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Resistance Resounds: Hearing Power in Mexico City

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For William

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Resistance Resounds: Hearing Power in Mexico City

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This dissertation addresses the sonorous attributes of hegemony and subaltern resistance within contemporary Mexico City. In this urban environment, inhabitants use sound to interpret and shift the balance of power that pervades their daily lives. I draw on the interdisciplinary research area of sound studies that regards the acoustic environment not only as an amalgam of sounds but as overlapping sites of cultural inscription, resistance, and reimagining. Recent works in the area of sound studies identify sound not only as a byproduct of social conflict but also as a weapon itself. While these studies emphasize the use of weaponized sounds in war zones, few studies exist concerning the insidious manipulation of acoustic environments by oppressive regimes during peacetime, or the efforts of marginalized groups to challenge this oppression through sound. As a result, a significant aspect of social conflict in urban centers—that of the sonic—remains unexamined.

This dissertation is organized into four case studies that each address distinct yet

interrelated manifestations of sonorous struggles for territorial dominance: 1) the specialized listening and sound producing practices of street vendors in Mexico City's Historic Center; 2) the crisis of street harassment as a sonorous practice of patriarchal domination; 3) the mosaic of sonic differentiation found in the Chopo Cultural Bazaar and finally 4) the reconfiguration of *son jarocho* (a folkloric dance and musical tradition from Veracruz) by urban musicians as a form of counterhegemonic protest during the Ayotzinapa marches of 2014 and 2015. These four case studies represent nodes of broader patterns of oppression and resistance that are indicative of both Mexico City's distinct history and its contemporary condition. The materiality and affective potency of these acoustic environments provide a crucial link between subjective sensory experiences and the social forces that inform them. The selective listening of sonically inundated urbanites, the politics of personal representation and group affiliation shown through aesthetic musical choices, and the occupation and contestation of acoustic space through the use of amplified sound all demonstrate tangible expressions of embodiment that speak to larger patterns of power.

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(Audio)

(Video)

To access the audiovisual examples, please copy the following web address and paste it into your browser:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B0AlIHr__OeGY3h2NGVncnI1LTQ

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Chapter 1 | Introduction

Isaura, city of the thousand wells, is said to rise over a deep, subterranean lake. On all sides, wherever the inhabitants dig long vertical holes in the ground, they succeed in drawing up water, as far as the city extends, and no farther. Its green border repeats the dark outline of the buried lake; an invisible landscape conditions the visible one; everything that moves in the sunlight is driven by the lapping wave enclosed beneath the rock's calcareous sky.

—Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

(Mis)hearing

I begin with a glitch—a stammer, a skipping stylus, a moment of audile infidelity. On my first evening in Mexico City, I lay splayed on a twin mattress in a rented room in the borough of Coyoacán. In the florescent blue of a storm-induced twilight, I made my first journal entry: "Bumped into a sweet, elderly couple who invited me to join them for dinner. Exhausted now. There is a thunderstorm on the shores of Lake Texcoco." The lake (actually a lake-system) that once provided both sustenance and security for the Mexica Empire had been gradually filled in from the Conquest until the 1970s. Now, only a few pockets remain in the south and east. The romantic inspiration that led me to remark on the storm would quickly fade as I discovered that I had arrived at the end (and grand finale) of the rainy season and that these storms would arrive almost daily—subtropical sheets that, trapped in the high mountain valley, fall hard and cold. Nor did I sleep near the (now subterranean) shores of Lake Texcoco but a former strait that once connected the brackish waters of Texcoco to the north with the sweet waters of Xochimilco to the south. Vanished, disguised, and even mythical landscapes seem to resound in Mexico City and resurface throughout this investigation.

That night, I was torn from a palindromic dream—a silver lake below silver clouds. "A little girl is shrieking at the top of her lungs," I thought as I was wrenched from sleep. I had arrived from the airport that afternoon, ate something, and went to bed before dark. I had not yet seen my new neighborhood at night. But I imagined the cobblestone lanes of Coyoacán, shimmering surfaces after a heavy rain, and a small girl screaming, her voice visible in little puffs of steam. I have heard something like that sound from both boys and girls, usually when they are playing or startled. For some reason, I pictured a girl. The sound of the scream was remarkable. It was in the piccolo range but much more powerful. While there were no audible words, the scream had a contour that spoke of an initial shock (a piercing tone) a realization of panic (a crescendo that transformed into a quick upward leap of about a perfect fifth) and a shift toward despair (a mournful *portamento*[1] toward the initial pitch). I jumped from bed jolted awake by the chill of the cement floor, grasping for the light switch in the unfamiliar room. The scream again! Now, the story grew more complex. She was farther away now, about two blocks. I imagined a faceless kidnapper had thrust her in the back of a car, though he seemed to be making a rather languid get-a-way. The girl screamed a third time—a near carbon copy of the first two but this time, from about six blocks away.

After a few hours of fitful sleep and a stroll through my new neighborhood, I discovered that my ears had misled me. It had not been a scream at all but the steam whistle of the *camotero*, a street vendor who sells *camote* (sweet potato) and plantain deserts from a portable, coal-fire oven and releases steam as a form of sonic

[1] A continuous slide between pitches

advertisement. The frightful screams I heard were in fact, produced by a camotero during an unusually late shift, pushing his or her steam cart along a predesignated route and letting off a piercing whistle every few blocks once the apparatus had time to re-pressurize.

Figure 1.1. A camotero posing with his portable, coal-fire oven. Photo by María Magdalena Alonso Pérez. Used by permission.

Audio 1.1. The characteristic steam whistle of a camotero. Recorded by author.

Phenomenological Considerations

This is a rather dramatic example of something that I experienced frequently during my research and followed along two lines: I either failed to correctly match a sound to a sound producer, or I misconstrued the intersubjective significance of a sound. I say "intersubjective" to distinguish between personal significance and systems of meaning that require the shared understanding of at least two people (everything from an inside joke, to a popular song lyric, to a colloquialism). In some cases, completely lacking a frame of reference, I *(mis)heard* a sound, learned something about it through my own discoveries or the input of *experienced auditors*,[2] listened again with a new set of presumptions, corrected again, listened again, and so on. My (mis)hearing the camotero illustrates this process. In my first listening, I instantly linked the sound with the wrong sound producer (using the closest reference that I had at the time). Then, after having seen a camotero and his steam cart, I linked that image with the sound. At several points in my research, I interviewed camoteros and those individuals, their faces, clothing, and my memories of our conversations, have settled as a cluster of associations that I now make with the sound itself. Over time, hearing the camotero every few hours at various distances, quite literally every day for about two years has, for me, evolved into what philosopher Don Ihde calls "an index for auditory 'sameness'" (2007: 87). I grew to take comfort in the continuity that this sound provided, a sonic index for stability in the wider world that garnered little of my auditory attention. This sense of stability became

[2] I apply ethnomusicologist J. Martin Daughtry's term to suggest that the way an individual perceives a given acoustic environment may, in fact, be inculcated by that environment over time (2015).

joltingly obvious since my return to the United States. Now in its absence, the sound lingers as a kind of earworm, as if my imagination is trying to prod it back into existence. The absence of the sound that once startled me now makes me anxious. But what is interesting to me about this acoustemological progression is that now, the sound of the camotero stirs *all* of these associations in my mind. It is frightening, comforting, and innocuous at once. And it represents people, both real and imagined.

In *May It Fill Your Soul*, ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice presents the world of Bulgarian music and his position within that world as a sort of progression as well. Placing his work within the orbit of hermeneutic phenomenology, Rice discusses how he "discovered" Bulgarian music as a sort of raw material—an unknown language, fascinating rhythms, and curious affects—beyond any substantial frame of reference. Driven by his initial interest in the musical material, Rice embarked on a sequence of encounters—with the music makers, the places of production, and the Bulgarian language—and each encounter held the promise of the expansion of "self-operating 'horizons'" (1994: 4).

Phenomenology, as conceived by Edmund Husserl, is a rigorous, primarily descriptive evaluation of conscious experience, one reliant on the psychological exercise of suspension (*epoché*) of "common sense" in order to access "the things themselves" (Gadamer [1975] 1989: 244; Ihde 2007: 18). Phenomenologist Martin Heidegger advanced this "phenomenological perspective" in part, by shifting focus from a disinterment of "things themselves" to an interrogation of *pre-understandings*—the historical, cultural, and linguistic filters that mediate lived experience (Ihde 2007: 18–20).

Heidegger posits that these filters and lived experiences are mutually constitutive. The phenomenologist's task then, using hermeneutics as a tool, "is never to allow [these filters] to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather […] by working [them] out in terms of the things themselves" (Heidegger [1953] 1996: 153).

Hermeneutic phenomenologists Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur enlivened Heidegger's turn by positing that genuine objectivity in observing the outside world is not possible because the mechanisms for describing that world depend on pre-understandings (Ricoeur [1981] 2016: 69).[3] In their work, hermeneutic explication presents an important compliment to phenomenological practice. While epoché serves to suspend pre-understandings, thus narrowing one's plane of consciousness, hermeneutic interpretation functions to signify and thus, reintegrate these pre-understandings as part of an "intentional movement of consciousness towards meaning" (Ricoeur [1981] 2016: 76). This movement, what Ricoeur dubs the *hermeneutical arc*, involves a practice of oscillating between *distanciation* (i.e., deconstructing the pre-understandings that accompany lived experiences) and *appropriation* (i.e., reevaluating lived experiences through the interpretation of these pre-understandings) ([1981] 2016: 71).

A journey along a hermeneutical arc begins with pre-understandings. One acknowledges them thereby interrupting their "givenness" in the present moment. Through critial examination of pre-understandings and their structural relations, one momentarily puts them at a distance, yet "distanciation is the dialectical counterpart of the notion of belonging [and t]o interpret is to render near what is far (temporally,

[3] Gadamer refers to these as "fore-meanings and prejudices" ([1975] 1989: 269)

geographically, culturally, spiritually)" (Ricoeur [1981] 2016: 71). While a reflexive process (thus a literally self-centered one), it is also one that requires an object of interpretation (i.e., an alterity) be it a written text, a sensory experience, or intersubjective encounter. Hermeneutic expansion is fostered through sensitivity to alterity; by excavating embedded pre-understandings, one allows alterity to "assert its own truth against one's own" (Gadamer [1975] 1989: 269). Consequently, "[n]either the self nor the Other is exclusively the object of understanding; rather interpretation seeks to expose the world or culture referenced by symbols and symbolic behaviors" (Rice, Timothy 1994: 7).

Notably, Rice substitutes music and musical symbolism for text and discourse, the objects of interpretation that dominate hermeneutic phenomenology. From Rice's stance, musical meaning is not a text to be read but the cumulative "history of the individual's encounter with the world of musical symbols in which he finds himself" (1994: 6). Like Rice's reflexive process of understanding the world of musical symbols, Ihde proposes that "listening phenomenologically," (i.e., the active engagement with the sounding world) involves more than a thorough cataloging of sonic events, but also attention to "the pervasiveness of certain 'beliefs' which intrude into any attempt to listen 'to the things themselves'" (2007: 49). To listen to the present moment is to engage a history of previous listenings, and because aural perception is temporal and indexical rather than iconic (Grosz 1994: 98), "auditory memory plays a large role in acquiring the ability to hear space" (Blesser and Salter 2007: 17).

I present the example of my (mis)hearing of the camotero's steam whistle to frame a premise at the heart of this investigation. What I playfully dub *audile infidelity* (i.e., the failure to hear "correctly"), is in fact, my intermittent passage along Ricoeur's hermeneutical arc—the annotation, replacement, and juxtaposition of old associative meanings with new ones. This is not to launch a relativistic assault on ontological reality. The sound that I heard on my first night in Mexico City was *not* a child's scream but that of a steam whistle. Further, Rice points out that the hermeneutical arc is not solely the purview of cultural outsiders and inexperienced auditors: "individuals operating within tradition continually appropriate their cultural practices, give them new meanings, and create their own sense of 'being in the world'" (1994: 6). In this investigation, I present the hermeneutical arc as a rumination on the mutual constitution and transformation of coexistent auralities (my own included) in which significance is cast and recast as individuals engage multisensorially and interpersonally within a given place at a particular time.

This work is organized in four case studies with material compiled from August 2014 until September 2016: 1) the specialized listening and sound producing practices of street vendors in the city's Historic Center; 2) the crisis of *acoso callejero* (street harassment) as a sonorous practice of patriarchal domination; 3) the mosaic of sonic differentiation found in the Chopo Cultural Bazaar (*tianguis cultural del Chopo*); and finally, 4) the reconstitution of *son jarocho* (a folkloric dance and musical tradition originating in the coastal state of Veracruz) by urban musicians as a form of

counterhegemonic protest during the Ayotzinapa marches of 2014 and 2015.[4] These case studies, emphasizing different practices of sound perception and production, featuring the divergent beliefs and values of various actors, and taking place in different locations throughout Mexico City, are nevertheless connected in that each case study considers the *sonorous encounter*—the transformation (be it one of struggle, acquiescence, affinity, or negotiation) produced as individuals meet each other in Mexico City's public spaces[5] and the role of sound, not only as an ethereal byproduct of the encounter but as a dynamic force in that transformation. Hermeneutic phenomenology has provided me with a framework of interpretation, yet the "object of interpretation" exists almost entirely in the fleeting moments of sensorial engagement between individuals who signify those moments through recollection. Published works or formalized discourse on the aforementioned case studies are virtually non-existent. Thus I position the sonorous encounter, the communion of sensing bodies with their environment and each other, as the locus of my hermeneutic interpretation.

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[4] On September 26, 2014, forty-three students were abducted and allegedly killed through the collusion of Mexican police, military, and cartel members (Guerreros Unidos). News of this atrocity resulted in massive, peaceful marches of students, *campesinos* (agrarian workers), and others in Mexico City with occasional outbreaks of violence (see Chapter 5).

[5] For clarity, I follow my interlocutors' usage of the terms "space" (*espacio*) and "place" (*lugar*) and employ the term "space" to describe a three-dimensional area (both virtual and literal) and "place" to indicate a conceptual territory defined by memory and identity. I intentionally omit anthropologist Marc Augé's concept of *non-place* (i.e., "a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity" [2008: 63]). I argue that in Mexico City, the deeply entrenched cultural practice of repurposing public spaces represents, in and of itself, a kind of historical continuity.

Sonorous Encounters

To see the world as a text to be read is often to belie the fact that that text is being read by a body, one perhaps sitting in an uncomfortable chair with tired eyes or a grumbling stomach. Pre-understandings frame and are expanded by our perceptions of the world but also emanate from the outside world. Gadamer suggests that knowing the world requires differentiation between it and the self, yet it is through this knowing that the self is constituted ([1975] 1989: 252–253). This conceptual permeability between the interior self and the outside world is grounded is sensory perception. To perceive another is to establish a conceptual field in which both the perceiver and perceived are situated. Philosopher Elizabeth Grosz explains that within this field, "[t]he subject brings to the world the capacity to turn the world back on itself, to fold it over itself and the world, introducing that fold in which the subject is positioned as a perceiving, perspectival mobility" (1994: 102). This "folding over" suggests a sensory reversibility in which perception (i.e., knowing the world) and awareness of the possibility of being perceived (i.e., self-consciousness) are expressions of a single act (Grosz 1994: 100). Phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty posits, "Every external perception is immediately synonymous with a certain perception of my body, just as every perception of my body is made explicit in the language of external perception" ([1945] 2012: 212). The outside world is rendered comprehensible to the degree that it sympathizes with *body schema* (i.e., body consciousness), yet through this communion, this body schema is reconstituted (see Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012: 221 and Grosz 1994: 87).

This research is framed by the supposition that the sensory experiences of individuals are often part of a discursive circuit: these experiences reciprocally condition and are conditioned by intersubjective and intercommunal social formations. Anthropologist Thomas Csordas states that "embodied experience is the starting point for analyzing human participation in a cultural world" (1993: 135) and that such experience provides a "dialectic between perceptual consciousness and collective practice" that is determined by "somatic modes of attention [:] culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one's body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others" (1993: 138). If we invert Csordas's *somatic modes of attention* from attending to one's body to the body attending to the outside world, it is interesting to consider the sensory reversibility that Grosz describes as a spatiotemporal map of sympathetic vibration. The schema of the body itself is "fundamentally linked to representations of spatiality and temporality. This relation to space and time is a precondition of the subject's relation with objects" (Grosz 1994: 90). Consequently, we may resonate with (i.e., derive meaning) from events that occur outside of us because in one way or another, these events correspond to what is already inside of us. According to Grosz, urban spaces provide a fascinating context of investigation of embodiment in that they are often conceptually entwined. "Cities," she states, "have always represented and projected images and fantasies of bodies, whether individual, collective, or political. In this sense, the city can be seen as a (collective) body-prosthesis or boundary that enframes, protects, and houses while at the same time taking its own forms and functions from the (imaginary) bodies it constitutes" (2001: 48).

In Latin American urban centers and in contemporary Mexico City in particular, anthropologist Nestor García Canclini posits that the populace reflects a "multitemporal heterogeneity […] in which modernization rarely operate[s] through the substitution of the traditional and the ancient" (1995: 47). It is a place of literal and symbolic ruptures between the present and (oft imagined) past. The breaking of earth preceding the construction of a new shopping center or high-rise occasionally reveals archeological artifacts; in a recent building project in Tlatelolco, an entire Mexica altar was discovered, still encrusted with bits of limestone plaster. During a routine dredging of the lakes of Mexico City's largest park, Chapultepec, workers found *amarres de amor* (love charms)[6] among the refuse—secret stashes of sympathetic magic radiating influence over unsuspecting urbanites. The soundtracks to Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* and Franco Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* overlay the pre-Columbian syncretism of the Holy Week festivities in the borough of Iztapalapa. Street vendors produce "virtual" street cries with smartphones and MP3 players. Children, their faces painted to resemble fleshless skulls, sit cross-legged in Coyoacán's central plaza watching *The Book of Life*, an animated film that borrows heavily from Mexican customs surrounding *el día de los muertos* (the day of the dead), as the real thing is happening around them. *Ofrendas* (offerings to the dead) of *cempasúchil* (marigold), *pan de muerto* (bread of the dead), candle-flame, tequila or mescal, and *papel picado* (colored paper with ornate, snowflake-

[6] These amarres included, "[a] jar full of honey with photographs of a pair of men and red ribbons attached to an incense stick, two fragments of gold chain covered in peanut butter and sesame seed, a sealed flask containing liquid, a candle made of seeds covered in gold dust, and a watch wrapped in a sewn bag" (Espinosa Rodríguez 2006: 67).

like designs) appear both on and off screen. One is a fictionalization of the other; that fiction gradually becomes part of the lived experience.

Figure 1.2. Multitemporal heterogeneity abounds as police and biblical reenactors wade through crowds during Holy Week in Iztapalapa. Photo by author.

Ihde reminds us that imaginative modes are active agents in the unfolding of the phenomenological encounter, modes "at least as complex as that of perception," and that to dismiss them is to risk a purely "descriptive phenomenology [;] to arrive too soon at a superficial, if apodictic, level of discovery" (2007: 119). This work is concerned with the collision, negotiation, and transformation of imaginative modes, my own included, that are carried out in physical encounters, between individuals, in specific places and moments in time. In "Resistance Resounds," I seek to demonstrate how sound as both a consequence of and a decisive force in these encounters is particularly pronounced in Mexico City's public spaces.

Sound artist and social theorist Brandon Labelle's concept of *acoustic territories*—"in which the disintegration and reconfiguration of space [both within and without of the body] becomes a political process" (2010: xxiii–xxiv)—has been particularly salient in this regard. Within these encounters, sonority "comes to provide not only points of contact and appropriation, but also meaningful challenge [and] shared

property onto which many claims are made, over time, and which demand associative and relational understanding" (Labelle 2010: xxiii–xxiv). These encounters are invariably conditioned by the settings in which they occur (be they physical or virtual) and in the particular context of Mexico City—a place where walking and taking public transportation is both a practical necessity and an important mode of social interaction for many—I have chosen to focus on public spaces. Nevertheless, Grosz cautions that the concept of *public* is paradoxical in that it can only exist in relation to the *private* (2001: xv). The coming chapters are replete with this paradoxical interplay. Many of the most challenging and insightful conversations that I had with interlocutors occurred behind closed doors—in homes, offices, and during casual gatherings. Reflecting on street sounds in private seemed to grant these interlocutors a valuable hermeneutic distanciation, a different angle from which to regard the commonplace. Conversely, sonorous encounters in the streets of Mexico City often involve efforts to symbolically privatize public space. Groups of sound makers may use vocalizations and amplified musics to not only project identity but also demarcate territory, encapsulating some while excluding others. Experienced auditors, in turn, deftly interpret these sonic cues to know who or what these sounds represent, seeking out allies while nimbly avoiding dangerous territorial incursions.

The "multitemporal heterogeneity" that García Canclini describes results in a rich polyphony of epistemological encounters, a texture of momentary elisions and eclipses. This is a particular characteristic, says García Canclini, of *hybrid cultures* found throughout Latin America in "which coexist multiple logics of development" (1995: 9)

and "where different forms of disputing and negotiating the meaning of modernity are in constant contention" (2001: 140). Something that is curious and particularly pronounced in Mexico City is that, despite the proliferation of media technology and the privatization of wealthy enclaves, these epistemological encounters continue to occur in public, face-to-face interactions. The analytical stance of this work is that these multiple logics—imbricated, mutually fabricated, occasionally oppositional like swirling ribbons of oil in water—are not eternal essences but productions that both inform and are formed in the ontological moments of encounter. Thus, to speak of *cultural imaginaries* (Anderson 1991; Hall 1997) in relation to an individual's conceptualizations of culture, history, identity, and affiliation is not to suggest that they are somehow "unreal." On the contrary, in a chance encounter on a city sidewalk—the moment in which one perceives the other and is aware that he or she is being perceived—these imaginaries frame the encounter and guide the terms of its negotiation.[7] In her conceptualization of sound as a form of "material transmission," musicologist Nina Eidsheim notes that much like sound, "human beings are not stable and knowable prior to entering into a relationship; rather, we unfold and bring each other into being through relationships. [There is] a strong parallel between how sound is realized or propagated through certain materialities and how we as unique beings are being realized through transmission and the reception of another person" (2015: 24–25).

[7] Here, the sonic encounter is reminiscent of philosopher Louis Althusser's concept of *hailing or interpellation* in which, through mutual recognition, concrete individuals are transformed into ideological subjects (1984: 47–48).

Figure 1.3. A metro boarding platform at rush hour, a key site of sonorous encounters in Mexico City. Photo by author.

Figure 1.4. A mural of the Virgin of Guadalupe enwreathed in graffiti demonstrating the contestation of public spaces. Photo by author.

Sound as Power

Originally, I embarked on this journey determined to maintain a receptive stance; I wanted to learn about the emic meanings that locals assigned to sounds in the streets of Mexico City. I did not set out with an a priori taxonomy of which sounds (be they musical or otherwise) deserved my attention and which did not. My hope was that the people I encountered would guide me to other people or places of interest and populate the taxonomy that I had left undefined. This investigation could have turned in a number of directions depending on whom I encountered—toward a nostalgic exploration of vanishing sounds and sound makers, an investigation of noise pollution (the sonic byproduct of swift and unequal modernization), or the absorption and transformation of transnational musics in Mexican popular culture. As it turns out, all these subjects are at play in the coming pages; they are part of the story, sometimes liminally, sometimes at center-stage, but always in a state of cohabitation, one that echoes the multiplicity of this urban environment. However, what emerged (overwhelmingly at times) from these encounters—the congruence of my own experiences with those of interlocutors—was the topic of sound as power. In this regard, I mean "power" as in agency, the capacity to effect change in the world. Ethnomusicologist J. Martin Daughtry posits that in the contestation of physical space, violence "is often implied rather than enacted [but a]coustic territories, by contrast, are in a constant state of active contestation. Because sounds are ephemeral, a regular stream of sonic acts is necessary to maintain the spaces they occupy" (2015: 192). Grosz contends that the structures, pathways, and intersections of the urban landscape, in which these territorial disputes are often situated, are not

neutral in negotiations of power. She states, “the more congealed, formulaic, predictable, and recognizable the cultural and architectural forms, the more they aim at conserving a facet of the past and reducing the future to a form of its repetition” (2001: 103) but adds that urban spaces also carry the potential “for the unhinging of identities and the initiation of pathways of self-overcoming. [T]hese same stabilized and congealed forces can be reanimated and revivified in another direction” (2001: 103–104).

Sound may be more than a container for symbolic meaning, a trigger for memories and associations, or an innocuous residue of social relations. Daughtry suggests that our very aural faculties are forged in these social relations, stating “we learn how to listen in an environment that is already shaped by and coursing with power” (2015: 123). The shifting borders of the intersubjective encounter are sites of contention and in the streets of Mexico City, these encounters are often aural—sounds provoke, persuade, dispute, disrupt, and silence others. Speaking to the intersection of musical memory and sexual abuse, composer Jenny Johnson argues that popular music specifically and sound in general can be at once evocative and “broad shouldered,” fixing a common-place sound like the *pop* of a beer can lid or the saccharine refrain of a pop song to a moment of trauma like an insect trapped in amber (2009). Sounds can ignite a sequence of memories while rendering others inaccessible. Sounds and the anticipation and memory of sounds can rob us of our desire to eat, ability to sleep, and determine where and with whom we are willing to venture. Sounds can box-in our sensory bodies, conditioning what we perceive and how we perceive it. Sounds can change our comportment, bending our backs, and leaving marks that may never fade.

Intersubjective encounters are both where relations of power are revealed and where they are enacted and refined. Indeed, García Canclini defines culture not as an "essence or […] a set of intrinsic qualities" (1993: 2) but as "a particular type of production, whose objective is to understand, reproduce, and transform the social structure and to struggle for hegemony" (1993: 1). These relations of power are rarely (if ever) equal, and this imbalance leaves room for the possibility of violence but also, in the de-centered heterogeneity of Mexico City, ample opportunities for avoidance and resistance. Throughout Latin America says García Canclini, "power is won and renewed through centers that are disseminated, initiatives that are multipolar, actions and messages that are adapted to the variety of addressees and cultural references that in every case provide an order that shapes identities" (2001: 142). The very design of Latin American urban centers, one based on the remarkably consistent Spanish and Portuguese methods of city planning, stratifies the rich and the poor but "nevertheless promote[s] interethnic [and interclass] coexistence" (García Canclini 2014: 138; see also Rama 1996: 5). García Canclini asserts that cultural hybridity is the outcome of this cohabitation of diverse groups and has only intensified with urban expansion during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (1995: 207–208). The salient point here is that the particular history of colonialization, the absorption of forced and voluntary immigrants, the exponential population growth of Greater Mexico City from three million in 1940 to over twenty million as of 2010 (García Canclini 2014: 142), and the spatial organization of the city itself, have resulted in a setting in which power relationships are multilateral rather than monolithic. "[C]ross-class interaction," says García Canclini,

> force[s] us to recognize that alongside struggle there is also negotiation. And negotiation does not appear as a process external to the constitution of the actors, to which they might resort on occasion for political convenience. *It is a mode of existence* [my emphasis], something intrinsic to the groups that take part in the social drama. Negotiation is located within collective subjectivity, in the most unconscious culture of politics and daily life. Its hybrid character, which in Latin America derives from a long history of mixtures and syncretisms, is accentuated in contemporary societies through complex interactions between the traditional and the modern, the popular and the elite, the subaltern and the hegemonic (2001: 146).

It would be an error to suggest that deep-rooted traditions or a self-conscious preoccupation with the past have made Mexico somehow resistant to globalization. The Spanish colonizers arrived to a world of multipolar powers and a complex watch-work of political alliances and systems of patronage in which negotiation was already a mode of existence. What the Spanish codices suggest is that the Spanish arrived in a land with a system of conjoined civilizations and a massive, heterogeneous population comparable in size and diversity to that of Western Europe (Escalante Gonzalbo and Alcántara Gallegos 2012). The Spanish either found it expedient to tolerate or exploit systems that were already in place (e.g., pre-Columbian market structures or the placement of politico-religious centers and transportation routes), or, due to the sheer size of the population and despite the ravages of European-born epidemics, slavery, and systematic genocide, were unable to destroy and replace extant practices and social structures. García Canclini presents a very particular condition of modernity, one characterized by an ability to absorb and appropriate change—to *Mexicanize* new belief systems, material goods, waves of immigrants with distinct cultural practices and cosmologies, and perhaps most interestingly, to serve and occasionally undermine multiple masters. If Mexicanizing is a process of appropriation, then *Mexicanness* (*mexicanidad*) is its consequence. The term,

one that can be heard frequently in the streets of Mexico City, involves the evaluation of something or someone in terms of adherence to an intangible, highly idiosyncratic essence of *being Mexican*. Thus, while it is a binary concept (Mexican/not Mexican), it is of a kind that, as anthropologist Michael Herzfeld suggests, often "obscure[s] complex processes of creative cooptation in economic, political, and administrative practices" (1997: 3). The rigidness of the term belies its continual flux.

In some neighborhoods of Mexico City, the weekly (or multi-weekly) family ritual of strolling through the *tianguis* (bazaar) is now conducted in Walmart or in massive shopping complexes. In the countless eateries of the city, one can dine on sushi loaded with *queso oaxaqueño* (cheese from the state of Oaxaca) and *tacos al pastor* (shepherd's tacos), the latter being one of the signature foods of Mexico City that is, in fact, a Mexicanized version of Lebanese *shawarma*. In the Chopo Cultural Bazaar (see Chapter 4), one can find patches and stickers with peace symbols, crossed-out swastikas, and anarchy symbols all hanging next to each other. There, teens shout phonetic renderings of the choruses of English language pop songs doing their best impression of a "gringo accent" (imagine a Scooby-Doo voice). I have seen, on more than one occasion, a shop displaying posters or hanging t-shirts of icons like Saint Judas Thaddeus (a saint held in high esteem throughout Mexico), the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, juxtaposed with "the lizard king" Jim Morrison—a new holy trinity for an age of coexistent logics.

The Mexicanization of transnational musics offers a striking example of this process of absorption and transformation. It also is a critical way in which musical sound

is used to exert power multilaterally in Mexico City. Anthropologist Mark Pedelty has noted how the Mexican bolero, originating in Cuba, became Mexican during the first half of the twentieth century in part by gradually transforming the instrumentation and attenuating the genre's Afro-derived elements such as the clave (1999: 30). The music/dance genre of son jarocho (see Chapter 5), widely considered a quintessentially Mexican form, has its roots in both the Afro-Mexican communities of colonial Veracruz and Cuba and like bolero, assumed its current form by gradually obscuring or removing Afro-derived elements (e.g., manners of dance, instrumentation, etc.). In contemporary Mexico City, one can find sharply-dressed couples (many middle aged but increasingly young) moving on light fantastic toes to serenades of live, Cuban danzón groups. Cumbia, originally from Colombia, has blossomed throughout much of Latin America and is a fixture at private parties, *quinceañeras* (coming-of-age celebrations for fifteen-year-old girls), and public festivals. Reggaeton, which developed primarily in Puerto Rico, is very popular in Mexico City today while also strikingly divisive. A number of interlocutors, upon merely hearing the name, almost reflexively announced that they despise the music because it is degrading to women. Just as many expressed their love of the genre. For example, "María"[8] sells curative balms and powders in Mexico City's Sonora Market. She explains, "reggaeton is the music of my neighborhood. It is part of who I am. When I come to work, I bring it with me in my head. Perhaps even the way I make my *pregón* (street cry) is influenced by reggaeton" (interview, April 4 2015,

[8] Names first introduced in double quotation marks represent pseudonyms for interlocutors who wish to remain anonymous.

Mexico City).[9] Such examples of the Mexicanization of transnational musics are indicative of what ethnomusicologist Ana María Ochoa Gautier dubs the "sonic turn" in Latin America. She posits that popular musics (including appropriated imports) are increasingly assuming roles once held by folkloric musics "to articulate a) ties to place, b) communicative and communal ideals of spontaneity and affect that have been historically associated to an aesthetics of orality, and c) an ascribed sense of deeply felt identification" (2006: 805).

The Soundscape Concept

I believe that all soundscapes are not created equal. The concept itself, borrowed from the genre of landscape painting that began in earnest at the end of the eighteenth century, still bears features of its ocularcentric origins. Unlike the portrait, the landscape suggests multiples nodes of focus, a vanishing point, the suggestion of depth, and the allusion to unseen spaces. If figures move about in the landscape, they are secondary to the landscape itself. By capturing, in layers of pigment, a passing moment or perhaps a summary representation of many moments in a natural setting, the landscape, in its very mode of representation, suggests a state of fixity. The soundscape, as theorized by composer R. Murray Schafer ([1977] 1994), has served as a catalyst in the development of sound studies in at least two significant ways. First, as system that aims to categorize environmental sounds, it has contributed to the language that academics use to debate sound and a pedagogical starting point for the study of spatialized hearing. The creation

[9] All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

of terminology and organizational structures belies Schafer's larger contribution: in drawing our attention away from figures (pieces of music or spoken words simply as a chain of meanings) to the spaces figures occupy (the sounds that encompass, surround, and reflect the figure) Schafer accomplishes something akin to that of landscape painters who subordinated the figures of people, animals, and objects, to the settings that they inhabit (if those settings are inhabited at all). Second, the soundscape concept has been catalytic to the interdisciplinary field of sound studies because it is incomplete, thus easily problematized and providing a point of reference against which, a number of important discourses have been articulated.

Schafer uses the terms *hi-fi* and *lo-fi* to distinguish between soundscapes replete with "meaningful" sounds and those in which the meaning is masked or has been replaced by "noise" ([1977] 1994: 43). Obviously, this distinction is reliant on the idea of *audio fidelity*—the maintenance of a sound signal's quality and character from its original source, through cables, processors, and speaker to an ear. The hi-fi soundscape implies an acoustic environment in which a sound or sounds are reproduced that exist (in some unspecified location) in an uncorrupted state and are being reproduced, transmitted, and received with high fidelity—faithfulness to a platonic, quintessential version. Eidsheim argues that this preoccupation with fidelity (which implies an unsullied original) has contributed to the *figure of sound*, a term she uses to convey "the process of ossification, through which […] an ever-shifting, relationally dependent phenomenon comes to be perceived as a static object or incident" (2015: 2). Sound studies scholar Jonathan Sterne opines that the concept of hi-fi versus lo-fi acoustic environments not only presupposes

the existence of sounds a priori to the context in which they are produced but also implies an a priori listener, a concept that Sterne believes "conceals a distinctly authoritarian preference for the voice of the one over the noise of the many" (2003: 342–343). Daughtry's grievance with the soundscape concept stems from the conspicuous absence of the listener in the discussion. "If the soundscape concept is to be brought into alignment with the most incisive new work on sound and listening," he contends, "we will need to reattach its abstract ear to a historically and culturally inflected body; conceive of that body as one that sounds while listening, listens while sounding, and learns while doing both; and emplace that body within an ever-changing series of overlapping vibrational environments" (2015: 122–123). Aural historian Emily Thompson defines soundscape as "simultaneously a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment" (2004: 1) and Ihde expands this definition to include a third modality, that of the imaginary. Taken together, "listening becomes comes *polyphonic*. I hear not only the voices of the World, in some sense I 'hear' myself or from myself" (2007: 117).

A soundscape then, requires an ear at the very least[10] and not an "abstract ear" but "historically and culturally inflected bodies" that move within and without a state of "moment-to-moment mutability" (Daughtry 2012: 115). The body itself, states Grosz, "must be regarded as a site of social, political, cultural, and geographical inscriptions, production, or constitution" (1994: 23). And these inscriptions are reversible; bodies

[10] Eidsheim suggests that hearing through the medium of air (i.e., hearing with the ears) represents only a fraction of the possible vibratory engagements with the world (2015).

mark the world like carbon paper through their passing. They crease and tear the membranes and voids that surround them and in doing so, sculpt internal worlds.

Increasingly, sound studies scholars like Sterne, Eidsheim, and Ochoa Gautier have worked to rein in what they identify as a pattern of fonocentrism that seems to be replacing the dominance of the eye in social studies and the humanities. Ochoa Gautier cautions that in twentieth century scholarship, Latin American is "often presented as having a different modernity, one that highlights the oral/aural bodily knowledge as a particular knowledge of the subaltern opposed to the ocularcentrism of the elite," and adds that this emphasis on aurality points to "a celebration of the acoustic that limits the expression of sonic difference to the body and the voice [and in doing so, belies] a dense history of the sonorous and audiovisual as a field that has generated multiple modes of action, thought, and critical theorization" (2014: 17). Indeed, the imbricated auralities presented in this work are not contained within discrete social classes. Though social class is certainly at play in the way individuals perceive and thus position themselves in relation to particular sounds, the power of a given sound in this urban context lies in its capacity to bisect social stratum, opening multiple channels of negotiation and contestation and taking root in quotidian interactions.

This "coup" in the hierarchy of the senses threatens to replace one dictatorship with the other, and the pressing question that is often (and I argue, *should* be) on the lips of anyone interested is sound studies is: "why sound?" There is good reason for hominids with forward-facing eyes and color vision to be preoccupied with sight. If the motivation to explore sound is to unseat the dominance of vision then surely, this inquiry must

include the other senses. In this investigation, I consider the multisensorial experiences of individuals whose bodies move along distinct tracks through a mutable present, engaged in the polyphony of the ontological and imaginary. Sound, a narrow and physiologically variable band of frequencies, a range of vibrational perception, only becomes relevant to Ihde's *polyphony* of sensory experience when it happens to be of significance to the person perceiving it. Thus, I return to my initial statement. Soundscapes are not equal (i.e., equally interesting, relevant, or worthy of study) because their value is wholly reliant on who is listening and what particular sounds mean to that person in a given moment. Schafer's hi-fi/lo-fi dichotomy is insufficient in recovering this value because it places the "meaningfulness" of sounds in one person's ears (presumably, Schafer's).

Sounds may be "broad-shouldered," acquiring personal meaning as they coincide with lived events. Johnson's observation articulates an important, and perhaps transcendent feature of perception—the profound imbrication between a person's multisensoriality and emotional universe and the paradoxical nature of sound as something simultaneously impactful and ambivalent. My purpose is to distinguish between Johnson's broad-shouldered concept, always a latent potential in sensory perception, and aurality as a system of ideas, emotions, allusions to the past, or projections of the future that are understood between and beyond perceiving bodies. Here, these places of collision and elision of sensory worlds can rightly be called epistemologies and when the practices of hearing and producing sound are fundamental vehicles for these epistemologies, they are *acoustemologies*: "sounding and listening as a knowing-in-action: a knowing-with and knowing-through the audible" (Feld 2015: 12).

Sound is important in Mexico City, not only on a personal, "broad-shouldered" level, but in that it is a medium of expression and communication used and comprehended by millions. Like García Canclini's hybrid culture itself, these acoustemologies absorb and adapt new technologies while maintaining a certain internal integrity that allows them to remain mutually recognizable. Sounds can raise and disperse crowds, wake the whole of the city up at three in the morning with a false earthquake alarm, rouse people from their homes (almost reflexively) to take out the trash, buy water, sell furniture, and so on. Sound, in this particular context, acts as a bridge between imaginary worlds as well as the realms of the interpersonal, communal, and national. I resist the idea of an acoustemological relativism—the idea that the sonorous attributes of a given setting are equally communicative or symbolically meaningful (for those who inhabit that setting) as any other. There is a reason why, in *Sound and Sentiment*, anthropologist Steven Feld presents his readers with an acoustemology of the Kaluli people. In the dense rainforests of Bosavi, Papua New Guinea, the Kaluli people exhibit a complex acoustemology, one that encompasses the practical and symbolic importance of often unseen bird species and the role of this invisible pantheon in the Kaluli's ritual life, daily routines, and the convergence of the two (1990). For different reasons, sound has guided the orientation of this work precisely because it is more than a personal repository of memories or associations. In Mexico City, sounds are the vehicles for pervasive, culturally grounded, and impactful social engagements.

The testimonies presented here serve to convey how important sounds are in the daily struggles of people who inhabit Mexico City, and to offer ample examples of

precisely how the sonorous dimensions of these struggles take shape. In this regard, Ochoa Gautier's notion of the *sonic turn* in Latin America provides an important backdrop to this investigation. The sonic turn in Latin America, what Ochoa Gautier describes as the outcome of a decentered modernity, is characterized by "multiple mediations enacting a constant relation between sonic transculturation and purification" (2006: 820). Presenting a parallel with García Canclini's concept of hybrid cultures, Ochoa Gautier argues that the need to establish continuity within heterogeneous populations from competing centers of authority and to delineate between the "authentic" and the "alien" is often carried out in the aural sphere and reflects the "displacement of ideologies of mestizaje that were crucial to the nation-building phase in the early twentieth century" (2006: 808).

Coaxing a history of aurality from written accounts of colonial New Granada, Ochoa Gautier notes the centrality of "voice" in shoring up the "troubled boundary" between human and animal, natural and fabricated, and lettered and illiterate (2014: 5). The colonial period itself, a radical meta-encounter of forced and voluntary displacement, a reshuffling of social orders, and disruptions of ways of being and systems of understanding coincided with an exposure to, among other things, new ways of listening and sounding. Deciphering the accounts of European and *criollo*[11] elites (the documentarians of this epoch), Ochoa Gautier notes that they encountered "vocalities that seemed out of tune, difficult to classify as either language or song, improper Spanish

[11] This term has numerous meanings depending on place and historical context. In this case, "criollo" refers to people of (primarily) European descent who were born in the Americas.

accents that did not conform to a supposed norm, sounds of indigenous languages for which there were no signs in the Spanish alphabet, [and] an abundance of noises or 'voices' coming from natural entities that seemed to overwhelm the senses" (2014: 4). Attention to the "spectral figuration of the voice and of the acoustic as an invisible yet highly perceptible and profoundly felt (im)materiality" (2014: 5) was crucial during the colonial period, says Ochoa Gautier, in creating boundaries, be they within or between the natural world and the human-made.

Sensitivity to the voice also provided a means of both recognizing (i.e., hearing) and performing (i.e., sounding) locality. "[P]ersistent underlying understandings of the acoustic today," she concludes, "emerged or were consolidated during the early postcolonial period, especially regarding the way 'local sounds' of different entities and of peoples were understood as 'voices'" (2014: 5). However, Ochoa Gautier argues that despite the fact that it was the lettered elites who provided a written record of the colonial and postcolonial periods, between the lines there is evidence to suggest that "Latin America was simultaneously and just as importantly constituted by audile techniques[12] cultivated by […] peoples historically considered 'nonliterate,' giving rise to the types of questions and relations that the worlding of sound enables" (2014: 4). Giving credence to García Canclini's description of multipolar societies in which multilateral negotiation is "a mode of existence," Ochoa Gautier describes the production of Latin American aurality as occurring within *acoustic assemblages* that consist of

[12] "Audile technique": listening practices based on science/reason used to rationalize what is heard (Sterne 2003: 23)

> mutually constitutive transduction (in two directions, let us say) of notions of sound as well as notions of who listens, as well as potentially transformative processes of inscription of sound that interrelate listening and sounding "objects." If such an interrelationship between listeners and sound objects is intercultural, that is, it occurs between beings considered "different" as is the case in colonial contexts, then we have a cycle of transductions in which each of the listening entities of this assemblage generates its own process of transformation of the relation between the notion of the listening entity, the notion of the sound producing entity, the process of (re)inscription of such hearing and the type of relation constituted in the process (2014: 23).

In other words, Ochoa Gautier is illustrating processes of acoustemological construction that involve intercultural relationships (despite possibly being placed under the dome of a common ethnic or national construct) that are "mutually constitutive and transformative." What we are presented with is a matrix of unequal power relationships that, despite this inequity, open the possibility for diverse actors to be both the active listeners and the "sounding objects," to operate with overlapping definitions of lo-fi and hi-fi acoustic environments, and to passively demarcate or actively re-draw boundaries of the "local." The significance of these acoustic assemblages has only increased, says Ochoa Gautier, "under the contemporary processes of social globalization and regionalization coupled with the transformations in the technologies of sound [resulting in a] public sphere [that] is increasingly mediated by the aural [and] is being redefined to include forms of participation which are not channeled by the forms of debate or participation historically recognized as such by the official polity" (2006: 807).[13]

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[13] Sociologist Jürgen Habermas conceives of the "public sphere" as a bridge between the State and society, one that coincided with the rise of the bourgeoisie in eighteenth-century Europe. In that epoch, the public sphere mediated between the "Private Realm" (e.g., the family and civil society) and "The Sphere of Public Authority" (e.g., the State and the court) and as such, acted as "the vehicle of public opinion [putting] the State in touch with the needs of society" (Habermas 1993: 30–31). Ochoa Gautier describes the public sphere of contemporary Latin America as one in a state of reconstitution and expansion (2006: 807). This

Methodology and Chapter Organization

The potential and the limitations of this study lie in its emphasis on the particular. Despite my efforts to prepare prior to my arrival in Mexico City, I see in retrospect that there was no way to gird myself for the maelstrom of humanity that I encountered. This research has been a journey of missteps, adjustments, improvisations, and revelations. I discarded some research topics as others emerged from midnight conversations and the generous advice of friends. Pre-planned questionnaires became surprising, occasionally challenging conversations with some interviewees playfully scolding me, "you should really be asking me about *this*!" I stumbled upon *peregrinaciones* (religious processions) and followed them to unknown conclusions and found myself in the midst of protest marches on my way to visit a friend. I have been caught in the cross-fire of street fights, fiery arguments, and aborted robberies. I have found myself a welcome guest in solemn religious rites and family feasts and was allowed entry into the padlocked hideaways where informal vendors guard their merchandise. I say this investigation is particular because the arc of my inquiry has been conditioned by these encounters.

Testimonies constitute the primary material of this investigation. The opinions, perceptions, affinities, and fears of the many individuals I have encountered in Mexico City (often fragmented and occasionally contradictory) have determined what topics warranted my time and energy, what places I should be familiar with, and what questions I should ask. Discussing the centrality of testimony in his own work, Daughtry states, "If

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suggests a plurality of the public sphere, the possibility of diffuse modes of participation and channels of debate between the State and society. I use "public sphere" to connote this plurality.

we can say that a conversation becomes an interview when it takes on a certain structured character and the goal of eliciting information from one of the parties (the interviewee), then an interview becomes a testimony when it is marked by the solemnity that accrues around situations of vulnerability, violence, and loss [and] when corroborated by multiple accounts of others, a testimony can acquire a claim on truth" (2015: 14–15). Similarly, I consider the interviews that have directed the trajectory of this work to be testimonies because so often, in the course of a structured interview or a casual conversation, interviewees would express the uncertainty or instability that they feel in their lives or about the state of their country, the dull ache of past injustices, and an internal struggle between a sense of urgency to take action and one of impotent inevitability.

Certain concepts emerged in these conversations, often with a different significance depending on who was speaking, but with striking regularity: "Mexican culture," "Mexicanness", "*machismo*" (hyper-masculinity), "counterculture" as a thing apart from politics, and "culture" as something distinct from "tradition." These words act like vessels for individual sentiments and personal histories. They are critical to this investigation because they are like a linguistic residue, a vocalized manifestation of the *coexistent multiple logics* that García Canclini describes. Many people that I have spoken with express a sense of ownership over these concepts and deploy them frequently. However, the juxtaposition of different interpretations of these concepts reveal gaping fissures.

In approaching this epistemological multiplicity, often masked by common terms, Herzfeld's concept of *social poetics* has been revealing. According to Herzfeld, "[s]ocial

poetics is about the play through which people try to turn transient advantage into a permanent condition in this socially comprehensive sense" (1997: 25). A clear example of this, he adds, "is the use of stereotypes in social interaction [:] social life consists of processes of reification and essentialism as well as challenges to these processes" (1997: 26). In other words, as problematic as discussing "Mexican culture" may be—perhaps excruciatingly so because it attempts to contain the confluence of many ethnic and regional identities, has been subject to intense re-formulation during the post-Revolution period, and is further complicated by the transformation and reification of this concept in a cycle between diasporic communities and the symbolic homeland—such stereotypes are critical because they hang on the tips of so many tongues. Curiously, Herzfeld adds that "[t]he adherence to a static cultural ideal has a surprising and presumably unintended consequence: not only does it ground certain permissible forms of debate but it also permits and perhaps even encourages the day-to-day subversion of norms. This comes about because the very rigidity of outward forms provides some actors with a mask with which to conceal a variety of messages" (1997: 21). This masking behind a rigid national narrative is particularly intense in Mexico City as ruling elites, students and educated professionals, the working poor, and even transnational migrants vie for control of the exact same icons in the service of divergent agendas—the coopting of the revolutionary figure of Emiliano Zapata being a particularly virulent example.

In the coming chapters, I will discuss acoustemologies comprised of corroborations, diametrical oppositions, and variations on a theme but in every case, outcomes of sonorous encounters. Chapter 2 concerns the *toreros* of Mexico City's

historic center, informal street vendors who work in daily defiance of regular police raids. Producing sound as advertisement is a hallmark of street vendors throughout much of Mexico. But for toreros, sound making and sophisticated listening practices are matters of survival. Here I adapt Daughtry's concept of *bellophonic listening* (2015) to Mexico City's colonial streets in order to understand how toreros juggle their auditory attention, filtering innocuous sounds, responding instantly to threatening ones, all the while seducing, cajoling (and sometimes bullying) customers into advantageous transactions.

The toreros' pregón or stylized street cry draws on flexible, deeply-rooted discursive modes of praise, communication, and humor. In Chapter 3, I show how some of these same discursive modes are manipulated by sexual predators in order to confuse, dominate, and abuse victims in the streets. I consider acoso callejero (i.e., public, often anonymous sexual harassment) to be a form of *acoustic patriarchy* that serves to restrict victims' access to public space. Like the toreros, victims of acoso callejero exhibit sophisticated listening practices but of a different order. Subjected to whistles, shouts, murmured profanity, and words of false familiarity as a matter of routine, these victims become experts in discerning the implicit intention behind sounds and filtering out those they deem benign. In order to manage or avoid this harassment outright, victims draw on a personal history of these sonorous encounters (e.g., where they happened, what they sounded like, who the sounds came from, etc.), to construct *topographies of fear*—ever-evolving, spatiotemporal arrangements of relative safety and danger.

These first two case studies engage vocalizations that transcend semantics. Their mutual recognition, and thus their affective potency is just as dependent on their timbre,

rhythm, melodic contour, as their linguistic content. In Chapters 4 and 5, I invert this scheme by examining how musics (e.g., live performance, amplified recordings, and symbolic musical materials) achieve mutual recognition (thus affective potency) in part through their "non-musical" aspects. These include their spatializations, coordinating functions (i.e., capacity to synchronize bodies), indexical functions (i.e., referencing historical narratives, identities, and localities), and communicative functions (i.e., signifying messages, warnings, and other non-verbal directives).

In El Chopo (Chapter 4), a diverse, elective community of underground rock fans join together each Saturday in a countercultural rite of commemoration, consumption, and contestation. This heterogeneous community, one composed of distinct music subcultures, arranges itself like a honeycomb in the tiny bazaar. Amplified musics serve to index this arrangement. The distribution and relative dominance of certain musics over others demonstrate the evolving dynamics between these subcultures, but taken as a whole, the soundscape of El Chopo is understood by many as an audible demonstration of community tolerance. The shifting soundscape of El Chopo not only references the flux of underground music trends, but also constitutes an *audible palimpsest*—the performance of parallel, historical imaginaries that both invoke and reconfigure the roughly sixty-year history of rock music in Mexico City.

In Chapter 5, I examine the reconfiguration of son jarocho to a galvanizing force in the Aytozinapa protest marches of 2014–2015. Amid the melee of chanting students, solemn agrarian workers, masked anarchists, and government infiltrators, these musicians perform a sort of defiant vulnerability that suspends normal circuits of social control.

Through their allegorical lyrics and traditional instruments and dress, these musicians invoke an alternative history to that of the national narrative. Their ludic performance and synchronized corporeality project utopian possibilities. In the context of the march, these musicians "play" the space. They adapt their playing and singing to the acoustic niches through which they move (Augoyard and Torgue 2005: 80). They coordinate internally, modulating their aural concentration between their own playing and that of their comrades to sonic cues from beyond their column. They select traditional songs to frame contemporary disputes and even improvise verses to signify the events of the march as they unfold. Through this symbolic labor, these musicians not only embolden themselves in a threatening environment, but also energize the protesters that surround them.

Toward a Transmusicality

As sound studies scholars working under the dome of ethnomusicology push, problematize, or simply bypass music as a form of expressive culture for murkier auralities, several questions arise. At what point is our exploration of sound no longer ethnomusicological? Does habitually referring to the "musical" and "non-musical" serve to defend the embattled, sacred earth of the musical (shrinking daily it seems as funding for the arts is gutted and file-sharing has made the possibility of actually getting paid to make music seem like a dream)? Or, on the other hand, does it reproduce reductive nominalisms that are, in my experience, common tropes among many musicians (e.g., "intellectually rigorous" versus "popular," "authentic" versus "derivative," "cerebral" versus "sentimental")? These questions are not meant to be rhetorical. I do not have a

spring-loaded response. Rather, these are the questions I have wrestled with and consequently, are ones that have played an important part in guiding this investigation. In his examination of the Red Shirt protests in Bangkok in 2010 and 2011, ethnomusicologist Benjamin Tausig places his work in the sound studies milieu in saying, "it is sound, rather than music, that bounds this human inquiry at its outer reaches," and adds, "It was my experience that sound, sonic technology, and broadcasting histories were enormously important to understanding how the Red Shirts articulated their discontent" (2013: 10). In the particular setting of war-time Iraq, Daughtry states that "listening—to music, but also to the sounds of non-musical events—can orient people within their environments, connect them with affective stimuli, and open their bodies up to violence and pain as well as to knowledge and pleasure" (2015: 6). Thus, these particular settings and historical moments called for an investigation of sound, one that could include and transcend "music" as both activity and artifact. Tausig makes it clear that he could have approached the Red Shirt protests in a number of ways but that sound was particularly salient in terms of the Red Shirts' spatio-hierarchical organization, public impact, as well as other factors. Sound has certainly bound this project at its outer reaches as well, but I have found it frightfully cold out on the perimeter.

I have been making music since I was fifteen years old and my time in Mexico City called for a change of focus. I found myself separated from the musical community that I had built over years and was beckoned by new, professional demands that called me out into the streets to interact with people and document instead of performing from the safety of a stage. I noticed my guitar callouses disappearing, neglected the nails on

my plucking hand, and frequently dreamt of being thrust on a concert stage with hands gone numb and vocal cords that would not stir. My journey into the aural imaginaries of others has coincided with a distancing from my own musical world and frequently, I reflected on how much I missed making music with other people. Participating in son jarocho workshops and studying the *jarana*[14] provided one salve, hanging out with rock fans in El Chopo another.

What has been clear both in the field and as I relive these experiences by putting them into words, is how dramatically my emotional state changes as I move from topic to topic—from the hateful shouts and double-entendres of acoso callejero (see Chapter 3) to the sonic embrace of the son jarocho contingent (see Chapter 5). Like Tausig, I found it necessary to both consider and transcend the musical in my examination of intersubjective, sonorous encounters. However, I am not a sonic relativist and I find that I respond to different sonic events differently and believe it would be counterproductive to belie that fact. Similarly, none of my interlocutors would consider a pregón (street cry) or whistled phrase to be music, strictly speaking. I say so because I asked them. Nevertheless, many have pointed to the potential of speech to be "musical" and some have even gone so far as to suggest that the sounds of the street are "symphonic" with layers of rhythmic and melodic motives and an overall form that is guided by place and time of day. But if we use the analogy of a city as being like an orchestra, it would be more accurate to imagine listeners stumbling through rows of instrumentalists, catching

[14] A strummed string instrument (normally five-courses) that provides much of the rhythmic support in son jarocho ensembles (see Chapter 5)

music stands with their elbows and sending sheets flying, receiving an angry glare from the conductor as they make their way up to row of bassists who suddenly surround the listeners, pressing the bridges of their instruments uncomfortably close, fraying horse-hair bows, competing with each other for attention.

What arises from the tension produced in discerning between music and non-music is a sort of spectrum with what I call, for lack of a better term, the *transmusical* occupying the middle. By transmusical, I mean sonorous forms of expressive culture that are reliant, in terms of intersubjective comprehension, on a simultaneity of features that would generally be considered *both* musical and non-musical. For example, whistle practices (see Chapters 2 and 3) found in a number of regions of Mexico as well as Mexico City, can be linguistic (or in some cases complete language systems) because they make it possible to convey complex and precise ideas between inculcated participants. Replacing spoken words with whistles, comprehension between conversationalists is entirely reliant on recognition of the melodic contour of phrases, their rhythmic consistency and points of emphasis, as well as the context—the nesting of one motive within a group of others. An added transmusical dimension of whistle practices is that, in some cases, a whistler may play with the timbre of a whistle to express intensity, panic, and anger. These transmissions then, exchange not only information but emotional nuance. None of the whistle practitioners that I have spoken with would call their whistles "music," nor would the handful of linguists who have written on the subject. Yet without melody, rhythm, and form, these practices could not exist. Linguists, I argue, have treated whistle practices as a system of substitutions—

sounds standing in for words like an audible Enigma machine. But such an assessment dismisses what Ihde calls "the dramaturgical voice [that] stands between the enchantment of music, which can wordlessly draw us into the sound so deeply that the sound overwhelms us, and the conversation of ordinary speech, which gives way to a trivial transparency that hides its sounded significance" (2007: 167). The *dramaturgical voice* becomes all the more apparent when in Chapters 2 and 3, I show how the discursive mode of *piropo* (a poetic monologue meant to seduce) has been appropriated by both street vendors and sexual harassers, and for listeners, it is often the acoustic character (e.g., the timbre, volume, rhythm, and accentuation) the enables them to distinguish the intent of the sound maker.

Since the transmusical lies at the crossroads of music and non-music, I find it useful to reverse course and look at some of the attributes of music that are often ignored or dismissed as noise. Eidsheim claims that "traditional understanding isolates sound from the thick event of music" (2015: 11) and this is certainly evident when attending a solo, classical guitar concert. So pronounced is the fret-noise (i.e., the composite sound of finger pads pressing strings and moving across metal frets and a varnished fingerboard) that even with the most seasoned players and well-constructed instruments, the noise competes with the tones of the strings themselves. Players struggle to tame these inevitable sonic artifacts and trained auditors guide their ears to avoid them. But those who have experience with audio sampling have most likely found that samples of a classical guitar without this added noise do not sound like a guitar at all but more like some synthetic harpsichord. Here the absence of incidental sounds makes the musical

instrument difficult to recognize. In the case of El Chopo (Chapter 4), the simultaneous amplification of diverse musics *is* at once the incidental sound and the crux of its sonic experience. There, to hear a particular song from beginning to end in complete isolation is virtually impossible. It is a soundscape of accumulation and to navigate this space is to approach and depart from the acoustic plumes of its constituent parts. Similarly, in son jarocho (Chapter 5), it is the percussive *punch* (tactile immediacy) of the string-playing technique and singspiel-like vocal delivery that endows this music with its aura of authenticity and it is the placement of this performance within a protest march that engages its symbolic potential.

The great strength and inherent challenge of sound studies lie in its interdisciplinary nature. Within this rich interchange, I posit that musicians have a particularly important role to play in engaging the transmusical in sonorous expressive culture. Eidsheim forwards an approach to music that rejects what she calls "the object of sound" in favor of a "vibrational practice," consisting not only of the audible "but also tactile, spatial, physical, material, and vibrational sensations" (2015: 8); this approach "takes into account [music's] nonfixity and recognizes that it always comes into being through an unfolding and dynamic material set of relations" (Eidsheim 2015: 10). She adds that the concept of music as a vibrational practice is also "useful when putting cross-disciplinary bodies of knowledge in dialogue" (2015: 16) in the sense that, by not considering music as a thing in-and-of-itself or something apart from the world, we are free to attend to the social forces that give it form.

I find Eidsheim's vibrational practice concept particularly useful in engaging rather than reducing or dismissing the nonfixity and dynamism of urban sounds and their constituent, subjective meanings. To speak of *transmusicality*, something that I believe musicians are particularly poised to do, is to give life to the "fundamental sense in which the sounds of the world are the first music, with what we call music in a narrower sense as a kind of abstracting from this auditory realm, perhaps setting it in an auditory frame, perhaps enhancing and embroidering upon it" (Ihde 2007: 191). The goal then, is not to redraw and entrench a new boundary between music and non-music but to acknowledge their synergy. Indeed, Ochoa Gautier posits that "implicit in the distinction between music and sound [there is] the underlying relation between nature (as the given) and culture (as the made) [and that] ideas about entities that listen and about entities that produce sounds are intertwined in theories about the acoustic whether understood as music, language, narrative, sound, or otherwise" (2014: 21). If we accept the boilerplate definition of music as "humanly organized sound" (Blacking 1973), then I add that the organization of that sound may occur in the auditory imaginations of individuals, each settling in a distinct position in relation to sounds that have settled before. Attending to this intersubjective variation—treating auditory engagement as an irreproducible, material transmission means to disassemble the binary of "nature" and "culture" which Ochoa Gautier argues, in the context of Latin America, has served to both sublimate and perpetuate the structures of colonial hegemony.

Chapter 2 | Pregones Perdidos: Sales and Survival within the Acoustic Territories of the Historic Center

Hay tamales oaxaqueños, tamales calentitos.	We've got Oaxacan tamales, hot little tamales.
Pida sus ricos tamales oaxaqueños.	Order your rich Oaxacan tamales.
Ya llegaron sus ricos y deliciosos tamales oaxaqueños.	Your rich and delicious Oaxacan tamales have already arrived.
Acérquese y pida sus ricos tamales oaxaqueños.	Come on over and order your rich Oaxacan tamales.

—Elías Zavaleta[15]

They know me from Chiapas to New York City…I am the Devil.

—El Diablo

"El Diablo" sells tasers on Corregidora Street, directly opposite of the southern wall of Mexico's National Palace. He is the leader of a *banda* or fictive family of street vendors dubbed *toreros*. Toreros or bullfighters are so called because they "spend their time dodging the 'bull'—the […] inspector who works for the city" (Cross 1998b: 99). The occupation of torero is defined by defiance: a torero works in a place or manner prohibited by the city. Chased, herded, banished, the toreros are the revenants of Mexico City's public spaces. The "volatile stage" of the city sidewalk, metro station, or traffic

[15] Despite being arguably Mexico City's most famous *pregón* (street cry), the identity of the pregonero heard on the recording is not widely known. In an interview with journalist Cynthia Ramírez, pregonero Elías Zavaleta explains that he recorded the pregón in 1992 when he was seventeen years old. Apparently, he had developed a chronic sore throat from performing pregones during long shifts and his uncle suggested that they record his voice to save his vocal chords (2009). Today, tamal vendors, mounted on pedal-driven carts, amplify this short pregón across the city. Thus, these vendors exploit the brand familiarity of this pregón without adhering to any product consistency. "Tamales Oaxaqueños" is so iconic of Mexico City that Mexico City native and director, Alejandro Iñárritu chose to place the famous pregón within the bustling soundscape of Time Square in his 2014 film *Birdman*—a subliminal gesture toward his fellow *capitalenos* (Mexico City natives).

island (Labelle 2010: 87)—spaces experienced by most as venues for only momentary eye contact and brief negotiation with the movements of others—are the bailiwick of the torero.

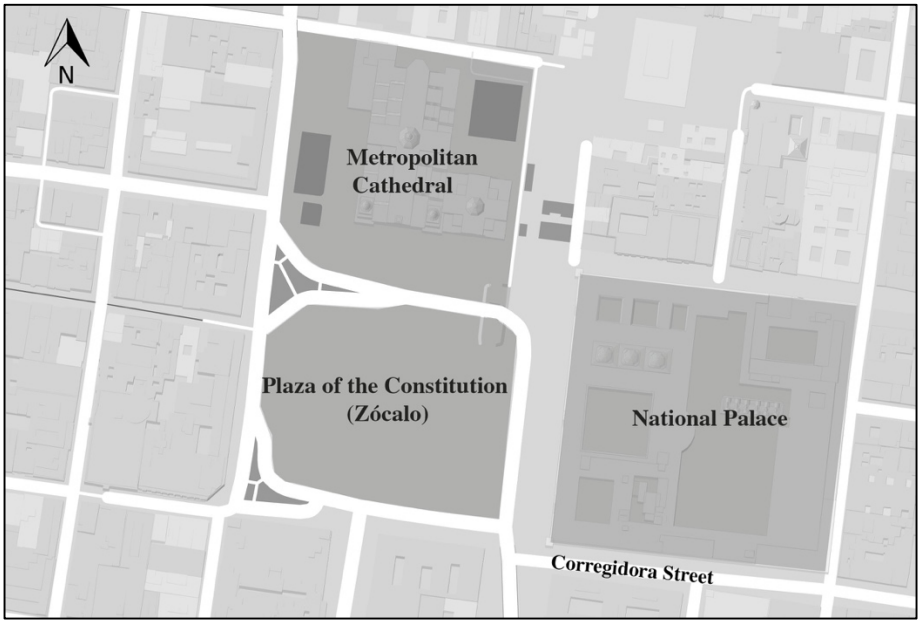

Figure 2.1. A map of Mexico City's Historic Center with the Zócalo (center), Metropolitan Cathedral (north), National Palace (west), and Corregidora Street (southwest). Created by author using Snazzy Maps (CC0 1.0 Universal).

Video 2.1. Toreros using pregones to attract customers in the streets adjacent to the Zócalo. Created by author.

I first met El Diablo on a winter afternoon in 2016. He and his banda were standing in the street with their backs to the palace, using the sidewalk, which rises a meter above street level, as a tabletop. El Diablo drew an assortment of tasers from a black canvas bag and explained their features to curious passersby: "this one hurts, this one kills, and this one leaves only ashes" (interview, 14 February 2016, Mexico City). El Diablo's hyperbole was greeted with nervous laughter from the choir of onlookers that surrounded him. He pointed out that several of the tasers are reversible with one side

emitting a thin blue electrical arc and the other, a cigarette lighter with a soft yellow flame. A potential customer decided to try one out, pulling a cigarette from a pack and nearly incinerating his beard when he mistakenly selected the taser-side. More laughter. A teenaged boy in his school uniform, encouraged by his giggling friends, selected the model with the highest voltage and the deal was struck.

As the sales continue, I chatted with El Diablo about his life and work. He is a man in his early 50s with a wiry build, wind-burnt skin, a silvery, pointed mustache, and a penetrating stare. He has a penchant for bandanas and leather vests and looks a bit like "Quint," the sea captain from Steven Spielberg's *Jaws*. He explained that at an early age, he learned that the *pregón* or stylized sales-pitch is more than a form of advertisement; it is a type of seduction. He elaborated,

> You can't put on your battle face to promote your merchandise. You promote merchandise with a smoother, sweeter voice: "What can we get for you, my love? *Pásale, mi carnal* [come, my brother], look what we have. Try out whatever you like, it's no problem." [As a torero], you must make the people feel comfortable or they won't come (interview, 14 February 2016, Mexico City).

I observed that El Diablo had three dramatically different modes of speech with distinct tones. When he spoke to me directly his volume dropped. His normal speaking voice was dry like the sound of tearing butcher paper and laced with the singsong melody and euphemistic word play of Mexico City *caló* or slang. His phrases tended to trail off into silence implying that, you, the listener, *know what I mean*. His sales voice was something altogether different. It was penetrating and nasal like the upper-register of a bassoon. He spoke with super-sonic wit, poetic flourishes, and dashes of dark humor that teased, cornered, and engaged potential clients. He pivoted between these two modes of

speech rapidly, spying potential clients out of the corner of his eye, addressing them, and then returning to me once they had passed.

He pivoted into his third mode of speech so quickly that it took me a moment to register the situation that provoked it. El Diablo formed his lower lip into a u-shape and produced a short, melodic whistle that was so loud and so close to my head that I could feel the air pressure fluctuate in my ears. El Diablo was answered by a cascade of whistles from the other toreros; the waves of sound rolled along the sidewalk to the end of the block. The municipal police[16] had arrived in a pickup truck and seven officers in body armor were shuffling out of the back. They seemed to be in no particular hurry. The toreros, on the other hand, were already on the move—each forming a sack from the square cloth upon which their merchandise was displayed, slinging the load over their shoulders, and dashing out of sight. El Diablo grabbed a two-way radio from his vest-pocket and barked at an unseen torero on the other end: "Get up, let's go! Get up, let's go! Hold on, I'm coming! Six-three of your fifteen to my fifteen, put the shot up! Uncle uncle, eri eri! Your fifteen to my fifteen, program one to get up! Hold two! Hold two!" (interview, 14 February 2016, Mexico City).[17] Not everyone ran, however. An elderly *torera* (female torero) walked directly toward the police vanguard pulling a laminated form out of her coat. The lead officer glanced at the form and gave her a dismissive wave. Toreros above a certain age or with disabilities who have acquired the correct

[16] Auxiliary Police of the Secretary of Public Security (SSP)

[17] Toreros assume that their radio communiques are being intercepted by the police. In order to refer to particular streets, intersections, and other landmarks (for the sake of alerting others to the location of a disturbance), toreros label these locations with numbers and other code words based on a formula that is both confidential and regularly changed.

paperwork are spared the indignity of running.[18] Curiously, El Diablo did not run either. He and several of his companions simply packed up their merchandise and hopped up on the elevated sidewalk, chatting calmly, sipping cokes, and offering occasional insults to the police. His banda dispersed and determining that his responsibilities were momentarily fulfilled, El Diablo leaned against the cold basalt wall and sighed, "It's like this every day. The police aren't trained to care for the public. All they know how to do is grab toreros" (interview, 14 February 2016, Mexico City).

Audio 2.1. A raid of Corregidora Street conducted by the Auxiliary Police of the Secretary of Public Security on February 14, 2016. Recorded by author.

To date, the limited research conducted on toreros and Mexico City's informal economy in general has largely been the province of sociologists who focus on the socio-economic conditions that have produced this vast network of unregulated labor. For example, the work of John C. Cross and Miguel Ángel Olivo Pérez demonstrate the complexity and political agency of informal vendor organizations in Mexico City. Sociologist Diane E. Davis's research on urban identity politics is helpful in contextualizing the daily police raids suffered by toreros within the larger processes of gentrification in the Historic Center. Such research is valuable in tracking the broad patterns of informal commerce but for the most part, does not address how these

[18] The torera in question had been issued a credential by the National Institute for Elderly People (INAPAM) attesting to her senior status. This credential serves as a de facto exemption from arrest during police raids though may not protect from confiscation or demands for *mordida* (bribes; literally, "a bite"). Ironically, senior status can protect individuals during raids while simultaneously excluding them from "legitimate" occupations. Age discrimination, while illegal, is rampant throughout Mexico (Flores 2015); one need only check the classified section of a newspaper to see job ads openly including applicant age range within a list of job requirements.

individuals grapple with the challenges they face on a daily basis, nor the personal and cultural forces they draw upon to maintain this lifestyle in the face of powerful opposition. Auditory perception and engagement are significant factors in explaining the endurance of the torero. Sound in this context is more than a means of communication and emotional expression. Sound is a weapon. For both toreros and police, it is often applied tactically to warn, stun, torment, mislead, and seduce the listener.

In this chapter, I examine the sociopolitical forces that have been aligned against toreros and consider the role of sound in meeting and surpassing these forces. To this end, I will present an overview of Mexico City's informal economy, arguing that the legal protections and social status applied to informal vendors correspond to their degree of fixity (i.e., the more fixed, the more protected and privileged). The degree of fixity of particular vendors is reflected in their reliance on sound with the most mobile being the most sonorous. I will present the various sounds and listening strategies that toreros employ to conduct their business, compete with other vendors, and avoid confiscation and arrest and frame these within broader historical and cultural modes of informational and symbolic communication. Finally, I will discuss the steps that the city government has taken to curb the sonorous practices of toreros (and by proxy, the toreros themselves) and evaluate the consequences.

Mexico City's Informal Economy

Informal commerce permeates many public spaces in Mexico City. Hundreds of thousands of individuals work as informal vendors, and this labor force is expanding

(Aguiar 2009; Barbosa Cruz 2008; Domínguez Prieto 2004). From the cement-block sprawl of the poorest neighborhoods that extends to the city's volcanic rim to the verdant parks of its most exclusive districts, Mexico City residents are accustomed to having the option of instant consumption at their fingertips. Street vendors huddle on corners frying blue-corn quesadillas over portable propane stoves and chop *suadero* (beef thigh meat) and *longaniza* (pork sausage) for tacos. They polish shoes and display newspapers and magazines in temporary stalls. Peddlers hawk gum, cigarettes, nuts, and *chicharrón* (fried pork rind) from boxes strapped around their shoulders. *Bocineros* advertise pirated mix-CDs in metro cars by blasting weary commuters with music from portable speakers strapped to their backs.[19]

Street vendors shadow chanting students and *campesinos* (agrarian workers) during protest marches offering *botanas* (snacks) and *cháchara* (knick-knacks) like "Guy Fox" masks while standing perilously close to tear-gas fire. They encircle the annually-elected Jesus impersonator and his flock as they lug heavy wooden crosses to the peak of the Cerro de la Estrella for the dramatic climax of the world's largest Good Friday Passion Play. Street vendors breach the thresholds of elegant restaurants and chat-up dining customers. They crowd around the entrances of brick-and-mortar shops, presenting fierce competition for established merchants and cheap alternatives for shoppers.

[19] For more on the bocineros of Mexico City's metro system, see Enríquez, "Los bocineros del metro: Entre resistencias prácticas y prácticas instituyentes."

Figure 2.2. A camotero positioning his cart to catch shoppers entering and leaving a shopping center. Photo by María Magdalena Alonso Pérez. Used by permission.

So ubiquitous are street vendors that many longtime residents of Mexico City have an almost Pavlovian response to the sounds these vendors produce. Literary scholar Aimée Boutin notes a similar phenomenon in her study of the sounds of nineteenth-century Paris stating, "[n]ewcomers hear the cries of small-scale itinerant tradesmen that most of the residents, 'born and bred Parisians,' no longer pay attention to" (2015: 2–3). Detecting, almost subconsciously, the distant *klang* of the sanitation worker's massive

hand bell, experienced auditors may pop out of their seats to collect the garbage without even a pause in their conversation. Hearing the faint tinkling of a musical triangle, one may develop a sudden *antojo* (craving) for the delicious wafer cookies that it heralds. The cry of "aguaaaaa" reminds everyone that it is time to refill the *garrafón* (20-liter water jug). These sounds define daily, weekly, and seasonal routines and are so commonplace that they become most conspicuous in their absence (Barbosa Cruz 2008: 80). When a certain type of vendor is prohibited to work in a particular area, there is an interruption in the supply chain, or a certain trade is no longer lucrative for that vendor, the sounds of that vendor attenuate as well. This disruption of sonic sameness jolts listeners from their passive positions and forces them to hunt for the missing sound and by proxy, its producer, or otherwise, lament its disappearance altogether.

The existence of this massive, unregulated sector of the economy is made possible through inconsistent police enforcement, ambiguous legal codes, and, says Cross, "irregular agreements [between street vendors and] city officials [that have transformed] vast areas of the city into outdoor markets" (1998b: 17). These activities are not strictly legal. Informal commerce consists of trade and monetary transactions for goods or services that are not regulated by city (Barbosa Cruz 2008; Bromley and Mackie 2009). Social worker and Mexico City native Laura Vargas believes that "it is and isn't legal. People say, 'What else am I gonna do? How else am I gonna survive?' The system isn't providing for these people and that leaves a void. People are just filling that void by taking up the practice of street vending as a means of survival" (interview, 5 April 2016, Mexico City). Human rights lawyer and ex-street vendor José Luis Gutiérrez Román

points out that strictly speaking, informal commerce *is* a legal practice but one that is extremely vulnerable to administrative snares and legal loopholes. He adds that Article 123 of the 1917 Constitution guarantees individuals the right to "exercise the profession that they desire" but it also reserves the right to regulate that profession (interview, 24 October 2015, Mexico City).[20]

Street vendors, operating outside of Mexico's commercial regulatory system, do not adhere to intellectual property or copyright laws, follow no food handling or sanitary regulations, and pay no property tax (Domíguez Prieto 2004; Olivo Pérez 2010). The nuanced and oft-contested legal status of these activities does not so much concern the movement of illegal merchandise but rather "economic strategies that contravene laws regulating *how* business should be conducted, but not laws specifying *what* business may be conducted" (Cross 1998b: 29–30). Some individual vendors work independently, producing their own merchandise (for example, food vendors who prepare the food themselves) and working where, when, and how they choose without any group affiliation or oversight. However, truly independent street vendors are rare.

Without protection or political leverage, independent vendors are left out in the cold—vulnerable to criminal predation, hostile competitors, and the police. One such example is the *camotero* (sweet potato vendor). Camotero "Francisco" explains, "I don't belong to any group. I work on my own and if I ever have a problem because I'm

[20] Gutiérrez Román refers to the following passage in Title 6, Article 123 of the Mexican Constitution: "Every person has the right to dignified and socially useful work; with the purpose of promoting the creation of jobs and social organization for work, under the law" ("Art. 123 – Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos de Mexico," Sistema de Información Jurídico Laboral, la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, http://info4.juridicas.unam.mx/juslab/leylab/250/124.htm [accessed 6, November, 2016]).

working alone, I have to *rascar con mis uñas* [scratch with my nails/fight with my bare hands]" (interview, 6 June 2015, Mexico City). Pushing his heavy, piping-hot cart, Francisco does not have the option to run and thieves have reason to assume that he is carrying cash. As a mobile, independent vendor, Francisco must hunt for potential clients but states, "one can't go anywhere because there are other camoteros that roam the streets and we have some rules between each other in order to avoid fights."

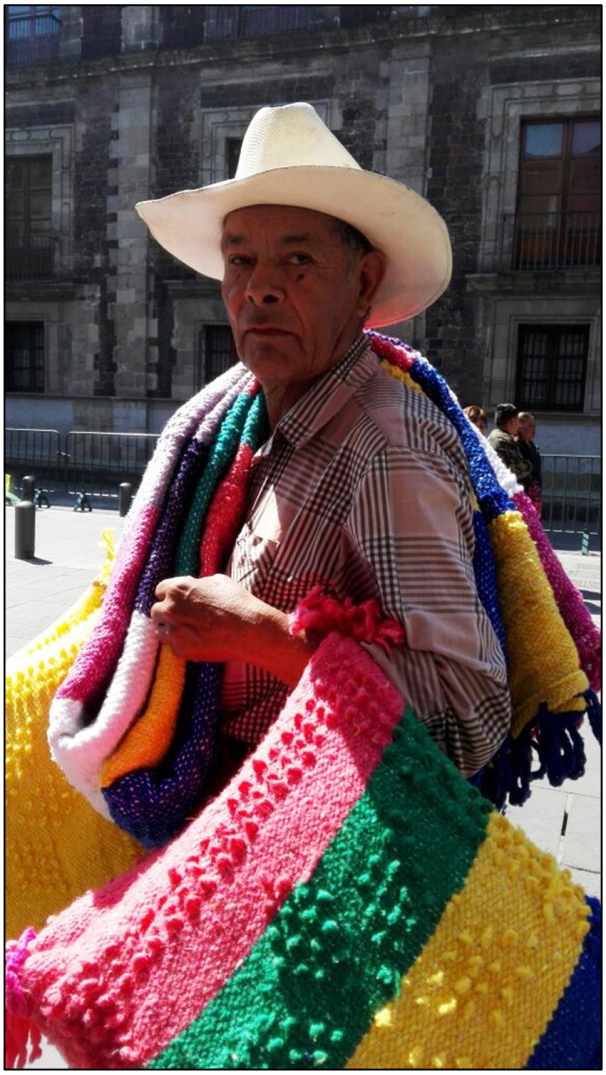

Figure 2.3. An independent street vendor poses with artisanal textiles. Photo by María Magdalena Alonso Pérez. Used by permission.

Independent female street vendors are even more vulnerable. Speaking to the open-air markets of Andean cities, anthropologist Mary Weismantel explains that "[t]he market woman is [considered] an indecent figure who arouses rumors of sexual anomaly" and the markets themselves, the territories that these women dominate, "violate a cultural order in which the public sphere is masculine, while feminine realms are enclosed and hidden away from the intrusive eyes of strangers" (2001: 47). Within the context of Mexico City, sociologist Patricia Gaytán Sánchez suggests that this "public woman"—one who works in the streets as a vendor, police officer, prostitute or in any capacity legal or otherwise—disturbs a gender construct that lies at the base of Mexican culture (2004: 92; see also Wilson 1991: 8). According to this vision, women are caregivers and homemakers. Their presence in the hurly-burly of street life disturbs this construct.

Consequently, female street vendors who work without the protection of a merchant collective often work in fear. Independent street vendor "Laura" explains that her fears of harassment and assault define the territory in which she is willing to work:

> For others, it would be easier to roam elsewhere, but not for me. My parents don't give me permission because it is dangerous and they are afraid that something might happen to me. As a woman, I can't defend myself. Sometimes I have to put up with men saying things to me but I don't listen to them and I don't return their glances (interview, 5 May 2015, Mexico City).

Laura enjoys the freedom of movement and community interaction that her job entails but she confesses that she is continuously burdened by the anticipation of unwelcomed voices: "I don't like it when men are disrespectful. [For example,] a particular guy always tells me things when I pass by him. He sells desserts in one of the streets on my route and whenever I pass he says, 'hello, cutie,' 'friend, you are very beautiful,' 'have a treat, my

little friend,' and things like that" (interview, 5 May 2015, Mexico City).

Figure 2.4. An independent street vendor selling a Mexico City original: *tortas de tamal* (tamale sandwiches). Photo by María Magdalena Alonso Pérez. Used by permission.

The majority of street vendors must purchase their right to work in a particular territory and they accomplish this in a number of ways: cash bribes to police or city officials, a percentage of their earnings to informal vendor collectives or market organizers, oaths of allegiance, promises of political support, or some combination (Barbosa Cruz 2008; Cross 2007 and 1998b; Olivo Pérez 2010). Many street vendors align with informal collectives headed by a *aguador* (leader)[21] who is responsible for negotiating with the police and city inspectors.

Yet the choice to incorporate into an informal collective is not without risks. Competition is commonplace between these organizations and is often fueled by

[21] In our discussions, El Diablo was uncomfortable with the title "leader" and instead referred to himself as both a *halcón* (falcon) and *aguador* (look-out), both meaning roughly the same thing. The latter is a play on the common expression "*aguas*!" ("waters!"). This expression is used to warn someone of danger and harkens back to an age in Mexico City when people cleaned their chamber pots by tossing the contents out the window.

conflicting political affiliations between rival groups. Leaders may use their influence with particular government officials to sway police enforcement in their own favor and thereby, displace or disrupt the business of their rivals (Cross 1998a). El Diablo notes that outbreaks of violence between street vendors is unusual but does occur. Rivals probe each other's territory for weakness, looking for under-defended or unoccupied spaces. The torero bandas and independent vendors also work in direct competition with the established, brick-and-mortar shops that line the streets near the Zócalo. Torero "Zeta" believes that he and his group have just as much right to work in the Historic Center as the shopkeepers, having devoted most of their lives to working in the same small area. Yet he acknowledges that many shopkeepers resent the toreros because they must pay rent and the toreros do not. Nevertheless, this competition and mutual resentment does not preclude a degree of cooperation. During several police raids, I witnessed toreros quickly pack up their merchandise, slinging it over their shoulders, and dumping the load on the floor of a nearby shop. Across the threshold of the shop door, the merchandise can no longer be declared contraband by the police and therefore cannot be confiscated.

Acoustic Pruning

Legally, explains Gutiérrez Román, the roads, avenues, and alleys of Mexico City constitute "communication channels" (*vias de comunicación*) in precisely the same way as a telephone line. To block the passage of vehicles or foot-traffic in the street is considered a crime in the same sense as climbing a telephone pole and cutting the wires. As Gutiérrez Román points out, this legal definition has been used as a pretext to

criminalize not only the activities of street vendors but also those of "social advocates, defenders of human rights, […] and any person who makes a social protest." To interfere with these communication channels is to "transgress the administrative procedures established by the city" (interview, 24 October 2015, Mexico City).

Figure 2.5. Sidewalks surrounding the San Hipólito Temple are transformed into an outdoor market. Photo by author.

The analogy of an urban street being like a telephone line or internet connection is interesting in that it suggests that the violation committed by street vendors is not only in blocking the movement of bodies, vehicles, and materials but also inhibiting the flow of information. The sounds of the street vendors—ethereal yet tactile manifestations of sounding bodies—represent interference, cross-talk that disrupts these channels of communication. Thus the maintenance of these channels of communication is a matter of

spatial management and the illegality of the street vendor is found in their appropriation of space both by their physical presence and their sound production. In addition to the appropriation of space, street vendors are targeted by police when there is suspicion that their products were acquired illegally (Lezama 1991: 661). Curiously, in a system where itemized receipts are uncommon, determining the origin of goods is challenging at best. Instead, it is often the sounds that vendors produce (for example, the tone and content of their pregones) as well as their body-language and manner of dress (i.e., socio-cultural indices of class) that serve as a pretext for forced displacement, confiscation, and detainment. Thus, street vendors threaten the integrity of these channels in two ways. First, their bodily occupation of public space commandeers these channels and their production of unsanctioned sounds expands this occupation to the *acoustic horizon*: "the maximum distance between a listener and source of sound where the sonic event can still be heard" (Blesser and Salter 2007: 22). Second, these sounds, in both their performance and reception, present a counterhegemonic narrative of contemporary street life in Mexico City. As in nineteenth-century Paris, the sounds of informal commerce "signify the economic abundance and disparities of the capital, the coexistence of old and new traditions, the vibrancy of the streets or the weariness of street noise" (Boutin 2015: 3).

Gutiérrez Román explains that while legislation does exist that is explicitly directed towards noise abatement (e.g., traffic horns, noise within hospitals, airplane noise, etc.), "there is no law that specifically regulates the sound or the behavior of [street] vendors" (interview, 24 October 2015, Mexico City). Nevertheless, the sounds of the street vendors garner inordinate attention from the police. For example, during the

visit of Pope Francis I to Mexico City in February 2016, toreros were warned by police officers that they would only be allowed to remain in the Historic Center on the condition that they work in silence.[22] Conversely, *organilleros* (organ grinders),[23] regarded by some as protected heralds of an urbane, pre-revolutionary nostalgia, were permitted to remain. In the streets of Mexico City's Historic Center, the repression of noise reflects a privileging[24] of some sounds over others—an acoustic pruning of sounds that index Mexico's socio-economic inequity. By prohibiting the pregón, the police are effectively removing the ability of the toreros to make money and feed their family that day. As El Diablo explains, "if you don't yell, you don't sell. When everything is quiet the customers don't notice you. You can only show them what you have; you can't promote your merchandise with your voice" (interview, 3 April 2016, Mexico City).

Video 2.2. An organillero (organ grinder) playing for donations near the Zócalo during a protest march commemorating the 47th anniversary of the Tlatelolco massacre. Created by author.

[22] I had the opportunity to witness this phenomenon during the visit of Francis I; some toreros transformed their pregones into sharp whispers directed towards potential clients. According to both El Diablo and torero advocate/organizer Sofía Trejo, the police routinely silence toreros during the visits of foreign dignitaries.

[23] The organillero makes music from a mounted organ loaded with pre-tuned cylinders that, like a player piano, produces a melody based on the tuning of the cylinders. The organ is powered by a hand-crank much like a hurdy-gurdy but without the melodic control of a keyboard.

[24] While certain sounds may be "privileged" by civic authorities, this privilege does not necessarily extend to the sound producers themselves. The struggle for legitimacy has been hard fought by the organilleros. During the 1950s for example, the organilleros were nearly eradicated from the streets of Mexico City under a program of "hygienization" that included the suppression of all ambulant musicians and vendors (Inzúa 1981: 26). Most organilleros in Mexico City are now unionized (la Unión de Organilleros de la República Mexicana). This is precisely the same bid for legitimacy that toreros (among others) are presently making.

As the physical and psychological consequences of prolonged, high-volume sound exposure become better documented, noise abatement is gaining attention as a topic of concern throughout the industrialized world (Bijsterveld 2008; Gortari Ludlow 2013: 37; Keizer 2010; Thompson 2004). Without a doubt, industrial development and population growth are making Mexico City an increasingly noisy place. Organillero Antonio Flores, a man in his early 60s, reflects on the sonic transformation of Mexico City since his youth:

> At night, when I was a child, one could hear dogs barking, cats meowing, and even serenades by street musicians. Now it is more common to hear shootouts, ambulances, revving cars, and stereos playing *narcocorridos*[25] at full volume. It's not the same anymore. In past the only "thunder" we heard was the *cohetes* (firecrackers) during neighborhood festivals and church parties (interview, 15 April 2016, Mexico City).

Yet the sounds that street vendors produce (amplified and unamplified voices, whistles, bells, etc.) are mere sonic traces among the cacophony of traffic and construction in Mexico City. The cause of preventing the health risks caused by urban noise pollution is complicated, says anthropologist Ana Lidia Domínguez Ruiz, when noise abatement is muddled by socio-cultural sonic practices. She explains that the legislation of noise in Mexico often leads to "surveillance and sanction. It is here where the law becomes a double-edged sword [because] noise is related to diverse social practices that are strongly rooted in culture" (2015: 15). In this regard, it is necessary to distinguish between sounds as acoustic phenomena and cultural artifacts. If, for argument's sake, we define noise as "unwanted sound"—as opposed to sounds that

[25] A contemporary derivation of the *corrido* (a narrative ballad that often mythologizes people, places and events [Edberg 2011: 68]) that focuses on the exploits of drug traffickers and their world

"imply a healthy and lively atmosphere" or "playfully disturb the norms of everyday life" (Novak 2015: 125)—it remains to be determined exactly why that sound is unwanted and by whom. Is a given sound unwanted because it does bodily (or psychological) harm, or rather, because it threatens to usurp broader structures of power? In the latter case, noise may in fact be "the sound of individualism and difference in conflict. Noise is *othered sound* and like any type of othering, the perception of noise is socially constructed and situated in hierarchies of race, class, age, and gender" (Hagood 2011: 574). Indeed, Boutin opines that "[t]he power dynamic between sender and receiver is key to any historical understanding of which party is labeled noisy in a given period" (2015: 5). Sound artist and social theorist Brandon Labelle makes a similar claim stating, "there is no denial as to the intensities with which noise interferes with personal health and environmental well-being, while on the other hand noise may be heard as registering a particular vitality within the cultural and social sphere: noise brings with it the expressiveness of freedom, particularly when located on the street, in plain view, and within public space" (2010: xxiii).

Fixity as Status

While the types of informal vendors, their selling strategies, and inventories are too numerous to mention here, they can best be categorized—for the sake of understanding their social status as well the conditions under which they labor—by their degree of fixity. In the Mexican countryside, small villages often adhere to a predictable spatial model: a central plaza buttressed by a church, a government building, and a

market. Designed to serve a modest, rural population, this model exists in many iterations within the megalopolis of Mexico City and its expanding outskirts (Castro Gutiérrez 2012: 59; García Canclini 2014: 138; Rama 1996: 5). Many *barrios* (neighborhoods) in Mexico City mirror this village model and yet in the Historic Center—a spoke in the distribution of material goods—the single marketplace has dovetailed into a number of massive, specialized markets: Merced (fruits, vegetables, meats, and grains), Jamaica (flowers), Sonora (medicinal herbs, religious talismans, pets and livestock, animal products), and Tepito (pirated electronics, clothing, contraband and illegal items such as handguns and endangered sea turtle eggs) to name only a few. Many of these markets offer overlapping goods but their long-established association with particular items helps customers track down what they are searching for.

Commercial activities in the pre-conquest capital of Tenochtítlan (upon which Mexico City's Historic Center currently stands) were distinctly ambulatory and temporary. Open-air markets filled the city's many splendid plazas and "floating" vendors sold goods from shallow-draft boats along the system of canals that crisscrossed the island city (Cortés 1843: 111–112).[26] The aforementioned fixed markets, many first established during the colonial period, provided ruling elites with a means of regulating and extracting income from these indigenous, mobile commercial practices. Throughout the city's history, street vendors have been periodically corralled into fixed markets. As

[26] As Hernán Cortés recounts in his dispatches to Charles V, "This city has many public squares, in which are situated the markets and other places for buying and selling. There is one square twice as large as that of the city of Salamanca, surrounded by porticoes, where are daily assembled more than sixty thousand souls, engaged in buying and selling; and where are found all kinds of merchandise that the world affords, embracing the necessaries of life, as for instance articles of food, as well as jewels of gold and silver, lead, brass, copper, tin, precious stones, bones, shells, snails, and feathers" (1842: 112).

the city's population swelled and market demand increased, vendors repeatedly sought better opportunities beyond the confines of the market, seeking out consumers rather than waiting to be found. The enlargement and construction of new markets have often coincided with periods of severe repression of street vending. Yet these measures have proven insufficient in containing the multitude of vendors who spill out into the surrounding streets (Cross 1998b: 87–88). "Pepe," an artisanal craft vendor, explains that Mexico City's Historic Center and surrounding areas are divided into three zones: "Zone A, the central part of the city [including the Zócalo and surrounding streets] where street vending is not tolerated; Zone B where there is conditional tolerance of street vending; and Zone C [where fixed markets are concentrated], the farthest from the Zócalo and the zone where they throw all the vendors" (interview, 26 July 2015, Mexico City).[27]

These fixed markets continue to represent a container for the street vendors of the city through which city officials can easily observe, extract revenue, and "cement support among a section of the 'popular' classes" (Cross 1998b: 88). Frequently, city officials cement support by offering preferential treatment in exchange for political cooption (i.e., promising allegiance to a particular political party).[28] Nevertheless, these fixed markets

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[27] I have been unable to find official documents verifying the boundaries of all three of the commercial zones that Pepe describes. However, in "The Comprehensive Management Plan of the Historic Center of Mexico City" ("*Plan integral de manejo del Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México*"), published through the city government's official publication, *Gaceta Oficial del Distrito Federal*, on August 17, 2011, Zone A is defined as a three-kilometer-square area encompassing the oldest part of the Historic Center and B, a seven-kilometer-square area around it. Journalist Ilich Valdez explains, "[the plan] established, without exception, an immediate halt to the occupation of public thoroughfares by persons intending to sell or offer any services as well as […] the exhibition of goods in front of the facades of buildings" (2015).

[28] Torero organizer/advocate Sofía Trejo explains that many informal vendor collectives preserve their selling territory and discourage police raids through co-option—in this context, by affiliating with one of Mexico's major political parties (most often the PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party]). She adds that by affiliating with one party, a particular group may raise the ire of another group affiliated with the

cannot contain the number of individuals who depend on informal commerce to survive and as political climates, supply and demand, and population distribution fluctuate, vendors migrate between the market and the street. Gutiérrez Román notes that there are other reasons why street vendors would prefer to work in Zone A: "street vendors resist being pent up in Zone C because it is difficult for the customers to enter the markets." Indeed, Zone C has earned a reputation as a high-crime area among Mexico City residents and visitors alike. He continues, "It is easier to go walking down Moneda Street [adjacent to the Zócalo] and buy a purse for ten pesos, some sandals, or a doll simply because you encounter the item you want and you buy it. You wouldn't go directly to a market to look for those kind of products" (interview, 22 February 2016, Mexico City).

Moving from the most fixed to most mobile forms of informal commerce, the next stratum includes the *tianguis* (bazaar) system. These bazaars are normally held once a week in the same location. They are typically governed by a committee with representatives who develop mutually beneficial relationships with local government officials and police. The advantage of the bazaar over the fixed market, for vendors and customers alike, is its relative mobility. Unlike in the fixed markets, the vendors come to the customers. A green grocer, for example, can participate in different bazaars in a different part of the city each day of the week, thus offering his or her goods to a different clientele every day. The next degree of fixity includes the semi-permanent stalls. Many of these stalls were originally constructed in 1979 by the National Association for Blind

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opposition or invite harassment by partisan city inspectors. For more on co-option among Mexico City street vendors, see Cross, "Co-optation, Competition, and Resistance: State and Street Vendors in Mexico City."

Merchants of Mexico City A.C. They were originally intended for disabled (mostly blind or vision-impaired) vendors with the aim of integrating them into the work force. The temporary stalls were repurposed for general use once it was determined that handling knives and boiling oil might lead to the injury of these vendors as well as the risk that criminals might take advantage of them (Villanueva 2012).

Figure 2.6. A *tianguis* (bazaar). Photo by author.

Figure 2.7. A placard designating a sheet metal stall for vision-impaired vendors. Photo by author.

The true street vendors of Mexico City's informal economy are those who walk, stand, squat, pedal, and push their wares along the bustling streets. While many but not all of the Mexico City's street vendors rely on sound as their primary means of advertisement —from their own voices, to recorded voices and music, to mechanical sounds—the more mobile the vendor the more sonorous he or she must be. Vendors without a fixed location (or without a consistent inventory) must be able to announce their presence as well as the type and quality of their merchandise to any customer within ear-shot. These degrees of fixity roughly correspond to the legal and socio-political legitimacy that a particular vendor enjoys (with vendors in fixed markets enjoying the

most legitimacy), and thus reveal an internal hierarchy within the informal economy. In order to maintain a fixed location, a vendor must, in some way or another, purchase the luxury of that permanence by affiliating with a collective, paying rent or bribes, or exchanging favors with property owners, government officials, or the police. Bazaar vendors delegate a portion of their earnings to an administrative body that in turn, spread that wealth to city officials. Street vendors bypass many of the structures in place to extract revenue and consequently, pay little or nothing. This investigation focuses on a class of street vendor that is one of the most mobile, and because of the territory in which they choose to work, the group with the lowest socio-political status and legal stability—the torero.

Battling the Bull

There is no "typical" torero. Indeed, the more toreros I spoke with the more I encountered different political ideologies, values, and personal objectives. The occupation of torero offers individuals with no formal training the opportunity to acquire, buy, or make a product, sell that product, and have enough money to eat that night. Many toreros learned their trade or inherited their materials or selling territory from their family. Some have been selling on the same patch of cement for most of their lives. Some literally grew up and were educated on the corner of their mother's vending mat or in the back of their uncle's stall. In my investigation, I have met toreros and other street vendors with university degrees, as well as highly educated professionals who at one time worked in the streets. Others, like El Diablo, acquired only a primary school education and have

found that sufficient to be successful in the informal sector. Gutiérrez Román, for example, spent much of his childhood and adolescence selling tacos in the borough of Iztapalapa and now fights to defend the rights of marginalized communities like the one he came from. According to Cross, "street vendors do not appear to be substantially different from the bulk of the Mexican population. […] Most vendors are in their productive ages […] showing that street vending is not a 'refuge' of the young or old who are otherwise unemployable. Nor is it a haven for recent immigrants—63 percent were born in the Federal District [Mexico City] and another 10 percent in the state of Mexico" (1998b: 89–90).[29] Increased rural-urban migration has swelled the ranks of informal vendors in the city and there are many vendors for whom street vending is the only option. But at the same time, many choose this occupation and as there are many gradations of fixity and security available, individuals often select the work conditions that best suit their needs. For example, El Diablo explains that all seven of his siblings work in the informal economy. While all were originally toreros, his three sisters now work in the fixed markets because it is more "relaxed there."

While toreros are often open about the social and physical challenges of their work, they are also "quick to note the benefits of street vending as well: the pleasures of independence and the social life of the street" (Cross 1998b: 103). The phenomenological reality of their work—the need to vocalize, to listen, to read the streets, to face the

[29] Mexico City is a federal district (similar to Washington D.C.) and is surround on three sides by a state called "el estado de México" ("the state of Mexico"). For clarity, when I refer to "the state of Mexico" I refer to the geographic region and by "the Mexican state" or "the State," I refer to the military, political, and legislative authority of the Mexican nation.

elements, to live and breathe under almost constant scrutiny and threat—does promote a certain swagger. El Diablo sees himself and his fellow toreros as "working people. We are rock-n-rollers, we are *desmadrosos* [fuck-ups], alcoholics or drug addicts, but workers. We always look for a way to *sacar algo para la papa* [bring home the bacon]" (interview, 3 April 2016, Mexico City). Many of the toreros express pride in what they do. Street vending in Mexico City is often driven by financial necessity yet it takes on numerous forms affording vendors options about how, when, and where to work. Vendors may work outside of the Historic Center where police raids are less frequent. They may set up shop in weekly bazaars or permanent markets such as Lagunilla, Tepito, and Merced. To dodge the "bull" of police raids and plain-clothed inspectors every day is a choice. Choosing to work in almost constant defiance of civic authority feeds a sense of self-righteous autonomy.

Figure 2.8. A torero displays his merchandise from a tarpaulin that can be cinched with ropes for a quick getaway. Photo by María Magdalena Alonso Pérez. Used by permission.

Embodiment

The routine raids by the police, conducted daily and occasionally several times a day in the narrow streets surrounding the Zócalo, amount to a theater of the absurd. The police are unable and unwilling to permanently remove the toreros from the street. In fact, says Gutiérrez Román, these raids provide a perfect opportunity for the police to demand bribes, and confiscate goods. He and El Diablo also confirm that the fines imposed on toreros who are arrested (cripplingly high for most toreros), represent an additional revenue stream for the city. For toreros who have spent much of their lives working the same crowded sidewalks, subjected to this routine of humiliation and uncertainty for approximately ten hours a day six days a week, this theater of the absurd settles in their posture, their poise, the tension in their muscles, and the way in which they perceive their surroundings. Anthropologist Thomas Csordas's concept of *somatic modes of attention* is useful in understanding the toreros' extraordinary sensitivity to the world that surrounds them. Csordas explains, "To attend to a bodily sensation is not to attend to the body as an isolated object, but to attend to the body's situation in the world." By receiving sensory information and calculating risk countless times as day, the toreros are in fact, "paying attention *with* [their] body" (1993: 138).

The toreros must face the same challenges as other street vendors—acquiring merchandise, protecting against theft, finding and enticing costumers, building bonds with fellow vendors to ensure mutual gain, protecting themselves and their goods from the elements, finding a place to go to the bathroom and having a friend to guard their goods while they do so. But on top of all this, toreros must be constantly poised to either

fight or flee. In order to survive, toreros must acquire "socio-cultural tools that allow them to successfully manage their position" (Olivo Pérez 2010: 16). This includes an incredibly complex blend of sensory and social sophistication. They must be able to see the police, plain-clothed infiltrators, rival vendors, and thieves at a great distance. They must be able to hear changes in volume and composition of crowds, distinguish voices and signals within crowd noise, understand and converse using whistles and spoken code in order to confound the police, and be able to code-switch between the barrio-specific caló of toreros and Castilian Spanish. Personal safety and the ability to feed themselves and their families depend on their ability to deploy this multi-sensory knowledge almost instantly. "[T]his affective hermeneutic dance," says ethnomusicologist Martin Daughtry, "is simultaneously the product and the source of experience: to listen is to live, and to know how to listen is a skill that is developed through living" (2015: 101).

The impending danger that toreros face every day requires an ability to assess risk to a degree that other street vendors need not possess. The greater variety and higher the value of the merchandise that a torero carries, the higher the potential returns. Yet by virtue of the fact that toreros are physically carrying their wealth on their backs, police confiscation or theft can result in instant financial ruin. Also, the amount and variety of merchandise that an individual can sell is limited to what he or she can physically carry, run with, and store quickly and discreetly. Thus, a muscular young person may be able to carry more and thus sell more. A torero who is disabled, infirm, or elderly can carry less and therefore, earn less money. Being a torero is a highly physical activity, "framed by all of the activities of indoor work but is realized outdoors in four to ten hour shifts, […]

standing or sitting in the smog, the noise, [and] the sun" (Olivo Pérez 2010: 97). For example, "Doña María," a street vendor who sells artisanal goods explains that when she was young, she would shout pregones and enjoyed eluding the police, but that "now, the police no longer chase me because I have my documentation of senior citizenship" (interview, October 12 2015, Mexico City).

Toreras

Many toreras are mothers who care for young children. Either single or with working partners, these women must manage a double-shift, working an average of ten hours a day with their children at their side and then returning home at night to perform domestic duties. Environmental scientist José Luis Lezama notes that the increased number of women tasked with childrearing in the informal economy corresponds to "the Mexican economic crisis of the 1980s, which pushed a greater number of women into the labor market in order to contribute to family income or in order to maintain a standard of living when this was threatened by the decline in purchasing power" (1991: 656–657). During vending hours, these women must lure clients, haggle, and watch for the police all while caring for and educating their children. During a raid, these mothers must face the nightmare of carrying their merchandise, their infant (if they have one), and guiding their little ones to safety. More than any other informal merchant, these mothers and caregivers are at a distinct disadvantage in terms of their ability to earn revenue and elude the authorities and as a result, are extremely dependent on the cooperative structure of torero bandas such as El Diablo's. As Lezama confirms, "it must be added that instability stems

from the political character of the management of occupied space; space that depends on the correlations of forces and of the political moment in which distinct stakeholders are involved. […] All these elements translate into unfavorable conditions for the job performance of these women" (1991: 672–673).

Figure 2.9. Toreras selling artisanal textiles and gourds. Photo by María Magdalena Alonso Pérez. Used by permission.

Sofía Trejo began selling piñatas in the Tepito market at the age of twelve and is now the political director of the United Vendors in Motion (Unión de Marchantes en Movimiento, A.C.).[30] I met her in her organization's headquarters, a walk-up cluster of offices sandwiched between plumbing supply shops. I arrived just as an organization meeting was ending. Half-eaten pastries populated a conference table and the odor of Nescafé hung in the air like a canopy. During a lull in what would turn out to be a long

[30] Please note that the Spanish word for labor union is *sindicato*. Trejo's organization is a civil association (*asociación civil*: roughly equivalent to a nonprofit organization) that lobbies for regulatory reform, promotes the causes of street vendors to the general public, and organizes protests.

and fascinating conversation, I asked Trejo if she could speak to the experiences of toreras who must care for children while they work. "It's horrible!" she exclaimed, "something you will often hear during a raid is 'Where did I put my child?!' 'Where is my baby?!'" (interview, 31 May 2016, Mexico City). Trejo is a seasoned orator: she commands without condescending, her thoughts seem to immerge pre-assembled, and during our talk, she repeatedly anticipated my questions. Yet, as we discussed the panic of the raids her steady voice betrayed a sliver of pain. "This happened to me too," she said:

> The city inspectors found me. The police came to seize my *nieves*[31] cart. This was during a big raid in the 1990s. Before the raid began, I took my nine-month-old daughter and placed her in an apple box so that the police wouldn't be able to find her. This happened many times to me and it's something that toreros have had to do for years because if their babies were discovered, they would be given to the DIF (National System for the Integral Development of the Family) (interview, 31 May 2016, Mexico City).

Torero bandas often assume a structure that mirrors Mexican cultural conceptions of the extended family with men assuming the role of protector and women, that of caregiver (Barbosa Cruz 2008; Cross 1998b; Lezama 1991; Olivo Pérez 2010). Consequently, toreras (especially mothers with young children) are often unwilling to speak. With few exceptions, each time I approached a torera for an interview, one or more male guardians interjected. Men provide a defensive wall to the outside world; with the exception of customers with whom the toreras must deal, men negotiate and defend against the police, city inspectors, competitors, criminals, and others who would exploit the perceived vulnerability of these women. In an ironic twist, these women, with

[31] Flavored ice

thunderous pregones equal to their male counterparts, who struggle and pass the hours on the same ancient cobble-stone streets, have traded their "voices" for the security that these informal organizations provide.

Empathy for the Devil

While he has labored as a farm worker in Texas and California, been a tourist in the streets of New York City, and sold merchandise throughout Mexico, El Diablo currently works less than six blocks from Lecheras Alley where he was born and raised. He was born to blind parents and began his career as a torero at the age of six. From his earliest memories, El Diablo and his seven siblings had no choice but to act as their parents "eyes" and assist them in their daily toil. El Diablo explains, "I hated street vending. My father sold lottery tickets and with my mother it was different things: used clothing, seasonal merchandise, and knick-knacks. My siblings worked hard too, selling socks, lice-combs and such" (interview, 3 April 2016, Mexico City).

El Diablo's responsibilities to his parents and siblings made the pursuit of formal education impractical. He explains that during his youth, one only needed to be able to read and write in order to find a lucrative job. Apart from some primary schooling, El Diablo's "real" education occurred in the street: "Work taught me to live. The street and the suffering and beatings I took there taught me to live, excel, and to have power" (interview, 3 April 2016, Mexico City). Many of the street vendors I spoke with share similar stories. They learned their craft directly from family or friends and chose street vending instead of formal education because the former appeared to have more

immediate, tangible benefits for them and their families. Froilán Martínez, a clothing vendor from Nezahualcóyotl[32] explains that he learned his trade "from friends. Since I was a kid, I have always enjoyed working. I preferred working in the streets to studying. Besides, there was no money at home and we had to *chingarle* [work hard]. We didn't have any other option" (interview, 8 April 2015, Mexico City).

El Diablo admits that growing up with disabled parents was often a subject of frustration and humiliation. He grew weary of having to defend their honor against comments like, "here comes your momma, the little blind lady" (interview, 3 April 2016, Mexico City). Over time, El Diablo developed a reputation for fighting thus earning his intimidating street name. He explains,

> I had to become an animal to survive in the jungle of asphalt and mud. At a certain point, you have no choice but to defend your family and say "*chingue a su madre* ["fuck you"]." I didn't put up with the taunting for long because I was *muy carbón* [a bad ass] and since I was a kid *me la tuve que rifar*, *güey* [I had to get in the middle of a fight, dude] (interview, 3 April 2016, Mexico City).

El Diablo believes that these early struggles to defend his parents' honor and the vigilance he developed in assisting them imbued him with the skills necessary to be a torero leader.

El Diablo is willing and able to fight and bears the scars to prove it (one in particular runs across his nose and brow—donated by a baton-wielding police officer). However, El Diablo leads with his voice and his whistle. His whistle announces his presence and according to him, is recognized by all the toreros "from Pino Suarez to Correo Mayor. Everyone hears and they get up, dude!" (interview, 3 April 2016, Mexico

[32] A municipality of the state of Mexico immediately across Mexico City's eastern border

City). Leadership and internal organization are essential to the survival of the toreros and provide them with a degree of security that independent vendors do not enjoy. The ability to pool resources, share storage space, watch over children in the temporary absence of a guardian, and to have an experienced representative that can negotiate with police and government officials gives the toreros—otherwise the most marginalized segment of the informal economy in Mexico City—a degree of political power. Cross argues that "by operating *collectively*, informal economic actors acquire new interest structures that allow them to manipulate the zero-sum trade-off between evasion and harassment. What these activities share is a series of factors that orient them toward organization" (1998b: 35–36). Such conditions produce, according to sociologist Patricia Ramírez Kuri, "the creation of social synergies and community forms that can coexist in tension or intertwine with the predominance of commercialism and overcrowding or with forms of poverty, of social exclusion and segregation" (2010: 45). El Diablo bristles when I suggest that he is a "leader." He corrects me, stating, "I am a lookout. I am an 'aguador' or 'hawk' as many people say. I need to watch for everything, everyone who passes, what's happening, the police, the government, everything. We must keep watch" (interview, 3 April 2016, Mexico City).

In sum, El Diablo identifies his primary responsibilities as interpreting his environment and using his steady, persuasive voice to warn, guide, and calm his banda of toreros that may include between 200 and 300 individuals at a given time. He says, "leadership is in the voice, dude." The mark of a true aguador, he believes, is in the way one uses one's voice:

> You yell, you talk, you communicate, you move and jump for people. This is how you earn respect as a leader. Strength is in what you say and how you say it. I speak with integrity and lead by example. I do what I say and I say what I mean (interview, 3 April 2016, Mexico City).

Impudent Voices…Uncooperative Ears

On a long taxi ride across the city at rush hour, I struck up a conversation with my driver, "Marco," about the variety of accents I had noticed in the city. Serendipitously, this turned out to be one of Marco's favorite topics of discussion. Marco is a Mexico City native and explained that he was born and raised in the Doctores barrio to the immediate southwest of the Historic Center. For as long as he can remember, he has always been captivated by the different forms of communication in Mexico City and what these forms say about the people who produce them. He explained that with age, travel, and education he has lost some of the speaking habits that identify him as a person from Doctores.

Many of the barrios in Mexico City, said Marco, are known for their distinct manners of speech and that the more "working class" the area, the more "musical" the speech becomes. I asked Marco what he meant by "musical." It is not so much that people use different words or expressions in specific neighborhoods, he explained, but that the emphasis, roughness, and tonal qualities of the words are different. He pointed to my California accent an extreme example of a flat, "non-musical" manner of speech. I tried to not to take that personally. "Barrio speech," as Marco labels it, in contrast to formal Mexican Spanish, is filled with melodic peaks and valleys, relatively nasal, with guttural sounds somewhat like "vocal fry," and phrase structures that often conclude with a slight melodic lift. Pepe confirms that "[caló] is the language that is used by the people

of the barrio. In all the barrios, let's say the 'underground,' caló is well known, that is to say, the underground language with a roguish, erotic tint—a type of entertainment" (interview, 26 July 2015, Mexico City).

Marco proceeded to give me an auditory sampler of some of these ways of speaking by repeating the same phrase each time with a different inflection: "this is Iztapalapa, this is Tepito, this is my barrio, Doctores, this is '*fresa*' [the way upper-class young people are thought to speak]. For fresa, you have to speak like you have a potato in your mouth" (interview, 15 May 2015, Mexico City). Do these extremely localized ways of speaking serve some purpose for the speaker? For Gutiérrez Román, it is a type of code: "I can speak to you in caló and you will not understand. That happens in all societies. […]" (interview, 22 February 2016, Mexico City). Laura Vargas suggests that the prevalence of coded speech among Mexico City's marginalized communities is a reflection of a colonial legacy: "[If] you're forced to speak Spanish then you're forced to reveal everything. But, perhaps because it's not your native manner of expression, there are different modes of expression that can be combined with Spanish. It's a very intra-community way of keeping safe" (interview, 11 February 2016, Mexico City).

The use of barrio-specific caló by Mexico City's working poor is a dramatic marker of both affiliation and difference. Those who like Marco have achieved a degree of class mobility have also, in many cases, achieved a high degree of code-switching ability between caló and formal Spanish. Pepe relates that, over a period of twenty-five years working in the Lagunilla market, his comprehension of caló and likewise his status as a cultural insider has developed:

> Somehow I adapted. Now I understand that when a friend yells an insult at another attacking his mother, it is not meant literally but playfully. When I began to integrate myself into this community, the language seemed grotesque to me. I thought it was nonsense. But once I adapted I saw that it wasn't. Attitude is the thing that shows if a person is aggressive or not, not language. When I began to work and coexist with the people, my language appeared different to them, strange for some. It was as if we spoke two different languages. But now I have adapted to the barrio form and it's funny to me. Now I am no stranger to the structure of the barrio (interview, 26 July 2015, Mexico City).

Beyond the barrio-specific sounds of spoken caló, the imbrication of humor, insult, sexual innuendo, tactical obscurity, and double-meaning is highly characteristic of localized forms of communication throughout Mexico City. The international film star Cantinflas (Mario Fortino Alfonso Moreno Reyes 1911–1993) so successfully characterized the obscurity of caló in his films that a Spanish verb has been dedicated to him: *cantinflear*. Embodying the archetype of the illiterate "kid from the barrio," Cantinflas is famous for his lightning-fast word-play—spewing a string of words that sound important but are nonsense—meant to mock the empty rhetoric and erudition of politicians and scholars among Mexico City's elite (personal communication, Elena Deanda-Camacho, 12 March 2016). The comedic implication is that while the rich and powerful say much with out meaning anything, the poor use few words while saying a lot. Indeed, the caló used by interlocutors such as El Diablo expresses an ocean of allusion, humor, double-meaning, and emotion while all the while, being decidely indirect. In this sense, the art of Cantinflas represents the inversion of caló. If one were to examine the untranslated caló of El Diablo, one would hear an economical use of words, word derivations, expressions, and *grosería* (profanity) that, by their context and tone,

signify dramatically different things. One must be a cultural insider to grasp the whole of what is being said.

The way that toreros listen and communicate is a direct outgrowth of the playfulness and secrecy characteristic of Mexico City caló which in turn, is fed by several discursive tributaries with profound roots in Mexican culture: *piropo*, a poetic monologue meant to engraciate or woo another; *albur*, humoristic, pseudo-sexual word battles; the aforementioned pregón; and the *chiflido* (or *silbado*), a whistle that may either be a tonal signal or a melodic representation of a Spanish word or phrase.

Pregones: If You Don't Yell, You Don't Sell

For toreros, the pregón is their primary form of advertisement. Froilán Martínez confirms, "The pregón is very important. You have to walk around yelling all the time because if you don't, the client won't come" (interview, 8 April 2015, Mexico City). The pregón is formulaic. In its most basic form, it assumes a nasal tone that distinguishes it from normal speech. It is rhythmically metered, repetitive, and normally features a cadential portamento up or down. The pregón may be customized to each potential customer who passes. A seasoned pregonero will make the most of the natural qualities of his or her voice to personalize the pregón. Working within the aesthetic expectations of a piercing, nasal tone, pregoneros might distinguish their calls from the calls of others by operating in a distinct vocal range, or if they are naturally endowed with a gravelly tone, they may choose to emphasize that. The auditory challenge faced by pregoneros is to strike a balance between individual expression and an adherence to a familiar structure.

For example, "Albert," a *hierbero* (vendor of medicinal herbs) in the market of Merced explains, "we hierberos are a class of vendor that have brought the pregón forward. We extended the possibilities of the persuasive pregón and converted it into long *cantaletas* [sermons]" (interview, 12 December 2015, Mexico City).

Audio 2.2. A typical pregón. Recorded by author.

Audio 2.3. A pregonero cutting through the "sonic fog" with his distinctive voice. Recorded by author.

The expression of identity within a fixed structure is key to the success of the pregonero. In a setting where dozens of individuals may be producing pregones, the successful pregonero is one who can cut through the sonic fog—not only successfully conveying information to the consumer but distinguishing his or her voice to such a degree that they are remembered by the consumer and sought out in the future. Gutiérrez Román confirms:

> [The pregón] is fundamental because it is your own label and because the pregón defines the clientele. For example, I remember when I used to sell tacos a man told me, "here we have to shout in this way." After that, I imitated his pregones and that became the foundation of my success in that job. Making sounds and being persistent are important things because they give identity to your business and because that's how you gain clients (interview, 24 October 2015, Mexico City).

Sociologist Miguel Ángel Olivo Pérez agrees, stating that the pregón "may be endowed with a halo of its own cultural attraction that tens of thousands of shoppers can identify" (2010: 163).

But what bearing does technology have on the pregón tradition? Some of the great *soundmarks*[33] of Mexico City are pregones that have been recorded. Such iconic recordings include the aforementioned "Tamales Oaxaqueños" but also what journalist Víctor Usón calls "the most popular voice in Mexico" (2016), that of a ten-year-old girl named María del Mar Terrón performing "Fierro Viejo" ("Scrap Metal" [literally, "Old Iron"]). The lyrics of her pregón are as follows:

Se compran colchones, tambores, refrigeradores, estufas, lavadoras, microondas o algo de fierro viejo que venda.	We buy mattresses, box springs, refrigerators, stoves, washing machines, microwaves, or any scrap metal that you're selling.

Created in 2005, "Fierro Viejo" has come to represent Mexico City to such a degree that it has been converted into a cumbia by Grupo M[34] and integrated (melodically and lyrically) into the chorus of Fernando Rivera Calderón's biting folk-ballad, "Se vende mi país."[35]

In his interview with the Terrón family, Usón discovered that the famous recording came about because father Marco Antonio was trying to save his and his daughter's voices from the damage done by shouting pregones every day for hours at a time. Recorded on a home stereo system between midnight and four in the morning, the recording, under fifteen seconds in length, "became the promotional tape of every scrap

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[33] Schafer uses the term *soundmark* to denote "community sound which is unique or possesses qualities which make it specially regarded or noticed by the people in that community" ([1977] 1994: 10).

[34] "La Cumbia de 'Se Compran Colchones' – 'Grupo M'." YouTube video, 2:59, posted by "Caque K?" March 28, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZGDW_8mxo0 (accessed October 22, 2015).

[35] "Se vende mi país, el himno de la FIL Oaxaca. Fernando Rivera." YouTube video, 3:44, posted by "Claudia Silki," November 11, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jc3rCQ2eBEI (accessed February 15, 2016).

metal buyer in [Mexico City]" (Usón 2016). Marco Antonio expresses pride in the fact that the recorded pregón he created with his daughter "is helping a lot of people because before they would all have to shout" (Usón 2016). Despite the ubiquity of "Fierros Viejos" and the fact that Marco Antonio registered his recording with the National Institute of Authors' Rights (INDAUTOR), the Terrón family have not made any money on their work and continue to live, twelve years after the recording was made, in a state of day-to-day uncertainty. Usón opines that the Terrón family, who "devised one of the most listened-to refrains in Mexico City, who gave life to the sound that resounds in most corners of the capital, […] that children learn by heart, and that has ended up forming part of the sonic universe of the city, […] continue to struggle to see their dreams [of financial stability] fulfilled" (2016).

The recorded pregones of Mexico City—disembodied voices that drift like ghosts along the city streets— are quite the opposite of the living, breathing pregoneros who launch their personalized sales-pitches from powerful lungs. Yet for the sake of protecting their vocal chords and associating their product with a recognizable jingle, many street vendors find it advantageous to use recorded pregones. Independent street vendor Laura recalls a particular pregón from her childhood that has gotten a second life as an audio recording: "the ice-cream man used to have a special pregón. Now, the guy just rides by on a tricycle and plays the pregón off of his cellphone. You can get it as a ringtone" (interview, 5 May 2015, Mexico City).

The advantages of a recorded pregón are obvious. For example, the tamal vendors who purchase a recording of "Tamales Oaxaqueños" in the Tepito market and amplify

this recording from a bicycle-powered cart are saved the triple-duty of vocalizing, pumping their bike pedals, and interfacing with customers. The streamlining that comes about from recording a pregón is similar to the advantages of mechanical sound production (e.g., bells, triangles, steam whistles, mouth-blown whistles, etc.). For example, Don Pedro Pichardo is an *afilador*, a street vendor who sharpens knives with a kinetic sharpener built from a converted bicycle. Afiladores like Pichardo announce their presence to potential clients by producing a distinctive, pentatonic melody from a panpipe custom designed for this trade. Thus, the afilador uses the pentatonic melody as a form of echolocation and advertisement, much like the toreros but with an instrument in place of the voice. Pichardo explains, "The sound that I emit is important. Many jobs have particular sounds and if I couldn't make that sound, my work would change completely. I could only serve the clients that I already have. Sound determines when I have work and when I don't because when they hear me they come to find me" (interview, 12 March 2016, Mexico City).

Figure 2.10. Afilador Pedro Pichardo poses with his sharpening equipment in the Historic Center. Photo by Oswaldo Mejía. Used by permission.

Figure 2.11. Pichardo at work. Photo by Oswaldo Mejía. Used by permission.

Audio 2.4. The distinctive melody of the afilador's plastic panpipe. Recorded by author.

Some of these sounds are so widely recognized that if they were to change even slightly, clients would simply be confused. However, the disadvantage of recordings and mechanical sounds is that they are fixed. El Diablo recalls that much of the vending of his youth involved produce, grains, meat, and other foodstuffs imported from Mexico's fertile countryside. The economic crisis of 1982 as well as decades of trade deregulation that precipitated the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, brought a period of dramatic restructuring of local and international economies, in which businesses enterprises, including informal ones, had to parry unprecedented changes in material goods and customer expectations (Bartra 2002: 61; Cantú Chapa 2005: 61–62; García Canclini and Piedras Feria 2008). Street vendors throughout the city

were forced to adapt to new, increasingly imported inventories and endow these products with a glamour that might lure potential customers. Froilán recalls this transformation: "pregones depend on the products that you are trying to sell. For example, many years ago we didn't have so many Chinese goods to sell and now we have a lot. Before, I remember many pregones for food, fruit, vegetables but now they're often for toys, clothing, and electronics" (interview, 8 April 2015, Mexico City). The familiar scaffolding of the pregón must be adapted to each new item acquired. The problem then with recorded pregones and mechanical sounds such as the whistle of the camotero is that they are indelibly linked to specific products, and consequently cannot keep up with the flush of new imports. The flexible form of the vocalized pregón, however, is a quick and easy method to keep pace with a changing market place.

Pregones are informed by two discursive practices with profound roots in Mexican culture—the piropo, a poetic monologue meant to engraciate or woo another, and the albur, a humoristic, pseudo-sexual word battle. Piropos can range from simple compliments, "Your eyes are so beautiful," to direct expressions of romantic interest, "Napoleon conquired nations with his sword; you conquer hearts with your eyes" (interview, Elizabeth Hernández, 18 April 2016, Mexico City). As a part of his pregón, Froilán adapts the piropo to entice potential customers: "come here, *güerita*. Beautiful women don't pay here. This dress would look very good on you. With this blouse you will conquer your king. What a miracle you are, we already miss you." He says, "We don't do this with the intention of offending but we know how to sell the merchandise." He adds that in his practice, men receive similar treatment: "Come here master, which

would you like? Get up king, no obligation. Check it out, boss." Froilán believes that the tone of his voice is fundamental in making his customers "feel good." What is important is not necessarily what one says but how one says it and he speculates that if one were to work "in silence or fails to respect women, things just wouldn't work out and you could get yourself in trouble" (interview, 8 April 2015, Mexico City). Indeed, the "way" and the situation in which piropos are delivered seems to make an enormous difference in how they are understood. Many of my interlocutors, self-described victims of *acoso callejero* (sexual harassment in public), mention that the catcalls they receive are often reminiscent of the pregones that they might hear from a street vendor. Ice cream shop owner "Ysidora" explains that she has been called *güera*[36] numerous times in both markets and on the street. It is not the word itself, she explains, but the tone, the elongation of the first syllable, the breathiness, and the proximity of the speaker that allow her to distinguish a potentially threatening situation from a normal part of the commercial soundscape (interview, 17 February 2016, Mexico City).

While piropos and albures are both meant to demonstrate verbal and perceptive virtuosity, the albur is not a monologue but a conversation. According to historian Elena Deanda-Camacho, "the albur is a joke with sexual connotations that establishes two codes (the overt meaning and the implicit) and while the overt meaning may not have any sexual reference, in the reception one must contemplate both in order to understand each reference. […] To defend oneself in the albur is important because each annunciation is

[36] *Güero/a* (diminutive: *güerito/a*) literally refers to a light skinned person but is often used as a broad signifier of beauty (much the same way as "fair" may be a substitute for "beautiful" in English).

an attack that must always be answered with more wit, reproducing the imperative of the 'rape' of the other" (2010: 165). Participants of albur seek to position their opponent in a (symbolically) sexually submissive position and the one who cannot answer is metaphorically "conquered." As with piropos, the context and the relationship of the participants of albur define its purpose. Anthropologist Elizabeth Hernández explains, "albures tend to be more rude and offensive between people who don't know each other well. But it is also a common practice between friends and family members to tease each other or to communicate secretly while in mixed company" (interview, 18 April 2016, Mexico City).

Like piropos, albures represent an interesting pivot point between commerce, interactions between strangers, and normal exchanges between friends and family. Pepe explains, "albures are classic mother insults or erotic games, like when two people are preparing to have sex but don't actually do it, they only say it. The one who sexually dominates wins and the silent one loses. This is part of the auditory panorama" (interview, 26 July 2015, Mexico City). The albur is a common device in social bonding (especially between men and boys), a fundamental ingredient in Mexican humor and conversely, as a performative challenge to the wit of another, it is a powerful tool of domination and exclusion.

In addition to being a form of verbal competition, albures are often highly masculinized, clandestine practices. They are normally performed between men, and are, at least *intended* for a male audience. However, this is not always the case and a number of female interlocutors confirm that while they do not participate in albur duels, they

understand them. In fact, Lourdes Ruiz, known as the "Queen of the Albur," won her title during Mexico City's annual Albur Tournament in 1997 and has successfully defended her title every year since. A clothing vender for the Tepito market, Ruiz was enrolled in the tournament by her brothers and showed up on a whim. She recalls that the tournament began with a competition between men and women and that these albures presented imagery of market life ("descriptions of our stalls, the size of our merchandise, the types of poles we raise and how we pull our canvass over them") to mask descriptions of the speakers' sexual organs and prowess. "We quickly vanquished the men," Ruiz recounts, "and once they were disqualified, I beat all the women. Finally, the competition was open to the public. About fifty people clashed with me in albur duels until one of the competition judges wanted me to be quiet. He said, '*Es que se está yendo muy grande* [literally, 'It's just that, it is going very big' meaning 'The tournament has gone on too long'],' and I replied, '*entonces siéntate* [literally 'Then sit down' but implying that 'it' is a penis and the judge should sit on it].' He did not answer and everyone laughed" (interview, 1 August 2016, Mexico City).

According to Ruiz, "the albur is a game of verbal chess. It requires mental agility requiring both hemispheres of the brain." In her case, it is a skill that she learned in the street and honed in the market. She first encountered albures "…in the barrio. The kids who sold nieves on the corner would talk and laugh amongst themselves. I asked them why they were laughing and they wouldn't explain. Over time, little by little, they would teach me and when I began to understand I said to myself, 'Now I am truly from *here*!'" Ruiz suggests that the albur tradition and market and street vending influence each other

reciprocally but she also raises an important distinction. “For it to be a real albur,” she explains, “you always need an accomplice.” That is, a feature of the albur, whether a formal duel or a playful street transaction, is that everyone involved must be willing participants. She adds, “At the moment that one invades the space of another and chooses to utter a piropo or albur without the acceptance of the other, this is called violence” (interview, 1 August 2016, Mexico City).

Some street vendors deploy pregones that are not meant to compliment but rather to tease, confuse, or rush the potential customer into a quick sale or a sloppy negotiation. Like the albur, these pregones are inherently competitive (the vendor is trying to outwit the customer) and often rely on sexual innuendo and humor to get customers to drop their guard. Olivio Pérez notes that the pregones of street vendors normally adhere to certain conventions. Specifically, they tend to contain information about product type and quality and attempt to break social barriers through compliments and personalization. However, the particular conditions in which certain vendors work as well as the pressures of their ambiguous legal status occasionally push them toward other approaches. For example, some vendors coordinate their pregones in order to produce “an anxiety-inducing style of calling and hand clapping meant to obfuscate and/or enervate the client, who has no time to think about his or her purchase. [Others] terrorize through a relatively subtle threat to do some sort of harm to the client in case the transaction fails” (Olivo Pérez 2010: 101–102).

Audio 2.5. Food vendors in Mexico City’s Jamaica Market produce a din of “anxiety-inducing” pregones meant to pressure clients into visiting their stalls. Recorded by the author.

On a recent bus trip to the northern outskirts of Mexico City, "Julieta," a close friend, was accosted by a street vendor who hopped on the bus at a stop light and warned, "I could just rob you but it would be better if you buy something" (interview, 6 June 2016, Mexico City). However, Olivo Pérez points out that "these forms of pressuring the client to buy are unusual because they usually back-fire" (2010: 101–102). Indeed, a hallmark of street vending in Mexico City is the importance of personal accountability. A street vendor relies on regular customers who can recognize his or her pregón. If a tamal vendor, for example, develops a reputation for selling food that makes people ill, that vendor will shortly be out of work or will need to move to a different neighborhood.

Chiflidos

In contemporary Mexico City, *chiflidos*[37] or whistles may take the form of simple signals meant to announce the presence of an individual, family, clique, or to warn against danger. They may be used to startle, confound, and mock unwelcomed intruders demonstrating a form of sonorous, territorial defense. Among some indigenous communities of rural Mexico, such as the Chinanteco people of Oaxaca's Sierra Juárez, chiflidos have evolved to mimic the melody and rhythm of spoken words producing what linguist Juán Hasler calls a "whistle language" (2005: 21) that enables experienced whistlers to conduct full conversations—exclusively in chiflidos—at great distances and

[37] In Mexico, a whistle (i.e., a high-pitched tone produced by the mouth, lips, and tongue) may be called either *chiflido* or *silbido* (not to be confused with *silbato*, a mechanical whistle). Because the "chiflido" is favored by my interlocutors, I will use it throughout as an umbrella term to refer to the varied whistling practices of Mexico.

in a form incomprehensible to the uninitiated.[38] Among the toreros of Mexico City, the practice of substituting spoken phrases with chiflidos also exists but rather than encompassing a nearly complete language, survives as a shrinking repertoire of key phrases.

Audio 2.6. A whistle meant to represent the Spanish phrase, "¡*Sales o me voy*!" ("Hurry up or I'm leaving!). Performed by Ángel González. Recorded by author.

The highly localized practices of whistling found throughout Mexico have, beginning in the mid-twentieth century, been reified through popular media as a symbol of both the rural and urban poor. For example, in an iconic scene from the Mexican film *Nosotros los pobres* (1947 dir. Ismael Rodríguez), we see two lovers having a conversation from opposite ends of a humble house. "Pepe the bull," portrayed by crooner and film legend Pedro Infante leans against his carpenter's table with a cigarette in hand. His lover, "Celia the dirty one," (played by Blanca Estela Pavón) stands in the kitchen. They are not speaking words but instead are whistling. Each chiflido mimics the duration, accentuation, and approximate melody of the spoken words they are meant to represent. Two neighbors stand between the couple in the threshold of the front door listening in. "What are these crazy people up to?" one neighbor asks the other. The more knowledgeable of the pair begins to translate for his friend and by proxy, the audience. "She says 'I love you very much.' She had a dream last night. Him too." The neighbor

[38] Linguist Juán Hasler writes that "as this communication is not limited to simple, conventional calls, but allows the transmission of ideas not previously conventionalized in certain types of whistles, and as it allows one to form sentences and sustain conversations, it has been called whistle language" (2005: 21). Most whistle practitioners that I have encountered in Mexico City are only able to reproduce certain phrases as whistles. So for the sake of accuracy, I use the term "whistle practices" rather than "whistle language."

continues to translate Celia and Pepe's whistled dialog:

CELIA: Tell me what (you dreamt) about.

PEPE: I can't tell you.

CELIA: If only you would sing it in a song!

At the suggestion, Pepe begins to sing the bolero "Amorcito corazón" (by Manuel Esperón [music] and Pedro de Urdimalas [lyrics]) in his rich tenor belcanto. With each lyric phrase, Celia answers with a whistled response, not this time in the approximate pitch of chiflidos but as a purely melodic, consequent phrase (Infante and Pavón [1947] 2007).

This famous film of Mexico's cinematic golden age continues to play on Mexican television and is a common fixture in the pirated-DVD stands throughout the city. As an enduring, popular depiction of urban Mexican culture, *Nosotros los pobres* is impactful both in its depictions of the struggles and injustice faced by Mexico City's working poor in the years following the Mexican Revolution but also in its representation of the wit and artistry of barrio culture. The chiflido, in this case used as a cryptic language between lovers, is a cultural artifact with numerous practical and creative applications. Further, it is a mode of communication based on exclusivity, secrecy, and intimacy and as such, is a tool of agency for the poor—something the rich and powerful cannot understand and therefore cannot take away.

In recent years, the topic of chiflidos has been featured in a number of television and web series, some more serious than others. For example, in "Whistles in the Mist:

Whistled Speech in Oaxaca,"[39] social scientist David Yetman examines the connection between the chiflidos of the Chinantecan people and their tonal language; mock-television presenter Karl Pilkington has a brief lesson in chiflidos from farmers in San Luis Potosí in his series *The Moaning of Life: The Worldly Wisdom of Karl Pilkington*;[40] and in a parody video of a fictional smart phone application called "Chiflao," "Latino millennials" are able to miraculously communicate with their parents by using the application to translate their speech into chiflidos.[41] At the same time that chiflidos are gaining popular recognition as symbols of expressive culture, they are undergoing further changes due to rural-urban migration and the growing pervasiveness of communication technology, specifically smartphones and two-way radios. Population movement and a growing reliance on communication technology have produced a generation gap between those who once relied on chiflidos as a practical form of communication and younger individuals who, if they whistle at all, can understand and reproduce only a skeletal vocabulary. However, this transformation has not been uniform and in certain pockets of Mexico City such as the Historic Center, chiflidos have acquired a newfound hyper-

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[39] "Whistles in the Mist: Whistled Speech in Oaxaca." *In the Americas with David Yetman*, directed by Daniel Duncan (March 8, 2014: The Southwest Center-University of Arizona). https://vimeo.com/57291304 (accessed August 5, 2016).

[40] "Identity." *The Moaning of Life: The Worldly Wisdom of Karl Pilkington*, produced by Richard Yee (2015: Science Channel). http://www.sciencechannel.com/tv-shows/moaning-of-life/ (accessed February 17, 2017).

[41] "Can't talk to your Spanish speaking family? Get the new CHIFLAO APP." YouTube video, 1:34, posted by "Desmadre," July 20, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ow6KSnn3q0c (accessed October 18, 2016).

locality, no longer a simple means of communication but an embodied practice of resistance to capitalist hegemony and modernization.

While theories about the origins of chiflidos are inconclusive, what is known is that chiflidos exist in various forms throughout Mexico (Hasler 2005: 21; Wilken 1979). El Diablo, who has traveled and worked in many regions of Mexico confirms that

> Here in Mexico, everything is about sound. In many regions of Mexico, the chiflidos are still used. You can communicate from one hill to the other using chiflidos to chat with your buddy. In San Luis Potosí, Puebla, and in Oaxaca, dude. I've been there and they are whistling from hill to hill. They are whistling and they say, "Hey, mother fucker! No way am I walking for three hours down this fucking mountain just to say hello!" They communicate purely with chiflidos (interview, 3 April 2016, Mexico City).

According to El Diablo as well as the handful of scholars who have tackled the subject of chiflidos, the practice was developed by shepherds and other inhabitants of mountainous regions in order to communicate basic information across great expanses. Anthropologist Gene C. Wilken notes that "[t]he main advantage of whistles is that they can carry words farther and more clearly than shouts. In still air conditions, good whistlers can communicate over flat terrain for more than a kilometer" (1979: 883). Beyond being a long-distance communication system (before the advent of radio technology), chiflidos—requiring competence and experience of all parties involved—may also be used as "a second or secret language. [Such a language] is especially useful since it requires no special tools or equipment, as do drum or gong systems, nor mastery of a new language, and it can be used in a wide variety of situations" (Wilken 1979: 886).

Unlike a wind-swept mountain peak, Mexico City is remarkably flat for the most part with limited visibility due to high buildings and poor air quality. Here, chiflidos

careen off of concrete walls and whip around narrow corners. Wilken opines that chiflidos are less effective in low-land conditions with dense vegetation and consequently, tend to flourish in mountainous areas. And yet, the "jungle" of Mexico City (as it is sometimes called) presents acoustic conditions that are not far from that of a dense forest. The streets of the Historic Center are narrow with high colonial walls—more like fortress palisades than conventional shop fronts—and they are full of noise-producing (and absorbing) objects and bodies. Nevertheless, the tradition of whistling has adapted and endured in this urban setting. Instead of travelling great distances, the urban chiflido cuts through the din of noise and penetrates the insulating membrane of crowds. Invariably shrill and high-pitched, the chiflido occupies a frequency range that avoids competition with the low rumble of traffic and industry and the medium frequency band of crowd noises and amplified music.

El Diablo explains that throughout many barrios of Mexico City, it is a common practice for a group of friends or family to identify themselves at a distance using a distinctive chiflido. Similarly, each banda of toreros have distinctive chiflidos that serve the same function. Gutiérrez Román expands the possible applications of chiflidos beyond simple identification: "There are chiflidos that announce violence and those that call listeners to action, like when toreros warn each other. There are those that deliver mother-insults, and there are site-specific chiflidos for certain barrios where the tone and type of chiflido is like a code" (interview, 22 February 2016, Mexico City). By "mother-insults," Gutiérrez Román is referring to perhaps the most widely recognized whistled phrase in Mexico and the Mexican diaspora: "¡*Chinga tu madre*!" ("Fuck your

mother!”).[42] He presents a contrast between chiflidos like these that are meant to be understood across social class, region, and generation (i.e., a broadband transmission) and those developed by a closed group in order to communicate secretly (i.e., a narrowband transmission). Elizabeth Hernández believes that the chiflido has acquired particular importance in the Historic Center because

> Chiflidos differentiate between vendor groups. You can have one banda of street vendors on one street and another two blocks away. With chiflidos, they can identify themselves and communicate. The duration and tone [of the chiflido] is important because if the police are conducting a raid and the toreros need to flee they produce a tonality and a duration of the chiflido that will be different than if they want to warn about a robbery or confrontation between groups. It is for this reason that the culture of whistling in the Historic Center continues to be so strong (interview, 18 May 2016, Mexico City).

Like the albur, which can take on dramatically different meanings depending on the setting and the parties involved, the chiflido is a message with an added emotional layer that signifies urgency or threat. This is demonstrated through duration and intensity and in the case of a personal chiflido (one associated with an individual), the addition of this emotional layer would suggest that that individual is in danger. The addition of this emotional layer to an insulting chiflido may signify the difference between a tease and an impending physical confrontation. The famous “mother-insult” chiflido that Gutiérrez Román refers to, one that can be heard from Los Angeles to Chiapas, is sometimes a warning that precipitates violent confrontation. This chiflido “often fulfills the role of a signal of preparation for attack toward someone socially identified as undesirable in the

[42] The “mother-insult” chiflido reproduces the rhythm and melodic contour of arguably the gravest insult in Mexican Spanish. Despite its severity, it is also the chiflido that is the easiest to encounter. It is pervasive in political rallies, protest marches, sporting events, and traffic disputes to give only a few examples.

environment. This can be a police officer, a criminal, a politician, a leader, or a vendor *non grata*" (Olivo Pérez 2010: 161). Hernández agrees and notes a connection between the chiflido, albures, and piropos in the context of sexual harassment: "In Mexican culture, it is not usual that when one throws a piropo or albur at someone whether they know the other person or not, above all if it is in the street, the chiflido is used first to call the listeners attention and then you deliver the piropo or albur" (interview, 18 May 2016, Mexico City).

Radios

Within the world of toreros, chiflidos are used in tandem with the aforementioned pregones and two-way radios. Radios can transmit further than a chiflido but chiflidos can be produced almost instantaneously, by any of the toreros (only leaders carry radios) and are harder for the police to intercept. Olivo Pérez posits that "one cannot stress enough the importance of chiflidos as socio-cultural artifacts that allow street vendors to coordinate diverse collective actions" (2010: 161). Nevertheless, radios offer toreros an additional option for subterfuge and extends their ability to communicate with other torero groups. El Diablo explains that the tradition of whistling is gradually being lost due to the proliferation of communication technology:

> Chiflidos have gone to shit because they are being replaced by the radio and cellphone. I can talk to my friend over the radio without getting exhausted from whistling. Before the radio showed up, we always whistled to the banda to get them together. Not anymore. Now, you can be in the bathtub and get on Whatsapp and say, "What's up, dude? I'm just getting ready" (interview, 3 April 2016, Mexico City).

The cell phone and radio have replaced the role, to some degree, that the chiflido once

played and as a result, El Diablo has had to simplify his chiflidos in order to communicate with the younger generations that fill his ranks. At present, El Diablo explains that he is able to use only several chiflidos that his understudies can understand: "[There is] the chiflido to get up, and this chiflido is to get up *en chinga* [quickly]. This chiflido is to return to work and this is for my warriors to attack" (interview, 3 April 2016, Mexico City). The reduction of chiflido vocabulary used by toreros means that the police are more easily able to de-code this second language. Yet the chiflido endures because it is immediate and requires no additional equipment. El Diablo explains that everybody, including the police, now know these basic chiflidos. In order to advance in this sonic arms race, the toreros have taken to coding their radio transmissions as well. El Diablo explains the code designed to confuse the police:

> The codes are different and what we do is label the streets, that is, we identify them by different numbers, not in numerical order. Our territory is on Corregidora Street, from the Supreme Court at Catellanos Alley to Burger King. We mark all of Corregidora street as [##],[43] we mark Castellanos Alley as [##], and we mark Venustiano Carranza as [##]. Because of that, the police don't know who is signaling or where they are signaling from. For that reason, they say, "No way, dude…[##], [##], [##]? What's going on with these assholes?!" (interview, 3 April 2016, Mexico City).

The streets in the Historic Center are not numbered, so the designation of numbers to streets does not correspond with any city planning scheme. It is not clear whether the numeric system designed by the toreros is based on some formula or is completely random. However, the overall effect is that by coding language concerning location (be it the location of a group of toreros, the location of police officers, or suspicious

[43] I have omitted the numbers that El Diablo assigned to streets in order to protect the secrecy of the toreros' code.

individuals) the toreros are able to coordinate their movements across the entire area before the police can respond. Thus, the radio has assumed many of the functions that chiflidos once served and extended the possibilities of communication, misdirection, and resistance.

Audio 2.7. El Diablo's whistle commanding his banda to "Get up!" (i.e., "Be Alert!"). Recorded by author.

Audio 2.8. El Diablo's whistle commanding his banda to either "Spread out!" or "Fight!" depending on the situation. This whistle represents the Spanish phrase, "¡*Al ataque, mis guerreros*!" ("To the attack, my warriors!"). Recorded by author.

Streetwise Auditors

The lifestyle of the torero requires making countless, calculated risks each day. This risk-assessment is dependent on a specialized form of sensory awareness that is curiously applicable to what Daughtry calls *zones of (in)audition*. Discussing the listening practices of soldiers and civilians in wartime Iraq, Daughtry distinguishes four conceptual zones that roughly correspond to spatial distances: the *audible inaudible*, "a […] space that housed sounds so distant and/or ubiquitous that they ceased to draw the attention of the experienced auditor" (2015: 77–78); the *narrational zone*, "the story of an unseen battle unfolding before one's ears" (2015: 80); the *tactical zone* in which "listeners trained their skills of echolocation to determine the proximity of explosions, the trajectory of bullets, and the locations of shooters" (2015: 88); and the *trauma zone* where the force of an acoustic event temporarily supersedes its audibility (2015: 92). Despite the obvious difference between whizzing bullets in an Iraqi war-zone and vocalizations in the colonial streets of Mexico City, Daughtry's zones of (in)audition are

valuable in understanding some of the mechanics of the auditory sophistication of the toreros.

Mexico City's Historic Center is an objectively loud place. On an average day one can hear the roar of revving cars and trucks choking the cobblestone streets; the piatti-cymbal splash of reggaeton, banda, and EDM (electronic dance music) as they are spewed from oversized PA-systems; the colossal fanfare of bells from the Metropolitan Cathedral that are absorbed and filtered by the massive bass-trap of the Zócalo; as well as the hundreds of toreros launching their reedy, plaintive pregones. This ubiquitous acoustic foundation—routinely reaching decibel levels at or above 120—represents the "audible inaudible." Within this acoustic goulash, toreros must not only compete using their own, unamplified voices, but must also extract the voices and whistles of friends and foes, note changes in the composition of crowd noise, and scan for signals of ever-impending raids. Here, the toreros are listening to the narrational zone: if a police raid, scuffle between rival toreros, or other disturbance is occurring blocks away, toreros can follow the unseen action. When the action comes into view (a spatial range that is rather limited by narrow streets, high walls, and sharp corners) the analogy between war and informal commerce becomes illuminating by contrast. In the toreros' tactical zone, experienced auditors use their eyes, ears, and voice. No longer passive listeners, the toreros engage in a discursive dance with the individuals who pass through their territory. Unlike a soldier gauging the type and proximity of incoming fire and acting accordingly, the tactical zone of the torero is normally a social one. The experienced torero evaluates the manner of dress, body language, accent, phenotype, age, and gender of everyone who

passes. What barrio are you from? Are you a lost tourist? Are you a serious customer or just going for a stroll? Are you a police inspector or a thief? In the tactical zone, the toreros deploy their pregones. Here, the torero warns, teases, charms, and intimidates a host of actors depending on lightning-fast assessment.

The trauma zone—in which a sound is so massive that it can only be felt—is less applicable to the experiences of toreros but it does occur. The toreros use only their voices that, while often well trained and powerful, are normally unamplified because of the high premium on mobility. Traumatic sounds are the purview of the Mexican state. For example, the brassy pop of tear-gas canisters is used routinely in crowd-dispersal maneuvers and precede violent confrontation like swelling thunderheads before a deluge. At closer range however, within twenty meters, the concussive force compresses the chest cavity and drives one back well before the gas can reach one's nose and eyes. El Diablo elaborates on tactical use of sound by the police:

> The sirens [of police vehicles] indicate power, they tell you that power is coming. The sound of beating shields is intimidating. When they hit their shields with their batons then you have a sound of repression directed at the people so that they know that power is here and you can either calm yourself or *te pongo en tu madre* [get your ass kicked] (interview, 3 April 2016, Mexico City).

These traumatic sounds are not limited to conventional weapons. For example, in anticipation of the first visit of pope Francis I in 2016, the government locked down the Zócalo and erected a massive concert stage and sound system. Perhaps only "testing" the sound system, event organizers pumped caustic electronic dance music into the narrow streets where many of the toreros work. During this sound check, the music was amplified at such a volume that I remember feeling the robotic bass-pulse rise up from

the cobblestones from my feet to my viscera like a human tuning fork. The music was so intense that it drowned out the pregones of the toreros and drove the shoppers away. Perhaps only a coincidence, this sound test initiated a two-day period in which a complete prohibition of street vending activities was issued and aggressively enforced.

The Giuliani Plan

Mexico City's Historic Center (including the Zócalo, National Palace, Metropolitan Cathedral, and adjoining streets) is not only the symbolic heart of the Mexican nation but arguably the most contested territory in all of Mexico. As the terminus of most of the major protests in the city, the Zócalo is a site where songs, chants, and firecrackers are used by protesters to disrupt quotidian life, demonstrate grievances, and bolster their courage in the face of often-violent reprisals by police. The Zócalo is also the site of Mexico's most sanctioned sounds of nationhood: The President's annual Call to Independence (*el Grito de Dolores*), military fanfares, and the recitation of the national anthem. The Historic Center is the place where the Mexican people encounter each other, consume, obey, defend, complain, negotiate, retreat, and resist. For urban studies scholar Rubén Cantú Chapa, it is a microcosm of the Mexican nation itself and its history is one "of class struggle [and] of a society that cannot be separated from the central territory of the city" (2005: 120). The Historic Center assumes dual roles: it is at once the great meeting point of the nation and at the same time a space of struggle, violence and rupture "where a web of human relations come into play,

mediated by changing interests and purposes, [and] in turn, to some objective reality of the common world" (Ramírez Kuri 2010: 44).

Several earnest attempts were made to permanently remove street vending from the Historic Center during the twentieth century and most recently in the mid-2000s. In 2002, a plan was formulated to expel the criminal element—which included the toreros—from the Historic Center once and for all. A cabal of Mexican business leaders and city officials contracted the security firm of Giuliani Partners LLC, founded by the former New York City mayor (1994–2001) and republican presidential candidate (2008) Rudy Giuliani, to "rescue" the Historic Center. The plan was to be based on *broken windows*—a program implemented by Giuliani in New York City and characterized by heavy surveillance, brutal police enforcement, and rigid sentencing practices (Arroyo 2003; Davis 2007). As a franchise model of urban revitalization, the plan was designed "not only to restrict free movement and conduct an intense scrutiny of public behavior […] but also suggested the criminalization of certain public conduct and made recommendations for police reform that would call into question the distinction between public and private police in the central areas" (Davis 2007: 639–640). With a price tag of roughly 4.3 million dollars, the plan for the Historic Center included the installation of sophisticated surveillance equipment as well as the conscription of a "new, quasi-private police […] called the Citizen Protection Unit [with] an organization separate from the rest of the police, and a different uniform, a higher salary and specific responsibility to guard against crime and street life using new technology" (Davis 2007: 661–662).

By casting their net widely, lumping toreros and other informal vendors in with drug dealers and violent criminals, the city government hoped to accomplish something that they had been working toward for over forty years—a clean, exclusive, tourist-friendly commercial zone where all the relics of Mexican folkloric and pre-Columbian culture could be displayed safely behind museum glass and where the poor would remain unseen and unheard. While widely criticized by human rights advocates, journalists, and city police organizations that the plan usurped and implicitly criticized, the plan received heavy support from real estate developers and the tourism industry who recognized the money-making potential in the gentrification of the Historic Center (Arroyo 2003; Davis 2007).

A pivotal figure in the implementation of the Giuliani plan was telecom and real estate mogul Carlos Slim Helú, who helped draft the initial invitation to the Giuliani Partners. Slim's investment in the transformation of the Historic Center is deep. Slim owns many of the buildings that adjoin the Zócolo and these acquisitions contribute to a symbolic triumvirate of power in the Historic Center: the State (the National Palace), the Church (the Metropolitan Cathedral), and the Marketplace (Slim's multi-purpose commercial buildings). In fact, Slim provided much of the surveillance equipment and technical support called for in the implementation of the Giuliani plan. As the owner of Telmex, the largest internet provider in Mexico, Slim managed to exploit the plan through vertical integration. Profiting "from the city's use of high-tech services and internet used to monitor criminal activity" while acting as "the founder and majority share-holder of a private firm called the Historic Center of Mexico City, S. A. de C. V."

(Davis 2007: 662), Slim forwarded his ambitions to gobble up high value property. One might conclude that the stated purpose of the Giuliani plan—to render police enforcement more efficient, lower crime rates and create a safe space for legitimate business and tourism—was in fact a Trojan horse meant to drive the poor from the Historic Center in order to open it up to the predation of Slim and his competitors without a genuine consideration for public safety.

War between the State and street vendors is nothing new in Mexico City's Historic Center. However, the adoption of Rudy Giuliani's model of public security marked an ambitious, tactical shift. Before 2002, the methods of police enforcement were both violent and inconsistent, characterized by "the forced removal of semi-permanent stalls, sending mounted police, forced relocation of street vendors to markets built expressly for them or outright brutality against them had been used to solve the problem" (Davis 2007: 660). If the Giuliani Plan reached fruition, there would be no need to remind citizens of their place in the social hierarchy through demonstrations of force; social control would become a self-regulatory process as individuals pass through sterile, neatly delineated public spaces in which they never know when they are being watched or listened to.

The objectives of the Giuliani plan are reminiscent of philosopher Michel Foucault's concept of the *panopticon*: a metaphorical model for the "automatic functioning of power" ([1977] 1995: 201) based upon a circular, architectural structure in which individuals are isolated in cells and observed from a central tower ([1977] 1995: 173–174). This impersonal system of social control—in which individuals are "caught up

in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers" (Foucault [1977] 1995: 201)—is reliant on the belief (on the part of surveilled subject) of continuous, impending punishment and is therefore, much more insidious that the direct threat of violence. This belief "enables the disciplinary power to be both absolutely indiscreet, since it is everywhere and always alert […] and absolutely 'discreet,' for it functions permanently and largely in silence" (Foucault [1977] 1995: 177). The rifle cracks and police sirens of the forced removals of street vendors would be replaced, according to this vision, with the delicate buzz of security cameras and the sonic shadow of plain-clothed police infiltrators as they move silently through crowds of shouting toreros. The police would not need to intimidate through sound but only listen and observe, capturing the faces of torero leaders and protest organizers with hidden cameras and recording their intercepted radio messages. The ability to listen, both selectively and intently, is a critical survival tool of the toreros but it is also a tool of their oppression. Says economist Jacques Attali, "Everywhere, power reduces the noise made by others and adds sound prevention to its arsenal. Listening becomes an essential means of surveillance and social control […] Today, every noise evokes an image of subversion. It is repressed, monitored" (1985: 122).

When surveillance is deemed insufficient by the city to maintain order (e.g., in preparation for visiting dignitaries), the strategy of implicit threat spills into violent confrontation. In Foucault's panoptic model, the spectacle of public punishment is replaced by the anticipation of punishment—the subjugated body that flinches before the impending blow. When the State chooses to strike however, "it is not as a glorification of

its strength, but as an element of itself that it is obliged to tolerate, that it finds difficult to account for" (Foucault [1977] 1995: 9). In this regard, sound "extends the scope of panoptic possibility" not only in being heard "but in hearing an authoritarian presence" (Rice, Tom 2003: 8).

The many sounds used by toreros in order to evade, intimidate, and mock the police and other unwelcomed parties are well coordinated but often improvised, include room for variation and the demonstration of individual expression, and are anything but uniform. Conversely, the sounds that police and soldiers use to intimidate rely on physical discipline and coordinated motion (e.g., the beating of batons against riot shields and marching boots). The disciplined bodies of the police being "subjected, used, transformed and improved" are, following the panoptic vision, more than the executors of a socio-political ideology but are in fact, "political puppets, small-scale models of power" (Foucault [1977] 1995: 136).

Silver Instead of Lead

The success of the Giuliani plan depended on the coordination of interdependent parts: laws to regulate behavior and the use of space, efficient courts to penalize, technology to document criminal behavior and identify perpetrators, corporate sponsors to fund technology and supplement the pay of government employees, and a special police that due to their higher pay and advanced training, would be incorruptible. Most importantly, the plan depended on cementing the belief of its own perfection in the imagination of the public. In fact, the Giuliani plan has achieved none of these overt

objectives and succeeded only in punishing some of Mexico City's most marginalized inhabitants by interfering with sales, confiscating merchandise, and doing bodily harm. According to political scientist Mario Arroyo, "during more than seventy years of authoritarianism […] the overriding objective [of the police] has been to provide security not for the citizens but for the regime, hence the poor planning of the police [and] the lack of interest in themes such as professionalism, accountability, etc." (2003: 11–12). If a more cryptic objective of the Giuliani plan was to restore buildings in order to raise property value, drive out low-rent tenants, and open the door to the real estate interests of its corporate backers, this has succeeded to some degree and is characterized by an uneven gentrification of the area, a compression of individuals from a variety of socio-economic classes that has resulted in higher crime rates (Davis 2007: 668).

The implementation of the Giuliani plan did not include removing the rot of corruption from city government but simply imposed an additional layer of enforcement. The addition of special police only inspired rancor among police regulars and gave the toreros and other informal vendors a new actor with whom to fight, negotiate, and avoid. These byzantine, conflicting agencies have inspired uncertainty, among both civilians and the agents themselves, about who is responsible for patrolling the Historic Center. Arroyo adds that, "corruption is a key factor that explains the deviation of the police forces. […] Police officials work under a 'secret code' in order to move up, maintain their positions, or work in specific locations" (2003: 10). Police officers rely on informal and criminal activity as an opportunity to demand bribes and confiscate goods without repercussions. They then use this income, according to Arroyo, to bribe their superiors for the right to

work as well as for preferential working conditions. These superiors then in turn, bribe *their* superiors. In this network of corruption, "money flows from the base of the pyramid upwards and this [revenue] is the product of the extortion carried out by the police on both citizens and presumed criminals" (Arroyo 2003: 10).

Corruption and brutality represent a duality with which the police deal with any civilian who drift into the margins of legality. Gutiérrez Román explains that "[a]uthority may turn a blind eye, as if they don't see anything and allow the vendors to sell without permission at the cost of a fee. If the fee is not paid, that's when the soldiers and police begin to detain and harass the vendors" (interview, 24 October 2015, Mexico City). Toreros, like the police themselves, must always judge their own position of strength in comparison to that of their opponent: should I pay? Should I run? Should I fight? Consequently, bribery is a tool of both the police and the informal vendor and, says Olivo Pérez, "[b]ribery is the point that locks diverse actors in a transactional circle of a political and economic nature as well as making possible the broad consolidation of street vending [and] is the agreement that allows the vendors to persevere more comfortably, extensively, and lucratively in their activities" (2010: 115). Further, being a police officer in Mexico City is "risky business. All the more so because of the poor organization of police. Though current figures do not exist, it is estimated that eighty police officers die each year in Mexico City, representing one death every five days. […] The police prefer not to enforce the law and the prevailing context of corruption means that they would prefer to receive *plata en lugar de plomo* [silver instead of lead]" (Olivo Pérez 2003: 9). The addition of the Citizen Protection Unit has only inspired resentment and competition

within the police ranks (Arroyo 2003; Davis 2007). Consequently, toreros "have been able to take advantage of structural weaknesses in the political and administrative apparatus of the Mexican state to defend their interests in occupying public space" (Cross 1998b: 229–230).

While the Giuliani plan sought to revitalize the Historic Center by driving out street vendors thereby making the zone more appealing to high-income consumers, the reverse has occurred. If one wonders why a torero would choose to work in such hostile conditions rather than sell from the relative safety of a market stall, a major factor is that the density of visitors to the Historic Center means that it is an increasingly lucrative place to work. A vendor cannot rely on a middle-class customer to locate a specific item or vendor in the labyrinth of tents that constitute markets such as Merced or Tepito. Instead, street vendors prefer to come to the consumer. Architectural restoration, the development of modern transportation and shopping opportunities, and "the growth of heritage tourism […] ha[ve] contributed to the locational advantages of the city center for those informal traders anxious to capitalize on the tourist market" (Bromley and Mackie 2009: 1486).

The value of the streets surrounding the Zócalo, as ideal territories for informal commerce, are attracting more and more vendors with diverse affiliations, strategies, and consequently, these territories "require the most effort on the part of their owners [to defend]" (Olivo Pérez 2010: 108). Olivo Pérez asserts that disputes between informal merchant organizations and independent vendors nearly always concern the management "of space and placement positions" (2010: 103). This tension is exacerbated in the

Historic Center where the right to a particular territory cannot be demonstrated by paying rent or some legal claim. Instead, toreros command these territories through force of numbers and project this occupation through their collective voice.

Conclusion

In many cases, street vendors and especially toreros have subsistence lifestyles. Social worker Laura Vargas opines:

> Many toreros live very short-term transactional lives. In an urban setting, your entire day is about making transactions. Probably what's on your mind are the quotas you have to meet to make your money, raids, et cetera. And so your days go. With the exception of a few entrepreneurs, toreros don't have a marketing strategy or a long term plan (interview, 11 February 2016, Mexico City).

Discussing under-employed communities in post-industrial Great Britain, sociologist Simon Charlesworth states, "An inescapable conclusion […] seems to be that the most dispossessed individuals understand their lives the least and are certainly the least able to articulate their existence" (2003: 2). However, while there is little reason to doubt that toreros constitute an extremely vulnerable portion of an already socioeconomically vulnerable population, they also complicate the corollary between marginality and lack of self-awarness. To this end anthropologist Matthew Gutmann warns, "The notion that economic class position determines social consciousness overlooks important life experiences other than economic ones and sets up a dualism in which ideas are determined by 'outside' material factors instead of existing and changing in complex relation with them" (1993: 78).

In *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, anthropologist James Scott examines forms of resistance practiced by oppressed populations toward their oppressors. In contrast to armed rebellion, these *covert* forms of resistance often favor self-interest over cooperation and "typically avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms" (1987: 29). Are the gruff pregones, chiflidos, and coded language of the toreros *weapons of the weak* or, much like the threatening din of the baton-beating police, sounds that precede the blow? Scott's work is valuable to this investigation because, to a degree, it mirrors my interest in adapting the sonic attributes of out-right war to forms of quotidian conflict. However, I argue that Scott's model does not encompass the multi-polar power structures of contemporary Mexico City.

Torero groups demonstrate a degree of internal organization and planning that in many cases, out-pace the poorly organized and under-motivated police. Toreros, simply out of practical necessity, must work for the material gain of their immediate group but also compromise and collaborate with other torero groups as well as a broad network of market vendors, shop owners, and suppliers. Toreros deploy coded radio communiqués and whistles to achieve both ends, to confound the police and communicate with unseen allies. Finally, the toreros—masters of risk assessment—choose their battles carefully but conduct their work in full defiance of civic authority, often steps away from the National Palace and other symbolic sites of state power.

Toreros also stage public protests frequently. For example, on July 27, 2015, toreros blocked the entrance of the offices of the Secretary of Public Security of Mexico

City to "call upon the authorities to halt operations conducted against them by the inspectors […], as well as the sector chiefs of the sixteen boroughs, who [the vendors] complained, were trying to confiscate their products, which they could not recover, and would represent significant losses to the economy" (C. Velázquez 2015). Again, on September 7, 2015, street vendors marched from 21 de Septiembre Street to the Monument of the Revolution to demand the de-criminalization and regularization of the labor practices of their more than fifteen thousand compatriots (Jardínez 2015).

Toreros may often be driven by tremendous economic necessity but also by entitlement; many believe that the public spaces of Mexico City belong to them and that their trade constitutes an important public service. The sidewalks of Mexico City are more than places of business for the torero: "[They] draw upon the valor of the space as a symbol, as cultural patrimony not of a particular social group, but a territory for everyone [and this] allows the generic reunion and reconciliation of the Mexican people, beneath the dimension of the sacred, in order to give social legitimacy to their own professional interests" (Lezama 1991: 660–661). Beneath the drive for survival and providing for their families, the behavior of the toreros reflects "expressions […] of resistance, and only in gradation of more developed consciousness, […] expressions of class struggle" (Olivo Pérez 2010: 132). When left with no other recourse, toreros physically confront and intimidate the police and government agents. Thus, while not engaged in outright revolt, toreros display "a level of energy and aggression [that n]either the inspectors, nor agents, nor police […] are capable of matching" (Olivo Pérez 2010: 169). The toreros complicate Scott's binary of overt and covert forms of resistance, and, opines Gutmann,

"at least in Latin America today and historically, these forms occur together, alternate, and transform themselves into each other" (1993: 77).

But why is direct confrontation worth the risk for toreros? El Diablo believes that

> what happens is that one's needs are much stronger than the fear of the government's blows. I would prefer fifty lashes than my children going without food. I prefer to face the blows of the police rather than leave my girlfriend without food. I need to bring income to my house in whatever form I can as long as it's done honorably (interview, 3 April 2016, Mexico City).

For Froilán, the rewards of his trade simply outweigh the risks:

> I thank God that because of this business, I have been able to pay for my children's studies. All three have careers now. One is a librarian, the other a biologist, and the youngest a graphic designer. All three went to UNAM [National Autonomous University of Mexico]. They are my pride! (interview, 8 April 2015, Mexico City).

Toreros have proven to be too adaptable and powerful and the State, too weak. The hearing and sounding body, the primary tool and weapon of the torero, has ruptured the panoptic ear and held the street.

Chapter 3 | Navigating Acoustic Patriarchy: Hearing, Embodying, and Surviving Gender Violence in Mexico City's Public Spaces

Who walks *alone* in the streets at night? The sad, the mad, the bad. The lost, the lonely. The sleepless, the homeless. All the city's internal exiles. The night has always been the time for daylight's dispossessed – the dissident, the different. Walking alone at night in the city by both men and women has, since time immemorial, been interpreted as a sign of moral, social or spiritual dereliction.

—Matthew Beaumont

Karola's Commute

"Karola" lives in the neighborhood of Portales Norte and works in La Roma Norte, a distance of approximately nine kilometers. Twice a day, five days a week, Karola is faced with a choice. She can walk by the shuttered storefronts of Portales Norte before business hours and make her way to the red-light zone along Tlalpan Road. Then she can hop on the metro at the Portales station, change trains at the notoriously crowded Pino Suarez Station, and then disembark at the Insurgentes Station. From there, she must walk about four blocks to reach her office. To return home in the evening, often after dark, she must reverse course. This is the most direct route. However, for reasons both material and metaphysical, she avoids this route whenever she can. The streets near her home are bustling with street vendors and shoppers by midday—a sign of safety in her view—but during her commuting hours are quite desolate. The sidewalks along Tlalpan Road are peppered with loitering prostitutes and Karola fears the type of customers that the prostitutes draw, especially at night. At the convergence of two train lines, the Pino Suarez Station can be extremely packed during morning and afternoon rush hour. If it happens to be raining, pedestrians from the street are driven underground, some seeking

an alternate route and others only temporary shelter. Rain also affects the performance of the trains, causing delays in service that choke the tunnels and boarding platforms with frustrated commuters. This combination of place (Pino Suarez) and situation (a rainy day) is one that Karola dreads just as much as a lonely alleyway or freeway underpass. In the crowded metro car or boarding platform, accidental contact can be virtually indiscernible from intentional groping.

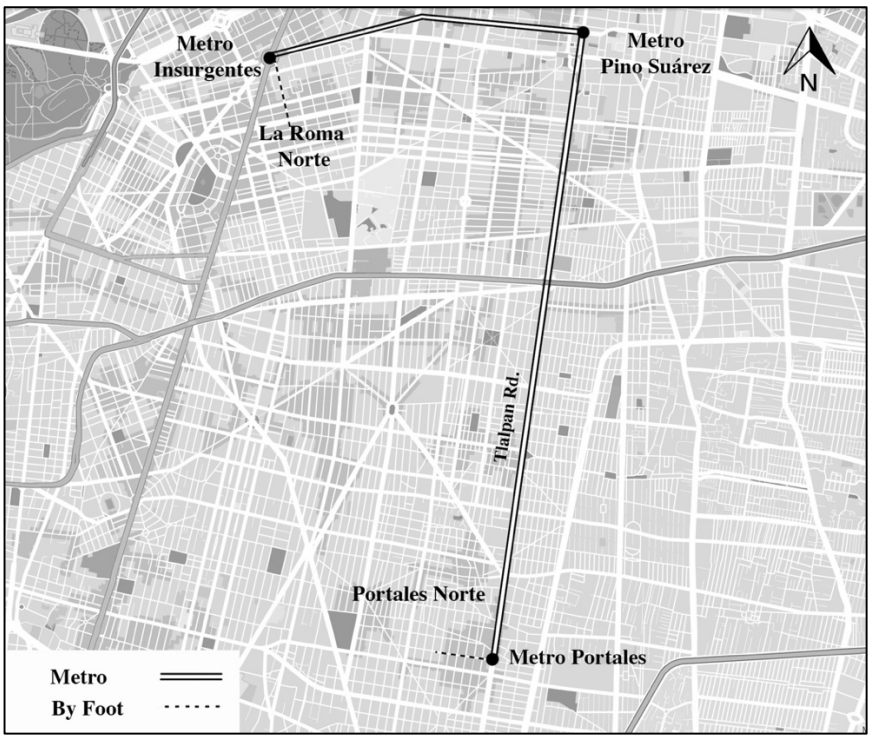

Figure 3.1. A map of Karola's ideal route between home and work. Created by author using Snazzy Maps (CC0 1.0 Universal).

The other possible route is circuitous but, in Karola's experience, less risky. In this case, she can walk several meters from her front door, wait for a *pesero*[44] or

[44] A small, privately owned and operated diesel bus

trolibus,[45] travel from east to west across Portales Norte, and arrive at the Zapata Station. From there, she must take a direct metro ride and disembark at the Niños Heroes Station in the Doctores neighborhood. This route involves an additional bus ride, less time on the metro, and more walking. In terms of personal safety, Karola ranks Doctores in the same category as Portales Norte. They are both dangerous at night and early morning but fairly safe during business hours. Once above ground, she again must walk east to west, pass through Doctores into the more affluent neighborhood of La Roma Norte, eventually arriving at work and depending on countless variables, arriving approximately fifteen to twenty minutes later than she would have if she took the first route.

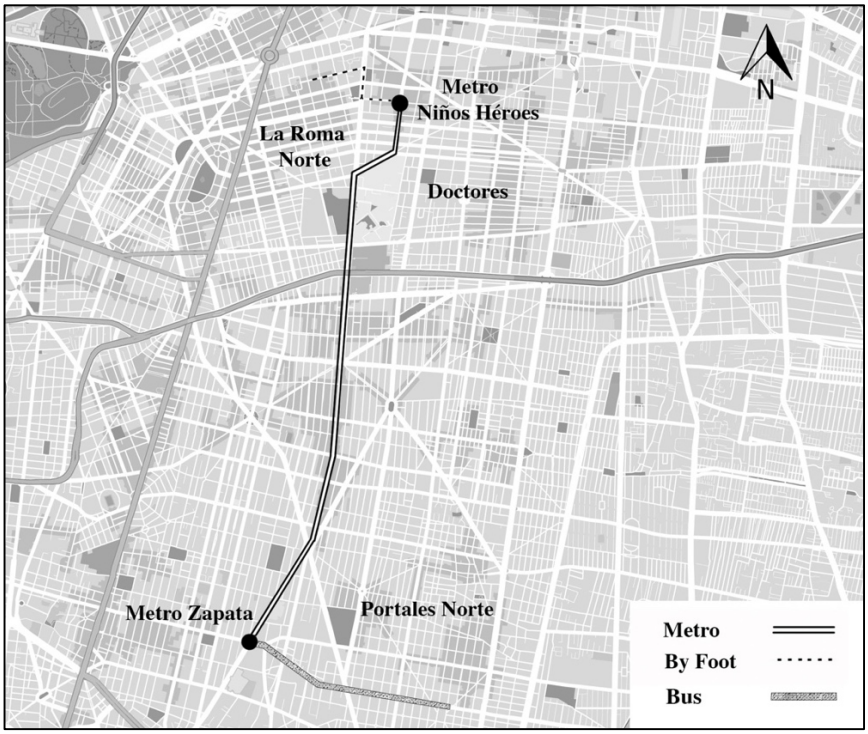

Figure 3.2. A map of Karola's alternate route. Created by author using Snazzy Maps (CC0 1.0 Universal).

[45] A city bus that is powered by an overhead, electric cable

Here, I present Karola's commute as she describes it and enacts it—a sequence of choices informed by the hour, time of day, weather, news reports she has heard on the radio or read, stories she has acquired second-hand, and memories of her own experiences. These choices comprise a ritual meant to ensure her personal safety; these choices are not fixed but in a continual state of renewal. Sociologist Alejandra Massolo suggests that such rituals serve to counteract something implicit in Mexico City's very design: "parking lots, tunnels, corridors, or alleys […] provoke daily insecurity or fear, more in women than men, especially if the visibility or illumination is poor, above all, for fear of sexual aggression" (2004: 15).

One morning, while traveling to her office along her alternative route, a pesero driver refused to accept Karola's money as she attempted to board. "Why not?" she asked. "Beautiful women don't pay here," the driver replied. Fearing some kind of expectation for reciprocity on the part of the driver, Karola leapt back onto the curb and hurried off to search for another pesero. Her commuting ritual now has an additional consideration, avoiding the pesero belonging to this particular driver. The ritual expands to counteract new dangers. At the opposite end of her route in the Doctores neighborhood, a newspaper vendor lies in wait. He knows Karola by sight and every time she passes him on her way to and from work, he tries to catch her attention and draw her to him saying things like, "Hey, good-lookin'! Come over here! I want to talk to you! I have something for you!" His tone and persistence frighten her and she ignores him. She has experimented with other routes to avoid the newspaper vendor's block altogether by walking parallel streets, only to discover a Scylla of leering young men on one block and

a Charybdis of whistling construction workers on the other. In the end, she decided that the obnoxious predictability of the newspaper vendor is safer that more unknown dangers.

One evening after work, she descended the stairs of the Niños Heroes Station to find the newspaper vendor at the bottom. She had never seen the man outside of his booth and suspected that he might have followed her underground. Once she spotted him, she flew past him onto the partitioned section of the boarding platform reserved for women and children hoping that the hazard-orange barrier would grant her some symbolic protection. The newspaper vendor continued toward her, casually passing the partition and pausing behind her. Karola recalls feeling a burning sensation flood her torso and like a reflex, she spun and raced past the man and above ground without looking back. Karola laments that bit by bit, she is running out of ways to get to work. The only option left is to hire a taxi which, during rush hour, could double her commute time and is prohibitively expensive for Karola. She says she feels impotent.

Acoso Callejero

Acoso callejero (street harassment) is an insidious form of gender violence that may be distinguished from other forms in that it is normally executed in public spaces between strangers. In Mexico City, acoso callejero often manifests as sound and may include: whistles, whispers, grunts, *shisteos* (e.g., *ch-ch-ch*), attention-demanding calls (e.g., "Hey!"), verbal greetings, and *piropos* (Gaytán Sánchez 2004: 58–59). These sounds may precipitate overt physical contact or contact disguised as an accident. In other

cases, acoso callejero may be decidedly silent and consist entirely of unwanted physical contact or insistent gazes (Gaytán Sánchez 2004: 58–59). Whatever the manifestation, these acts serve to "exert power over another and intentionally attack the human rights of others, in this case women, both physically and symbolically" (García Hernández 2004: 132).

While acoso callejero may assume many different forms, what distinguishes it from other forms of gender violence (e.g., domestic abuse, many incidents of childhood sexual abuse, and school/workplace harassment) is that normally, the parties involved are unknown to each other and this state of anonymity "explains why many offensive attitudes can occur in contrast to all the rules of urbanity" (Gaytán Sánchez 2004: 92). The anonymity of the harasser[46] and the popular belief that the acts themselves are somehow "normal" may call into question the judgment, perceptive acumen, and even the sanity of the victim.

In Mexico City, easy access to public spaces represents personal liberty, the possibility to earn money, build networks, and find pleasure. Put simply, acoso callejero is a denial of access to these many possibilities. A sense of security on public transportation is essential to this access in that it extends the mobility of an urbanite far beyond the limits of what one could comfortably walk in a day. Yet the modes of public transportation in Mexico City are heavily gendered and "perceived in a manner completely distinct between both genders since a great number of the crimes committed

[46] Interlocutors refer to the individuals who perpetrate acoso callejero as "*acosadores*" ("harassers" or "stalkers").

are of a sexual nature in which the majority of the attackers are men and the majority of victims are women" (Ban Toledo 2011: 36). It is there, in the transportation arteries of Mexico City, that acoso callejero coexists with overt violence: rape, beatings, and armed robbery. Psychologist Andrea García Hernández posits that the hierarchy of possible offenses renders acoso callejero virtually innocuous and warns that the trivialization of these acts of "symbolic violence" serve to normalize them. Within popular discourse, she argues, acoso callejero is "not seen as violence. In our culture [i.e., Mexican culture] there exists many expressions of violence that are quotidian and may not appear aggressive at first glance, but when we analyze and deeply contemplate on this topic we realize that it is a form of relating that is deeply rooted" (2004: 135).

Of all the mutually constitutive ways of hearing and being heard discussed in this investigation, the sounds of acoso callejero have, in my experience, proven to be the most difficult to observe. Traveling alone through the streets of Mexico City, I have only encountered their traces—distant shouts, *chiflidos*, or mumbled words directed elsewhere. Traveling with a female companion (e.g., a friend, colleague, interlocutor, etc.), I hear nothing though my friend may have heard something only moments before we met. As I hope to demonstrate in the coming pages, my performance of masculinity and my very presence in public spaces seemed to have a dampening effect on the production of these sounds despite my efforts to perceive them. Whether I was guiding my companion or she was guiding me (which was much more frequently the case), by virtue of my presence and appearance, I am cast in the role of protector by those poised to whistle and shout. As discussed in Chapter 2, men often assume the role of protector over women in *torero*

bandas. Independent street vendors and women in particular suffer extreme predation by not only those who wish to cheat them, but those who seem compelled to humiliate them and discourage them from their trade. Social scientist Elizabeth Wilson suggests that as cities grow and become ever more central to cultural production, the independent movement of women in cities is increasingly conflated with moral turpitude (1991: 14–15). As women are drawn into the public sphere by opportunity or the pressures of necessity, "men and the state continue their attempts to confine them to the private sphere or to the safety of certain zones" (Wilson 1991: 16). Thus, in the example of independent, female street vendors, these women may be targeted by predators not only because they are alone, but also because their independence represents a punishable transgression.

Unable to perceive the sounds of acoso callejero myself, I have only been granted access to them through the testimonies and comportment of interlocutors. Broaching the topic of acoso callejero with them has been difficult. For many of my interlocutors, the subject was an odd one. Several remarked that they had never discussed acoso callejero with another person before. Others commented on how acoso callejero was something that happened to them nearly every day but that clear memories of these encounters were curiously hard to access. In most interviews, interlocutors seemed to deliberate carefully before speaking—as if by speaking about their harassment they might summon it forth into the present moment. Others equivocated, or more often, normalized acoso callejero as something natural and inevitable. Some found it illustrative to imitate the sounds of their harassers and in doing so, added a strange and uncanny dimension to their recounting. The sounds themselves seemed to provoke a feedback loop, driving the

storyteller deeper, bringing up more sounds, driving them deeper still. Says composer Jenny Johnson, "sonically-triggered abuse testimonies […] have become indelibly connected—and often inextricably transformed—into physical sensations of sexual violation" (2009: 59).

If we accept philosopher Elizabeth Grosz's assertion that "[s]pace is the ongoing possibility of a different inhabitation" (2001: 9), it follows that *acoustic patriarchy*—the audible manifestations of a "male" space—is a matter of labor. It is a deliberate effort to re-cast an arbitrary bifurcation of space as both necessary and inevitable. In the context of Mexico City, acoso callejero is a salient mechanism for the maintenance of this bifurcation. Despite its arbitrariness, the social poetics (see Herzfeld 1997) of "gendered" space is a myth that I have heard perpetuated by harassers and victims a like. Perhaps then, it is not surprising that I have had the most revelatory discussions about acoso callejero indoors, at gatherings of friends, during work breaks behind an ice cream counter, or at dinner over tacos and beer. Interlocutors seemed to speak most easily about their experiences well away from the sites where those experiences occurred. A sense of fellowship also seemed to facilitate recollection; conversations grew rich and animated between interlocutors who shared common experiences of harassment though again (remarkably), most said that they had never had a serious discussion on the subject before. Consequently, this investigation is framed by two such gatherings and enriched by testimonies from several others—First, a casual dinner party with Karola and her coworkers and second, a gender violence awareness workshop hosted by multimedia artist, feminist activist, and journalist Mónica Mayer.

Mónica Mayer

A Mexico City native, Mónica Mayer has been a galvanizing voice in the evolution of Mexican feminism for over forty years. She has exhibited her art in the Carrillo Gil Museum of Art in Mexico City and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, is the cofounder of the first feminist art collective in Mexico, Polvo de Gallina Negra (Black Hen Powder), and she recently re-introduced her installation, "El Tendedero" ("The Clothesline"), to the public after its debut in 1978. The project, in which victims of sexual harassment and abuse are invited to pin anonymous, written testimonies on a clothesline—what Mayer considers to be an archetypal symbol of the domestic sphere—represented a watershed moment in the public debate over gender violence in the 1970s. Re-exhibited at UNAM's University Museum of Contemporary Art (MUAC) in Mexico City in 2016, El Tendedero offers a unique teleology. Mayer explains that initially, her installation simply gave women from different social classes and different parts of the city a venue to express what bothered them about urban life. In other words, the subject matter engaged in El Tendedero was initially meant to be open-ended. The emphasis on acoso callejero emerged from the anonymous notes left by contributors and recalls Mayer, many visitors to El Tendedero seemed to be transfixed because they discovered their own experiences echoed on the hanging scraps of paper.

Troubled Binaries: Gendered Difference in Urban Spaces

Between the years 2013 and 2014, approximately seven women were murdered each day in Mexico and this number has been rising for the last fifteen years. This led

Mexico's Ministry of the Interior to issue "gender alerts"[47] in eleven municipalities in July of 2015 (Reina Muñoz 2016). Across the board, reports of gender violence are increasing—domestic abuse, rape, femicide, human trafficking, violence targeting LGBT communities—while at the same time women, homosexuals, and transgendered people are assuming greater roles of economic and social power and public visibility (Ban Toledo 2011: 30). According to a report issued by Mexico's National Institute for Statistics and Geography (INEGI), "women's homicides […] are more of a structural phenomenon, […] that is, [they] derive from a cultural pattern and less from the changes of social violence brought on by criminal organizations," noting that the majority of these incidents cannot be tied directly to affiliates of criminal organizations ("Estadísticas a propósito del…" 2015: 10). Nevertheless, it is important to consider the tangential influence that the Mexican Drug War[48] may have on this structural phenomenon. For

[47] According to Mexico's National Commission to Prevent and Eradicate Violence Against Women, "The Alert of Gender Violence against Women (AVGM) is a mechanism unique in the world [that] consists of a set of emergency government actions to face and eradicate feminicidal violence and/or the existence of a comparable grievance" (Comisión Nacional para Prevenir 2016). In practice, these Gender Alerts are carried out by the Ministry of the Interior and include the following procedures: "(1) To establish a multidisciplinary, inter-institutional group with a gender perspective to evaluate the situation; (2) to implement preventative actions in the procuration and administration of justice in order to confront feminicidal violence; (3) to develop special reports that establish the area and behavior of the violence against women; (4) to allocate necessary budget resources; and (5) to notify the public of how and in which areas it [i.e., the gender alert] will be implemented" (#PreguntaFrecuente ¿Qué es una alerta de género?")

[48] The Mexican Drug War, as it has come to be known, was declared by Mexican president Felipe Calderón (2006–2012) shortly after he came to power and began with a military operation called "Operation Michoacán" meant to overwhelm cartel operations in that state (Camhaji and García 2017). Resulting in over 60,000 deaths during Calderón's presidency, the Mexican Drug War appeared wind down with the election of Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) candidate Enrique Peña Nieto in 2012 (marking the return of PRI to power after having held the presidency for more than seventy years with only a twelve-year interim). During his campaign, Peña Nieto promised to shift from all-out war with the drug cartels to an emphasis on protecting the public ("México: el plan de Peña Nieto" 2012). What time and the courageous contributions of Mexican journalists have proven (in a country where journalists are routinely murdered [("De 2000 a la fecha" 2016]) is that the PRI has created the illusion of de-escalation by permitting drug cartels to work in the shadows and in some cases—as in the abduction and likely

example, the dissolution of families and communities and the displacement of individuals caused by cartel violence and its consequent corrosion of public institutions have produced ideal conditions for increased gender violence. The epidemic of political corruption extends the possibilities of these forms of systemic violence: one would hesitate to denounce a criminal to a police officer for fear the officer has some sort of agreement with the criminal or that the criminal has connections with organized crime.

Figure 3.3. Street performers render violence of gender and violence of the State corporeal in a demonstration against gender violence as part of the Ayotzinapa marches of 2014. Photo by Viviana Zuñiga Rojas. Used by permission.

A central objective of this work is to demonstrate—through the testimonies of living people—that the casual violence of acoso callejero is one of the many outcomes of systemic violence and inequity. In adopting this position, I challenge two fallacies about

assassination of forty-three students in Iguala, Guerrero—actively colluded with criminal organizations in committing crimes on civilians and inhibiting the investigations of these crimes (see Chapter 5).

acoso callejero that effectively cancel each other out: 1) that acoso callejero is simply a "natural" part of Mexican culture and 2) that acoso callejero is committed solely by deranged individuals. Anthropologist Henrietta Moore argues, "[v]iolence at the national and international level is strongly sexualized, and the distinction between perpetrators and victims of violence is often represented as a genderized difference" (1994: 63). Sociologist Soledad González Montes extends this argument in saying, "violence exercised by men against women is not the expression of individual pathology […] Rather it is a constitutive part of a gender order marked by cultural norms and practices that legitimize and encourage the preservation of a patriarchal structure in which men have the right and obligation to exercise power over their partners, including through the use of violence" (2012: 218). If this is true, it is no wonder that acoso callejero, one of the many expressions of the systemic violence of the Mexican state, would be exercised upon female bodies.

How are the interests of the State served by promoting the "genderized difference" that Moore describes? According to Grosz, architectural space is inherently neutral in that its purpose is determined by a given occupant. This leads to the conclusion that multiple occupants may endow a given space with multiple, parallel purposes (2001: 9). The imposition of binaries upon spaces—be it male/female, rich/poor, mestizo/indigenous—limits the possibility of their unsanctioned repurposing. Individuals are consigned to "appropriate" spheres and closed circuits. In Mexico City, acoustic patriarchy is a critical vehicle for this consignment and while some might dismiss unwelcomed sounds as relatively harmless, "There is nothing ethereal about female role

imperatives when they are viewed as grounded in physical space. Simultaneously, women's placement in space provides support for the ideology and energizes the cultural definition of female roles" (Pellow 2003: 162). For Grosz, patriarchy is a project dependent on self-perpetuation, taking root in the daily interactions of individuals in which the lives of women are limited to "(pseudo) biological terms" and "men free to inhabit what they (falsely) believe is a purely conceptual order while at the same time enabling them to satisfy their (sometimes disavowed) need for corporeal contact through their access to women's bodies and services" (1994: 14). Under this world-view, men inhabit the life of the mind while women are only bodies. In disavowing the corporality of men, one also negates the sentient reason of women. Mayer argues that these perspectives are deeply entrenched in Mexico and are perpetuated by both men and women. "If you're taught to think that you're only valuable as a woman because you're beautiful," she explains, "which the media and everyone tells you all the time, it's hard work just leaving the house. Men see women as objects and women see women as objects. We all see women as objects because that's how we've been educated. So it's not surprising. Both men and women are sexist. We've been brought up in the same system" (interview, 19 February 2016, Mexico City). Activist and artist Talía García contemplates how profoundly this particular education has affected her sense of herself saying,

> I have lived my life being a woman in a man's world. I try to understand the situation so that it won't affect me too much. I try to understand that the problems of violence against women come from a system that has endured for centuries. I will continue to protest against this, because this injustice does not make sense. I believe that we are slow to change but in the end, we are all people (personal communication, 12 April 2016).

González Montes suggests that the impetus for women's growing participation in

the public sphere is not only the consequence of changing economic realities in Mexico but also the "destabilization of the generic model of masculine authority" (2012: 221). According to sociologist Patricia Gaytán Sánchez, this has led to a paradigmatic shift in public interactions producing "changes in the organizational framework reflected in social patterns distinct to traditional gender interaction" (2004: 107). As women become more active and visible in the streets of Mexico City, they become "less dependent on duality and opposition; instead of setting nature against the city, they find nature *in* the city" (Wilson 1991: 8). This has been a risky venture, says Mayer, because traditionally, the nuclear and extended family served to simultaneously protect and cloister women.

This idealized, hierarchical family structure—one that is headed by an oligarchy of men who delegate, discipline, and protect women and children—represents a microcosm of State power. The promotion of this microcosm is necessary for the State to perpetuate itself through the myth of its own permanence. Says Wilson, "Prostitutes and prostitution recur continually in the discussion of urban life, until it almost seems as though to be a woman—an individual, not part of a family or kin group—in the city, is to become a prostitute—a public woman" (1991: 8). Seen from this vantage, the independent, "public woman" and the prostitute both exist beyond the realm of male protection and are thus, equally threatening. The significance of "male protection" works its way into everyday interactions. In my conversation with climate scientist "Marta," I brought up the fact that acoso callejero seems to evaporate when I accompany a female friend in public. She opines, "in that moment you are their patron, their male-guardian. To attack her would really be attacking you which they're not willing to do" (interview,

10 February 2016, Mexico City).

Acoso callejero represents a ritual of territorial domination. In the limited writing on the subject,[49] the testimonies presented here, as well as initiatives implemented by city government to curb the phenomenon,[50] acoso callejero is often conceived of as acts perpetrated by men on women. Acoso callejero is based on lightning-fast visual assessment of potential victims by perpetrators. Physical appearance establishes the premise for victimhood so that, "if a man has a feminine physical appearance, the people with whom he interacts may perceive him from the gender stereotypes that they have incorporated. […] The same situation could occur with a woman who appears masculine" (Ortiz Hernández and Granados Cosme 2003: 282). Gaytán Sánchez agrees, arguing that the designation of masculinity or femininity (on the part of the harasser) frames the justification of harassment (2004: 110). My purpose is not to suggest that men are never harassed by women[51] or that this anonymous violence never involves members of the same gender group. Rather, I argue that acoso callejero is both produced in and serves to

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[49] Finding published research on the subject of acoso callejero has been a challenge. Considered to be almost a footnote in the larger discussion of gender violence in Mexico, the few scholars who discuss acoso callejero are largely junior scholars and graduate students in Mexican institutions who incorporate their own experiences with surveys and interviews. These studies—what I consider to be really a hybrid of primary and secondary sources—have been crucial in expanding this dissertation beyond my own subject pool. Nevertheless, sound perception and production—things that I argue are central to this topic—are only dealt with tangentially in these works. For examples, see Ban Toledo, "La mujer en el espacio público: Urbanismo con perspectiva de género," and García Hernández, "Qué mecanismos han generado las mujeres usuarias del sistema de transporte colectivo metro de la ciudad de México para defenderse del hostigamiento por el género masculino?"

[50] For example, the segregation of metro trains and metrobuses between "women and children under the age of twelve" and everyone else

[51] In this investigation, I never heard of or witnessed women perpetrating acoso callejero. Perhaps the absence of such reports is, in part, indicative of gendered behavioral norms that influence how victims interpret harassment as well as the mechanisms in place to publicly denounce harassment which, by design, assume a male perpetrator and a female victim.

enforces a conceptual space that is defined by a rigid, heteronormative gender division.

Discursive Modes: Piropos Revisited

After some small-talk on a crosstown taxi ride, my driver decided to initiate me in the "art" of piropos. He pointed at a woman walking along the sidewalk. "What would you say to her?" he asked. I processed the question. "I'm not sure what you mean," I responded. Talking the baton, he announced, "I would say this!" He then proceeded to recite a euphemistic piropo about the size of the woman's breasts (acting as if he was speaking to her). The driver repeated the lesson: "how about her?" he shouted over the drone of traffic and gestured at another pedestrian. Again, I failed to meet his challenge and the driver offered another poetic turn about that woman's long legs. I asked him if he has ever succeeded in whatever he is trying to accomplish with this approach. He said, "oh yeah! Sometimes they say 'thank you,' sometimes they say 'fuck you!' Either way, I am successful." The driver seemed to be enjoying himself as if he were engrossed in a game. He also seemed slightly disappointed that I was unwilling or unable to participate. I felt a palpable pressure from him, as if he needed my participation to validate his own. And if this was a game, it was one based on reduction. The living people beyond the car window became only caricatures—crude sketches drifting by.

My driver's piropos are a basic ingredient of acoso callejero and speak to its insidious nature. The piropo is thought to have originated during the sixteenth century and can be found, in numerous derivations, throughout the Mediterranean as well as former Spanish and Portuguese colonies of the Americas (Gaytán Sánchez 2004: 152;

Schreier 2005: 65). The piropo is a commentary, typically issued by a man, on the physical appearance of a woman (Schreier 2005: 67) and is traditionally classified as being either "offensive" or "charming" (Gaytán Sánchez 2004: 152). Like its cousin the *albur*, the piropo is a peacock display of mental dexterity; the more nested meanings a piropo carries, the greater its value. The ingenious piropo is meant to make the recipient laugh, marvel at the wit of the speaker, and perhaps blush. For example, Karola recalls a moment when an elderly, overweight man said something complementary about her appearance in the street that she found charming. Thinking back on the encounter, Karola wonders whether it was the man's age that made his overture seem harmless. Karola's coworkers, "Loreta" and "Fani," both remark that there have been rare occasions in which they have been impressed by a stranger's piropo. They explain that in these cases, the ingenious piropos did not necessarily boost their self-esteem but instead, were just impressive feats of verbal acrobatics. Regarding ingenious piropos, Fani says, "it really depends on my state of mind. The times when a piropo doesn't bother me is like 5% in comparison with the ones that do" (interview, 14 August 2015, Mexico City).

Audio 3.1. A man shouts piropos at a dancer during a carnival in Tláhuac, Mexico City. Recorded by author.

Like most forms of acoso callejero, piropos exchanged between strangers play on social pressures and uncertainty felt by victims; they resemble words of intimate affection and between strangers, they mask ambiguous intentions. The piropo, issued from the safety of a taxi cab or from within a huddled group of construction workers, presents a familiar discursive form in an unusual setting. It is the language of praise, desire, and

intimacy transposed to an encounter between strangers. Re-contextualized, these words "provoke ambiguous sentiments in women who may appreciate the compliments as a self-esteem boost, but [also] feel uncomfortable because of the offensive content of the majority of [piropos]"(2004: 239). Yet psychologist Susana Velázquez warns that more often than not, the piropo between strangers has nothing to do with flattery (2004: 146–147) and linguist Judith Schreier adds that regardless of the context of a piropo, its likely impact (if not motivation) is "to reinforce the image that he [the piropo-giver] is in charge of himself and society and is, above all, masculine" (2005: 72).

The discomfort that piropos inspire in most of my interlocutors makes it clear that they do not take them as compliments and yet, some also express a wisp of ambivalence. In several conversations, interlocutors (both victims and perpetrators of acoso callejero) wondered if *other* women enjoy the attention. There is a subtle narrative in these accounts that someone (no one seems to be able to determine who) enjoys or at least is unaffected by acoso callejero. Consequently, victims are doubly tormented—first through the harassment itself and second, by the thought that there is something wrong with them for feeling harassed. The myth that reacting negatively to piropos is outlier behavior serves to isolate victims but also animates and justifies the behavior of perpetrators. "Women crave the attention I give them," the taxi driver said, "they like it." Put simply, acoso callejero is a practice concerned with identifying and dominating female bodies. In the chance encounter on the street, these bodies need only appear to be female to garner aggression.

A Life Machista: Remo's Story

"Remo" is a good friend of mine and is confident enough in our friendship to discuss his participation in acoso callejero. During his adolescence, he engaged in acoso callejero on a regular basis. He is now in his late 30s, married, and works with Karola in a government institution in La Roma Norte. He continues to live in the working-class borough of Iztapalapa where he grew up. He explains that when he was young, being part of a *banda*[52] was essential in Iztapalapa. To be alone, he says, was to invite muggings, beatings, and harassment by other bandas. Remo's banda included about eight to ten men and boys who lived near each other. They devoted much of their time to demonstrating and defending their territory (both sonorously and through physical confrontation with intruders). Like many such bandas in Iztapalapa, Remo's inherited a special chiflido (whistle) that he says had been around for at least several decades. This chiflido served to announce the presence of a member upon arrival, call the others from their homes, or to signal when a member was in danger. A kind of sonorous "brand," this chiflido was also used to mark their territory and challenge rivals. The banda would huddle together and issue their chiflidos and insults with a sense of relative safety. And behind this defensive wall, Remo's banda would also practice their piropos and slurs on women as they passed. At a dinner party with coworkers, Remo demonstrated the chiflido that he and his clique would direct at women. A conversation ensued between Remo and coworkers Fani, "Flamingo," Karola, and "Julieta."

FANI: Did you do that to any woman who passed or only the most beautiful?

[52] In this case, a tight-knit group of male friends

REMO: We whistled at any woman who passed. This was back when I was between fifteen and eighteen years old. I was in an adolescent stage, a time of transition.

FLAMINGO: So hormones caused everything, huh?

REMO: No, we would say ugly things too. We would yell things like, "whores!" Many awful things. Obviously now wouldn't do that.

FLAMINGO: It was so easy to do, right?

KAROLA: Yeah, from a car window like a bunch of cowards.

[everyone laughs]

REMO: Yeah…We would get in a car and drive around and yell at women and yes, it was cowardly. When construction workers do it, it's the same thing. They only do it if they are in a group (interview, 14 August 2015, Mexico City).

Julieta was intrigued by the suggestion that a group of young men would feel a need for protection and asked Remo exactly what he and his friends were protecting against. Remo balked for a moment and then recovered by saying, "because we were stupid and well, in our banda we were like a herd of animals" (interview, 14 August 2015, Mexico City). Here, it is interesting to consider Henrietta Moore's assessment that "it is the perpetrator of violence who is threatened and experiences thwarting" (1994: 66–67). Remo attributed his behavior to a herd mentality—one that is intensified by imagined threats—and noted that his behavior changed with a simple change of venue: "I entered college and I met different types of people, many of whom were also from working-class neighborhoods but interested in different things" (interview, 14 August 2015, Mexico City).

Remo raised an important distinction between the banda to which he once belonged and the impoverished setting where he grew up. Many of the friends he found

in college also grew up in poor, tough neighborhoods. He said that, "these new friends were much more 'barrio' [i.e., tough/street-smart] than me. But they just had different ideas about how to treat women" (interview, 12 February 2016, Mexico City). This is important to mention because there is a well-worn stereotype linking acoso callejero to the "machismo of the lower classes" (Tovar Nemesio 2012: 55). However, to connect acoso callejero exclusively with poor or working-class men results in several levels of misdirection. I argue that such a conceit is particularly suspicious in a cultural context of demonstrable social stratification and class-consciousness that saturate everything from language to police enforcement to public policy. In Remo's case, the pressures and dangers of Iztapalapa prompted his participation in a banda that also victimized women but his college friends shared a similar upbringing and behaved differently. In this case, social inequity might fuel conditions for violence (e.g., lack of access to education, drug/alcohol abuse, etc.) but this idea negates the fact that this toxic behavior may also be reproduced on a smaller scale (e.g., within families and peer groups). And while the behavior itself may be learned between father and son, or between friends, to place sole blame on working-class men is to ignore the culpability of those who create the conditions that precipitate gender violence. Henrietta Moore argues "It is not now possible to analyze discourses on gender […] without recognizing the ways in which they are implicated in larger processes of economic and political change well beyond the control of local communities" (1994: 63). Says sociologist Virdiana Tovar Nemesio, an attack can come from anyone: "though a man may be dressed as a construction worker, mechanic, or whatever profession or position, young or old, fat or thin, physically or

mentally disabled, rich or poor, [acoso callejero] is simply a manner of demonstrating one's gender identity, their masculinity" (2012: 56).

In each of my interviews with victims of acoso callejero, I ask what they believe motivates their attackers. Musician and poet "Diana" believes that these attackers do not expect to accomplish anything:

> I don't know if they get a thrill out of it or what. I think there's different things. Sometimes people don't say anything but a look is just uncomfortable enough. But the ones that say something…I don't think that they're trying to necessarily accomplish anything. I don't think they think they'll get a date out of it. Or even acknowledgment. They know they'll be ignored. […] I don't know what it does for them. Does it make them feel powerful? They know that it makes women uncomfortable. I don't know if it's just rooted in the fact that they know that they can do it or if it makes them feel masculine or it reinforces whatever that means to them (interview, 5 May 2016, Mexico City).

Musicians "María" and "Norma" offer a split verdict. Is it cultural? Is it instinctual? Is it evidence of a lack of education? María says, "I think it is a mix of natural instinct and a culture that is evolving, because those who have information and those who read, those who are not so ignorant stop harassing women and do other things. That is, their behavior evolves." Norma assumes a different position:

> I believe that it is about exercising power, so that they feel like the owners of the street until after a while, it becomes true. It reflects a need to mark territory in some way and women in these contexts are among the other things in this territory. Thus, like a dog, they piss on things and say, "This is mine." Deep down, I think this is what's going on—a demonstration of power (interview, 2 February 2016, Mexico City).

Mayer makes no bones about the centrality of power in acoso callejero. She firmly asserts that perpetrators do not expect to achieve anything with their victims be it a date, an acknowledgment of their dominance, or anything else. It is their freedom to act without repercussions that demonstrates their dominance and the victims, treated as objects, need

only be. I recall the words of my taxi driver: "either way I am successful." Mayer adds, "I think [acoso callejero] comes from a very deteriorated manhood that is produced by society in which fathers are absent for many reasons. It has to do with a cultural idea of what manhood is. So they just have to do that all the time" (interview, 19 February 2016, Mexico City). Mayer points to the institutionalization of this violence—the trope that it is a biological imperative of men to assault and women to endure it that guides aspects of public policy in Mexico City. "It's so naturalized," says Mayer, "that our buses are divided for men and women. I always tell men in my talks that they should be offended and protest because they're being told they're uncontrollable beasts that can't resist their instincts which is not true. And they're telling women that we are helpless and should be protected which is not true either" (interview, 19 February 2016, Mexico City).

Strange Loops: Anticipation, Perception, and Trauma

In acoso callejero, harassers hunt with their eyes. Under dimly lit overpasses, cavernous metro stations, bus stops, and along busy streets, the harasser evaluates people as if loading a tray in a buffet line. Depending on the conditions, proximity, and predilections of harassers, they may engage a would-be victim with a gaze, a touch, or an utterance. Such contact is often brief and consequence-free for the harasser. According to many of my interlocutors, it is standard practice to ignore these advances, to pretend that one does not see, feel, or hear. The reason for this is that many believe that if they return a gaze or engage the harasser in any way, they will invite escalation. However, the victim's *auditory ray*, the cognitive filter that allows one to attend to certain sounds over

others, also allows one to monitor a particular acoustic environment without swiveling one's head (Ihde 2007: 21). The corporeality of the victim prioritizes aural perception: hunched with limbs to trunk, intentionally blind while listening intently, the victim knows public spaces as a polyphony of lilting piropos, strident whistles, heavy footfalls, and idling engines that seem to emanate from everyone and no one.

In her consideration of embodiment, Grosz acknowledges the paradigmatic contributions of phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty—particularly his recognition of the inherent reversibility of perceiving and being perceived—but warns of the implicit uniformity the body (i.e., male body) in Merleau-Ponty interpretations. Instead Grosz posts, "[e]very body is marked by the history and specificity of its existence" (1994: 142). The victims of acoso callejero in Mexico City include individuals of different gender identities, sexual orientations, ages, and socio-economic backgrounds (Ortiz Hernández and Granados Cosme 2003: 266; S. Velázquez 2004: 147). Yet acoso callejero, as a transduction of systemic gender violence, often succeeds in forcing a false reduction. Perpetrators of acoso callejero, through their harassment, clumsily place individuals into a male/female dichotomy. Sociologist Miriam Lang suggests that acoso callejero is a performance of hyper-masculinity. Consequently, one who is the recipient of acoso callejero is symbolically relegated to a state of mute, passive femininity (whether the victim identifies as female or not) which extends beyond "an attack on female bodies and personal dignity [but may also been seen as an] obstacle on the road to equality, participation, and democracy" (2003: 84). In this ritual of quotidian violence, the Cartesian hierarchy of the senses—the association of vision with masculine

rationality and hearing with feminine hysteria (James 2016; Weidman 2015: 234)—is reinforced by the penetrating gaze of the harasser and the furtive, indeterminate auditory ray of the victim.

The reductive force of acoso callejero acts upon victims in myriad ways, meeting variable points of resistance, ambivalence, and vulnerability depending on the victim. Yet despite the specificity of sensing bodies, there is point in which they all collapse under the weight of trauma. According to psychiatric historian Ruth Leys,

> Post-traumatic stress disorder is fundamentally a disorder of memory. The idea is that, owing to the emotions of terror and surprise caused by certain events, the mind is split or dissociated: it is unable to register the wound to the psyche because the ordinary mechanisms of awareness and cognition are destroyed. As a result, the victim is unable to recollect and integrate the hurtful experience in normal consciousness; instead, she is haunted or possessed by intrusive traumatic memories. The experience of the trauma, fixed or frozen in time, refuses to be represented *as* past, but is perpetually re-experienced in a painful, dissociated, traumatic present (2010: 2).

Disassociation, in this sense, marks a vanishing point between the self and others, the point at which we, regardless of our degree of self-awareness, emotional stability, and physical fortitude, are rendered anonymous—like the harassers themselves—by trauma. Acoso callejero in Mexico City not only adheres to certain spatiotemporal patterns but also sculpts somewhat consistent responses: the anticipation of an event, the sensory perception of an event, and the trauma-response(s) to an event. I conceive of these responses as parts of what cognitive scientist Douglas Hofstadter calls a *strange loop*—a structural hierarchy in which, upon reaching the hierarchy's zenith, one realizes that they have returned to its bottom.[53] Like the figure of Ouroboros, a serpent swallowing its tail,

[53] Hofstadter coined the term to describe a "paradoxical level-crossing feedback loop," and uses M.C.

the responses by victims to acoso callejero present an *illusion* of sequence. Instead, I argue that these responses may generate and regenerate each other and occur at any time.

One may be convinced that they are perceiving what they are in fact anticipating, or experience a trauma-response and the perception of that response may intensify the former and so on. Because the prevailing strategy of victims of acoso callejero is to avoid eye-contact with the harasser, both the anticipation and perception of the event are often consigned to the haptic spectrum of hearing and touch. Thus, the imbricated responses of anticipation, perception, and trauma are deeply implicated with audio-cognition. These three responses as experienced by victims are largely internal yet unfold in a complex relationship with the surrounding world. It is interesting then to consider that these responses, locked in a cycle of mutual re-generation, bear a resemblance to the socio-acoustic phenomenon of *chaining*—a sound is produced (e.g., a harasser whistles at a victim) which triggers another (e.g., the whistle draws the attention of other harassers who take up and intensify the attack) leading to a cascade of sound (Augoyard and Torgue 2005: 27).

Anticipation

From Daughtry's examination of *bellophonic listening* (2015), to ethnomusicologist Suzanne Cusick's discussion of music as a method of torture in U.S.

Escher's *Drawing Hands* as a visual representation. The strange loop, says Hofstadter, consists of a "series of stages that constitute the cycling-around, there is a shift from one level of abstraction (or structure) to another, which feels like an upwards movement in a hierarchy, and yet somehow the successive "upward" shifts turn out to give rise to a closed cycle" (2007: 101–102).

military detention camps (2008), to Susana Velázquez's study of work-place harassment and domestic abuse (2004), anticipation often enwreathes acts of violence. For victims of acoso callejero in Mexico City, the possibility of danger emanates from a moving, faceless multitude. During daily routines—commuting to work, finding something to eat, running errands, and visiting friends—the labor of anticipating threats from unknown sources often takes on metaphysical proportions. In the absence of an identifiable harasser (as is frequently the case), victims may graft their fears onto particular locations, general areas, times of day, or swaths of the urban population. To dwell in the city is to calculate the risks of unknowable variables. Victims often consider how they may appear to potential harassers, struggle to deny the needs and desires that might draw them out of schedules and places that make them feel safe (e.g., enjoying a night walk), and cultivate the skills "to interpret the intentions of others in each instance in which they find themselves, for which they must be ever alert. The numerous interactions that individuals experience each day require expert handling of impressions and information as an indispensable requisite in order to survive these encounters" (Gaytán Sánchez 2004: 90). What the victim creates, through the accumulation of experiences and the acquisition of both rumors and hard evidence, is a *topography of fear*—a conceptual map of areas and times of day organized by degree of danger. Underpinning this topography is "the idea and the reality that urban spaces are dangerous and therefore, must not be visited at certain hours [and within those spaces, one] must behave in a certain way, always adhering to what is considered normal within one's social role" (García Hernández 2004: 81). Like Karola's commute, a topography of fear may be based on geography but is also

contoured by sensory memories and rumors: the dark block where one was once followed by a stranger seems to continue without end, the passage through a leafy park filled with families and promenading lovers feels light and uneventful, the black atmosphere of a murder scene one read about in the newspaper seems to ooze into the adjoining streets, rendering the entire area a forbidden zone.

This way of navigating urban spaces is both sophisticated and subject to error. It not only represents a practical method to avoid danger but is also a ritual practice: making judgments about geographic locations based on perhaps isolated events may give one the sense that they have control over the fleeting, anonymous encounters that characterize the majority of interactions in the streets of Mexico City. In her survey of victims of acoso callejero, Gaytán Sánchez found that the majority of these victims construct their topography by compromising between convenience and perceived security. However, she adds that these topographies are continually updated and consequently, "women must be constantly alert while walking the streets or aboard public transportation. The signals emitted by harassers, for their own amusement or in order to ingratiate themselves with their peers, are indicators of possible risks that are calculated continually" (2004: 198–199). In many cases, the need to constantly adjust routes becomes impossible: emotionally, financially, or in terms of time management. Because of this "loss of control," says Gaytán Sánchez, many of the victims that she surveyed have resolved to stay at home or at least indoors whenever possible (2004: 198–199).

Sophisticated listening practices are at the heart of this process of constant calculation. As an audio-cognitive practice, anticipation lies at the axis of desire and

repulsion. Be it the voice of someone deeply missed, the roar of the waves after a long journey to the sea, or the impending rebuke of a long-time opponent, the anticipated sound may precede the sound itself and in terms of emotional gravity, bear the same weight. One may *pre-hear* a sound that never occurred as an acoustic phenomenon and, according to musicologist Jean-François Augoyard and composer Henry Torgue, "can be observed either in the expectation of an unknown sound, every rustling then becoming a potential sign, or in familiar situations where the listener anticipates in her or his mind, a foreseeable (or *fore-hearable*) sonic context" (2005: 25–26). In terms of acoso callejero, pre-hearing, coupled with other sensory illusions, may account for the "funny feeling" that many victims describe that alerts them to danger that is already underway. Pre-hearing marks a rupture in time and similarly, the "funny feeling" my interlocutors refer to suggests a rupture in spatial orientation. Says Merleau-Ponty, the perceiver "senses the approach of this Other—whom he has never seen with his own eyes—in his own body" ([1945] 2012: 212). During one of Mayer's workshops, an attendee at remarked on the multi-sensorial indeterminacy that she has often experienced immediately before an incident of acoso callejero. "Perceiving acoso callejero is often a question of energy," she explained. "You may hear it, feel it, or see it but more often than not you experience it through a combination of the senses so that it simply becomes 'a feeling'" (interview, 23 February 2016, Mexico City).[54]

[54] Several interlocutors describe how they out-maneuvered a harasser because they sensed what they describe as a strange "energy" or "funny feeling."

This preternatural engagement with one's surroundings demonstrates the fragility between imagination and perception and evokes Merleau-Ponty's ruminations on what he refers to as *sensibility*: "I offer my ear or my gaze with the anticipation of a sensation, and suddenly the sensible catches my ear or my gaze. […] The sensible does not merely have a motor and vital signification, but is rather nothing other than a certain manner of being in the world that is proposed to us from a point in space, that our body takes up and adopts if it is capable, and sensation is, literally, a communion" ([1945] 2012: 219). In the testimonies I have gathered on acoso callejero, pre-hearing is a recurrent theme. Individuals hear what may or may not be there, are often uncertain by the meaning of particular sounds, the intention behind them, and for whom the sound is intended. Street-wise auditors might hear footsteps beyond their field of vision and imagine a person is trying to close the distance when in fact, the pursuer is simply late for work. They might misconstrue an attention-grabbing "Hey!" from a person across the street when the call was meant for someone else standing nearby. They might register giggles from a group of young men and wonder if they are the butt of the joke without ever knowing for sure.

"Ysidora" owns an ice-cream shop with her boyfriend in the borough of Coyoacán and has spent her life between Mexico City, the countryside of Guanajuato State, and Orange County, California. While she has experienced acoso callejero in all three places, she notes that the local flavor of sexual harassment in Mexico City is especially impersonal and decidedly sonorous. Her personal topography of fear involves both anticipation and a degree of negation of her own feelings. Says Ysidora, "I try not to let acoso callejero affect where I'll go but it bothers me: the looks, what they say, the

whistles…It bothers me. I don't know if it's because I'm scared or if it just offends me and in order to avoid it, I'd just don't go to certain places" (interview, 17 February, 2016, Mexico City). When general avoidance fails, Ysidora deploys the following tactics:

> If I hear a car slowing down behind me, I stop and pretend to take something out of my bag or I pretend that I forgot something and go in the opposite direction. If I hear someone walking really close behind me, I do the same thing. If I hear those kinds of noises, I never look back. I pretend I'm going to cross the street and every time I look both ways, as if I'm looking for cars, and that helps me peek at who's behind me. So when I'm walking, I do "keep an ear out" for those noises. If someone is approaching me really fast, or if someone's close, or if someone starts to run…That's what I listen for (interview, 17 February, 2016, Mexico City).

Coworkers Karola and Flamingo's tactics are remarkable similar:

KAROLA: If a car comes up behind me and parks I am alert, but if I hear footsteps coming closer and closer, I immediately turn around and walk in the opposite direction.

FLAMINGO: Yeah, me too! When that happens, I also stop suddenly or change direction. Sometimes I pretend to be looking for something in my purse in order to see who's behind me.

KAROLA: Yeah, I stop suddenly and let the person pass me. I do this automatically and then consider what happened afterwards (interview, 14 August 2015, Mexico City).

When asked if she has ever returned a gaze when she feels one upon her, Flamingo shook her head: "No, I just glance to see who it is. I stop and see if they pass me. I don't know if this is a placebo but it gives me the idea that I have a little bit of control over the situation" (interview, 14 August 2015, Mexico City). Intentionally unseeing, carefully scanning the soundscape while appearing not to hear, these women use their oblivion as a cloak in a form of play-acting that seems to be as much about curbing disturbing behavior around them as providing a modest sense of control.

Originally from Washington D.C., Marta is a climate researcher whose work brought her to Mexico City. While her Spanish is excellent, she explains that her appearance as a fair-skinned person of Central European descent factors into the unwanted attention she sometimes receives in public and consequently, is also a factor in her avoidance strategies. In affluent neighborhoods like La Condesa and Polanco, Marta believes that her presence generally goes unnoticed amid the blend of foreign tourists and upper-class Mexicans.[55] In *barrios populares* (working-class neighborhoods), however, Marta explains that she feels "more stared at. I don't blame people for staring at me. It's like, if I were from their neighborhood I would say "what's this white girl doing here?' But it's uncomfortable" (interview, 10 February 2016, Mexico City). However, less than a month after my interview with Marta, independent journalist Andrea Noel was assaulted in the very same neighborhood of La Condesa where Marta says she feels relatively safe. Noel was walking on the sidewalk in broad daylight when a man approached her, lifted her dress, and pulled down her underwear. After the story, Noel "received misogynist messages some of which held her 'responsible' of the sexual aggression due to her manner of dress. [Noel also disclosed that] a man followed her home and masturbated in front of her door" ("Agreden sexualmente a periodista en la Hipódromo Condesa" 2016). Involving a public figure in an affluent neighborhood, the incident received disproportionate coverage (in comparison to other sexual assaults throughout the city) and, at least momentarily, forced many victims of acoso callejero to

[55] As a legacy of European colonization during which time, a rigid caste system was enforced, there remains a correlation between social class and phenotype in Mexico were European features are disproportionally more common among members of the elite than other socioeconomic classes.

re-draw the boundary between safe and dangerous places. In Mexico City, the differentiation between safe and dangerous public spaces is often conflated with the neighborhoods of the rich and poor. Outbreaks of violence in the sacrosanct territories of the wealthy disturb topographies of fear drawn by interlocutors across the socioeconomic gamut, and point to the possibility that such topographies are, more or less, amulets meant to control the uncontrollable.

The fluid conversation between Karola and her coworkers on the topic of acoso callejero, one frequently interrupted by bursts of laughter and thoughtful moments of collective reflection, impressed two things upon me. First, despite being well-acquainted with each other, these coworkers had clearly never discussed the topic together and several of them remarked how good it felt to be able to talk about it in the open. Second, as the coworkers compared their personal topographies, it became evident that the points of reference that they mentioned represent more to them than structures of cinderblock and rebar; they bear the weight of myth:

KAROLA: I try to avoid the metro stations in the Historic Center like the Balderas Station.

FLAMINGO: Only certain stations in the Historic Center though, right? Bellas Artes is ok when it isn't so crowded.

JULIETA: Hidalgo is cool too.

FLAMINGO: But if you go to metro Juárez or Garibaldi, it's not so cool.

KAROLA: I do often change my routes when returning home late at night and I always it's always a lesser of two evils, like, "maybe this way but definitely *not* that way."

JULIETA: Even if it takes more time?

KAROLA: Even if it takes more time, yes! I decide based on the time and area. Or, I take a taxi with Fani who lives near me, depending on the hour. I prefer to avoid "men's areas" which are less crowded but also where I also feel more exposed. And I prefer to walk calmly for a long distance on the street rather than always battling with men on the metro (interview, 14 August 2015, Mexico City).

I asked Karola what she means by "men's areas" and she answered, "construction sites, factories that mostly employ men like the ice factory near my house, places where taxi drivers hang out to wait for fares, but also buses and the metro." As of 2014, approximately 52.3% of Mexico City's inhabitants are female and this distribution roughly corresponds to the usage of public transportation (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geographía 2015). It is troubling to think that despite their numbers, women like Karola continue to feel that when they enter a bus or a metro car, they are entering an area belonging to men.

Figure 3.4. An example of the sites where several interlocutors anticipate acoso callejero. Photo by author.

Perception

Here, I return to the difficult task of describing, in prose, the strange loop of hearing acoso callejero and attempt to position, in sequential order, responses that are phenomenologically non-sequential. I am reminded of the story of a friend and musician. At one point during a long car ride, after hours on the road, he suddenly began to hear the song "Galveston" by Glen Campbell. He explained to me that he was not "singing the song in his head" and that he checked the car stereo and found it was shut off. The song was not streaming through the windows from a nearby car. The sound of the music was crisp, vibrant, detailed. Unnerved by this phantom song, my friend flipped on the radio and what was playing? Glen Campbell's "Galveston." Another friend, also a musician, once described to me how, faced with a short-notice concert date, he had taken to composing for hours starting at about five in the morning until after dark for a span of two weeks. About half-way into his composing marathon, he found that when he would get into bed at night he could hear the sibilant hisses and plosive *pops* of a choir of human voices emerging from the hum of the electrical wiring in the house.

The fact that both of these cases of auditory hallucinations were experienced by musicians, I believe, is important. Well acquainted with their habits and personal histories, I know that both of them have devoted a life-time to cultivating a discerning ear and spend a large part of their waking hours immersed in their own auditory imagination. As is the case with the toreros of Mexico City's Historic Center, individuals who have experienced acoso callejero over a life-time exhibit a sophisticated sensory awareness including, because of the premium on perceiving without appearing to do so, an expertise

in selective listening. Toreros and victims of acoso callejero must listen as a matter of personal safety. Musicians listen because it may be their vocation but also (speaking to my own experience) may be a tremendous source of pleasure. The listening practices of these very different, skilled auditors are motivated by profoundly different things but share the need for listening precision. They also all must navigate the affective terrain of sound: sound may be emotionally charged for both but charged with nearly opposite emotions. And it is this investment in sound, be it for opposite reasons, that seems to precipitate auditory illusions. Further, the musicians I mentioned are extremely hesitant to open up about their uncanny experiences. The stigma of auditory hallucination is so strong that to acknowledge such a hallucination is tantamount to confessing one's own insanity. Victims of acoso callejero often keep silent but for different reasons. Subtle, untraceable, and routine, acoso callejero is often minimized by victims and harassers alike. To challenge harassers or publicly denounce them risks being dismissed or being accused of inviting such unwanted attention through one's own behavior and appearance. But another reason why many victims choose not to act, and one that relates to auditory hallucination, is that acoso callejero—often fleeting and subtle—leaves many victims in a state of uncertainty about what exactly happened to them. In interviews, several interlocutors described encounters that made them feel humiliated but in which they also wrestled with the idea that they may have misinterpreted the situation and overreacted. I believe it is not a coincidence that when some of these same interlocutors have chosen to speak up, be it to the police or their harasser, these same doubts are reinforced by the latter parties.

Karola's daily commute, a mix of walking and riding peseros, trolibuses, and the metro, is consistent with those of the majority of my interlocutors and represents a fairly cost-effective way to get around. These modes of transport may be solitary or crowded depending on the time of day and each bear different challenges and possibilities for unwanted encounters. As a commuter slips between these different modes he or she experiences what Augoyard and Torgue term *cut out*—a sudden change in the color, volume, resonance, and composition of the enveloping sound (2005: 29). Cut out typically corresponds to a commuter's visual field—direct sound overtakes reverberance as one passes from an open plaza to a small shop—but may also trigger a change in comportment and the focal depth of one's sensorial focus. Following sound artist and social theorist Brandon Labelle, the "mediating spell" of the sonic event, in this case the passage between thresholds, leads to "the effective dislocation and reconfiguration of the body" (2010: 107). If perception of the surrounding world is accompanied by an awareness of being perceived (Grosz 1994: 100; Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012: 219), then perhaps, as the commuter moves from open space to an intimate one, there may be a sensation of the witnessing Other pressing closer.

Audio 3.2. Acoustic cut out between the interior of a metro car and the open station. Recorded by author.

In the open street, harassers often compete with intense, ambient noise. In order to rattle their victim's cloaking oblivion, harassers employ the *niche effect*. Says Augoyard and Torgue, the niche effect requires that one occupy "a favorable zone of sound emission in relation to the intended receiver" (2005: 79–80), and depends entirely on the

acoustic qualities of a given space. The sound producer may manipulate the intensity, pitch, timbre, or rhythm of his sound producing instrument (in the case of acoso callejero, the voice) in order to stand out from other sounds. Musician "Laila," for example, recounts a confrontation with a group of men in the street saying, "when I passed by where they were standing they began to whistle so loudly that the sound was almost deafening" (personal communication, 17 May 2016). However, if harassers use the niche effect to demand their victims' attention, I argue that these niches may be both acoustic and sociocultural. For example, a deafening whistle issued in the street would hurt most people's ears, regardless of where they hail from. But in the particular context of Mexico City—where whistles are not only loud noises but also represent a substantial, historically inflected mode of communication and emotional expression—a shrill whistle can perform double duty depending on who is listening: it can be both a hurtful blow as well as a verbal directive. Says philosopher Don Ihde,

> The languages that relate hearing to the invading features of sound often consider the auditory presence as a type of "command." Thus hearing and obeying are often united in root terms. […] Sound in its commanding presence invades our experience, and although this invasion may be desirable […] it may also be detestable […]. In both cases one's train of thought is likely to be upset by the "command" of the sound which is so penetrating or loud that he can't "hear" himself think (2007: 81).

Harassers may find another sort of niche by penetrating the personal space of another; extreme proximity provides another way to compete with the ambient din. Many victims of acoso callejero recount the effort of harassers to "close the distance" in the street, or ambush them behind unseen corners or amid crowded bottlenecks. Unlike a harasser who shouts an insult or whistles from across the street, those who close the

distance forgo the safety of anonymity for an alternative strategy. These harassers not only attempt to close physical distance but also attempt to exploit the basic politeness of the victim by trying to engage him or her in conversation. For example, Karola recalls a frightening encounter that took place near the Plaza of the Three Cultures in the Tlatelolco neighborhood. "My friend Clara and I were strolling along just talking and talking," she says:

> Clara was very distracted but I thought I heard the footsteps of more than one person behind us: the shoes went *clap*, *clap*, *clap* but I didn't hear the owners of those shoes talking. That was weird. Their silence alarmed me. I heard whoever they were getting closer and I spun around and saw them… two large men, dressed in black, just staring at us (interview 14 August 2015, Mexico City).

Karola was tipped off not only by the sound of footsteps but by the eerie silence of two companions walking together. The men caught up to Karola and her friend Clara and, perhaps noticing that Clara was the more distracted of the pair, asked her for directions. Karola grabbed her friend, pulled her away from the men, and sternly commanded, "Clara, come on!" Walking away at a fast clip, Karola spotted a third man waiting for them at the end of the block. He was "a kind of interceptor…waiting in ambush," explains Karola. If there was indeed an ambush in place, Karola's reaction to the sound of her pursuers upset their plans just enough to allow the women to slip away. She summarizes, "the sound tipped me off…the sound and the absence of sound. They came up to us and I didn't know if they were going to assault us or what. We were both trembling. We stopped trembling and walked in a big loop in order to avoid them and get to another metro station. It was horrible!" (interview 14 August 2015, Mexico City).

Harassers may feign vulnerability by asking for assistance, money, or claiming that they have just been accosted themselves. They may offer assistance: many female victims of acoso callejero describe incidents in which men warned them that they were in a place where they should not be and offered to escort them. Other times, the harasser is direct like in the case of a man who cornered Marta asking her, "wanna have sex?" However, Marta says that in her experience, it is much more common to hear salacious remarks like, "*bonita güera* [pretty white girl]." At Mayer's workshop, an attendee lists the expressions she most commonly receives: "little mamma, my precious, my queen, little girl, good-lookin', my love, et cetera." Such utterances demonstrate a perversion of the language of intimacy and familiarity. They are expressions that a father might reserve for his daughter or whispered words between lovers.

To complicate matters, intimate language is a common part of business transactions in Mexico City, though they may sound overwrought to foreign ears. As discussed in Chapter 2, inflated praise is an essential part of the street vendor's semantic tool kit. I am curious about how street-wise auditors tell the difference in a cultural context where the same expressions may be meant to convey genuine affection, facilitate business, or to ensnare and dominate. I ask Diana if she ever has difficulty interpreting the intentions of praise-givers. She explains that "growing up Mexican" and spending her time between California and Yucatán, she is very adept at distilling intentions from the words themselves (interview, 5 May 2016, Mexico City). Ice cream shop owner Ysidora says something similar: "It is all about how a person says something: the silkiness of his

voice, where his eyes go while he's talking, how close to you he chooses to stand" (interview, 17 February 2016, Mexico City).

Whether launched from a distance or delivered eye to eye, these utterances may be both directional and encompassing and it is in the intersection of these two spatial orientations that sound assumes an *auditory aura* in which "[t]he other, when speaking in sonorous speech, presents himself as 'more' than something fixed, 'more' than an outline-body, as a 'presence'" (Ihde 2007: 79). Listening to the phenomenological present—perhaps enmeshed in associative memories and anticipation of sounds to come—the perceiver judges the intentionality of the sound maker not only through the content of their words, but through an evaluation of his or her auditory aura.

While Diana is confident in her ability to determine a speaker's intentions, she adds that this sensitivity has come at a cost:

> My mom always made me wary of attracting the "wrong" kind attention. I think it messes with your self-esteem as a woman. Like, "Oh, I think I look nice but that's too tight and I'll probably get hassled." It feels good to feel pretty but you're also made to feel like that's a negative thing. It's not cool because it messes with how you see yourself or maybe you're uncomfortable when you are receiving a compliment or when you receive something that isn't sexual harassment. And you think, "hey I don't know what to do with either: sexual harassment or normal interactions. I start to just ignore them all (interview, 5 May 2016, Mexico City).

For Ysidora, the direct confrontation—when a stranger engages her face-to-face, offers her a piropo, or asks her out on a date—is irritating but of a much lower order than an anonymous shout. However, Laila, perhaps because of her particular experiences, does not share Ysidora's view. Laila recalls one such face-to-face confrontation between her and a bus driver when she was a teenager:

DRIVER: You think you're hot, don't you?

LAILA: That's none of your business.

DRIVER: Stop moving your ass.

[Laila gives him "the finger."]

DRIVER: You want it?

LAILA: You don't have it! (personal communication, 17 May 2016).

Laila then forced open a gap between the bus doors, squeeze through them, and ran.

Breaching one's personal space, appealing to a victim's politeness or manipulating words of endearment are tactics for some harassers which others forgo. Laila recounts one of her earliest, and most haunting memories of acoso callejero that bypassed conversation altogether. Only twelve years old at the time, walking alone to school in the pre-dawn, Laila saw a young man exiting a construction site farther down the sidewalk. "The moment we crossed paths," she explains, "he grabbed my breast and the only thing I could do was to say, 'Asshole!' It was hard to get the words out because I was somewhere between surprise and anger. I didn't know what else to do" (personal communication, 17 May 2016). The man strolled along, entitled and unconcerned.

The Sardine Life: Aboard the Metro

Passing between the open street through the cavernous metro station and wrestling aboard waiting metro cars, commuters must engage in what journalist/cultural critic Carlos Monsiváis dubs, "bear-hugged humanism [*humanismo del aprentujón*]" (1995: 111). Commuters experience a dramatic cut out between the shimmering reverb tank of the boarding platform and the coffin-like acoustics of the car. Greeted by a mass

of bodies, heat, odors, and intimate sounds, the perceptive spheres of commuters draw inward like the petals of a heliotrope at sundown. This dramatic moment of *abduction*—in which the sensing body retreats inward—supports Merleau-Ponty's assertion that sensory perception cannot be reduced to a pseudo-metaphysical "essence" but is rather a process of "motor physiognomy […] enveloped by a living signification" ([1945] 2012: 217). Commuters, shoulder to shoulder, are forced to pack themselves so tightly that even I, weighing about 200 lbs., have been lifted up onto my toes by the compression of bodies. Here, commuters enter the realm of caresses, jabs, and whispers. The *acoustic arena* (Blesser and Salter 2007: 22) is dominated by the hum of rooftop air vents (when they are working) and the squeal of steel on steel as the metro cars follow their subterranean track.

Video 3.1. A journey aboard the metro. Created by author.

Mexico City's metro system is well distributed, often faster than other transport options (especially during rush hour), and at five pesos per entry (approximately 25¢ USD as of 2016), it continues to be a frugal option for the city's commuters. A very limited segment of Mexico City's population is wealthy enough to avoid the metro system entirely, and consequently, the metro is a site of socioeconomic pluralism framed in brief encounters (Gaytán Sánchez 2004: 117). The intense compression of bodies has the effect of suspending many behaviors related to the management of personal space and in delineating public and private spheres. Consequently, many commuters perform and tolerate behaviors that they otherwise would not. For example, positioning one's face within centimeters of a stranger's; accidentally touching the hair, torso, or hand of

another as one grasps for an object of support; or pressing one's chest or pelvis against another's is generally tolerated with the tacit understanding there is simply nowhere else for these body parts to go. Obviously, the cramped conditions of a metro car offer ample opportunities for harassers. These individuals no longer need to shout, disorient, or trick their victims into a conversation. The distance between harasser and victim has, as a result of limited space, been closed for them. Simultaneously, this peculiar social space, in which normal rules of public interaction are suspended, opens new dimensions of misinterpretation and self-doubt for the victim. Everyone is touching, pressing, and shifting their weight on tired feet. Which caress is intentional and which is not? And these constant, ambiguous caresses, mumbled words, and puffs of hot breath are often underscored in the victim's imagination, with foreboding stories of the metro that circulate between friends and family.

Some of these stories are so frightening that they sound almost apocryphal and are difficult to forget. One interlocutor recounts an experience of her daughter's. Riding like canned sardines on a crowded metro car, the daughter registered an eerie sensation: she felt heat behind her, watery mouth noises, and an odd tugging on her scalp. Unable to move her torso, she turned her head to discover a man sucking on her hair. For Flamingo, an empty metro car is not much better than a crowded one. She describes an incident that occurred while riding the metro when she was seventeen. Virtually alone, a man approached Flamingo from behind, tapped her on the back to get her to face him, and began masturbating. She remembers, "When I saw what he was doing I thought, 'dude, if he's masturbating in my face, he's probably going to rape me.' So I remained super-still."

I ask her what happened next. “Well,” she answers, “fortunately, he got off at one station before mine which was good because if not, he could have followed me home. As soon as he left, I started to cry out. I felt super, super, super, scared!” (interview, 14 August 2015, Mexico City). Flamingo describes a sensation that welled up inside her while she was in the man’s presence, as if she was wailing internally but could not release it. Only after the man walked away—casually, as if this were part of his daily routine—could she bring her voice back into the world.

In the metro car, the suspension of certain customs of public behavior results in curious acoustic effect. There is often an uncanny silence. Through sensory abduction, the range of one’s perception retreats inward as does the volume of one’s voice. Often pinned mouth-to-ear, travelling companions speak in hushed tones and solitary riders stare downcast. In the metro car, people with perhaps incongruous ideas of public conduct temporarily cohabitate. Some commuters violate unspoken codes of conduct: they cackle with friends as if they are still above ground, grind their knuckles or elbows into their neighbor’s back to claim space, enter the car without allowing those on the car to exit, or ignore the boilerplate question, “are you getting off on the next stop?” and block the path of those who try to leave. Consequently, there is often a palpable atmosphere of general irritation in the metro car; many commuters cocoon themselves in a sullen silence.

Inconsiderate commuters are not the only sound makers aboard the metro. Unless it is the absolute peak of rush hour and the cars are impassible, the relative silence of commuters is broken by a steady stream of *vagoneros*—unauthorized vendors who hop

onto train cars and weave nimbly from one end to another while delivering their pregones. This practice is not limited to the metro system nor to Mexico City: throughout the country, musicians, food vendors, and others wait at bus stops, hop aboard, work through the bus, and then hop off at the next stop. Vagoneros sell chewing gum, nail clippers, light reading on the luminaries of Mexican history, vials of bubble-making soap and blowing wands, and rubbery globs that can be rolled into bouncing balls "for your exercise, your diversion." Vagoneros are such a mainstay of public transportation in Mexico City that they are more or less tolerated by metro security. Commuters rely on them to provide a quick solution to an empty stomach or missing household item.

Figure 3.5. Vagoneros preparing to board a metro car. Photo by María Magdalena Alonso Pérez. Used by permission.

Audio 3.3. A vagonero issuing his pregón inside of a metro car. Recorded by author.

Among the variety of vagoneros, we encounter the anti-hero of Mexico City's metro folklore, the *bocinero*. Bocineros hawk unlicensed CD mixtapes and advertise their wares by playing their CDs through backpack-mounted speakers (*bocinas*). Perhaps because bocineros invariably play these CDs at vertigo-inducing volumes, they are aggressively harassed by metro security and, as mentioned to me repeatedly in interviews, despised by a great number of metro passengers. Despite this, these loud, halting musical interludes are welcomed by some: frequently while riding the metro with a bocinero, I have observed some passengers glaring and covering their ears while others move with the music and even sing along.

Personal Sound Systems: From Cocooning to Subterfuge

In the crowded metro car, passengers can choose what they gaze upon but must bear what they smell, feel, and hear. But what of listening? Perhaps listening—the active engagement with one's acoustic arena—is the only thing that passengers have control over. Writing about his experiences of the Mexico City metro, Monsiváis notes that commuters often engage in what he calls "auditory voyeurism," saying, "I do not mean listening for the sake of gossip, current events, but that skill of surfing rumors[.] In the metro the 'auditory voyeur' is frustrated, arriving late to the news exchange and must remove themselves before the revelations" (1995: 166). Like the fifteen-second musical excerpts that bocineros use to advertise their CDs, listening to snippets of conversation may present a passenger with a source of entertainment, annoyance, or simple distraction.

Tovar Nemesio suggests that "listening in" on private conversations is difficult to avoid on long metro rides (2012: 46) and to extricate oneself, adds Ihde, is "essentially a matter of psychic control" (2007: 82).

For victims of acoso callejero, simply exerting "psychic control" over their acoustic arena is not enough to safely navigate public spaces. Street-wise auditors in Mexico City, as well as many of my acquaintances in the United States, often wear headphones while walking or aboard public transport. In the case of victims of acoso callejero, this practice serves at least two purposes. First, sound studies scholars such as Karin Bijsterveld, Jean-Paul Thibaud, and Michael Bull forward the notion that through the use of personal sound systems (be it an iPod, CD player, or car stereo system), urbanites are able to customize their listening experiences in the public, "decompos[ing] the territorial structure of the city and recomposing it through spatio-phonic behaviors" (Thibaud 2003: 329; see also Bull 2012). The "acoustic cocoon," (Bijsterveld 2010: 192) of one's music playlist "provide[s] a performative shelter for the senses by both filtering out the undifferentiating flood of sound as well as empowering individual agency in controlling what comes in" (LaBelle 2010: 97). Despite or perhaps *because* of the common practice of amplifying music at high volumes in Mexico City's public spaces (to advertise, to entertain, to index a certain identity or lifestyle, etc.), it is normal to witness pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, and patrons of public transport moving about in customized, personal audio environments. However, while filtering out unwanted sounds is certainly at play here, a more pressing issue for victims of acoso callejero is the need to listen to the acoustic arena without appearing to listen. As we have seen, gender violence in

Mexico City lies along a spectrum of intensification. The anonymity of harassers and the ambiguity of some of their actions present an interpretive challenge for victims and often provoke a crisis of intense self-doubt. An attendee at Mayer's workshop described how this sensorial uncertainty is surgically exploited by harassers:

> I believe that unintelligible sounds are the most common type. I think this is because harassers are highly trained and try to find a way of saying things that only the victim will perceive. It's like a secret. Before we know it, something has already happened and happened so quickly that it's difficult for us to perceive. Plus, we are raised to ignore these things. I remember being touched on the metro as a teenager and at the time, I was passive and felt like I didn't have the right to say anything. People walk around blindly in Mexico City and I believe that this attitude has a huge effect on the type of harassment that one encounters here (interview, 23 February 2016, Mexico City).

Listening without appearing to listen defends against only certain types of harassment, scenarios where a harasser shouts to grab the attention of a victim or tries to spark a conversation. These are the most common forms of acoso callejero and the ones that wearing headphones most help to tamp down. However, victims of acoso callejero must also be attentive to sensory clues that hint that a particular encounter may be leading in an unusual direction. Genuine sensory deprivation is simply unsafe in the streets and tunnels of Mexico City. During our dinner party, Flamingo explained that she always wears headphones when she is out in public but will often put her device on pause when she passes through acoustic cut outs. Karola loves to orchestrate her day with the music of her favorite artists (e.g., the Doors, David Bowie, Blondie, the Cure, etc.) and this customized immersion lends a degree of "individual agency" that Labelle describes. But Karola added, "I never play my music at a high volume because I need to stay alert to everything that is happening around me. I have learned that being distracted in the street

can get you in trouble. So, I just use music to accompany me. It puts me in a lighter mood while I walk" (interview, 5 April 2016, Mexico City). Coworker Julieta was curious about the way Karola uses here headphones and asked her to elaborate on how she is able to perform the double duty of enjoying her music and also being vigilant. "It's like this," explained Karola, "I go around like, 'la, la, la' but I am always alert. It's like I'm juggling—focusing on one ball but being aware of the others" (interview, 5 April 2016, Mexico City). Karola's split-brained audition is reminiscent of a group of musicians who simultaneously perform a series of musical tasks while monitoring each other's performance. As a frequent victim of acoso callejero, Karola cannot afford to miss a single warning, cut out, or ambient metamorphosis but gleans little from the *keynote*[56] sounds (e.g., traffic, normal crowd noise, etc.) and is able to filter them skillfully.

Trauma

Ouroboros swallows its tail. The distinct histories of our bodies, the corporeality of our memories, frame sensory perceptions and interpretations of the phenomenological present that, reciprocally, re-frame those histories (Grosz 1994: 142). To remember and to forget are both activities undertaken in the present (Dessingué and Winter 2015: 1), and it is through the senses that we track the passage of time and spatial dimensions that we inhabit. Grosz reminds us that body awareness and spatiotemporal awareness are so intertwined that the latter "is a precondition of the subject's relation with objects" (1994:

[56] Schafer's term to describe sounds that are so continuous or ubiquitous that they garner little conscious attention ([1977] 1994: 9)

90). Yet the sensitive instruments of aural perception, vividly alive in moments of ecstasy and terror, are also extremely fallible. These instruments contain a dual nature: they may be overwhelmed, paralyzing and disassociating the listener from the phenomenological moment, or they may provide that same listener with a catalyst for re-associating experiences rendered inaccessible by trauma (Johnson 2009: 5–6).

A comprehensive discussion on the topic memory in relation to quotidian violence is beyond the scope of this investigation. Instead, I discuss the imbricated processes of remembering and forgetting as they emerge in the testimonies of my interlocutors. From these testimonies, I have identified the several patterns. The self-identified victims of acoso callejero, whose testimonies are presented here, produce personalized yet socially informed topographies of fear. In the moment of encounter between the victim and harasser, victims register and interpret sensory information as it correlates to their anticipations. There is a struggle between ontology and epistemology and each new encounter may contribute to the expansion of one's hermeneutical arc. Considering the urgency, expressed by many interlocutors, in formulating anticipatory strategies to avoid acoso callejero, it is perhaps not surprising that there exists a tension in the moment of encounter between details that reinforce the victim's topography and those that undermine it. An attack, for example, in a territory considered safe or from an individual that the victim would not normally profile as dangerous, call into question the sense of security that many victims rely on to go about their lives. When this tension builds degree to which it can no longer be tolerated, a limit different in every individual,

it may lead to such traumatized[57] responses as: emotional suppression, heightened emotional reactions, obsessive thinking, loss of memory, radical changes in behavior, and difficultly interacting with others, to name only a few (Leys 2010: 2). The salient point, in assessing the outcome of quotidian violence such as acoso callejero, is that trauma need not occur all at once and in a dramatic fashion, but may be cumulative—a death by a thousand cuts.

Victims of acoso callejero often maintain a sort of *pre-history* of harassment that is subsumed by a more conscious, personal narrative. For many of my interlocutors, incidents of harassment begin at the very dawn of conscious memory and, in some cases, were only carefully scrutinized for the first time during our discussions. Still others have a sense of strange encounters and unpleasant feelings that populate the margins of their memory, but struggle to reconstruct them. I ask Laila about her first experience of acoso callejero. "I can't put an exact date on it," says Laila, "but I was a child." Coworkers Fani and Karola explain that their first experiences occurred during pre-pubescence but have since followed opposite trajectories. Fani explains, "I believe that men began shouting at me in early adolescence and they continue to shout things but I have the feeling that, as I get older, it happens less and less. I'm not sure why. Maybe people have become more educated in 'certain sectors' since I was little." On the contrary, Karola believes that over the span of her life, the frequency of acoso callejero has increased. "When I was a little girl," she explains, "the men didn't bother me. I grew up—I don't have a great body or

[57] Here, I use "trauma" in its clinical sense (i.e., "a psychological shock") rather than "its more widespread, popular usage (an open wound in the collective memory)" (Fassin and Rechtman 2009: 2).

anything—but I feel like men bothered me more as I matured. I definitely don't feel like the harassment has diminished over time." Karola also suggests that perhaps it was not that she was left alone by harassers as a girl, rather, she was too young to read signs that bore sinister intent or to label the uneasy feelings that these encounters gave her. Yet whether or not one is mature enough to comprehend the violence acted upon them, says psychologist Andrea García Hernández, this violence accumulates in the corporeality of its victims:

> From the time that they are small, women have been taught to occupy a space of limited form adopting "convenient" body postures like sitting with a rigid back, walking with short, slow steps, maintaining their abdomen in tension so as not to appear fat, keeping their legs closed despite no longer wearing skirts but rather pants, to not move too much, to smile discreetly, and so on. Women must maintain all these body postures to appear aesthetically pleasing and are also sometimes utilized in order to defend themselves in the moment of sexual harassment. [These postures] are strongly linked with ideas of morality and modesty (2004: 155).

During our dinner party, Karola and her coworkers reflected on how their comportment changes in the street:

FANI: I tend to make assumptions about situations when I'm walking around, right? I walk around and see that there is a construction site or something and then I walk past anyway but I just feel…

KAROLA: Tense!

FANI: Yeah! Or I try to cross the street to the other sidewalk and usually I don't get yelled at but I already associate certain types of people and certain spaces with people that lack respect, so I already have tension in my body.

KAROLA: You prepare yourself. It is a reaction of fear, right? And as you protect yourself it changes everything: your face, your expression. You make yourself look serious all the time, like a snob (interview, 14 August 2015, Mexico City).

The corporeal changes that Karola and her coworkers described may represent a disinvestment in their own bodies. Denied the right to fully inhabit public spaces, victims of acoso callejero move between spaces and periods of perceived security often in a state of semi-consciousness. The steady accumulation of traumatic experiences renders these victims "less able […] to effectively inhabit that space as [their] own" (Grosz 2001: 9). Similarly, Susana Velázquez notes that more than a source of profound psychological pain and physical damage, quotidian violence produces a "dispossession and destruction of the identity that constitutes [victims] as subjects […]. violat[ing] an order that supposedly must exist in human relations" (2004: 30).

In an urban setting in which unwanted contact, battery, kidnapping, rape, and even femicide occur, why are sounds important in understanding acoso callejero? Mayer believes that sounds are important because "they are precisely the things that most people don't notice. These are the things that are so unconscious and so ingrained. What you say, what you don't, what you listen to, what you don't. *How* you listen to things. I find these to be the most interesting things because they affect us all but no one notices" (interview 19 February 2016, Mexico City). Despite the potential of sound to do physical and psychological damage, "sound is rarely at the origin of a trauma; more frequently it is one of the ways to explore and find the initial stimulus of the neurosis or the psychosis" (Augoyard and Torgue 2005: 22). Instead, sound may act as a pre-cognitive trigger for somatic memory. In the experience of *anamnesis*, for example, a listener hears a sound and is transported to a scenario or atmosphere in the past (Augoyard and Torgue 2005: 21).

Referencing the work of philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch, Johnson argues that sounds, especially musical sounds, are particularly "broad shouldered," suggesting that they are simultaneously neutral vessels for the containment of affect and but also powerfully evocative (2009: 64). The broad-shouldered quality of sound is reminiscent of the ambiguity of acoso callejero itself. Ethnomusicologist Deborah Kapchan observes that "touch always has a sonic dimension, as rhythms collide at different frequencies and oscillations. Touch is vibration, and vibration, sound. Sound affects: we feel it and it creates feeling" (2015: 40). From the vantage of perceptual uncertainty, an innocent brushing may transform into a grope, automatic eye-contact of passing strangers might morph into a leer, a familial or personal chiflido might be re-appropriated in order to startle, the language of romantic love or familial affection may be distorted to objectify and disempower.

In, "The Luminous Noise of Broken Experience," Johnson investigates childhood sexual abuse, including her own, in the context of late-twentieth century U.S. suburbia. In this particular setting, says Johnson, it is often a pop song, warbling from the rec-room stereo system or back porch radio, that provided the accompaniment to life-changing, nearly inaccessible experiences of sexual abuse. She attests to the uncanny, synesthesiatic potency of these particular pop songs—heard by victims during the moments of their abuse—that enable survivors "to communicate with traumatic experiences that are otherwise unreachable through language, logic, and reason" (2009: 57). These often innocuous, saccharine melodies, "somehow reenacting the rape upon [the bodies of sexual abuse victims], or as though the sound itself were some kind of witness, testifying

to facts and details that the survivor's own psyche had long since banished or failed to integrate into normative memory" (Johnson 2009: 5–6).

Johnson presents a triangulation between setting, aural perception, and the traumatic event and it is interesting to consider how this triangulation transposes to the aurality of victims of acoso callejero. As one passes from street, to alley, through markets, and aboard metro cars, one experiences the convergent trajectories of amplified musics as layered, sonic spheres. Mexico City street culture is so sonorous (i.e., not only loud but meaningful both in the intention behind its production as well as its reception) that the evocative potency of both musical and non-musical sound begin to assume a similar order of significance. Many sounds are not byproducts of other functions (such as engine noise) but are conceived of and understood through their sonority. In this particular context, the intended application of common discursive modes (the piropo, albur, and chiflido) are identified by their sonic components. The sonic components of acoso callejero are not antithetical to these prolific discursive modes but are instead their corruption and misappropriation. In this sense, these sounds that engulf city life are at once threatening and benign and serve as a witness to events both catastrophic and commonplace.

Whether subtle or overt, cumulative or the consequence of a single experience, trauma may be understood as "the leftover energy of actions untaken" (Johnson 2009: 75). Physiological responses are numerous and unpredictable. Literally and figuratively cornered by a harasser, victims may become paralyzed, absorb stimuli without being able fully integrating it into their consciousness, and their emotional responses may be muted

or intensified. Speaking of victims of acoso callejero, who are subjected to routine violence, these untenable states of body consciousness are often followed by "a kind of indifference necessary in order to endure the great quantity of things that present themselves daily in the streets and on public transportation" (Gaytán Sánchez 2004: 91). During many of my interviews, I was taken aback by the cool delivery of some interlocutors. Many recounted memories of humiliation and panic without emotion or with flippant humor. Several simply reported on events as if they had read about them in a newspaper. Says Susana Velázquez, "When recounting experiences of violence, some women present themselves, initially, as disaffected and structured relating a story without emotion. The affective block, the outcome of an event with a heavy, traumatic load, renders these women unable to show anger, sadness, to cry, but are simply able to inform" (2004: 62). On the other hand, some conversations slowly evolved, growing more emotional and mutually revelatory. In these interviews, I often had the sense that a long cord was slowly unwinding. Regarding her research with sexual abuse survivors, Johnson notes that many had "sensory and synaesthetic associations with specifically musical or acoustic memories" (2009: x). In my own interviews with interlocutors, it was often the recovery of a sensory detail—a spoken phrase, a whistle, the description of a particular sonic atmosphere that transformed the conversation from journalistic to emotional. I am reminded of Johnson's belief in the uncanny ability of the audible to coax traumatic memories to the surface. For example, as musician Laila struggled to articulate both the details and emotional impact of acoso callejero in her own life, she seemed surprised by her own words as they took shape:

> I must confess that I avoid dressing in skirts and short dresses and if I do, I wear nylons. Now as I write this I am realizing this. It has converted into an automatic action of mine that repeats from day to day. How sad! I want to avoid acoso callejero and I don't even consider it something to be fought against. Rather, it is something unmovable. Because of this, I am responsible for protecting myself against it. HOW SAD!" (personal communication, 17 May 2016).

Voices in between

The vast majority of interlocutors say that they ignore acoso callejero whenever possible. They return the volley of shouts, whistles, gazes, and gropes with pensive silence. Some, like Diana, María, and Laila express surprise at their own responses when, in a moment of "fight-or-flight," terse words seemed to rise out of them beyond their control. As these words of incredulous rage left their mouths, these victims say that almost instantly, they were burdened by thoughts of possible repercussions. For cultural studies scholar Alexandre Dessingué and historian Jay Winter, forgetting is not the absence of memory but rather a performative, parallel processes. Silence is the connective tissue that binds these processes (2015: 4–7). In silence, one may contemplate the textures of one's memory or lay that memory bare in an associative communion with the present moment. One may condemn a painful thought to confinement within—words left unsaid—and thus deny it the scrutiny, validation, or dismissal of those who hear it. Like the piropos, chiflidos, slurs, and indiscernible utterances of acoso callejero, silence too may be broad-shouldered. It is at once a prophylactic of control for victims who fear violent reprisal and at the same time a validation for harassers who deem themselves the masters of public space.

To *envoice*—the sometimes fluid, sometimes halting journey between the

auditory imagination and the acoustic realm—is "a manifestation of internal character, even essential human consciousness" and to grant one the right to speak "is to recognize their subjectivity" (Novak and Sakakeeny 2015: 1–2). Silence may be a sign of both compliance and resistance, used "to imply an active politics of domination and nonparticipation" as well as "a significant political, symbolic, and interpretive strategy to respond to situations of conflict" (Ochoa Gautier 2015: 183–184). Silence is indeed a strategic response of many of my interlocutors and one that many harassers seem to expect. For these victims, silence often transcends the encounter itself to the recollection of the encounter and is, in turn, reinforced by the silence of others. Gaytán Sánchez posits that many of her interview subjects expressed discomfort in disclosing incidents of acoso callejero with parents, aunts and uncles, and older people in general, exposing a generational gap in the recognition of acoso callejero as a serious societal problem. She notes that those of her interlocutors who chose to divulge their experiences of acoso callejero to women of the same age, received a much better reception (Gaytán Sánchez 2004: 119).

Speaking from her own experience, Karola believes that acoso callejero is a topic that is rarely discussed either inter-generationally or among peers. Coworker Fani agrees, "It's not something you'd talk about at home." Instead, "You only talk about it if what happened was something very serious or abnormal. But on a daily basis, no" (interview, 14 August 2015, Mexico City). In Mexico City, acoso callejero is as common as weeds, difficult to identify and to report, and it is for these reasons, as well as perhaps a widely-held but often tacit anxiety about the growing presence of women in public life, that

renders it an unpopular topic of discussion. “If we ever talk about it with our parents,” says Karola, “we are told, ‘be careful,’ or ‘if you see a stranger or a suspicious person, step aside.’ Things like that. Yes, you are taught to protect yourself but you don’t talk much about the daily harassment so that you live happily, right? This is with parents but it’s not even a common topic between friends.” She adds, “what’s so sad is that no one talks about it because we all just assume it’s happening to everyone else” (interview, 12 June 2016, Mexico City).

The silence of victims of acoso callejero is a necessary ingredient in the acoustic patriarchy of Mexico City’s public spaces. This silence, says Susana Velázquez, “can be understood as a strategy of gender inequality: if the violence is considered ‘invisible’ or ‘natural’ it legitimizes and justifies the arbitrariness as a habitual form of relation between genders” (2004: 27). In Mexico City’s public spaces, sounds and their absence bring underlying power structures into stark relief. Silencing women, like controlling their bodies, is deeply implicated with Western notions of inarticulacy, hysteria, and excess (Weidman 2015: 234) and to the ancient Greeks, the female voice was anathema to the concept of “logos [and] of the well-ordered city and harmonious cosmos”(James 2016). For historian Christine Ehrick, the weight of history bears down upon the voice, coloring not only our interpretation of its sonic properties and emotive potential but also of its belonging: “Gender and history […] shape parameters of where and when particular voices are invited to speak or expected to remain silent. And here of course we encounter the ways gender hierarchy is expressed and constructed in the acoustic/vocal arena” (2015).

In the streets of Mexico City, harassers dominate women in order to enforce their symbolic control of the public sphere. As ethnomusicologist Ana María Ochoa Gautier has suggested, this public sphere—a consequence of both colonial legacy and contemporary reality—is increasingly determined through aural practices. Thus, controlling women in this particular setting is often a matter of controlling their voice. "The inhibition of the feminine response," argues Gaytán Sánchez, "has to do with the denial of women's ability to express themselves […]. In large part, the social frameworks constructed for gender interaction corroborate these attitudes in order to limit the possibilities of action permitted for women in public places" (2004: 224).

If forgetting does not necessarily mark the absence of memory but instead a reformulation of experience, perhaps a victim's silence does not necessarily represent the absence of a voice but rather a voice *in utero*. Musicologist Nina Eidsheim posits, "[s]inging happens before the sound; it is the action that produces the sound" (2015: 130). Following Eidsheim's call to approach the voice not only as the sound of the voice but as a type of transmission (2015: 19), it seems reasonable to argue that the un-uttered responses of victims of acoso callejero—like Flamingo's wail that she was only able to release once her attacker had left—represent voices in a particular stage of transmission.

I am curious about these words that my interlocutors, in the blur of the encounter with their harassers, have left unsaid. I ask them what they would like to say to their harassers if they were certain that they could speak without fear of retaliation. "I would like to tell them that I'm not a Barbie doll," says Ysidora. "If they think I'm pretty, well, 'thank you' but I don't need to hear it. I don't need their opinion, I don't need their

approval, I don't need their comments and I don't want them. Their attention makes me feel uncomfortable and they need to respect my space and respect me" (interview, 17 February 2016, Mexico City). Marta responds similarly but tempers her frustration by considering the situation that she believes, motivates her harassers. She cannot overlook the subjectivity of these individuals despite the fact that they have denied hers. Marta says,

> [I would like them to understand] that I don't take it as a compliment if I don't know you. I am just trying to go about my day. They need to understand that women don't exist for the visual or physical pleasure of men. If I'm walking down the street to pick up my laundry, that is not an opportunity for you to hit on me. [Having said that,] I'm constantly analyzing things on different levels. Not to excuse acoso callejero but I try to understand why these men do it. And I feel like Mexico is such a horribly unequal country that this is one of the manifestations. Some people do it because they don't give a fuck. And they don't give a fuck about anything because they've been screwed since birth. I think a lot of these guys wouldn't care about my feminist perspective about why acoso callejero is bad. They're like, "I do it because I feel like it [*cuando me de la gana*]" (interview, 10 February 2016, Mexico City).

Flamingo is a bit less generous to her harassers. She says, "My fantasy confrontation is a very violent one. I feel so violent sometimes that there comes a moment when I would like to… [throws a right hook at the air]" (interview, 14 August 2015, Mexico City).

The Daughters of Violence

Las Hijas de Violencia (The Daughters of Violence)[58] are Mexico City-based performance artists who fight against acoso callejero and other forms of gender violence.

[58] For brevity, I will refer to Las Hijas de Violencia as "Las Hijas" throughout. Further, members of the group are frequently harassed on social media and have received death threats. In order to support the necessary anonymity of these interlocutors, I will refer to them collectively as "Las Hijas" or by pseudonyms throughout.

I first discovered Las Hijas through their promotional video, "Fighting Street Harassers with Confetti Guns and Punk Rock,"[59] produced by AJ+, a self-described "global news community for the connected generation."[60] Featuring English titles and English translations of Spanish lyrics, interview excerpts with la Hijas, as well as footage of real confrontations with harassers, the video succeeded in bringing international attention to the crisis of acoso callejero in Mexico City, putting Las Hijas, in terms of publicity, in the order of groups such as Pussy Riot. The video features street scenes from Mexico City in which Las Hijas verbally confront harassers, shoot confetti in their faces, and then bombard them with their theme song, "Sexista Punk," with the help of backpack-mounted microphone/speaker rigs. These scenes are spliced with interview excerpts where Las Hijas describe their initial motivation, tactics, and ultimate objectives. Composed by Las Hijas, "Sexista Punk" is not only an element of their street performances, but also serves as the soundtrack for a number of different videos produced by the group. The use of a single song to support different videos in a series, each constructing a visual narrative that highlights different aspects of acoso callejero, points to the fact Las Hijas occupy a space of artistic practice that, inspired by punk groups like Pussy Riot and the Riot grrrl Movement, elicits some of the aesthetics and swagger of a punk group, but is not so much a musical project as a political one that employs several forms of media (live performance, sound recording, and video production).

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[59] "Fighting Street Harassers with Confetti Guns and Punk Rock." YouTube video, 1:28, posted by "AJ+," January 27, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ze4AH_5kJw (accessed February 1, 2016).

[60] AJ+ features left-leaning, often provocative video reports in the vein of VICE News. Their YouTube channel can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCV3Nm3T-XAgVhKH9jT0ViRg.

The original video in this series, entitled "Sexista Punk"[61] after the song itself, seems to serve a different purpose from the video disseminated by AJ+. The original is less a statement of purpose than a poetic distillation of the crisis of acoso callejero itself. The message of "Sexista Punk" appears intended for the victims of acoso callejero, saying (through lyrics) and showing (through intercut scenes) that these victims are not alone in their uncertainty, isolation, and shame. The video begins with jump cuts showing each of four group members as they walk alone, casually dressed, along a leafy Mexico City street. Assailants hop from off frame, startling their victim. Some appear behind the protagonist and deliver gentle caresses while others gather in the background. The assailants are wearing plastic animal masks; beaks and snouts protrude from dark hoods. The animal masks suggest both that these anonymous assailants are behaving like animals but also that they are hiding, emboldened to behave this way because they are masked.

The narrative perspective shifts and we move from the voyeurism of the street to a representation of the victim's interiority: she (each of Las Hijas becomes the subject in a series of jump cuts) is again alone but this time, posed in front of a bare brick wall (a symbol of the urban terrain). With tense shoulders, she gazes into the camera and braces herself in anticipation as a wreath of disembodied hands reach toward her from out of frame. The hands billow like tentacles and she appears to grow smaller. Cutting from scene to scene with the rhythm of the soundtrack, we see each woman in solitary torment

[61] "Sexista Punk Las hijas de Violencia." YouTube video, 2:59, posted by "Las Hijas de Violencia," December 30, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5pqOWBLNqA (accessed January 15, 2017).

but each expressing that torment in a slightly different way. The grasping hands begin caressing, groping, and tugging. Pink tongues wag through the plastic muzzles of the masks. Back on the street, one of Las Hijas is mobbed by the anonymous assailants and strikes back by shoving a bird-faced attacker against a lamppost. The mob responds by whipping off their masks, revealing the faces of Las Hijas themselves. Wide-eyed, shoulders shrugged, the un-masked assailants seem to be saying, "calm down. What's the big deal?" As the unmasked assailants shuffle off, the cycle of violence is complete: the victim has been both humiliated and denied the validity of that feeling. At the end, each of Las Hijas gaze into the camera, breathing deeply. Group member "Ana Karen" delivers a final message. Calmly drawing her confetti gun to her line of sight, she takes aim at the camera and *pop*, we see what the assailants are meant to see—a flurry of colored paper, punctuated by a final drum roll, and trailed by a lazy coil of white smoke.

As a piece of music, "Sexista Punk" loads this visual narrative with the tension of a steel spring. The video itself provides a rich allegory of acoso callejero—poetically demonstrating both what it is and how it feels. The driving punk rock music sputters like an overworked steam gauge. Sixteenth-note machine gun bursts punctuate phrases of kick drum and voice. One can almost feel the racing pulse of the victim and sense the internal struggle to ignore, repress, or retaliate. The lyrics and musical setting of "Sexista Punk" add an important layer of meaning to the video. While the images cleverly evoke the feelings that many victims describe, the lyrics convey their inner-voices, the words that so many interlocutors confess they long to express to harassers but fear to.

The lyrics, a volley of words passed stanza to stanza between Las Hijas, place the listener in the position of the harasser, perhaps not surprisingly considering that Las Hijas normally shout these words at actual harassers. Listening to these words, one can feel the brunt of las Hija's fury:

> What you are doing to me is harassment.
> If you do this to me in this way, I will respond.
> You must know that you are not the first or even the tenth.
> I am fed up with this and with your great stupidity.
>
> In a low voice, you tell me so many things.
> I pass to the side and I see your revolting gaze.
> If this were the metro, I have no doubt that in a moment,
> your hands would be on my ass and you would be inside.
>
> You don't flatter me. You make me uncomfortable like they all do.
> You don't care how I look or what I'm wearing.
> You don't have the right and you act like a pig.
>
> Sexist! Machista! What do you want?
> To show your manliness? Get the fuck out of my sight!
>
> I always find this, every single day.
> The same glances and words of aggression.
> "Qué rica." "Sabrosa." "Mamasita, qué culito."
> And I am only ignoring the denigration.
>
> If today I shut up, you shut up, we shut up,
> like a piece of meat, we all go down.
> It's not normal that you try to touch me.
> You talk to me like you want to rape me.
>
> I imagine the day when I can go for a walk,
> without having to take care of myself, without having to hide my body.
> I am not an idiot and that provokes you so much.
> You have no respect and you drive me crazy.

These words remind listeners—surrogate harassers—of their transgressions but are also peppered with appeals to listeners' humanity. The tone of these words suggest a number

of things. First, the motivation to remind a harasser that they are engaging in harassment speaks to the fact that this behavior is routine because it is normalized and normalized because it is routine. It is possible that at least some of those who commit acoso callejero are oblivious to the damage it does to victims. Second, these words closely correspond with the confrontations that several of my interlocutors fantasize about having with harassers. This demonstrates the thoughtful precision and potency of Las Hijas' message. While speaking overtly to a fictional harasser, Las Hijas also express what victims long to and thus, coax the casual, isolating violence of acoso callejero into the light. The objectives of Las Hijas are pragmatic. Group member "Ana Beatriz" explains in the video produced by AJ+, "We certainly don't think that we're going to change the world. But we sure know that we've changed ours." The salient point here is that while Las Hijas are interested in changing the minds of would-be harassers and generally raising awareness of acoso callejero, the more critical (and possibly more feasible) goal is to remove the isolation that many victims experience by reminded them that they are not alone.

Conclusion

During an interview with Mayer at her home, I brought up "Sexista Punk" and Mayer lit up, telling me that she knows Las Hijas and that several of the group members would be attending her upcoming workshop. Mayer invited me to attend as well and get to know Las Hijas in person. I was delighted and returned to her home (where many of her workshops are held) the following week, characteristically early and a bit nervous. Mayer's husband offered me some tea and I took a seat on a cozy couch and waited. The

living room was packed with chairs and sofas in anticipation. As the guests shuffled in, I noticed that I was most likely the oldest attendee (with the exception of our hosts) and the only man besides Mónica's husband. In a short burst, the living room went from awkwardly empty to uncomfortably crowded. All of the other attendees appeared to be in their twenties, many of them students (I surmised) by the backpacks that they stacked in corners and gaps between furniture. As the couches filled up, I remember feeling self-conscious of the physical space that I took up. We had all come to discuss and listen to stories about violence—often perpetrated by men upon women—and in that autoscopic moment, I found myself unsettled by my own maleness. The sensation quickly faded as I remembered that we had all been invited there by Mayer. Indeed, the very spirit of Mayer's workshops, one that through her words and actions is made explicit, is a celebration of the variability of being. Like Mayer's Clothesline project, a function of her workshops is, through conversation, to lift the shroud of silence that isolates victims of gender violence. Unlike the Clothesline project, workshops are not only about sharing stories; they are dialogic spaces in which attendees collectively articulate the nature of gender violence in Mexico City, ruminate on its causes, and construct paths of resistance. While "resistance does not need to be discursive, coherent, or conscious" (H. Moore 1994: 82), these workshops generate resistance precisely by drawing inchoate ideas about acoso callejero into intersubjective consciousness.

During the course of Mayer's workshop, Las Hijas shared several of their videos in addition to the ones I have previously mentioned. They discussed the importance of social media in their struggle to promote public awareness of gender violence in Mexico.

It is also through media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter that Las Hijas have garnered a new sort of harassment. Emboldened by anonymity, perhaps even more than what they feel on the street, individuals threatened by Las Hijas' message regularly post vicious insults, sexist memes, and even target individual members with death threats. During the workshop, Las Hijas projected some of these messages and images on Mayer's flat screen TV. One in particular showed a man with his face covered by a bandana and brandishing an automatic rifle. His message to Las Hijas stated, "If you don't stop, I know how to stop you." Secure in the warm fellowship of Mayer's workshop, we all laughed at the man's cowardice. Nevertheless, Las Hijas take these threats seriously and consequently, are very guarded about divulging their full names and personal information to the press.

I believe that the intensity of these threats illustrates precisely how threatening Las Hijas' message is among some sectors of the population. Las Hijas' public use of confetti guns on harassers is normally met by embarrassment and nervous laughter, but their social media presence has garnered something much more sinister and, as such, presents a conundrum for Las Hijas. In their view, their street performance has little impact if it is not documented and disseminated through social media, a strategy meant to engage artists and activists internationally. They suspect that because of the frequency and intensity of the anonymous threats, they are most likely being orchestrated by organized groups rather than disturbed individuals. Las Hijas believe that their public Facebook and Twitter pages have been hacked repeatedly in an attempt to disclose their identities and personal information as well as those who are part of Las Hijas' network.

Further, Las Hijas have been in consultation with human rights lawyers about the inherent structural problems of these social media networks. A member of the group explained that on Facebook for example, when a threating message or derogatory comment is posted on their page and they report it to administrators, the entire page is blocked for seven days in order to inspect the situation. This happens so frequently that by posting hate speech on Las Hijas' pages, anonymous individuals can effectively silence Las Hijas' message by causing their page to be constantly suspended.

Mayer believes that Las Hijas have achieved the notoriety that they have in part because of the sacrifices of brave individuals who came before. Consequently, Las Hijas are able to transcend the limits of security and access that restricted activists of previous generations. "They are very young," says Mayer, "and they are confrontational in a way that I never would have had the courage to be. And as far as I know, they have never gotten hurt in the street. They've been threatened online, but so far, there hasn't been any violent retaliation" (interview, 19 February 2016, Mexico City). By defining acoso callejero in explicit terms and symbolically inverting this ritual of dominance and humiliation, Las Hijas are exposing the breadth and depth of acoso callejero in Mexico City. Could punk rock and confetti guns possibly reverse the crisis of gender violence in Mexico City? Mayer resists such simplifications of what she considers to an endemic social illness, but does believe that Las Hijas address a particular issue at the root of the crisis, the complacency and isolation of victims. If many of the victims of acoso callejero express a fantasy response to their assailants, Las Hijas gives these fantasies flesh. Mayer states:

> Las Hijas are self-reflecting; they're saying what they want. Something that has changed is that forty years ago, there was nobody doing these things. I would never do the work that Las Hijas are doing. I think it's wonderful. It is wonderful that the voice has multiplied and that it has a lot of textures and different attitudes today (interview, 19 February 2016, Mexico City).

Resistance to acoso callejero in Mexico City is on the rise. As Mayer states, "the voice has multiplied" and these voices are emerging from all sides to expose the hypocrisy and vulnerability of a system designed to protect its citizens but is, I argue, partially complicit in their denigration. Though Las Hijas have achieved international notoriety and for some, may embody a new wave of activism against gender violence in Mexico, they are not alone and seem to be riding the crest of a wave of public awareness that grows daily. Their struggle coincided with the "March against Gender Violence" in April 24, 2016, the first of its kind to be held in Mexico City. The march began in Ecatepec in the state of Mexico, the scene of a rash of femicides in recent years and ended in Mexico City at the monument of the Angel of Independence. Thousands of marchers participated in the capital and the march was coordinated with others in the cities of Puebla, Xalapa, Tuxtla, Oaxaca, Morelia, Guadalajara and Juárez (Cruz 2016). The rising public profile of acoso callejero has also inspired social experiments aimed not only at bolstering the solidarity among victims but by drawing attention to the public apathy that allows acoso callejero to fester. One such experiment staged incidents of acoso callejero on public transport in order to highlight the hesitance of bystanders to intercede in these attacks.[62]

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[62] "Impresionante reaccion de la gente ante un acosador del metro/ Experimento social." YouTube video, 3:58, posted by "MESAJEROS URBANOS," August 17, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YmL7Y-oI3IU(accessed October 15, 2016).

Public outcry concerning acoso callejero has forced policy makers in Mexico City to play "catch up." Murmurs of legislating against domestic violence in Mexico first began in the late 1980s but it was not until the passing of "the General Law of Access of Women to a Violence-Free Life" in 2007, that *public* harassment (e.g., acoso callejero) began to be categorized as a prosecutable offense by the Mexican government (González Montes 2012: 215). In 2008, the "Safe Rideshare Program" was established, designed to curb acoso callejero on Mexico City's vast public transportation system. This program included the segregation of the metrobús and metro system as well as the installation of booths with the title of "Modules of Attention for Victims of Sexual Violence on Public Transport" (Ban Toledo 2011: 54–59). The impact of this segregation remains unclear. Mayer argues that such segregation is problematic, enforcing the belief that gender violence is natural rather than systemic. Grosz makes a similar point, stating, "to produce a women-only space is to produce that space as a separatist and thus as reactive to the dominant male culture" (2001: 25). Diana, on the other hand, recognizes that this segregation may reinforce the belief that "that's just how men are," but she asks rhetorically, "is a massive amount of the population expected to endure sexual harassment on a daily basis just to prove a point?" She has observed "women-and-children-only cars" to be sites of inverted confrontation: "That's something interesting that I've seen…Women vocalizing…fighting back. Now, when men get on these cars, I notice that they get nervous like they're expecting to be kicked off" (interview, 5 May 2016, Mexico City). Gaytán Sánchez notes that the segregation policy lacks a certain numerical logic. The metro, for example, is used in roughly equal numbers by men and

women yet only the front two cars of a given train are designated "women-and-children-only." She adds:

> Apparently, it is assumed that [this segregation] provides greater traveling comfort for women and children based on the principle of their vulnerability. […] However, the separation of cars does not alleviate overcrowding: these cars are saturated in the same way as the mixed cars and in reality, the distributions [of travelers] is quite unequal (2004: 94–95).

Figure 3.6. Metro passengers waiting in an area designated, "for women and children only." Photo by María Magdalena Alonso Pérez. Used by permission.

Figure 3.7. A "Module of Attention" in a metro station where victims may report sexual assault and harassment. Photo by María Magdalena Alonso Pérez. Used by permission.

Figure 3.8. A metro billboard stating, "A safe and friendly city for women and girls." Photo by María Magdalena Alonso Pérez. Used by permission.

The city government has recently taken imaginative steps to alleviate the crisis of acoso callejero, with questionable results. On May 26, 2016, mayor Miguel Ángel Mancera presented his plan to issue more than 100,000 plastic whistles to combat acoso callejero. Pink whistles were issued to women and black to men. The program has since been widely criticized, not so much for the irony of combating whistles with whistles or the bizarre gender-based color coding, but for reports by victims of their ineffectuality (Juárez 2016). A satirical public-service poster has made its way through social media showing, in addition to the "anti-acoso whistle", "anti-corruption maracas" as well as an "anti-extortion trumpet." Beyond the sardonic humor, this poster is a response to what many consider to be the patronizing superficiality of government initiatives meant to address serious social problems like acoso callejero—ones that rely entirely on systems of reporting and enforcement that are simply not in place. Yet the existence of these programs suggest that the city government is feeling the pressure of this rising tide of activism in Mexico City and as such, is compelled to acknowledge it in some way.

Can the crisis of acoso callejero in Mexico City be abated? It is one that is facilitated and emboldened by the corruption, callousness, and brazen inequity of institutions of power, reproducing the sanctioned violence of the State on the scale of quotidian interactions. It is a form of systemic violence that is made possible through public apathy and omission. But for Mayer, hope is not lost:

> I mean, forty years ago, when I was a part of the Feminist Movement…the *actual* Movement…Abortion wasn't legal. I thought we would never get abortion legalized. I really thought that in Mexico, that would be the last thing that would ever happen. No way! Gay marriages? No way! And these two things are now possible. So why isn't it possible to fight against acoso callejero, when, I would say, 90% of the cases happen because of a lack of education? Sure, there are a few

> mentally ill people who do violent things…true. But that's something else. If more of us started reacting when someone else is being harassed, that would help (interview, 19 February 2016, Mexico City).

Musician María suggests that both harassers and victims of acoso callejero need an education on the subject. It is necessary, through the concerted efforts of individuals, to continually disrupt these patterns of violence and call attention to them. "The key," María explains, "is to change our routines. Harassers are expecting you to act in the same way as victims normally act when they are whistled or yelled at. They expect you to take it. If you break that routine by confronting them, they will be forced to acknowledge what they are doing" (interview, 2 February 2016, Mexico City).

As Mayer's workshop drew to a close she invited us all to rise and form a circle, hand in hand. We were then invited to offer a prayer, a single word of inspiration that passed from mouth to ear along the tight spiral of safety. "Strength," "hope," "empathy." In the final station of her ritual, Mayer invited us to kiss our neighbor on the cheek, first clockwise and then counter-clockwise. I was transported to the Catholic mass of my childhood. "Peace be with you" we seemed to say as we departed into the howling nighttime streets.

Chapter 4 | An Acoustemology of the Chopo Cultural Bazaar

No se como te atreves a vestirte de esa forma y salir así.	I don't know how you dare to dress yourself that way and go out like that.
En mis tiempos, todo era elegante sin greñudos y sin rock.	In my day, everyone was elegant without scraggly hair and without rock.
En mis tiempos, todas las mujeres eran serias no habia punk.	In my day, all the women were serious and there was no punk.
¡Hey pa! ¡Fuiste pachuco! ¡También te regañaban! ¡Hey pa! ¡Bailabas mambo! ¡Tienes que recordarlo!	Hey, pop! You were *pachuco* [zoot suit]! You were scolded too! Hey, pop! You danced mambo! You have to remember!

—Maldita Vecindad y los Hijos del Quinto Patio "Pachuco"

A Stroll through the Bazaar

After a late Saturday breakfast in the Spring of 2015, some friends and I decided to visit the Chopo Cultural Bazaar (*el tianguis*[63]*cultural del Chopo*). After a short metro ride, we emerged from the Buenavista station onto sun-dappled sidewalks. To our left stood the massive train station Buenavista that serves commuters to and from the north of the city; farther ahead the Jose Vasconcelos Library lay adjacent to the entrance of El Chopo.[64] We pushed ahead and as we did, the appearance of the crowd along the broad transportation artery of Eje 1 Norte began to change—young people were distributing

[63] "Tianguis: from the Náhuatl *Tianquiztli*, a market in a plaza or open space. The stalls of the vendors are improvisational structures covered by tightened tarpaulin or cloth. The organization of their location is temporal and follows a confusing order" (Camacho Carmona 1998: 680).

[64] For brevity, I will refer to the Chopo Cultural Bazaar (*el tianguis cultural del Chopo*) as "El Chopo" throughout.

flyers, carrying backpacks, dressed in black and leather, and adorned with "liberty spikes"[65] the colors of tropical birds. Turning down Aldama Street, we encountered young men offering various types of drugs in hushed tones and middle aged men with shaggy beards reading poetry over a P.A. system and selling dusty books. As we approached a warren of tents we heard a low rumble like a massive army assuming battle formations. The foot traffic congealed and forced us to slow our pace. The atmosphere was thick with a turbulent blend of musics, so loud that they triggered the alarms of parked cars nearby. As we passed through the tents it felt as though I was moving through membranes of liquid space, each heated to different temperatures: the amplified punk music was hot; the classic rock, tepid; the reggae, surprisingly cool. The atmosphere was filled with smoke (tobacco, marijuana, and a mix of incense). We passed haltingly through a digestive track of canvas and twine only to be deposited into a crowded parking lot. There, at the end of El Chopo, it was as though we had entered a waking dream, charged at once with magnetic pull of familiar recognition and the simultaneous repulsion of the uncanny. The sounds, images, manners of dress, and body language were simultaneously familiar and unknown to us.

Along a narrow, two-lane strip buttressed by decaying factory and commercial buildings in the Buenavista neighborhood of Mexico City, El Chopo is a site in which nearly four decades of struggle, triumph, art, and community have been compressed into the area of roughly two residential blocks. Through amplified music and live performance, El Chopo offers nearly every imaginable strain of rock: classic rock, punk,

[65] A type of "Mohawk" hairstyle characterized by large, pointed spikes

metal, psychedelic, reggae, ska, and grunge, to name only a few. You can *hear* El Chopo before you see it. What marks this unusual soundscape[66] and sets it apart from other soundscapes in the city is its overwhelming acoustic representation of power, anger, passion, and youthful energy. "They are human molotov cocktails!" exclaims cultural critic/activist Carlos Monsiváis (1996: 19), summarizing the fearful gaze of the Mexico City public. The devotees of specific musical genres occupy tight pockets of space within the tiny bazaar compromising a mosaic of sonic differentiation (Farías Bárcenas 1996: 49). Curiously, these "urban tribes" (Maffesoli 1990)[67] or *bandas*[68] appear to share the space willingly with each other. According to urban planner Isaac Dolores Sánchez, "the possible problems arising from the use of space create imaginary boundaries between distinct social groups. In the case of El Chopo, it seems that these boundaries do not exist" (2008: 73). Former Chac Mool percussionist, co-founder, and cultural committee chair of El Chopo Carlos Alvarado adds, "throughout El Chopo you'll see how all these

[66] According to Daughtry, without a consideration of the performative nature of listening, "the soundscape concept ends up strangely both presuming and *erasing* the listener" (2015: 122). I have chosen to use the term "soundscape" (*paisaje sonoro*) precisely because it is used by several of my interlocutors to describe not a neutral composite of sounds but rather an acoustic manifestation of community values.

[67] Coined by sociologist Michel Maffesoli (1990), an "urban tribe" is a small group of individuals who inhabit an urban area and are unified by a common ideology, behaviors, or manner of dress. This label has been widely adapted by social scientists (especially in the study of musical subcultures) and is used by several of my interlocutors to describe the distinct groups found in El Chopo.

[68] In Mexican Spanish, "banda" is a flexible term with many connotations. It may designate a social clique, a collaborative team or social collective, a musical group, regional variants of a musical genre (e.g., *banda duranguense* [Durango banda]), or even be enlarged to refer to an entire community or population (e.g., *chilango banda* [people of Mexico City]). In this discussion, interlocutors use "banda" to describe members of particular music subcultures (e.g., punks, metaleros, goths, etc.) but also to refer the entire elective community of El Chopo as a composite whole. To make matters more complicated, "banda" may also refer to a youth gang (though *pandilla* is more explicit).

tribes live together in harmony. You can hear that in the soundscape" (interview, 16 May 2015, Mexico City).

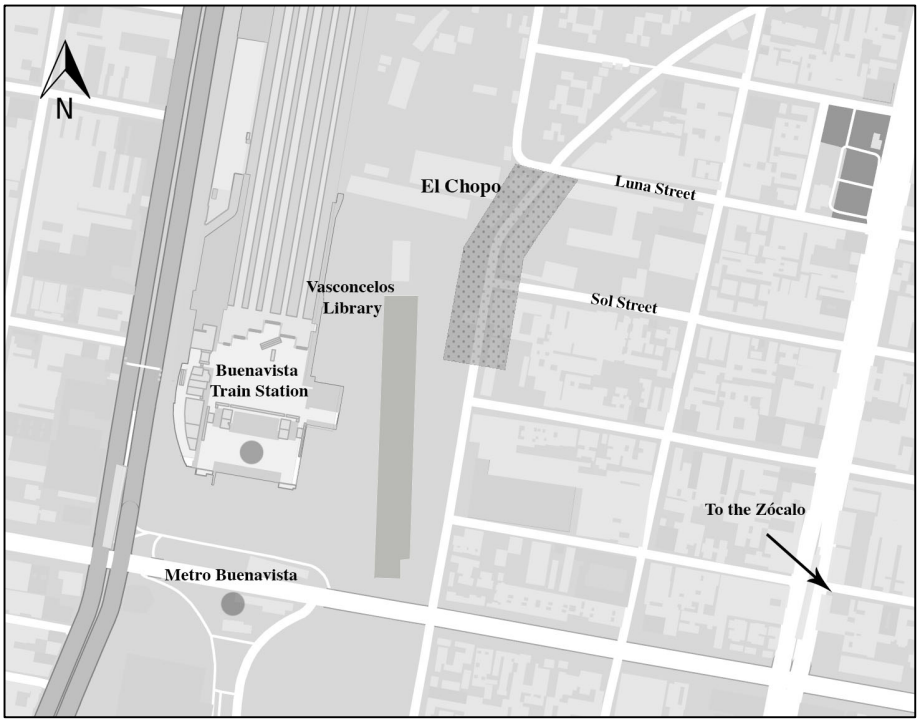

Figure 4.1. A map of El Chopo and surrounding Buenavista. Created by author using Snazzy Maps (CC0 1.0 Universal).

Video 4.1. A stroll through El Chopo. Created by author.

Sound is the lynchpin that holds this community together and permeates every corner. The distinct sonic space of El Chopo is grounded in the particular histories and patterns of migration that lie beyond its borders. Journalist Rodrigo Farías Bárcenas describes the soundscape of El Chopo in this way:

> The cry of the boom boxes merges with the murmur of the crowd. At full volume, so as not to go unnoticed, the machines hurl seismic vibrations of the heaviest genres of rock and heavy metal through the air that cross the street from one side to the other, electrifying the atmosphere. […] It is not a homogenous block that we see but rather a heterogeneous mosaic of personalities. In this place the generations of rock find each other and mix (1996: 49).

Music and musical memorabilia demonstrate the material presence of this heterogeneous mosaic and carry overlapping and often incongruous imaginaries of what El Chopo was, is, and could be. This chapter is concerned with the constitution of this mosaic and as such, marks a departure from the bulk of writing on El Chopo by rock journalists and popular music scholars who deal with El Chopo tangentially in their examinations of the rock subcultures that gather there.[69] Such information is critical in understanding the musical movements and affiliated subcultures that brought El Chopo into existence and continue to nourish it. Out of respect for such research and in order to contribute to the larger discussion of coexistent auralities in Mexico City, I have chosen to focus elsewhere.

El Chopo, like other bazaars, represents a temporary occupation of public space. Tents are raised and collapsed and between these brackets, the space is transformed. Within this spatiotemporal *niche*, embodiment and sensory perception are indelible filters through which individuals communicate, form memories, and establish their *sense of place*[70] in relation to their physical environment and to other human beings. Thus, I am concerned with epistemologies of space within El Chopo and how the elisions, eclipses, and metamorphoses of sounds (live and recorded music, voices, machinery, etc.) seem to

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[69] For work that deals directly with some of the micro-communities that make up El Chopo, see Castillo Almaraz, "Muerte y futuro: El movimiento oscuro en el tianguis cultural del Chopo," Tatro, "The Hard Work of Screaming: Physical Exertion and Affective Labor Among Mexico City's Punk Vocalists," and Torres Medina, "*Rockeros en concreto: Génesis e historia del rockmex*."

[70] "Sense of place: the terrain covered here includes the relation of sensation to emplacement; the experiential and expressive ways places are known, imagined, yearned for, held, remembered, voiced, lived, contested, and struggled over; and the multiple ways places are metonymically and metaphorically tied to identities" (Feld and Basso 1996: 11).

demarcate halls, corridors, and nested chambers. This investigation is based on the testimonies of casual visitors, customers, vendors, founders, organizers, neighbors, and self-identified *chopero/as* (dedicated members of the Chopo community).

Elective Cohabitation

The megalopolis of Mexico City is experienced by many who live there as a network of localities, *known* places laden with both personal memory and collective meaning. The capacity to inhabit and navigate between these confluent localities "is made possible through the construction of broader contexts of reference or 'scapes,' in relation with which the local is delimited and differentiated" (Giglia 2012: 153). Sounds provide inhabitants with a powerful means of navigation: the unique calls of street vendors, song fragments, patterns of speech, and church bells echolocate the listener within a vast spatiotemporal grid. The rapid expansion and transformation of Mexico City over the last twenty-five years "does not appear to have diminished the importance of the local—on the contrary, it may have reinforced it—for instance in the production of meaning associated with quotidian life" (Giglia 2012: 171).[71] Anthropologist Steven Feld uses the term *acoustemology* to describe these "local conditions of acoustic sensation, knowledge, and imagination embodied in the culturally particular sense of place" (1996: 91), and according to phenomenologists Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, it is

[71] Anthropologist Angela Giglia adds, "if the local is a dynamic and unstable factor, in a continuous process of redefinition in accordance with the changing succession of events in the local and supra-local space, local culture appears to maintain a stable relation with the plane of quotidian life and routine practices" (2012: 171).

through the cohabitation of these places "in which sound is mutually experienced" that *acoustic communities* are formed (2007: 26). El Chopo is such a place—a site of reunion for rock fans of all ages and one centrally located at the interchange of train, metro, and bus lines (Dolores Sánchez 2008: 17; Farías Bárcenas 1996: 45; Pantoja 1996a: 13).

At its inception in 1980, El Chopo was one of the only places in Mexico City to find and trade specific types of rock, punk, and metal music that were forbidden by civic authorities and banned from radio airplay and formal performance venues (Augustín 1996; Cerrillo Garnica 2012; Hernández Murillo 2000; Pantoja 1996b). Like many great undertakings, El Chopo started with a conversation. Former coordinator of Cultural Activities at the Chopo University Museum of UNAM[72] and co-founder of El Chopo Jorge Pantoja explains: "In the first days of 1980, during an interview for the UNAM Gazette, [Ángeles] Mastretta suggested that I produce a monthly program similar to that of the Theater of Architecture, with the same financial scheme, but in the Chopo Museum. The following month gave rise to the most enduring gig-space, perhaps, in the history of Mexico City: 'Rock from here'" (1996a: 12). Thus began a small cultural initiative sponsored by a museum and with it, the enduring and well-publicized creation myth of El Chopo. Originally intended as a vinyl flea market that would meet each Saturday for a single month, El Chopo has continued until the present due to public demand.

[72] El Chopo (the bazaar) takes its name from the Chopo University Museum of UNAM. The bazaar was originally held in the museum but the two institutions have not been officially affiliated since 1982. However, the museum houses archival material about El Chopo and occasionally hosts concerts and art installations in collaboration with bazaar organizers.

With the advent of digital media and the Internet, however, El Chopo appears to have little to offer that would not be accessible through one's personal computer. So why is El Chopo still relevant and irreproducible in the lives of many? Anthropologist Maritza Urteaga Castro-Pozo proposes that choperos "don't only go to acquire material, they go to acquire warmth, affection and this is only possible by 'making banda,' becoming part of one of the numerous rock tribes that arrive each Saturday to 'affectionately connect' through a third object, the rock music, the disk, the live show" (1998: 115). The prohibition of rock and the gradual privatization of public spaces beginning in the late 1970s gave young people fewer places to turn. This has led to the remarkable cohabitation of "rock tribes" within El Chopo. External pressure fomented a spirit of tolerance and shared purpose simply by virtue of the fact that El Chopo is "one of the few spaces in which the alternative cultural groups […] frequent the same space" (Dolores Sánchez 2008: 77). Analogous to a diasporic population, the compressed cohabitation of these distinct groups produces, in the words of sociologist Vic Seidler, a *fusion sound culture* that "help[s] people to work through the pressures, anxieties and hopes of everyday life that they might not otherwise be able to express" (2003: 407). Without a shared point of origin or common socio-economic status, this elective community is bound by individual choice and tolerance of the choices of others. This exaltation of individual choice is materialized in El Chopo where overlapping waves of amplified musics both provide, says Blesser and Salter, "multiple listening spaces" (2007: 130) and "broadcast" the composite whole to everyone within earshot (2007: 26).

For chopero "Mario," the enduring success of El Chopo is a consequence of face-to-face interaction. El Chopo is, above all, a site of reunion that provides a heterogeneous population the opportunity to mingle, share music and ideas, and in doing so, establish a sense of locality that transcends geography and social class. According to anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, locality in the contemporary world is primarily influenced by three factors: "the nation-state, diasporic flows, and electronic and virtual communities" (1996: 198). All three have left their imprint on El Chopo. The power of the Mexican state, its exploitation of the symbols of the Mexican Revolution, and its success in silencing the student movements of the 1960s and 1970s have pushed the music counterculture of Mexico City to the margins of society, strengthening the bonds of choperos through the common causes of survival and counterhegemonic resistance (see Lefebvre 1996: 67). Since the arrival of rock 'n' roll music in Mexico in 1957, Mexico City's counterculture has been nourished by waves of music and material culture from abroad (e.g., the psychedelic movement of the 1960s, the punk movement of the 1970s, and the ska movement of the early 1990s, etc.). Repeatedly, these waves have been absorbed and *Mexicanized*, rapidly acquiring the status of sacrament in the ritual practices of new urban tribes. Appropriating transnational musical movements—rendering them at once hyper-local yet in tune with parallel, global configurations—has provided young people a means of establishing a powerful counterbalance to the rigid narrative of Mexican nationalism and "introduced the possibility of selecting among multiple reference points in the reconstruction of one's national as well as individual identity" (Zolov 1999: 139). Finally, El Chopo is a single, very important node in a broad network of sites where

Mexico City's counterculture is celebrated and enacted. According to anthropologist Alfredo Nateras Domínguez, "the space of El Chopo is one space among other spaces, like the *cantina* [bar], the party or the *tocada* [rock show], that young people have appropriated and made their own. In this sense, [El Chopo] is a space of entry and exit" (1995: 32). Unlike an urban neighborhood or rural village where people interact because they live side by side, El Chopo is a place where most visitors choose to go. They choose to interact with each other and in doing so, construct a community of mutually constitutive aesthetics, ideologies, and affections. This elective community is both concrete in that it is based on weekly cohabitation and virtual in that it fosters a cosmology, a sense of shared origin and common destiny that transcends the spatiotemporal limits of El Chopo itself.

Being Chopero: Mario's Story

Mario identifies himself as a chopero. A chopero "is a rock-n-roller," he explains, "a person with very distinct musical taste that isn't satisfied by the mainstream. For that reason, we are drawn to El Chopo" (interview, 18 May 2016, Mexico City). For Mario, choperos are individualists who courageously maintain a particular lifestyle despite the prejudice and dismissive attitudes of family members, neighbors, coworkers, and the public at large. Mario is a Buenavista native and has been a regular fixture in El Chopo since the early 1980s. When El Chopo was moved to Buenavista in 1988, his neighborhood and his elective community became one. During the week, Mario works as an assistant for the neighborhood tortilla shop as well as several other local businesses.

He is also fond of doing odd jobs and running errands for neighbors, anything that gives him the opportunity to visit far-flung parts of the city. Each Saturday, Mario partakes in the activity that he says "gave El Chopo its start" (interview, 18 May 2016, Mexico City). He is a *truequeador* (barterer), and spends his Saturdays standing near the northern end of El Chopo, joking with friends, listening to live music, and trading CDs and DVDs from a cardboard box.

I first met Mario at his home several blocks from El Chopo. He was resting shirtless on his couch while watching the evening news. After we greet each other, he popped up from the couch and drew a box of CDs from his cache of merchandise. "Please take whatever you want," he said. I selected one: *Queens of the Stone Age: KCRW Session*. His generosity was not satisfied and smiling, he encouraged me to choose others. He assured me that these were the leftovers from last Saturday and that a "guy" will bring more. I protested nervously but feeling out-matched by his politeness, I chose several others, a compilation of heavy metal music videos and titles by Prince and Tenacious D. I noticed that the disc jackets were photocopied and that the discs themselves were re-writable CDRs with titles written in pen. Anthropologist and life-long Buenavista resident Elizabeth Hernández explains that these discs are produced in one of two ways: an individual buys an original copy and duplicates it on a high-output CD/DVD burner (widely available in black markets such as Tepito) or they download the content from the internet. Hernández suggests that while cellphone use is now common in Mexico City, a large number of cellphone users only use their devices for phone calls and texting. She opines that Internet usage is relatively low in Mexico City (in comparison to

the United States, for example), as is the art of illegal file-sharing and downloading. Thus, CDs and DVDs continue to retain market value.

Mario believes that in El Chopo, choperos find the music that "carries the feeling that is already inside of them. Perhaps for this reason music is universal: there is something out there that resonates with every individual" (interview, 18 May 2016, Mexico City). His poetic insight is reminiscent of phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty's observation that "there is an objective sound that resonates outside of men in the musical instrument, an atmospheric sound that is between the object and my body, [and] a sound that vibrates in me 'as if I had become the flute or the clock'" ([1945] 2012: 236). Mario pointed to the interlocking tiles on his living room floor. "It is a mosaic of rock music," he explained, "the music grabs your attention and draws you to a particular spot in the bazaar" (interview, 18 May 2016, Mexico City).

In El Chopo, music serves as a beacon: a visitor is guided to the source of a particular song through echolocation and in doing so, becomes engaged with a micro-community of likeminded listeners. For Mario, it was the Mexican rock group El Tri[73] that originally called him and aligned him to a network of fellow El Tri fans. Despite the historical emphasis on hard rock, punk, and metal in El Chopo, one can now find everything from classical music to jazz. I asked Mario how this change relates to the theme of tolerance that has come up in my conversations with other choperos. "The beauty of El Chopo," he answered, "is that there is just such a space for every type of

[73] El Tri (originally Three Souls in My Mind) is a Mexican rock group fronted by guitarist Alex Lora. Active since 1968, the experimental psychedelic rock and blues of El Tri have been deeply influential in the evolution of Mexican rock and particularly in Mexico City.

music fan. In El Chopo, you are struck by the respect for different musical tastes that does not exist in other places" (interview, 18 May 2016, Mexico City). Audible musics and the objects that represent them (e.g., vinyl LPs, band T-shirts, patches, etc.) draw or repulse individual listeners in El Chopo resulting in a mosaic-like arrangement of bodies. Those who share "the music that is already inside them" congeal and in doing so, establish difference with those who do not share their tastes. But the establishment of sameness and difference within El Chopo's sonic mosaic does not simply serve to entrench these differences. Cohabitation in this context invariably means encounters with new sounds, people, and ideas. "In El Chopo," explains metal guitarist Cinthia Blackcat, "you have a panorama of Mexico's underground culture" (interview, 23 May 2015, Mexico City).

Choperos' Mental Map

In El Chopo, anthropologist Néstor Garcia Canclini's notion of *multitemporal heterogeneity* is rendered polyphonic. Each Saturday, between Sol and Luna Streets, there occurs a meta-encounter between individuals, urban tribes, truqueadores and merchants, security officers and rule breakers, and among all of these actors, throngs of tourists who come as much for the spectacle as the shopping. A premise of this chapter is that El Chopo is an *inscribed space*, one in which individuals "etch" themselves, "in some enduring way [upon] their surroundings" (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003: 13). These inscriptions are layered, frequently sympathetic but just as often conflictive. Discovering El Chopo for the first time, a visitor might hear an unfamiliar refrain in the

air, spot an intriguing disk jacket in a dusty box, or find him or herself captured in the tractor beam of a live band. Or he or she may simply by entranced by an unfamiliar atmosphere, one composed of bodies, beliefs, adornments, and activities but one that is also quite literally quivering with soundwaves that collide, subsume, and redirect each other. In El Chopo, says Monsiváis, "each song is not part of an atmosphere, but the atmosphere itself" (1995: 123).

"Martín" is a self-described chopero and has been visiting El Chopo regularly since the mid-1990s. Like most of my interlocutors, Martín did not stumble upon El Chopo. His phenomenological inception was colored with pre-understandings, the "legends of El Chopo" as he puts it. He had been told that El Chopo is a completely unique place; while other bazaars offer hard-to-find music in certain stalls, "nothing compares to the total ritual of El Chopo." He also notes that these legends often included a touch of menace: "I remember that the first time [that I visited El Chopo] I felt a little scared to see so many bandas in one place, so many rockers and punks. For me, it was new to see so many people meeting together, coexisting together, but the truth is that I was a little frightened" (interview, 7 July 2016, Mexico City). He recalls that through his childhood in the 1980s, mainstream news outlets frequently conflated punks and other underground music bandas with violent street gangs. Cinthia Blackcat has a similar story: "I learned about El Chopo in high school because it was an urban legend. My friends told me that if I went, I had to wear ugly clothes because if not, they would beat me up. But I had to go! I had to find out what this place is about!" (interview, 23 May 2015, Mexico City). Upon Martín's first visit to El Chopo, his wariness toward punks and metaleros

was lifted by the novel spectacle of *convivencia* (coexistence). Now, it is this very ambience that he cherishes most about El Chopo and one that he believes is gradually eroding: "It used to be that the people who hung out in El Chopo really knew about music. Now I'm not so sure. The ambience is very different. There are a lot of street vendors and food and you can hardly find any punks" (interview, 7 July 2016, Mexico City).

Cinthia and Martín's choices of words (e.g., "legends" and "ritual") are telling. To enter El Chopo is to encounter an atmosphere of historical *accumulation*. The language that many use to describe El Chopo alludes to this accumulation, a sort of symbolic weight verging on the metaphysical. "Places," says philosopher Edward S. Casey, "gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts" (1996: 24). El Chopo's mosaic of sonic differentiation is the manifestation of this historical accumulation—a medium between the symbolic and the concrete. The placement and volume of particular types of music in El Chopo, the conspicuous absence of others, and the ratio of amplified recordings to live music project shifting allegiances, revolving occupations, and pressures eminating from both within and without El Chopo. It is a topography (both a physical and symbolic one) of continuous erosion and reconstitution. Writing in 2007, sociologist Olivia Domínguez Prieto describes an iteration of El Chopo that is "organized in diverse sections that, in general, include the artisanal section, the bazaar in the general section, the punk section […], a section where concerts are performed 'Radio Chopo,' a space for photography, or space for visual art, and a space destined for sculpture" (2007: 16–17).

Her summary corresponds more or less with my own observations, with some notable changes.

The major transportation hubs lie to the southwest of El Chopo. Consequently, most visitors approach El Chopo from the south, funnelled along Aldama Street until they reach the intersection of Luna Street, eventually doubling back. This spatial layout promotes a particular, sequential experience for the majority of visitors (with the exception of neighborhood locals who find it expediant to enter from sidestreets). This sequence, a combination of deliberate ordering and practical factors, contributes to the "ritual" experience that Martín and others describe. This ritual consists of stages, enacted in particular spots, in a particular order, and involving the participation of particular people.[74] To complete the ritual a first time is to establish expectations (or modify one's pre-understanding of El Chopo). Repeating the ritual each Saturday establishes a hermeneutic base by which subsequent interpretations are measured. Over years, the accumulation of a personal history of El Chopo (through repetitions of the ritual) is a foundation upon which many claim the title "chopero." Ritual participation is an important countercultural currency. Self-identified choperos have witnessed musical trends wax and wane, remember how El Chopo "once was" and judge its present incarnation against these memories. The "right to El Chopo"—to make a playful nod to philosopher Henri Lefebvre —is the yield of ritual practice.

[74] Despite the throng of tourists, it is easy to find familiar faces in El Chopo. The locations of favorite vendors are predictable and people tend to linger in roughly the same areas.

For sake of illustration, I will designate these ritual *stages*[75] in the order that they would normally be experienced by a visitor to El Chopo. Heading along Aldama street between Eje 1 Norte and Camelia Street, one passes through what I call "The Exterior Membrane" of El Chopo (Stage 1). It is not part of El Chopo proper but is important to the innerworkings of the bazaar nevertheless. Meters away from the din of Eje 1 Norte, Stage 1 is where the city's *affective tone*—"an immersive atmosphere or ambience of fear and dread" (Goodman 2010: xiv)—is most pronounced. The irregularity and unpredictability of car horns, engine roar, and peeling tires foster what sound studies scholar Karen Bijsterveld describes as an auditory topos of *intrusive* sound, one that "invade[s] or threaten[s] the existence of a vulnerable or fragile quality, such as nature, harmony or one's heart, mind, body or security" (2013: 19). This is also the stage where unaffiliated actors attempt to take advantage of the flood of visitors who must pass to reach El Chopo. If El Chopo marks the "hour of alternative consumption," as Monsiváis puts it (1995), then the question of "alternative to what?" is answered here. In Stage 1 (almost equal in size to El Chopo), street vendors park their carts and shout pregones as the would in plazas, metro stations, or any other crowded spot in Mexico City. Drug dealers linger there and present Chopo organizers (many of whom hover within view) with a significant existential threat (Corona 2016). Most of these unauthorized vendors sell apparel but, unlike the authorized vendors in The General Bazaar (Stage 3), must forego canvas stalls for more portable, metal display racks. Over two years of research, I

[75] I use the word "stage" instead of "zone" or "area" to connote the sequential experience of moving through El Chopo.

have observed these vendors grow in number and spread farther to the south. Along with their merchandise, these mobile, unsanctioned vendors use amplified music to lure customers and pass the time. The music in Stage 1 is predominantely pre-recorded reggaeton and electronic dance music. If, as Monsiváis contends, Choperos are both "unfied and diversified following gradations of resistence to cultural industry or commercial television" (1995: 124), this music typifies the object of their resistance. In search of the obscure and undiscovered, choperos travel, in many cases, great distances to escape the hegemony of popular music. For an overwhelming majority of choperos I have interviewed, reggaeton and various forms of electronic dance music index this hegemony. Thus it is poignant to note that forces against which choperos align are manifested sonically and hover around the margins of the bazaar.

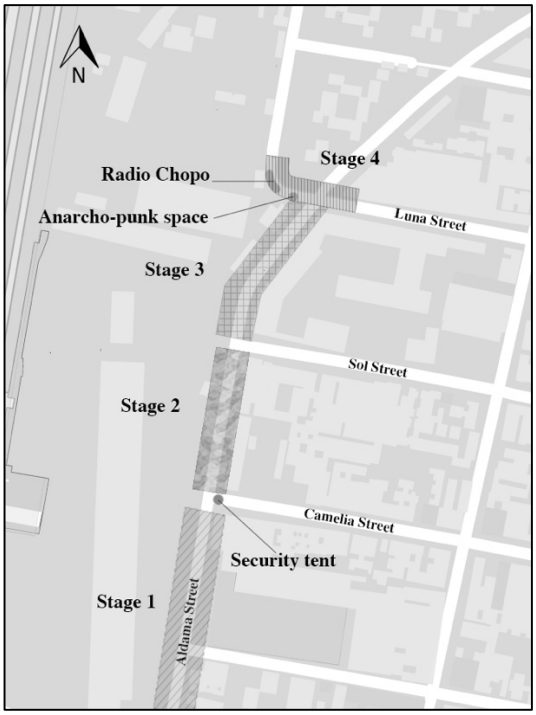

Figure 4.2. A Map of El Chopo's ritual stages including: Stage 1 (The Exterior Membrane), Stage 2 (The Cultural Corridor), Stage 3 (The General Bazaar), and Stage 4 (The Parking Lot Terminus). Created by author using Snazzy Maps (CC0 1.0 Universal).

Figure 4.3. Unsanctioned clothing vendors set up shop beyond El Chopo's Exterior Membrane. Photo by Julie K. Wesp. Used by permission.

Between Camelia and Sol Streets lies The Cultural Corridor (Stage 2), a row of folding tables covered by tents marking the entrance of El Chopo proper. At its southern boundary, The Cultural Corridor is guarded by a security tent positioned to watch over the unsanctioned activities to the south. A canvas welcome banner marks the spot and reminds visitors to "Say 'no' to drugs, 'yes' to culture." As a consequence of recent initiatives by organizers to broaden El Chopo's appeal (including a shift in emphasis from live and recorded music to multimedia art and apparel), The Cultural Corridor has acquired greater significance in recent years. Here, El Chopo hosts performance artists, fanzine and comic book expositions, and public lectures by groups like Juventudes

Marxistas who gave a recent lecture entitled “Femicide and Gender Violence in Mexico.” One can find lithographs, rare books, and witness things as incongruous as displays of medieval swordsmanship and expositions of carnivorous plants. Buttressed by the mélange of rock from El Chopo’s interior and subsonic bass pulse from beyond El Chopo’s parameter, The Cultural Corridor is a stage of relative silence. If there is a poetry reading or lecture, the orator is provided an acoustic niche in which he or she may be heard.

Figure 4.4. A welcome banner near the entrance of El Chopo reminding visitors to “Say ‘no’ to drugs, ‘yes’ to culture.” Photo by Julie K. Wesp. Used by permission.

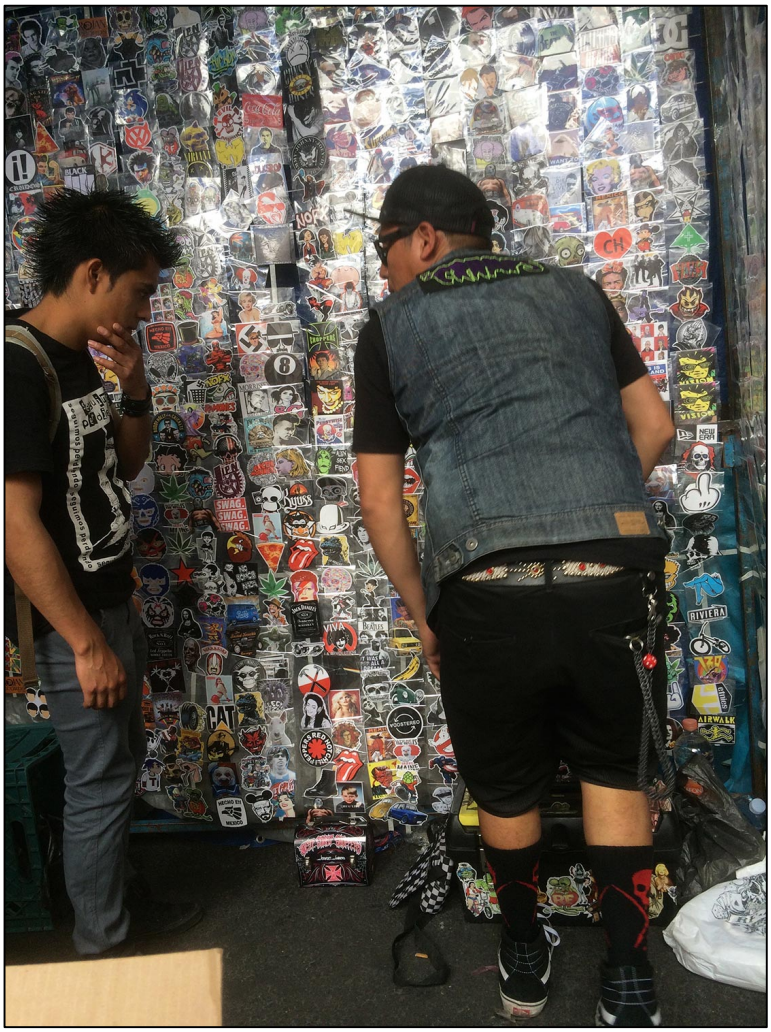

Figure 4.5. A chopero peruses a wall of stickers featuring a host of pop culture symbols. Photo by Julie K. Wesp. Used by permission.

Between Sol and Luna Streets, lies what Domínguez Prieto dubs "The General Bazaar" (Stage 3)—"the agglutinating nucleus and original section" (2007: 17). While I disagree with her assessment that The General Bazaar is the "original" section of El Chopo (the founding activity of bartering takes place elsewhere), it is certainly a compressed area of agglutination (i.e., combination of diverse elements). Occupied by canvas stalls each dedicated to distinct musical predilections, The General Bazaar feels

like a collection of difference, intentionally balanced and arranged. Most of the venders in this stage play amplified music to index the particular music subculture that their wares are meant to cater to. There are stalls devoted to reggae music and Rastafari-inspired apparel and accessories, stalls for the stud-and-leather crowd, stalls that specialize in stickers and patches, stalls stocked with bins of CDs and vinyl records, and stalls draped with t-shirts commemorating everything from international cult films to Nahuátl iconography. In this stage, the already narrow street of Aldama splits in two. Visitors pause to peruse, ogle, and absorb the competing, amplified musics that crest as they pass before the open face of each stall. The auditory experience is like a very eclectic Deejay's set—song after song unravels without beginning or end, crossfading as the listener changes position.

Reaching the northern edge of El Chopo, as Luna Street meets Aldama and bends sharply to the north, visitors enter a clearing bisected by a short, concrete island that Buenavista residents use as a parking lot on weekdays. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to this area as "The Parking Lot Terminus" (Stage 4). The analogy of the mosaic also applies here but in a manner different from the other stages of the bazaar. Blocked from traffic and forming a semi-cul de sac, The Parking Lot Terminus is the only relatively large, open space in the bazaar. Here, sounds do not compel or corner the listener as they do in the bottleneck of The General Bazaar. The competition of direct sounds is replaced by a panorama of diffusion corresponding closley to Bijsterveld's *sensational* sound—"a multitude of sounds [that] fill the environment and surround or 'lift' the subject in an enthusing way" (2013: 19). It is hardly a coincidence that this is the primary site of

reunion in El Chopo. There, choperos come to socialize, absorb and disseminate information about their favorite music and participate in the hunt for the obscure recording. While all of El Chopo's stages overlap to some degree, The Parking Lot Terminus is the least commodified space. It is ringed by truequeadores like Mario, who do not use pregones to attract customers but instead, let interested parties come to them while chatting with friends. These transactions may include money exchanges, but, unlike the disc dealers of The General Bazaar, this is not the truequeadores primary reason for being there.

Stage 4 hosts Radio Chopo, "one of the most important places for diffusion, permitting access to new generations of rock groups and exposing [those groups] to a large audience that does not need to pay to see them" (Domínguez Prieto 2007: 18–19). Radio Chopo is a complex including a band stage, tents and folding tables where the organizers present free, live music concerts, and host signing events and artist interviews. Radio Chopo has proven to be one of the most complex and at times, treacherous undertakings for Chopo organizers, requiring additional security, sound engineers, and equipment (Domínguez Prieto 2007: 18–19).

Another unique, and symbolically significant feature of Stage 4 lies only steps away from Radio Chopo. The Anarcho-Punk Space (*Espacio Anarco Punk*) is unique in El Chopo in that it is the only patch of territory that is officially designated for a particular banda. Here, members of Mexico City's anarcho-punk collectives distribute anarchist literature, fanzines on anarcho-punk groups, and trade, sell, and accept donations for band t-shirts, and recordings. These anarcho-punk collectives are non-

hierarchical, highly organized, and use both their appearance (black leather, colored hair, piercings, t-shirts of bands like Masacre 68 and Atoxxxico, etc.), their music, and their anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian ideology to demarcate "difference" within El Chopo. These anarcho-punks embody El Chopo's slogan, "Only rebels can change the world" and they authenticate the claim of "counterculture" that Chopo organizers seek to project. Consequently, they are afforded enormous cultural capital in El Chopo. Yet the job that Chopo organizers are tasked with is a treacherous one. Economic and socio-political realities compel these organizers to present a version of counterculture that is inviting to tourists and non-threatening to neighbors and government officials (all while making enough money to pay its bills). These pressures have intensified the commodification of El Chopo in a way reminiscent of anthropologist David Harvey's concept of *monopoly rent*. This involves the "appropriat[ion] and extract[ion of] surpluses from local differences, local cultural variations, and aesthetic meanings of no matter what origin" (2012: 109). Monopoly rent is essentially a balancing act: value is derived from uniqueness but the act of assigning value risks destroying that uniqueness. Harvey explains that monopoly rent must allow "divergent and to some degree uncontrollable local cultural developments that can be antagonistic to its own smooth functioning. It can even support (though cautiously and often nervously) transgressive cultural practices precisely because this is one way in which to be original, creative, and authentic, as well as unique" (2012: 109–110). In El Chopo, the anarcho-punks are the wellspring of these transgressive cutural practices that simultaneously validate El Chopo's countercultural "uniqueness" and threaten its bid for stability and economic solvency.

Figure 4.6. Punk truequeadores (barterers) unpacking their wares in El Chopo's Anarcho-Punk Space. Behind them is a banner that reads "No drugs, no alcohol, no violence!" Photo by Julie K. Wesp. Used by permission.

Such internal tensions reveal the accumulation of a deeper history, one that proceeded the founding of El Chopo itself. El Chopo is a palimpsest; new inscriptions overlay older ones but never quite mask faint impressions. Social scientist Omar Cerrillo Garnica suggests that "although the important space that El Chopo represents did not

exist in the first decades of the life of rock in Mexico City, the practice of temporal appropriation of certain urban landmarks was a characteristic trademark of the first rockers. This ended up turning into […] the more institutionalized space that El Chopo represents" (2012: 56). Urteaga Castro-Pozo agrees stating that spatial appropriation is a fundamental characteristic of Mexico City's rock underground and is one adopted from the practices of youth gangs during the mid-twentieth century. She explains that these youth gangs "demarcat[ed] territories in relation to 'others,' in real/physical/neighborhood terms, [while rockers tend to] delimit theirs in more symbolic, perishable terms." And for the latter, this demarcation is accomplished through "a secret connotation that only the 'initiated' ha[ve] access to, [and] once this place is invaded by 'strangers,' the tribe moves in search of another place" (1998: 61). Unlike territorial youth gangs, Mexico City's rockers have historically been migratory, imbuing sites with their "secret connotation" for a time, then setting off for undiscovered territories. According to Cerrillo Garnica, these rockers come to "know" the city by migrating between these semi-private places, what he dubs *nodes of co-presence* (2012: 39). Urteaga Castro-Pozo describes this spatio-symbolic knowledge as the "'rocker's mental map,' elaborated in relation to those places of public leasure that become 'private'" (1998: 61).

As an important "node of co-presence" in the rocker's mental map, El Chopo is "recognized as the capital of rock in the city, as the key point for the conformation of communities of meaning among rockers, [and] for the concentration and later diffusion of those symbolic elements necessary to reproduce the rock movement for new generations"

(Cerrillo Garnica 2012: 58). Within these nodes, the demarcation of space between "us" and "them" represents a negotation between public and private space. It is a performance of affiliation and intimacy that is reliant on the proximity of the unaffiliated. Taken altogether, each node of co-presence encompasses a "convergence of pluralities in manners of thought and posture [in which individuals] stage their collective and group identities, by using and sharing similar signs, symbols, and significations" (Nateras Domínguez 1995: 33). This staging of distinction and assimilation is akin to philosopher Louis Althusser's notion of *interpellation*—the mutual recognition between individuals and thus their transformation into ideological subjects (1984: 47). In El Chopo, music is the catalyst for interpellation: musical choice, musical knowledge, and adorning one's self with musical symbols announce one's subjective stance to others. Intersubjective recognition of this stance cements one's position in an ideological world (Althusser 1984: 52). Consequently, naming the diverse bandas that frequent El Chopo, however indeterminate and ever-changing these names may be, is necessary because it is very much a part of how choperos understand their intersubjective position. Sociologist Héctor Castill Berthier summarizes the primary, contemporary bandas of Mexico City as follows: "'Los punks' (also 'punketos or punkis'), 'los darks' (also 'darkis' or 'góticos'), 'Los metaleros', 'Los eskatos', and 'Los emos'" (Castillo Berthier in Red 2014: 104–105). These contemporary bandas coexist alongside older ones (shrinking in number) as well as new waves of music fans that, newly established, are as yet unnamed. It follows that navigating the "rockers' mental map" is a matter of historical engagment. The spatio-

acoustic organization of El Chopo is, in part, a performance of plural, historical imaginaries.

Tlatelolco, Avándaro, and The Long Night

There are many factors in Mexican political and cultural history that bear on El Chopo but are beyond the scope of this investigation, including the Mexican Revolution (ca. 1910–1920), the reconstruction and the formation of Mexican national ideology by philosopher José Vasconcelos and others, and the early history of rock music in Mexico beginning in the 1950s. However, it is critical to mention two historical moments that determined the destiny of rock in Mexico City and continue to frame contemporary debates: the Massacre of Tlatelolco and the Festival of Avándaro. The former was precipitated by student-driven reform movements of the 1960s, closely associated with the multidisciplinary art movement of *La Onda*.[76] Inspired by parallel social movements throughout the world, these students and their allies initiated a series of highly organized, peaceful protests in Mexico City in 1968 concerning the crisis of electoral corruption and demanding a return to the dictates of the 1917 Constitution. Under international pressure and scrutiny surrounding Mexico City's hosting of the upcoming 1968 Summer Olympics, the Mexican army occupied the campuses of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN) in order to tamp dissent, thus violating the constitutionally guaranteed autonomy of these

[76] Monsiváis considers *La Onda* "a systematic revision and critique of the values offered by the West as sacred and perfect" (1968: 5).

universities. This prompted a massive march on the Tlatelolco housing development in the north of the city where between 5,000 and 10,000 students and non-students assembled to demand justice. Soldiers trapped the protesters in the Plaza of the Three Cultures and opened fire on the crowd, resulting in an undisclosed number of deaths (between 49 and 200 based on different accounts) (García Canclini 1995; Kun 2005; Zolov 1999).

The Tlatelolco massacre also gave the Mexican government a pretext to attack all things representative of youth culture in general, including music it deemed subversive. According to Brenda Caro Cocotle, archive director at the Chopo University Museum of UNAM, "young people became dangerous people [in the eyes of the government and a large part of the public] and for that reason, all the cultural manifestations associated with young people were banned" (interview, 22 May 2015, Mexico City). Urteaga Castro-Pozo suggests that even by the turn of the twenty-first century, anti-youth sentiments endure: "To be young in the Mexican society of today, at least clearly since the generation of '68, is to be considered 'suspicious' of being a criminal and/or of being a social rebel" (1998: 54).

If Tlatelolco revealed the unrepentant brutality of the Mexican state toward student activists, the Festival of Avándaro drew a line in the sand between Mexico's counterculture and "institutional culture."[77] The Festival was held on a converted

[77] Novelist José Augustín defines "counterculture" as "a series of movements and cultural expressions, usual youth-driven, collective, that surpass, reject, marginalize, confront or transcend institutional culture" and "institutional culture" as "the dominant, directed, inherited […], often irrational, alienating, dehumanizing, consolidating the *status quo* and obstructing, if not destroying, the possibilities of authentic expression between young people" (1996: 129).

racetrack near Avándaro Lake in the state of Mexico on September 11–12, 1971. Inspired by The Woodstock Festival of 1969, Avándaro featured Mexican psychedelic blues-rock bands such as Los Dug Dugs, Peace & Love, División Del Norte, and Three Souls in My Mind (El Tri). Like Woodstock, Avándaro was organized by concert promoters to host a significantly smaller number of attendees than those that eventually arrived. From an expected 3,000, attendance swelled to well above 100,000 (Agustín 1996: 86) and "wound up being the first great Latin American rock festival in history" (Cerrillo Garnica 2012: 45). The consequences of this massive, peaceful gathering were two-fold. One the one hand, Avándaro represented an unprecedented engagement (in Mexico) of young people from every socio-economic class, joined in the common pursuit of pleasure (Augustín 1996: 86). This mass gathering "configured the symbolic elements and spatialities that would prove necessary for the difficult survival that would occur during the 1970s and 80s [and], concerning the ritual of rock, it represented […] the foundational, collective initiation of all individual initiations to follow" (Cerrillo Garnica 2012: 45). Despite the lack of violence during the festival, "Avándaro [also] united Mexico against [the rockers]. Officials, businessmen, merchants, professionals, civil associations and the media, as well as the left and the intellectuals, condemned the kids for sharing the night of their lives" (Augustín 1996: 88). This broad-based response to Avándaro initiated a "cultural counter-revolution" in Mexico (Augustín 1996: 100)—and most intensely in Mexico City—that lasted for fifteen years (Cerrillo Garnica 2012: 46–47; Urteaga Castro-Pozo 1998: 105–106). This period, which came to be known as The Long Night, was characterized by "the institutional, cultural, and moral exclusion

(prohibition/censorship/open repression) of society toward any manifestation by the young" (Urteaga Castro-Pozo 1998: 105).

As a palimpsest of historical pluralities, El Chopo's contemporary condition becomes illuminant through historical interpretation. Embedded in the expectations, disagreements, fears, and aspirations expressed to me by interlocutors, certain themes have emerged. Regardless of one's level of commitment, status, or self-interpellation, speaking about El Chopo (as both a symbolic site and a canvass-and-twine bazaar) requires one to navigate through these themes. They include: 1) the philosophical (and semantic) debate between "politics" and "counterculture" as these concepts relate to El Chopo; 2) the contention between openness and exclusivity (i.e., who should and should not be grated access to El Chopo); 3) and concerns surrounding the historical conflation of rock bandas and violent street gangs in Mexico City. These themes encapsulate long-standing tensions that define the history of rock in Mexico in general and Mexico City in particular.

"Politics" versus "Counterculture"

Rock 'n' roll arrived in Mexico in 1957, in tandem with the rapid expansion of the Mexican television, radio, film, and record industries. Pioneers of Mexican rock included Los Locos del Ritmo, Los Rebeldes del Rock, and Los Teen Tops who performed primarily in Spanish and incorporated both original material and *refritos*[78] into their

[78] Adaptations of hit songs from the U.S. and U.K. with original, Spanish lyrics (as opposed to direct translations)

repertoire (Agustín 1996: 34; Cerrillo Garnica 2012: 43). "Rock in Mexico was not born as a subaltern culture," states Urteaga Castro-Pozo, "but rather as a commodity imported by the hegemonic cultural apparatus" (1998: 38). Representing an early foothold in rock 'n' roll's transnational expansion, these Mexican proto-rockers "were outwardly embraced by local and transnational capitalist interests, found endorsement (at least partially) from the regime, and discovered a level of fame that catapulted them into national and international stardom" (Zolov 1999: 10).

Less than a decade later, the psychedelic movement arrived in Mexico and little by little, urban *rocanroleros* (rockers) were replaced by *jipitecas* (a portmanteau of "jipi" and "Azteca" meaning "Mexican hippie") who, as in other parts of the world, fomented aesthetic developments in literature, apparel, the visual arts, and music. In doing so, the jipitecas presented a reevaluation of "traditional boundaries of propriety, gender relations, social hierarchies, and the very meanings of national identity in an era of heightened nationalism" (Zolov 1999: 10; see also Cerrillo Garnica 2012: 44). Between capitalist cooption and psychedelia, "rock music […] served as both wedge and mirror for societies caught in the throes of rapid modernization" (Zolov 1999: 10).

Creating a wedge between themselves and the symbols of Mexican nationalism by looking abroad, the jipitecas of the 1960s showed a degree of ambivalence to the swelling Mexican student movement. Conversely, many on the left regarded the jipitecas as victims of "'imperialist infiltration' or a form of 'cultural colonialism'. […] Consequently, there was no rock in the student movement, instead songs of the Spanish civil war and revolutionary corridos" (Augustín 1996: 82). At the same time, because of

their rejection of patriarchal values, use of psychedelic drugs, and pursuit of ludic activities, the jipitecas were portrayed as a dire cultural threat by Mexico's right (Pacini-Hernández et al. 2004: 6).

Despite their isolated position, the jipitecas' decidedly peaceful form of counterhegemonic rebellion began to trickle through Mexican society. A large swath of young people, including student activists, began adopting the jipitecas' long hair, manner of dress, and language. This influence was reciprocal. After the horror of Tlatelolco and its repressive aftermath, jipitecas began to "attenuate […] the psychedelic sectarianism and broadened their social consciousness" (Augustín 1996: 83). Through this reciprocal exchange La Onda was born, "the cultural manifestations of numerous young Mexicans that had filtered the jipis' approaches through the harsh reality of the student movement" (Augustín 1996: 83).

Despite this gradual merger, a number of leftist intellectuals held out. One in particular was Carlos Monsiváis who, ironically, would become one of the greatest proponents of Mexico's rock counterculture and recognize El Chopo as an important bulwark in its defense. Monsiváis's initial distaste for the Mexican rock movement is quite clear in an editorial he penned after Avándaro: "What is the Avándaro nation? Groups that sing, in a language that is not their own, innocuous songs…Long hair and astrology, but no readings or critical confrontation…It is one of the greatest moments of mental colonialism in the Third World" (Monsiváis in Augustín 1996: 89). Indeed, language has been a sticking point throughout the history of rock in Mexico. And it is the politicization of language (the choice to sing in English or Spanish) that gives us some of

the greatest insight into ongoing debates within El Chopo. In Mexico, access to English language education has been and continues to be a distinction of socio-economic class. Thus, a contemporary Mexican rock band that chooses an English name and sings in English may do so in the hope of appeal to a well-to-do Mexican audience or even an international, Anglophone one. On the other hand, English may serve to position that band's work in an imagined hierarchy of authenticity. For example, if the band draws its influences from the Anglophone world (e.g., British new wave), then presenting a derivative song in English may serve to "convey […] the essential feeling of the rock original" (Pacini-Hernández et al. 2004: 15). Conversely, if the source of inspiration is homegrown or one steeped in anti-imperialist sentiment, then that band would do better to sing in Spanish, thus indexing another hierarchy of authenticity.

For the contemporary denizens of Mexico's rock underground, indexing authenticity is deeply implicated with a history of vacillation between Spanish and English. Early Mexican rock was overwhelmingly sung in Spanish due to "marketing considerations, nationalist sentiment, and a lack of familiarity with English" (Pacini-Hernández et al. 2004: 15). This all changed by mid-60s when jipitecas began to favor English as the *lingua franca* of the transnational psychedelic movement. Mexican rockers would reverse course again during The Long Night in a turn that coincided with the pan-Latin American rise of *rock nacional*, a consequence and artistic response to "the advent of neoliberal economic policies […] which set in motion the systematic privatization of national infrastructures throughout Latin America" (Pacini-Hernández et al. 2004: 16).

In Mexico City, this trend toward localism and artistic introspection came to be known as *rock urbano* (urban rock) and coincided with a period in which rock artists were generally unsupported by media conglomerates and condemned by both political leaders and the press. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, established blues rock/psychedelic groups like Three Souls in My Mind (as evidenced in their name change to El Tri in 1983) began to shift their orientation from global rock movements to decidedly local ones, favoring Spanish lyrics and nationalist subjects. This reorientation had the added effect of finally winning the respect of many of Mexico's leftist intellectuals (including Monsiváis): "These former critics, who had once shunned rock for its presumed cultural imperialism, now embraced rock nacional as an authentic movement of cultural resistance to the devastating economic marginalization and political repression that was accompanying the structural shift toward neoliberalism" (Pacini-Hernández et al. 2004: 16).

Speaking in the 1990s, El Tri front man Alex Lora reflects on this change:

> El Tri has given the Mexican identity to rock 'n' roll; this now includes the rocanroleros who feel proud to be Mexican. El Tri is 100% Mexican. […] There are still two or three closed-minded elitists who cling to the idea that foreign is the best and they listen to songs in English and they don't understand what [the lyrics] say. They are guided by the rhythm rather than the communication that can exist in music. But in this moment, I think that there are more Mexican rockers than *malinchistas* [cultural turncoats[79]]. […] That happened when I started to sing my own songs in Spanish. […] They told me, "You don't understand that rock is in English, not Spanish." But what I want is that when people hear my songs the will understand what I'm saying (Lora in Durán and Barrios 1995: 12).

[79] In Mexico, *malinchista* is a pejorative term for someone thought to favor foreign people, ideas, and materials over Mexican ones. The term refers to La Malinche, an indigenous slave who was sold to Hernán Cortés and served as his translator and later bore him a son (Núñez 1992).

The outcome of this politicized zig-zag between English and Spanish is that contemporary rockers must deftly negotiate between historico-symbolic implications of both languages, usually landing somewhere in between. Speaking about the Mexico City punk scene of the early twenty-first century, media scholar Alan O'Connor explains,

> Language is a key factor in the conduits through which punk travels. Some Mexican punks have a basic English vocabulary learned through singing along with tapes of bands from England and North America. […] However internationalist the movement, there is nonetheless a strong preference for lyrics in Spanish (2002: 231).

Punk rock arrived in Mexico City during the late 1970s. Dedicated to "anti-authoritarian practices and values" from the beginning, (Poma and Gravante 2016: 437–438), Mexico City punk networks quickly took root in areas most devistated by urban blight. At the time of El Chopo's founding in 1980, Mexico City punks and blues-rockers (in the mold of El Tri) consituted the primary ingredients of underground rock. This was "an odd pairing," says Cerrillo Garnica: "The first, idle, aggressive, and disenchanted with everything; the second, rather antecdotal and musically centered in the blues" (2012: 47). This "odd pairing" was El Chopo's formative dynamic, the original manifestation of tolerant cohabitation. And though musical subcultures have waxed and waned in El Chopo, this dynamic continues to endure, perhaps especially so in The Parking Lot Terminus (Stage 4). There, blues-rocker truequedores like Mario spend their Saturdays trading disks and hanging out only steps away from The Anarco-Punk Space where there punk counterparts spend the day in a similar fashion.

Openness versus Exclusivity

If we unpack the analogy of El Chopo as a mosaic, this implies the placement of different pieces (in this case, music and the individuals, ideologies, and histories that that music represents) to produce a coherent, composite whole. The placement of these different pieces (spatially, symbolically, discursively) is a matter of labor. In El Chopo, this labor is carried out bilaterally, horizontally between bandas and vertically from El Chopo's administrative committee. The labor of building and maintaining this mosaic is akin to what Casey calls, "the hold of a place." This involves "holding *together* in a particular configuration: hence our sense of an ordered arrangement of things in a place even when those things are radically disparate and quite conflictual." At the same time, "the hold is a holding *in* and a holding *out*" (1996: 25). This "sense of an ordered arrangement" is readily apparent in conversations with choperos who frequently use words like "tolerance" and "harmony" to distinguish El Chopo from its surroundings. Whether a particular individual is aware of the contested history of El Chopo or not (many of the young people I spoke to admitted that they were not), the consequences of this history are something that they feel when they enter El Chopo, when they hear powerful, comforting music, both familiar and new, and when they bask in the camaraderie of their peers. Mario believes that El Chopo's spirit of tolerance is a consequence of interaction. The overlapping sonic spheres of El Chopo connect individuals with similar musical taste but also promote the discovery of new music, values, and perspectives. In El Chopo, "you must interact with different types of people and over time, you are absorbed into the community. […] This is why El Chopo exists"

(interview, 18 May 2016, Mexico City). But to hold El Chopo together necessarily involves an arrangement in which pieces "overlap with, and sometimes […] occlude, others as they recede or come forward together" (Casey 1996: 25).

This begs the question, how is El Chopo's spirit of tolerance experienced differently by different individuals? During my visits there, I noted a dearth of female vendors and the peculiar manner in which women occupy and move about the space: seeing a solitary woman is very unusual. It is much more common to see groups of women, mix-gendered groups, or a woman in the company of a male escort. Several *choperas* (female choperos) confirmed that El Chopo is indeed a place where they feel comfortable, at least, *as* comfortable as other public spaces in Mexico City. Metal guitarist Cinthia Blackcat explains it this way: "El Chopo is a secure place for women. Sometimes there will be a drunk or stoned guy who says something to me, but nothing serious has happened. One time when I was playing a gig here [El Chopo] a guy came up and shoved me, but the people in the audience stopped him and it wasn't a big deal. I think it is a secure place because if there is a problem everyone will help to calm things down" (interview, 23 May 2015, Mexico City). "Sheila," one of the few female trueqeadoras in El Chopo, observes that the presence of women has grown from approximately 30% to 50% of the chopero community since her first visit about ten years ago. "Throughout the city," says Sheila, "we [women] are exposed to crime. In El Chopo, not so much. People come here with a different attitude. They're here to meet people, to exchange. We are rockers and warriors and if there is trouble, we don't run so easily" (interview, 16 May 2015, Mexico City).

Female artists like Cinthia Blackcat explain that they do not feel particularly objectified or pressured to sexualize their art but rather, consider El Chopo to be an important and welcoming venue for creative expression. For Sheila, "[the] truth is that in Mexico, there are many musical genres that are driven by women: black, heavy, power, dark, goth. What the charisma of these female artists demonstrates is to say, 'Here we are and we are going to sing and rock the same as men.' I believe that we are a compliment: men and women" (interview, 16 May 2015, Mexico City).

Indeed, women have provided a crucial voice in the development of Mexican rock and particularly so in Mexico City's punk scene during the 1980s. Some notable luminaries include Angela Martínez Texeiro, who formed a punk collective called Las Guerreras (The Warriors) and set about educating and assisting young women who had been disowned by their families for their punk lifestyle. Another is Patricia Morena Rodríguez (La Zappa Punk) who, in 1985, formed the punk rock group Virginidad Sacudida (Discarded Virginity) through friendships she established with other young, working-class women in El Chopo (Palacios and Estrada 2004: 154–155). Solidarity between female, Mexico City punks was particularly important, argues historian Julia Palacios and musician/political scientist Tere Estrada, because many of these women were disowned by their families. This need to educate and protect one another, to essentially form autonomous, surrogate families, emphasize the "key link between music and politics" for female punks (2004: 156). Sociologists Alice Poma and Tommaso Gravante note the between the late 1980s and early 1990s, a growing number of Mexican music subcultures began integrating feminist thought into their ideology. For Mexican

punks especially, "the question of gender was always a prominent issue but […] the emancipation of women is a struggle that is continually reinvented in light of changes that emerge in society" (2016: 456).

While women are becoming more visible in El Chopo, "men," say social psychologists Marina Estrada Barbosa and Mónica Belem Velázquez Rodríguez, "are the symbolic owners of the space. As women observe a pattern of symbolic nomadism, their presence [in El Chopo] is not as regular as that of men" (2002: 99). The growing participation of women has been *granted* through the executive authority of men as well as the implicit guarantee of relative security. These authors trace the patriarchy of El Chopo to something endemic in the social fabric of Mexican society: "El Chopo is conceived of as being 'masculinized' because from a social viewpoint, it is more acceptable that a man belong to a youth culture represented by concepts such as roughness and rebellion. [These concepts are equated] from childhood [with] social concepts of masculinity" (2002: 99). Placed within a larger discussion of acoustic patriarchy in public spaces (see Chapter 3), El Chopo begins to blend into the background. Many interlocutors do not consider El Chopo to be particularly dangerous (as compared with a crowded metro car, for example) but neither do they think of it as an unbounded utopia. El Chopo is organized, patrolled, and mediated overwhelmingly by men and as a result, women participate by their leave.

The implicit hierarchy in El Chopo's mosaic-like arrangement informs interactions between bandas and becomes explicit when newcomers and long-established actors meet. Cinthia Blackcat recalls that when she first started to visit El Chopo in the

late 1990s, she was given the cold shoulder because of how she dressed. "I've never had problems in El Chopo because I'm a woman or because of the music I play. For me, the way I dress has brought problems. A few times I was stopped because I wear velvet clothes and the choperos thought I was *fresa* (upper-class). But more recently, the way I dress has come into style and people have accepted it" (interview, 23 May 2015, Mexico City). "Fabian" is a Christian metal guitarist who uses his music to spread the gospel in El Chopo. He explains that while his music is normally well received, his message is not: "unfortunately, there are a lot of people here who are against religion, politics, and authorities. There are many people that hate us because we sing about God, but other people have welcomed Christian metaleros like us because they know that we are necessary." He adds that while those most dismissive of his message claim that they have no religion, "the same people make a religion of their own movement. For example, they make a religion of metal, a religion of punk, a religion of ska. It is their religion because they do everything for their movement. They make it their God. The punks say they are free and fight for liberty, but they are bound to their own rebellion, they live bound to their own benefit, their own desire" (interview, 8 March 2015, Mexico City). Yet it is important to note that while Fabian has had a mixed reception in El Chopo, his message *is* part of the conversation; he has never been bullied or barred outright. He feels free to have disagreements with some and to share his music and faith with those who are keen to listen.

In each of my interviews, I asked individuals how El Chopo had changed since their first visit. Obviously, the answers to this question had a lot to do with how long ago

that first visit was, how consistently that individual had attended since, and in what capacity. Despite these variables, everyone I spoke with confirmed that El Chopo was changing, and exponentially so. An individual's evaluation of this accelerating change seemed to hinge on his or her selection and interpretation of cross-hatched histories: judgement is rendered by comparing El Chopo as one perceives it in the ontological moment with imaginaries of what El Chopo once was and what it *should* be. Some believe that El Chopo is becoming safer and more inclusive to new music subcultures and the general public alike. For example, "Paola," a twenty-year-old student and relative newcomer to El Chopo, says "I am aware that before there was a bit more 'rough business' in El Chopo but now there are more people from distinct tribes and nothing is taboo" (interview, 23 May 2015, Mexico City). "Sandra," a twenty-seven-year-old used book vendor believes that by broadening appeal and thus, drawing more customers and raising its public profile, El Chopo has "contributed to changing some of the prejudices [towards young people]" (interview, 23 May 2015, Mexico City).

Those disenchanted with El Chopo's current state lament that the bazaar is becoming "less musical," coopted by people with little commitment to Mexico City's music underground, and is becoming increasingly indistinguishable from other bazaars throughout the city. For co-founder and truequeador Jorge Vargas, the early 1980s represented El Chopo's "moment of splendor, a boom." What he sees as the commodification of El Chopo has "sent us plummeting into decadence and even though the people still come none of us know when it all will end" (interview, 23 May 2015, Mexico City). Chopero "Alejandro" agrees stating, "the truth is that now things are

different. It is no longer the same group of people. These are different times and more urban tribes will come so this will no longer be a place dedicated to music" (interview, 25 May 2015, Mexico City).

But if some fear that music may eventually disappear altogether from El Chopo, others express concern that El Chopo may someday resound with music they dislike. Martín elaborates, "now, everything is moving in the direction of club music, reggaeton, et cetera. Those who remain in El Chopo are trying to rescue what little is left. We are trying to rescue the old culture, the subterranean rhythms that only a few people know about" (interview, 7 July 2016, Mexico City). However, Mario believes that it is precisely the ability of El Chopo to absorb and adapt to changing styles and pressures that has facilitated its survival. He argues that "the potential [of El Chopo] rests in young people who bring new types of music and the old rockers who give these young people a place" (interview, 18 May 2016, Mexico City).

Distilled to its essence, debates between openness and exclusivity in El Chopo revolve around *access* (i.e., who should and should not be granted access) and *purpose* (i.e., what functions El Chopo should serve). Two imbricated histories inform these debates. The first relates to the "odd pairing" of punks and blues-rockers during El Chopo's founding. The collaboration of these disparate factions meant that El Chopo was endowed with a hybrid functionality: it was in one breath a bazaar—a prolific, deeply entrenched model for public, semi-informal commodity and information exchange—and a *common*, "both collective and non-commodified—off-limits to the logic of market exchange and market valuations" (Harvey 2012: 73–74). The second history concerns the

intermittent participation and abandonment of middle-class young in Mexico City's rock underground.

In El Chopo, there is a premium on exclusivity. Social position is acquired through ritual participation. This social position is demonstrated through occupation (i.e., the placement of bodies and the expansion of this placement in the acoustic sphere). The designation "chopero" speaks to this positioning. To identify oneself as a chopero is to make a territorial claim. To be dubbed "chopero" by others is an acknowledgment of this claim. Social position also corresponds to the possession of privileged knowledge and materials. The chopero community is one christened in the clandestine exchange of hard-to-find recordings. Possessing what others do not possess, knowing what others do not know is in part what it means to be chopero. This is one side of El Chopo. It is the outcome of an itinerant history of hegemonic exclusion and the necesity to appropriate spaces for autonomous organization and exchange. The other side of El Chopo is that it is a bazaar. A bazaar requires some kind of administrative body to delegate the use of space, collect contributions from vendors, and negotiate and acquire authorization from city authorities. As a bazaar, El Chopo is driven by commercial pressures and must attract a steady supply of new and repeat customers. In accordance with Harvey's notion of monopoly rent, much of El Chopo's cachet (thus its claim on uniqueness) is that it grants outsiders special access to the insular terrain of Mexico City's rock underground.

This insularity is a form of defense. The collusion of cultural and government institutions, the press, and much of the public against rock fans, beginning in the 1960s and tapering off by the end of the 1980s, smothered the consumption of rock music,

disrupted fan networks resulting in isolated feifdoms, and stunted the careers of many rock artists. Ironically, rock urbano artists like Jaime López and Alex Lora believe that it was precisely due to this intense repression and consequent fragmentation that rock musicians and fans alike developed a newfound sense of self-determination and solidarity. In the early 1960s, *cafés cantantes* were the primary places for rock fans in Mexico City to hear live rock music. "They were normally tiny places," says Cerrillo Garnica, "uncomfortable, where kids drank coffee, coca-colas or lemonade and where, since they could not dance [for lack of space], practiced *el sitting*, that is, keeping pace with the rhythm without moving for their little chairs" (2012: 44). Almost as soon as these cafes began popping up around the city, government officials would shut them down "claiming that they fomented 'rebellion without a cause' and encouraged the 'distortion of local customs'" (Pacini-Hernández et al. 2004: 1). Closing these cafes drove rock fans to *hoyos funkis*—converted industrial spaces and abandoned buildings in Mexico City's poorest neighborhoods, known for their extremely unsanitary and uncomfortable conditions, rampant alcohol and drug use, sexual harassment, and frequent outbreaks of violence (Augustín 1996: 89–90; Palacios and Estrada 2004: 151).

In the hoyos funkis, underground rockers forged the basic practices, organizational structures, and epistemologies of belong and difference that would eventually be reproduce in El Chopo. Urteaga Castro-Pozo summarizes these developments: "Because of the 'countercultural' proposition that La Onda embodied, Mexican rock was forced to organize its life autonomously if it wished to continue to exist. Due to adverse social and political conditions, rockers had to do it in a subterranean

way, creating […] forms of production, circulation and alternative consumption to […] those proposed by the entertainment industries" (1998: 39–40). Armando Vega-Gil, bassist of the rock urbano group Botellita de Jerez, recalls that in Mexico City during the late 1970s, autonomous, loosly organized hoyos funkis concerts were the only way to hear rock urbano besides on one's own record player (Vega-Gil in Durán and Barrios 1995: 13). Alex Lora believes that his group would not have survived The Long Night if not for the hoyos funkis and adds that extreme repression did not diminish underground rock but strengthened it, producing the conditions in which rock became "the banner of the young and a release valve for their frustrations" (Lora in Durán and Barrios 1995: 11).

The designation of social class is used frequently to establish difference in El Chopo. For example, the establishment of the emos (Emotional Hardcore Punk) in Mexico City in the mid-2000s was met with fierce resistance by Mexico City punks and their allies. Tensions culminated when the emos staged a peaceful march in 2008 that ended in El Chopo. At the conclusion of the march, the emos were shielded from the punks and others by *granaderos* (riot police), a fact that only infuriated the punks more (Red 2014: 101–102). The basis for anti-emo sentiment is complex but relies partially on the belief (on the part of the punks) that emos are malinchistas—cultural turncoats favoring English language and Anglophone culture—effeminate in their dress and mannerisms, and fresas (middle or upperclass, though there is no impirical evidence to show that this is always the case) (Red 2014: 103). Ironically, I have frequently heard punks, metaleros, and goths deride *regatoneros* (fans of reggaeton) for being not only

mysogyinists, but *nacos* (a slur meaning "low class" or "tacky" but often with a racial subtext). Nevertheless, tolerance, including interclass tolerance is the foundation upon which the myth of El Chopo rests. Mario articulates this quite succinctly, stating, "In El Chopo, it doesn't matter if you're rich or poor. Friendship and shared musical interests are what's important. We aren't elitists. We come together to enjoy this concert, this conversation, this good moment" (interview, 18 May 2016, Mexico City). Elizabeth Hernández adds that El Chopo provides some with the opportunity for transformation: "the professionals who have to wear suits during the week arrive on the day of El Chopo in their jeans and heavy metal outfits and hunt for the music that they love" (interview, 18 May 2016, Mexico City). "This is exactly why El Chopo is so cool," adds Mario, "because you can send the whole 'social class' thing straight to hell!" (interview, 18 May 2016, Mexico City).

An important precursor to this conceptualization of interclass tolerance and collaboration came during The Long Night. According to Urteaga Castro-Pozo, it was the very cultural, moral, and institutional exclusion directed toward young people at large that "made possible the rooting of rock as a way of life between middleclass sectors and working-class, urban youth" (1998: 105). However, despite the show of interclass solidarity that Avándaro crystalized, anti-youth hysteria grew to the point that by the end of the 1970s, "middle-class youths deserted and in the end, only the poorest and most marginalized continued staging shows […] always faithful to Mexican rock, but also marginalized to incredible extremes" (Augustín 1996: 89–90). Underground rock

survived in the hoyos funkis. The interclass solidarity following Avándaro proved to be a conditional one and by the end of the 1970s, those who could flee did.

At its founding, El Chopo represented a unique alternative to the hoyos funkis in Mexico City. According to Cerrillo Garnica, "the mixture of diverse social classes that took place Saturday to Saturday in El Chopo brought the punks shows of the proletariat barrios to the neighborhoods of the middle class again" (2012: 50). By creating a semi-institutionalized space for music, El Chopo organizers established an organizational model that would be adopted by others in Mexico City during the 1980s and 1990s leading to music venues called *antros*—fully licensed bars and performance spaces with adequate sound equipment and security (Cerrillo Garnica 2012: 50–51). Following El Chopo's lead, these antros provided the comforts and relative safety that middle-class young people expected and served to re-integrate them into the Mexico City's rock underground.

Though they have long since vanished, the specter of the hoyos funkis continues to haunt El Chopo. Indeed, the activities of Chopo organizers—publicity campaigns emphasizing El Chopo as a safe "family place", community outreach programs, anti-drug and violence propaganda, and initiatives of "cultural preservation" through the regulation of art and commerce—suggest a concerted effort to define El Chopo in contrast to the hoyos funkis that no longer exist. The implication is that if organizers were to relinquish control, they would risk driving out the middle-classes once more and consigning the choperos to the derelict buildings of the city's outer slums.

The Stigma of Rock and Violence

The greatest existential threat to El Chopo began to develop decades before its founding. Conflating rock bandas with violent youth gangs has been a trope forwarded by government officials and journalists alike since the late 1950s. Throughout the nearly forty-year history of El Chopo (and as recently as October 2016), the suggestion that rock bandas are violent or simply that their presence provokes violence among the general population has been a pretext for police raids, closures, and forced relocation. In this case, the word "banda" is revealing. In Mexican Spanish, "banda" may refer to a group of friends, an informal collective (e.g., El Diablo's banda of toreros [see Chapter 2]), a musical group, or a street gang (though a more difinitive term would be *pandilla*). Urteaga Castro-Pozo considers a banda to be "a form of socialization parallel and/or alternative to traditional ones [and] also, a form of solidarity grouping […] which accomplishes an integrative function inwardly and a delimitating (defensive) function outwardly, and in some case, an attack position" (1998: 55). As a mosaic of sonic, and thus, subcultural differentiation, El Chopo is a territory composed of distinct bandas. At its root, "banda" is a flexible term to demarkate between "us" and "them." In various interviews, I have heard the word used to designate a particular musical subcuture (e.g., metaleros [heavy metal fans]), and in the same conversation, expanded to designate choperos as a whole.

Cerrillo Garnica argues that some of the implications of the word "banda" are rooted in an important social shift that occurred in Mexico City during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Groups of friends, in many cases young men from working-class

neighborhoods, converted into youth gangs with the modus operendi of acquiring and defending territory. "There were these violent gangs," says Cerrillo Garnica, and because their formation coincided with the establishment of rock in Mexico City, "they provoked the identification of rock as a dangerous phenomenon, aggressive and excessive" (2012: 43). An important reiteration of the banda model arose with the arrival of punk rock in Mexico City at the end of the 1970s, but with a vital differerce. According to Cerrillo Garnica, "A fundamental characteristic of punks was the creation of youth bandas, similar to the rocker gangs" (2012: 47). But unlike the bandas of the 1950s and 1960s, these punks "did not consider their territory to be sacred nor that it was something to defend to the death as did kids of other persuations" (Augustín 1996: 103). Instead, these early punks were "urban nomads in search of rock, connections and other bandas, with which, many times, they started disputes" (Cerrillo Garnica 2012: 47). In their wanderings throughout the city, punks drew ridicule and consternation from the public and "the police never failed to harrass them and, as with the jipis, they arrested them merely on their appearance" (Augustín 1996: 104).

El Chopo inherited this stigma of rock music and violence. After only two years in the Chopo Museum of UNAM, El Chopo began a long and difficult exodus, taking temporary residence in several different locations in Mexico City: the Superior School of Commerce and Administration of IPN, the department of Architecture of UNAM, and on Oyamel and Mimosas Streets (Dolores Sánchez 2008; Pantoja 1996b). In February of 1988, "as if under a curse," El Chopo was forced to move again "due to a street fight initiated by local gang members and directed towards [choperos]" (Hernández Murillo

2000: 19). For nearly four decades, El Chopo has been beset on all sides: police harassment, hostile neighbors, and an increasingly conservative and unsympathetic middle-class that pressured Mexico City's counterculture into an "elected marginality," in which "all and nothing is an object of commerce and all and nothing is an object of transgression" (Monsiváis 1996: 20–21). Throughout the 1980s, music perceived to be subversive by the civic authority was banned. It was this "crisis," according to Jorge Pantoja, that allowed El Chopo to survive (1996b: 10). Caro Cocotle explains how the ban manifested in Mexico City:

> There were curfews in the city. At a certain hour if [the police] saw you in the street with your pals you would have trouble because it was not permitted. If they knew there was a concert or a party or something, a group of police would come and charge everyone with "disturbing the peace." They would trap everybody, take them to jail, and make false accusations against them (interview, 22 May 2015, Mexico City).

These laws managed the use of both public and private space under the banner of providing security and preserving "the peace." However, more insidious and ultimately more destructive laws targeted groups of young people dressed in ways that inspired police suspicion, further entrenching the public opinion that rock fans are criminals. Caro Cocotle continues: "There were laws against *pandillerismo* [gang affiliation] that meant that anyone could be considered a member of a gang. So if you were with a group—a lot of young people dressed funny in a populated area—you were in a gang" (interview, 22 May 2015, Mexico City). Caro Cocotle adds that the semi-formal ban on underground rock was also achieved through the complicity of government, university, and commercial broadcasting organizations that were dependent on government approval for their right to broadcast.

Torera activist and organizer Sofía Trejo presents an interesting parallel between the stigmatization faced by street vendors and rock fans in the 1980s. She says that forty years ago, the first thing that would happen if a torera (especially an indigenous torera) was detained by the police would be that her child would be put into protective services and then her hair would be shaved based on the presumption, on the part of the police, that a person who works in the streets is most likely riddled with lice. The toreras' bald heads, says Trejo, became like the mark of Cain—a warning to "decent" people of the presence of a woman tainted simply because "she was not a woman of the house but a woman of the street" (interview, 31 May 2016, Mexico City). Trejo continues:

> The same thing happened in the 80s when punk-inspired youngsters began to proliferate Mexico City. They started to wear studded clothing, color their hair and wear it in spikes, and later, got piercings and tattoos. Many people came to associate these things with "bad" people: drug addicts, homosexuals, criminals, and this attitude continues. If you've ever been to prison, you'd know that the first thing the guards do, whether you are a man or woman, is make you undress. It is very bad if you have piercings or tattoos because they assume you're infected with everything from the common cold to HIV. If you have tattoos and piercings, you must always be on guard because the guards and other inmates will make assumptions about the kind of life you've led and treat you very badly (interview, 31 May 2016, Mexico City).

The burden of this stigmatization, coupled with the allure of the forbidden made El Chopo appear like an oasis of freedom and hope for young people. García Canclini posits that "a major feature of the 1980s and 1990s has been the disappearance of spaces for political negotiation. […] Political struggles have become 'abstract' [and] have been displaced to hermetic places, channeled by forces that the citizenry has no way of confronting" (2001: 147). This abstraction of political struggle defines El Chopo. The organized actions of the 1960s and 1970s meant to secure substantial political reform

were transformed, out of necessity, into a nebulous system of collective memory (highly mediated through music, dance, and dress) that expresses a subtle form of cultural critique and unarticulated angst. From the mock-battles in the mosh-pit,[80] to bombastic music and subversive and often cynical lyrics, to the manners of dress meant to shock and annoy certain segments of mainstream Mexican society, the rebellious spirit of El Chopo feels more like disobedience than confrontation. This disobedience is primarily propagated through sound that, says sound studies scholar Steven Connor, "unlike the other senses […] can come about only as a result of some more or less violent disturbance [...] and the transmission of this agitation through the air to the ears or skin of another" (2004: 162). What had once been organized political action was converted to cultural imaginaries in which "Tlatelolco rock became an intrinsic part of a political, social, and cultural conquest by youth in an environment conditioned by the threat of repression" (Zolov 1999: 164). Thus, the counterculture of Mexico City, "those who had not been informed of the dream of modernity, nor pretended to be current with their North American counterparts, [nor] cared anything about the System and status symbols" (Monsiváis 1996: 20–21), began a process of gradual disengagement and insular self-reference in which countercultural symbols (both imported and homegrown) assume their own internal logic.

[80] A name for the spiral dance pattern often assumed at punk, metal, and hard rock concerts

Power Without: Public Relations

In the opinion of many who work in, visit, organize, and commemorate El Chopo, there is little doubt that El Chopo was and continues to be a contested space. The nomadic history of El Chopo demonstrates tenuous acts of territorial conquest that have led to its current state of relative stability (Appadurai 1996: 183). Throughout their history, choperos have laid an unwavering claim to their *right to the city*—"the refusal to allow oneself to be removed from urban reality by a discriminatory and segregative organization" (Lefebvre 1996: 195). This stability has been achieved through the concerted efforts of a committee that operates El Chopo, manages its public image, and acts as a liaison between the choperos, neighbors, and police and government representatives. A close examination of the imbalanced power relationship between El Chopo and the city reveals two spheres of power: 1) the *power without*, the continuous pressure and scrutiny by the civic authorities toward El Chopo and, 2) the *power within*, the steps taken by organizers to achieve the paradoxical task of regulating a community that self-identifies as "free" and "anti-authoritarian."

On October 19, 2014, the Auxiliary Police of the Secretary of Public Security (SSP) attempted a raid on El Chopo. In an anonymous video[81] shared widely through social media, we see a column of armored police officers snaking through a crowd of black-clad choperos in the direction of the band stage where a metal group is performing

[81] "Irrumpen policías en el Tianguis Cultural del Chopo." YouTube video, 4:25, posted by "2012mx: las noticias sin filtro," October 19, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vj8D-ZPqJf4 (accessed October 22, 2014).

and a writhing knot of fans are slam dancing.[82] A change occurs off camera and is marked by shrill, rising cries. The choperos are yelling and whistling in excitement. As the camera tracks the action, it becomes apparent that spectators are reacting to the behavior of the slam dancers. Like a flock of birds, the dancers have pivoted out of their circular pattern and are hurling their elbows, knees, and fists at the police. The dancers are guided, shielded, and bolstered by the music that continues to play. The slam dance—a ritual of mock battle that any punk or metal fan would be familiar with—has a curious effect on the police. They appear to be mesmerized by it. Is it a dance or an assault? By redirecting their slam dance from a tight loop to a linear march the choperos are able to simultaneously confuse the police and drive them back to the parameter of the bazaar. Then the music stops and it is unclear if the band has finished their song or stopped to watch the confrontation. As their sonic shield lifts, the dancers stop as well. The police make the decision to retreat. The choperos claim victory and again, the change can be heard before it is seen. In ecstasy, the choperos scream insults and launch a torrent of water bottles (some audibly full as they bounce against police armor). The choperos have won the day and sound has been both a sword and a shield.

For many choperos, the police are an unwelcome presence in the bazaar: "The community doesn't want the pigs [the police]. They are *culeros y manchados* [bad, abusive people]. If they provoke us it is logical that we will pounce" (interview, "Alejandro," 25 May 2015, Mexico City); "There have never been good relations between El Chopo and the police as far as I know, nor concerning the neighborhood. The

[82] An aggressive dance form commonly associated with the musical genres of punk, metal, and hard rock

neighbors have been uncomfortable" (interview, "Richard," 25 May 2015, Mexico City); "The police, well… there is a lot of discrimination because they think that we are delinquents that come to steal things around here" (interview, "Memo," 16 May 2015, Mexico City).

The relationship between the permanent residents of Buenavista and El Chopo is both crucial and complex, crucial to the prosperity of the neighborhood and to the survival of El Chopo. Acoustically, the transformation of the relatively tranquil streets of Buenavista into the carnival-like atmosphere of El Chopo represents the completion of a weekly cycle. Aldama Street is blocked to traffic each Friday night when the assembly of booths and delivery of merchandise begins. The bazaar opens each Saturday morning with the arrival of crowds, sales, and musical performances that crescendo by mid-afternoon. The bazaar is then disassembled and trash removed each Saturday night. For neighbors accustomed to this cycle, who have no particular need to enter El Chopo (neither as vendors nor as consumers), the presence and absence of El Chopo is a sonic progression representing a subliminal yet informative part of their sensory engagement with their neighborhood. There is a correlation between the relative continuity of the cycle and a sense of normalcy. For Elizabeth Hernández, who grew up in an apartment building immediately adjacent to The Parking Lot Terminus of El Chopo, the weekly wax and wane of noise is simply a part of her routine. Rather, she remarks, it is the disruption of traffic on Aldama Street and the perception (by some neighbors) that criminal activities spike each Saturday that have inspired the most rancor between neighbors and

El Chopo. Hernández cites a particular incident in which the admittedly loud but predictable cacophony of El Chopo was ruptured by the sound of gunshots.

In May of 2015, a gun battle broke out in El Chopo resulting in two deaths. While details remain unclear and the perpetrators never captured, Hernández relates her understanding of the events: "[The participants in the gun battle] included vendors [who sell in El Chopo], neighbors, and criminals from the area. Though I don't know why, there are two versions of the story, one included a dispute between gangs and another in which neighbors attempted to detain a person who assaulted some kid and that person was armed" (interview, 24 March 2016, Mexico City). Following this unusual outbreak of violence, police surveillance briefly increased and then gradually tapered off over a period of weeks. Hernández explains the tepid response on the part of the police: "My theory is that the government doesn't help [El Chopo] very much because there are many in government who want to see El Chopo removed" (interview, 24 March 2016, Mexico City). In other words, if the police do not provide security for visitors and organizers of El Chopo and neighbors do not have the resources to provide their own security, the incidents of violence will increase, the idea of El Chopo as a lawless place will become further entrenched in the public imagination, and attendance will wane.

This incident exemplifies a pattern in El Chopo's nomadic history. El Chopo draws music lovers from across the city and by doing so, transforms the dynamic of its host-neighborhood once a week. On more than one occasion, choperos have been characterized as territorial interlopers by hostile neighbors. In fact, El Chopo moved to Buenavista due to an incident known as the "Battle of Oyamel" in which choperos were

driven out "by the residents of a neighborhood known as 'El Nopal' who conducted illegal activities like narcotics trafficking, and blamed some groups of punks for 'altering the order of the place'" (Domínguez Prieto 2007: 21). I ask twenty-seven-year-old "Memo" why some Buenavista residents are hostile to El Chopo. "It is a question of culture," he explains. "There are two cultures slamming into each other. There are the choperos who come peacefully to hang out and there are the people who live in the area. They don't like our music, they don't like how we look, and most importantly, they don't like us being in their neighborhood. But it doesn't belong to them any more than it belongs to us. It is a public space!" (interview, 16 May 2015, Mexico City). Historically, hostile neighbors have tried to drive out Choperos in three ways: choperos were "attacked by the neighborhood kids themselves, the adults pressed the city government to throw them out, or the police ambushed them" (Urteaga Castro-Pozo 1998: 113). But what accounts for the intesity of this hostility? Urteaga Castro-Pozo suggests that it is not simply a response to territorial invasion. It is also about *who* is invading. The distrust of and disdain toward young, underground music fans is the outcome of a long-standing narrative in Mexican popular culture, one "internalized by a large part of the urban population, who are subjected to television as the unique medium of entertainment during their free time" (Urteaga Castro-Pozo 1998: 113).

Despite this tension and occasional violence, there is also a hard-won solidarity between some Buenavista neighbors and El Chopo. Historically, it has often been pressure from hostile neighbors that has led to police raids and evictions. Consequently,

El Chopo organizers are deeply invested in maintaining the support of the neighborhood at all costs. Hernández explains:

> [El Chopo] needs the support of the neighbors. The [real fight between El Chopo] and the government began with the construction of the [José Vasconcelos] library in 2005 changing the area [from an industrial area] into a very important commercial zone. […] This was the real reason why the government wanted to remove [El Chopo] and they asked the neighbors, "What do you want?" [The neighbors answered], "we have grown accustomed to El Chopo. Saturday is now one of our best business days—the kids come to buy what we sell, buy our food, and they are a lot of fun. Don't remove them!" (interview, 24 March 2016, Mexico City).

According to Hernández, many of the mobile vendors in El Chopo (as opposed to the vendors who occupy stalls)—those that sell cigarettes, candy, food and beverages, and occasionally illicit drugs—are permanent residents of Buenavista and have grown increasingly dependent on the revenue stream that El Chopo provides. Thus, some of the inhabitants of this working-class neighborhood have chosen to overlook the disruptions of El Chopo in favor of the economic benefits and in doing so, have provided El Chopo with a necessary ally.

Power Within: Two Discourses

In order to maintain peace with the city, El Chopo has acquired legal nonprofit status,[83] conspicuously added the title "Cultural Bazaar" to its name, and created the above-mentioned committee composed of many sub-committees including a cultural

[83] Co-founder and bazaar organizer "Abram" explains that by the late 1980s, legal recognition became an absolute necessity for the survival of El Chopo. He notes that "police raids were constant and the authorities wanted us to disappear. Legal recognition was our only defense" (interview, 21 May 2016, Mexico City).

committee that determines, according to Caro Cocotle, the "cultural value" of potential artists and vendors. Further, organizers have carefully managed El Chopo's legacy and status as a cultural institution through print media, highly publicized rituals of commemoration and community outreach events (including Children's Day [April 30] and Mother's Day [May 10] celebrations), and through its long-standing collaboration with the Chopo University Museum of UNAM. The soundscape of El Chopo thus demonstrates what Blesser and Salter call "the asymmetric relationship between those who give orders and those who must obey" (2007: 33)—a relationship through which pressure from the city officials, police, and competing merchant organizations is transduced into pressure exerted upon the Chopo community by its administrative body. In this transduction, El Chopo organizers mediate between what Lefebvre calls the *near order*—"relations of individuals in groups […] and the relations of these groups among themselves"—and the *far order*—"that of society, regulated by large and powerful institutions (Church and State), by a legal code formalized or not, [and] by a 'culture' and significant ensembles endowed with powers" (1996: 100–101). If, as many of my interlocutors indicate, the mingling musics of El Chopo's soundscape demonstrate a spirit of harmony, then ongoing developments between the near and far order are equally audible.

As a licensed nonprofit, El Chopo must pay rent. This has meant that in order for musicians to perform in Radio Chopo, they must "pay to play." Punk bassist "Hector" recalls,

> I was so moved to play here [El Chopo] in previous years because it was a platform for the people to know you and your music. Now they [organizers]

> charge you for "backline" [e.g., P.A. system, amplifiers, and usually a drumset without cymbals]. The backline is not very good. They have monopolized the situation because before, the entire Chopo movement was more honest; it was inclusive to more bands, and because of that, the bands that played were of higher quality than they are now (interview, 23 May 2015, Mexico City).

Hosting live music at Radio Chopo is a significant expense for Chopo organizers and since the concerts are free to the public, it is not a profitable one. Someone has to pay for the sound equipment, audio engineer, and added security during concerts and this responsibility falls on the musicians. This has had a filtering effect: independent, underground bands cannot afford to play in El Chopo and label-supported, touring bands have gradually taken their place. Hector adds that El Chopo used to be a "a place where you can get exposure. Before, a 'brutal' number of people would come to listen. Now, look at the show that happened today. How many people were there? About fifty, right?" (interview, 23 May 2015, Mexico City). He suggests that the crowds that once flocked to encounter "the panorama of Mexico City's underground" are no longer finding it in El Chopo and turning elsewhere. Elizabeth Hernández laments,

> Now [El Chopo] is less musical. […] The sound of [El Chopo] has changed because of the decline in live concerts. It's not the same hearing live music versus amplified recordings. Also the style has changed. When I was young I would hear Spanish-language rock and a lot of metal and now I hear much smoother things (interview, 24 March 2016, Mexico City).

This filtering extends beyond musical performance to material exchange. Stall rental costs have risen and the demand for sales licenses has nearly extinguished the ludic activity of bartering (Urteaga Castro-Pozo 1998: 115). And the sales of music discs, easily duplicated and thus less profitable, are being overshadowed by apparel and collectibles.

As a concession to government officials, the organizers of El Chopo have also assumed partial responsibility for public safety and the enforcement of prohibitions on illicit drug sales and under-age drinking. Hernández explains: "I know that now [the organizers] pay for private security. I know there are people conducting surveillance in the area but obviously they […] can't have control over everything and therefore, they can't be blamed for everything" (interview, 24 March 2016, Mexico City). Rather than actually improving public security or removing drugs from El Chopo, these acts of self-regulation on the part of Chopo organizers are primarily symbolic gestures meant to assuage the police and city officials.

A vivid example of this occurred on March 19, 2016. After being offered illicit drugs by several young men (despite being assured by co-founder Antonio Pantoja that drugs are not sold in El Chopo), I witnessed four police officers huddling together and beckoning a nearby Chopo organizer to join them. After a brief discussion, the huddle broke and the police began to walk toward one of the dealers who had approached me only moments before. The dealer saw the police coming, hoped on a bike, and the police gave chase. After a short tussle, the dealer was in the back of a police squad car with a sour look on his face. Curiously, there were several dealers flagrantly announcing their wares in the immediate area yet only one was arrested. At the moment that the police began their pursuit, the other dealers calmly walked toward the interior of the bazaar, pausing only for a moment before they resumed their work. Why did the police consult the Chopo organizer before the arrest? Why was that particular dealer targeted? While the terms of this negotiation may never be known, what is clear is that an arrest was made

that had no clear impact on the commercial activities—both in terms of legal and illegal goods—that market day.

In his concept of *holding a place*, Casey posits that this may involve not only maintaining an ordered arrangement of things by holding *in* and *out*, but may also "move place-holders toward the margins of its own presentation while, nevertheless, holding them within its own ambiance" (1996: 25). While Mexican rockers have had an ambivalent relationship to political activism, this has not been the case with Mexican punks who, "unlike those of Europe and the United States, where the punk scenes are politically balkanized, connected [punk rock and politics] from the beginning, and by the mid-1980s, almost exclusively with antiauthoritarian and anarchist values and practices" (Poma and Gravante 2016: 445). This began to change by 2004 as new waves of apolitical punks began to mix with the ideological base. Nevertheless, the association between political action and punk rock is deeply entrenched, both within and without El Chopo. Because of their anti-capitalist ideology and horizontal organizational structure (e.g., they resist selecting representatives making it challenging to include their demands in committee meetings), anarcho-punks have largely been excluded from the business of running the bazaar (O'Connor 2001: 78–79). Despite their increasingly marginalized status, anarcho-punks exert a powerful, symbolic influence on many including those who do not consider themselves punks. For example, "Manuel" is a forty-year-old jazz and rockabilly guitar enthusiast who has been coming to El Chopo routinely since the early 1990s. When I asked him about his most memorable experiences in El Chopo he

exclaimed without hesitation, "I'll never forget when I had the chance to see Atoxxxico[84] play live at Radio Chopo! I remember that the day was bursting with punk bands and a lot of rockers too. Of all of Atoxxxico's set, the song that I remember the most is 'Puerco Policía ['Police Pig']..' I was just a kid then and the words really hit me" (interview 21 August, 2015, Mexico City). Manuel recites a few lines of "Puerco Policía" from memory:

Puerco policía, cuanto asco me das. Solo de ver tu cara me dan ganas de mear.	Police Pig, how you disgust me. I only have to see your face and it makes me want to piss.
Si alguien te necesita nunca vas a llegar, Y sé que por dinero eres capaz de matar.	If someone needs you, you'll never show up, And I know that for money you are capable of murder.

Manuel explains that whether one identifies as a punk or not, the idea of standing up to the police resonates with a lot of people who deal with police corruption and intimidation on a daily basis.

The foundational dynamic between politically-minded punks and aesthetically-driven rockers—a crystallization of Mexican rock's pendulum swing between hedonism and activism—is crumbling under the weight of the far order. Says O'Connor, El Chopo "virtually excludes Mexican punks except as consumers. […] The term that best describes [El Chopo] is 'hippie capitalism.' Booth-holders pay for their space, and a portion is paid to the neighborhood residents' committee. There is a long waiting list for booths. Every type of music is sold, but punks are marginalized" (2001: 77–78). The

[84] Atoxxxico is one of Mexico City's most celebrated hardcore punk bands and was active from 1987 until the mid-1990s.

external pressure on El Chopo has fomented this gradual, internal power shift by determining exactly who is in the position to determine what live music, expositions, and material goods are of "cultural value." It has exalted one coexistent logic (i.e., El Chopo as a bazaar) at the cost of another (i.e., El Chopo as a common). This growing power imbalance is apparent not only in changes of the allocation of space and the arrangement of sound in that space, but in increasingly divergent discourses within El Chopo.

I have observed a consistent official discourse by the organizers of El Chopo disseminated through publications and official commemorative events. Conversely, I have observed a variety of unofficial discourses by vendors, neighbors, occasional visitors, and self-identified choperos that converge and diverge with the official narrative depending on the experience, orientation, and degree of involvement of the given individual.[85] This difference of opinion was most obvious when I asked informants, "is El Chopo a political place?" My interest and presumptions about this topic reveal something of my own subjective position as a foreigner, rock aficionado, and student of Mexican history. I assumed that because of the contested history of rock music in Mexico and the marginalization of youth culture, the continued consumption of rock and participation in El Chopo was obviously a political act. In my conversations with people about El Chopo, I discovered that my understanding of the word "political" occasionally differed from their own. However, it was also clear, especially in conversations with co-founders and organizers, that the word "political," with all its historical connotations to the student

[85] Ethnomusicologist Christian López Negrete drew my attention to the concept of official and unofficial discourses within the Chopo community and this concept resurfaced repeatedly in interviews with choperos.

movements of the 1960s and 1970s in Mexico, had been intentionally omitted from official discourse.

When I asked co-founder Antonio Pantoja if El Chopo is a political place he quickly corrected me: "No, El Chopo is a celebration of music and culture. […] It is a family place" (interview, 16 May 2015, Mexico City). Co-founder Carlos Alvarado agrees, explaining that "El Chopo is not political, it is countercultural" (interview, 16 May 2015, Mexico City). It is precisely this distinction between "political" and "countercultural" that reveals, in part, how El Chopo has been able to survive in the margins of Mexico City society without provoking civic authorities to shut it down. This subtle distinction is not lost on journalist Ángel Hernández Murillo who discussed the reaction of choperos to the incursions of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) against the Mexican government in 1995: "In El Chopo—prior to the plebiscite—there was no lack of enthusiasm among young people who launched, with megaphones in hand, proselytisms for the insurgent cause. [...] But in general, few paid them much attention; the indifference to the speakers was greater than the number of visitors that Saturday" (2000: 35). Hector elaborates on this nuanced perspective: "No, the fact is that politics are not accepted [in El Chopo], at least not in terms of domination or power. El Chopo represents a place contrary to the authorities and all political movements. […] In El Chopo we resist the concept of *la raza*[86] and try to be more

[86] *La raza* (in this context) signifies the *mestizo* or racial mixture between Amerindians and Europeans. La raza (a single racial identity based on hybridity) has been a central pillar of Mexican nationalism since the Mexican Revolution. Here, Hector seems to imply that la raza is resisted in El Chopo because it excludes those who do not fall into this racial and ideological category.

inclusive" (interview, 23 May 2015, Mexico City). However, he adds that many of the choperos are students and when students are targeted by police (as in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero on September 26, 2014), many choperos march in support of their peers. Nevertheless, rarely if ever are these activities conducted within the rarified space of El Chopo. This connection between what choperos do within and outside of El Chopo is not lost on the authorities. Hector adds, "recently, when the punks and anarchists went downtown to protest the events in Ayotzinapa, the government took reprisals and there was a clash between the police and choperos. It was an armed conflict but nothing serious happened" (interview, 23 May 2015, Mexico City). Indeed, anarcho-punk collectives have been regular fixtures at protests from the 1980s to the Ayotzinapa marches of 2014–2015 and represent, "some of the most important urban laboratories of political experimentation and self-management in the country" (Poma and Gravante 2016: 438).

Opinions within El Chopo over the question of politics are as diverse as the styles of music and dress: "I don't believe that [El Chopo is a political place], it is more like an oasis" (interview, "Carmen," 23 May 2015, Mexico City); "While El Chopo was not born in a political manner, now at its core the politics are very severe because there are perfectly identifiable groups: the good, the bad, et cetera. But fortunately we are not aligned to any political party" (interview, Jorge Vargas, 23 May 2015, Mexico City); "For me it has never been a political place. On the contrary, it is a space of culture for music" (interview, "Richard," 25 May 2015, Mexico City); "Yes, to be in opposition to politics is a political position. In El Chopo we don't deal with the partisan crap. Here is a space of liberty for music so that the community can live in peace. I'm not going to lie,

sometimes there are problems but it's the same everywhere else. Here it's all about music" (interview, Alejandro, 25 May 2015, Mexico City). Elizabeth Hernández argues that the answer to this question lies in the very mechanics of the bazaar itself:

> [El Chopo] is political simply by the fact that it is a bazaar. [The organizers of El Chopo] have their own agreements with local politicians. Therefore, they are heavily driven by politics and it is very important that they have a leader with political weight. Simply by being a bazaar they must be political or they couldn't survive (interview, 24 March 2016, Mexico City).

Conclusion

On Saturday, October 8, 2016, El Chopo held its thirty-sixth anniversary celebration that included a well-attended concert at Radio Chopo. The concert bill featured surf rock band Yucatán A Go Go, grunge band Radio Kaos, and rock urbano bands Liran' Roll and Heavy Nopal. The following Tuesday, Chopo organizers posted an announcement on their official Facebook page: "Unfortunately, due to the incidents that occurred in Radio Chopo this past Saturday, […] when at the end of an event there was a fight between various attendees, the decision has been made to suspend the musical activities in Radio Chopo indefinitely[.] We cannot have events if the people who attend do not know how to behave."[87] One of few newspaper articles that mentioned Radio Chopo's closure indicated, rather vaguely, that it was due to "security problems and logistics in general" (Hernández Chelico 2016). In a single announcement, the fears of many—that an outbreak of violence would be used as a pretext to close El Chopo—

[87] Efusión Periodismo Cultural. Facebook post. October 11, 2016. https://www.facebook.com/pg/Efusión-Periodismo-Cultural-1409000766065972/posts/?ref=page_internal (accessed March 23, 2017).

seemed to be coming true. And the responsibility for that closure was placed squarely on the shoulders of the choperos themselves.

Again, El Chopo's official discourse diverged with the unofficial version. Shortly after the fight, a compilation of audio interviews was produced by Descontrol Urbano, a media organization dedicated to "spreading awareness about all of the up-and-coming rock, punk, and goth bands, and also teach the authorities that rock is not how they paint it. Rock is culture, too!"[88] The anonymous testimonies presented in this compilation, eight in all, are by alleged witnesses to the fight, including some who say they were seriously injured. These accounts differ on some details (e.g., the number of instigators, the make and color of their vehicle, the timeline of events, etc.) but they all agree on the following points. In the late afternoon or early evening of October 8, after the anniversary concert had ended and most people had gone home, a small group of choperos remained in The Parking Lot Terminus (Stage 4) to hang out and drink beer. A group of young men arrived in a car, got out, and began yelling at the choperos, telling them to "Get out!" with one slapping a beer bottle out of a chopero's hand. According to these accounts, the young men, armed with knives and chains, began to attack the chopero who lost his beer bottle as other choperos rushed to his defense (themselves only armed with beer bottles and their own fists). One chopera was knocked unconscious and only remembers being dragged by friends to safety in The Cultural Corridor (Stage 2). The alleged witnesses describe these men as, "strangers," "people that don't belong to rock 'n' roll,"

[88] Descontrol Urbano. "Story." Facebook post. https://www.facebook.com/pg/undescontrolurbano/about/?ref=page_internal (accessed March 27, 2017).

"neighborhood people," and "fucking kids, nineteen to twenty years old." They say that these young men were joined by others (though who these others were is disputed) and the fight only ended when other choperos, those who had already left for the day, were alerted to the fight and returned to help. The choperos, throwing rocks and bottles to slow the progress of their opponents, retreated to The Cultural Corridor. As was the case with the shootings of 2015, the police were nowhere to be seen.[89]

I asked the producer of this compilation, who also asked to remain anonymous, why she had chosen to compile these testimonies and exactly what stake she has in the conflict. She replied, "I made this compilation as a way to support those who were beaten that day and to support their right to express what happened anonymously. I do not belong to El Chopo or any group. I'm just an independent journalist and what I hope to achieve is that people stop criticizing the choperos without knowing what actually happened" (personal communication, 3 April, 2017). Despite the obvious challenge of verifying the details of these anonymous witness accounts (made more difficult by the sparse media coverage), they are worth mentioning because they are now part of El Chopo's unofficial discourse. Since The Long Night, urban rockers have relied on the exclusive, clandestine exchange of ideas and information in order to establish and protect their nodes of co-presence scattered throughout the city. Stories, rumors, and gossip (discourses that do not garner the authoritative credibility of institutions) continue to contribute to parallel histories that trouble the monolith of El Chopo's public image.

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[89] "Agresiones en el Chopo el pasado 08/10/2016." YouTube video, 26:18, posted by "Descontrol Urbano," October 15, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exKISjA8yuc (accessed March 3, 2017).

Prior to October 8, 2016, live music was a ubiquitous presence in El Chopo's soundscape. Uncompressed, unpredictable in its timbral character, dynamics, and directionality, live music seemed to penetrate the veil of pre-recorded music, no matter how far one was standing from the source. Live music described action unfolding, mutual enrapture, and the affective labor of the phenomenological moment. And like many ubiquitous sounds, the affective potency of live music has become most apparent in its absence. Since the closure of Radio Chopo, official events (e.g., autograph events by touring musical artists, plays, poetry readings, etc.) have been staged exclusively in The Cultural Corridor (Stage 2). And, like the silencing of toreros during the visits of foreign dignitaries, the thunderous roar and squealing feedback of live music has been *pruned* from El Chopo's soundscape.

Regardless of the uncertainty surrounding the closure of Radio Chopo, the community response has been quite pronounced. In the months following the closure, nearly every announcement posted on El Chopo's official Facebook page was greeted by commenters demanding to know when Radio Chopo will reopen. In a particular exchange, a commenter named "Dafnis," articulated the collective frustration of the choperos quite emphatically:

DAFNIS: Gentlemen, you are killing El Chopo little by little. I miss the music in that place. Is music not the thing that unites us? Now, if you are a metalero, or any member of the counterculture for that matter, you are like a stranger in El Chopo. If you wanted to *darle en la torre* [hit us where it hurts the most], congratulations! You are doing a wonderful job.

EL CHOPO SPOKESPERSON: Those who are "hitting us where it hurts the most" are the people who don't know how to behave […]. Concerts have been suspended because of them. The concerts will return but we need all the attendees to cooperate and not drink alcohol or do drugs. It is in their hands if [El Chopo]

returns to what it once was.

DAFNIS: I agree with your point. It's just that not all of the attendees are like that and I don't think it's fair that we all have to pay for the sinners. […] I decided to express my annoyance because without music, the place loses its magic, the charm of being in a place that you share with other people who have come to share the same passion.

EL CHOPO SPOKESPERSON: "We agree that music is essential in El Chopo. But as you said, we are "paying for the sinners." We hope that when the concerts start again, people will realize that there are few spaces to enjoy good rock and all its derivations and if we don't take care of them, what happened will happen again.[90]

Interpretations about what El Chopo *should* be, who exactly it is meant for, and who is responsible for its present state are multivalent. Some believe that the very existence of El Chopo is a political statement; others believe it is simply "about the music." Some express concern about the changing focus of the bazaar from trade to sales, while others note that this change has attracted a broader spectrum of the public and coincided with a period of rising tolerance. Yet there are critical spaces where these perspectives converge. El Chopo is regarded by many as a *special* place: "an oasis,"[91] "an underground church,"[92] and "a place to let off steam."[93] It is a site of ritual communion, binding diverse actors through its musical sacrament. This is El Chopo's symbolic dimension, one inscribed with past victories and defeats, that has transcended geographic locations and endures against ever-present threats.

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[90] Efusión Periodismo Cultural. Facebook post. May 18, 2017. https://www.facebook.com/pg/Efusión-Periodismo-Cultural-1409000766065972/posts/?ref=page_internal (accessed May 21, 2017).

[91] (interview, "Carmen," 23 May 2015, Mexico City)

[92] (interview, "Hector," 23 May 2015, Mexico City)

[93] (interview, Elizabeth Hernández, 18 May 2016, Mexico City)

In connecting these testimonies to the specific history of youth culture in Mexico City, the ban on rock music, and the difficult evolution of El Chopo we can glimpse the conditions (to some degree) that gave shape to the sentiments expressed above. The exaltation of rock music in the youth culture of Mexico City and specifically in El Chopo is directly related to the contestation of that music in Mexican history and we can understand its current status in at least two ways. First, El Chopo represents a kind of consolation prize for a generation that has been robbed of its ability to organize, mobilize, and actualize political change. Those who cannot change their society, personal destinies, or recoup their cultural inheritance—the tacit promise of Mexican nationalism—instead command a narrow strip of territory and announce their dominion through pulsing, amplified music. Conversely, we can see the exaltation of rock music as a symbolic expression of resistance that constitutes a small but significant thread in a web of flexible forms of social resistance and activism (Appadurai 1996: 7). Though the future of El Chopo has always been unclear, at this moment, in this place, resistance resounds.

Chapter 5 | Jarocho Urbano: A Sonic Shield in the Ambience of Dread

No one knew it no one saw it
We are leaving this number 43 for you
Because there were 43 of us
We are
Not disposable

—Juán Felipe Herrera "Ayotzinapa"

In this final case study, I examine the Jaranero Contingent for Ayotzinapa, an informal collective of musicians/activists that formed in the autumn of 2014 in response to the abduction and likely murder of forty-three students—one of Mexico's gravest national tragedies and one that allegedly came about through the collusion of law enforcement agents and organized criminals. These *jaraneros*[94] come from Mexico City's tight-knit community of practitioners of a folkloric, regional musical form called *son jarocho*. Like the elective community of El Chopo (see Chapter 4), jaraneros are drawn together by aesthetics, fellowship, and in many cases political ideologies that, I will argue, are informed by antecedents in son jarocho's roughly four-hundred-year history and consequently, are ones articulated and refined through its practice. Son jarocho has deep roots in Mexico City, partially because it is so often associated with political activism there. While many jaraneros in Mexico City pay deference to the people and practices of the Sotavento region[95] where son jarocho is thought to have originated, some

[94] Practitioners of son jarocho frequently refer to themselves as "jaraneros" (masculine) or "jaraneras" (feminine). Taken literally, this term refers to a person who plays the *jarana*, a plucked string instrument that normally makes up the bulk of a son jarocho ensemble. For brevity, I will refer to members of the Jaranero Contingent for Ayotzinapa as "jaraneros" throughout.

[95] The Sotavento region encompasses parts of the Mexican states of Veracruz, Oaxaca, and Tabasco.

also express a sense of not only stewardship but also an artistic obligation to innovate and thus enrich son jarocho. A case in point is La Semilla, a Mexico City-based group that accompanies call-and-response singing and *zapateado*[96] dancing with traditional instruments (e.g., jarana, *guitarra de son* [or *requinto jarocho*],[97] and *leona*,[98] etc.) with non-traditional ones such as flute and synthesizer. Lucia Escobar, the singer/dancer of the group, does not consider their music to be son jarocho but rather *jarocho urbano*.[99] She believes this is part of a natural evolution in a musical tradition that has been continually renewed and enriched by the movement of populations and the changing conditions under which they lived (interview, 3 November 2015, Mexico City).

In the phenomenological meta-encounter of the protest march, the jaraneros perform acts of theatrical interpellation. Through their music, appearance, and coordinated comportment, the jaraneros distinguish themselves from other actors. They corporealize multitemporal heterogeneity by invoking and "tuning" their tradition to frame the present. In Mexico City, son jarocho is a music and dance tradition widely associated with a non-violent (though nevertheless powerful) form of political activism.

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[96] From the verb *zapatear* (to strike with the shoe), zapateado is a percussive dance associated with several regional Mexican sones including son jarocho. Zapateado is traditionally performed upon a *tarima* (wooden platform).

[97] In the absence of an *arpa jarocha* (jarocho harp), the guitarra de son normally carries the melodic line. There are several sizes of guitarra de son (e.g., *primera*, *medio*, *requinto*, *leona*, etc.) but the one called *requinto* is the most common size.

[98] The second largest instrument in the guitarra de son family used to provide bass/baritone lines

[99] For the sake of clarity, I will use "son jarocho" when referring to the music/dance tradition as a whole and use "jarocho urbano" to refer to the particular configurations of this tradition in contemporary Mexico City.

In this chapter, I will show that the politicization of jarocho urbano has arisen in part from modern reimaginings of a fragmented history, nourished by parallel traditions in Veracruz and the United States, and sculpted to fit the socio-political realities of Mexico City. The *fandango* (party) is a site of *cognitive praxis* in which jaraneros debate, consolidate, and integrate a "utopian vision […] with specific practical activities" (Eyerman and Jamison 1998: 21). I will consider how jaraneros "mobilize their tradition" by harnessing and adapting their cognitive praxis to the fray of the march and in doing so, present the public with counterhegemonic narratives of Mexicanness that "seep into the social lifeblood in often unintended and circuitous ways" (Eyerman and Jamison 1998: 6). I will show how the traditional emphasis on improvisation (both lyric and melodic) and allegorical, nested poetics allow jaraneros to construct a dialog with the march itself—commenting on and reacting to events as they unfold. Like the streetwise auditors of Chapters 2 and 3, the aurality of jaraneros is sophisticated and multidimensional: they intermittently listen to themselves, their fellow jaraneros, other marchers, and the acoustics of a given space. They often do this in an ambience charged with violence. It is interesting to consider then, that the split-brained aural concentration of the jaraneros lies somewhere between ethnomusicologists J. Martin Daughtry's belliphonic listening (2015) and Thomas Turino's interpretation of *flow* (2008: 4). I will show that among other functions, the jaraneros' music shields them during a march, enlarges them, and comforts them, but never completely dislocates them from the immediacy of their surroundings. They do all this while selecting and inventing repertoire to frame the moment at hand, adjusting their tempi and dynamics in relation to their comrades, and

delegating responsibilities between each other with very little verbal communication—all habits formed in the fandango and all suggesting a very specialized form of *synchrony* (Hall in Turino 2008: 41). Finally, I will show that in the context of the protest march, jaraneros occupy a striking acoustic niche through their bright, highly percussive timbres and use of tonal harmony, as well as an affective one that serves to coordinate, energize, and embolden not only the jaraneros, but anyone within earshot. The affective niche that the jaraneros occupy in the march—their symbolic performance of vulnerability and earnestness—temporarily inverts normal boundaries of cohabitation and thus provides "channels of communication for activists—within movements, but also between different movements, and, indeed, between movement generations" (Eyerman and Jamison 1998: 161).

Echoes of the Forty-Three

As of 2017, the events surrounding the disappearance of forty-three students of the Normal Rural School of Isidro Burgos in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero on September 26, 2014—often simply referred to as "Ayotzinapa"—have settled into three primary accounts: that of the office of the Attorney General of Mexico (PGR), that of the Argentine Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI), and that of Mexico's National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) (Martínez 2016a). The two independent reports (i.e., those produced by the GIEI and CNDH) conflict heavily with the official account (the PGR) and suggest that in the latter, the timeline and locations of violent confrontations have been distorted, the participation of certain law enforcement and

military organizations has been omitted despite the testimonies of numerous witnesses, and human remains and other forms of material evidence have been relocated for reasons yet to be determined (Martínez 2016b). However, all three reports agree in some respects: about seventy *normalistas* (i.e., students of the Normal School in question)[100] initially boarded two buses in Ayotzinapa with the objective of attending the Tlatelolco Anniversary March to be held on October 2, 2014, in Mexico City. At some point between 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m., this group was intercepted in the town of Iguala by some composite force of police, members of a criminal organization called Guerreros Unidos (Warriors United), and others. Forty-three students disappeared, six were killed outright, and 180 individuals (including bystanders) were injured in at least six different altercations between the armed, composite security force and the unarmed normalistas (Martínez 2016a).

I first heard about Ayotzinapa while standing in the Plaza of the Three Cultures, waiting for protesters to muster for a march commemorating the 46th anniversary of the Tlatelolco Massacre. This was the spot where the normalistas were heading—to gather with the rest of us and make their solemn march to the Zócalo. In the plaza, people had placed candles, flowers, and piles of cow bones surrounded by chalk outlines of human bodies meant to symbolize those who had fallen in 1968. As I wandered around the plaza, I overheard two protesters mid-conversation: "Did you hear what happened in Iguala?" a young woman asked her companion. "They did it again."

[100] "Normal" schools are teacher-training colleges. Hence, students of these schools are referred to as *normalistas*.

Figure 5.1. Deposits of cow bones, flowers, and the outlines of bodies commemorate the Tlatelolco Massacre of 1968. Photo by author.

A Declaration of Shared Destiny: Jaraneros Answer the Call

Ayotzinapa provoked horror and uncertainty across Mexico City. The nature of the crime—in which not only students but primarily indigenous, rural students were targeted—had a sweeping effect on the relative insularity of Mexico City's populace, temporarily unsettling boundaries of class as well as conceptual spaces of safety and danger. There was a sentiment, crystalized in one of the movement's slogans, "We Are the Forty-Three," that announced a recognition of shared destiny. Putting it bluntly, a Mexican friend expressed to me, "Ayotzinapa was our 9/11. Now, *everyone* is in danger." Jaranero Luis Argüello had never participated in protest marches until Ayotzinapa. He says, "Ayotzinapa was a subject that touched me a lot. I don't really know why but ever since I saw those images of the boy with the flesh removed from his face in the

newspaper,[101] I've felt that these are images that we should never see. For me, it was just too much." He suggests that what made Ayotzinapa so different from other incidents of state violence, at least in his mind, was not the violence itself but "that Ayotzinapa was so mediated. We saw new images and heard new rumors almost every day. And yet, illogically there was total silence at the same time: we still know virtually nothing" (interview, 5 February 2016, Mexico City).

Jaranero Carlos López Morales first participated in protests during the #YoSoy132 Movement[102] in 2012. But it was during the massive protests from October 2014 to January 2015, staged in response to Ayotzinapa, that he first marched as a musician—a jaranero. Carlos explains that it was his friend and fellow jaranero, Quique Morán, who first proposed the Jaranero Contingent for Ayotzinapa: "Quique had the idea to make an event on Facebook in order to reach out to the jaraneros who might like to accompany us during the march" (interview, 16 April 2016, Mexico City). Ayotzinapa was an unprecedented tragedy in their lifetimes, explains Carlos, and one that required a

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[101] Luis is referring to the photo of the body of normalista Julio César Mondragón Fontes, the only one of the forty-three to be found and identified. The grisly image received international press coverage though the CNDH later determined that the body's disfigurement had most likely been caused by scavenging animals (Saldaña 2016).

[102] #YoSoy132 (meaning "I am the 132nd") was a massive, student-driven movement that rose in opposition to the 2012 presidential campaign of then-governor Enrique Peña Nieto, as well as neo-liberalism, election fraud, and the monopolization of media outlets—problems that movement participants associated with Peña Nieto's party, PRI. The movement began with a spontaneous demonstration at Mexico City's Ibero-American University during which Peña Nieto was forced to interrupt a campaign speech and take shelter in a restroom. The name of the movement comes from the 131 students who participated in this original event (Kun 2012). #YoSoy132 marked a dramatic shift in Mexican protest movements. Social media played an essential role in coordinating actions and disseminating information (as suggested by the movement's name), and was inspired by the Zapatistas' "Other Campaign," the Arab Spring of 2010, and the Occupy Wall Street Movement of 2011—all of which relied on the internet as a tool of propaganda and organization.

coordinated response. It was this Facebook announcement that drew Luis to his first protest march. He reflects, "it was important to attend, to be there as a jaranero, as a musician and as a citizen" (interview, 5 February 2016, Mexico City). According to Carlos, the jaraneros normally recruit about fifty musicians to walk as a contingent at a given march, a number that grows as they bump into fellow jaraneros along the march route. In the case of the Ayotzinapa marches of 2014, this number swelled to approximately one hundred. Carlos reminisces, "When we were in the street during these marches, it was cool to see the participation of the people, the camaraderie and energy among the jaraneros as well as the response by onlookers" (interview, 16 April 2016, Mexico City). Jaranera Anna Arismendez explains that "jaraneros always march," but Ayotzinapa marked the first time that the jaraneros marched under the name "Jaranero Contingent for Ayotzinapa" and used a Facebook page to plan marches. This was necessary, says Anna,

> Because marches were suddenly so much more frequent. It just became a way to easily communicate with each other. What happened was that everyone kind of planned to go to the march and there are so many of us that we ended up being like a bunch of little groups. So we thought, "Hey, let's meet up." We decided that we need to know where all of us are going to be so we have a *big* presence. A presence that would be felt (interview, 20 October 2015, Mexico City).

The jaraneros interviewed for this investigation are a diverse bunch: some come from Mexico City, others from the distant reaches of Mexico, and even a few originally from the United States. Most are well educated but come from very different socio-economic backgrounds and display a high degree of class mobility. Every one of them does have some occupation, other than as a professional musician, to make ends meet. Some are teachers, students, craftspeople (particularly luthiers and carpenters),

photographers, visual artists, and social workers to name only a few. In Mexico City, the possibility of making a living as a jaranero, regardless of one's level of technical accomplishment, fame, or respect within the transnational son jarocho community, is virtually non-existent. Instead, every jaranero who contributed to this investigation studies, performs, and protests son jarocho because it is their passion to do so.

Figure 5.2. The Jaranero Contingent for Ayotzinapa. November 13, 2014. Photo by Viviana Zuñiga Rojas. Used by permission.

"We Resist Against Forgetfulness": Performing History through Son Jarocho

Why do jaraneros so frequently participate in protest marches in Mexico City, while practitioners of other Mexican popular and folkloric music traditions (e.g.,

mariachi, son huasteco, banda oaxaqueña, etc.) participate infrequently? This question was the impetus of this case study and one that I regularly put to interlocutors. Jaranera Gabriela Duhart Herrera believes that the correlation between son jarocho and social activism is engrained in the history of the music itself. She says,

> I'm thinking of other types of *sones*[103] from other regions of Mexico that have similar qualities: similar instruments, harmonies, use of repetition, call-and-response, et cetera. Why aren't those traditions more often represented at marches? I think it might have to do with the history of son jarocho as a form of resistance since the time of the Revolution. To me, son jarocho has always been related to political activism and resistance. For example, did you know that son jarocho was revived in Mexico City thanks to the interest of some students who were interested in the music of Don Arcadio? He had been in the revolution and he wrote verses about the revolution and his experiences there. Also, son jarocho was a form of resistance during the colonial period. Because it was banned and such. Because of the African influences in son jarocho, I think it was more demonized than other music and that is what gives it a tone of resistance (personal communication, 24 September, 2015).

Gabriela refers to jaranero Arcadio Hidalgo, a master of the *décima* (ten-line stanza) and veteran of the Mexican Revolution. Born in Veracruz in 1893 to an Afro-Cuban father, Hidalgo's poetry captures the humble majesty of peasant life, the systematic exploitation that these peasants suffered through the *hacienda* (plantation) system, as well as its ultimate disintegration during the Mexican Revolution (E. González 2013). Hidalgo's music was re-popularized in Mexico City during the 1970s by son jarocho groups like Mono Blanco and has become, both in lyric style and thematic content, a foundational model for contemporary jaraneros in Mexico City.

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[103] In Mexico, *sones* refer to regionally distinct music/dance traditions that, according to musicologist Alejandro Madrid, may be understood as parts of a "son complex" in that, despite their variations, they include common aspects (e.g., emphasis of stringed instruments, use of improvisatory singing structure (*copla*), use of *sesquiáltera* or hemiola rhythm, and parallel dance traditions that frequently includes a tarima) (2013: 12).

In the following excerpt, one of Hidalgo's most famous décimas, we can glimpse the underpinnings of an artistic and political ideology that frame son jarocho as a potent form of musical activism and cultural critique:

Yo me llamo Arcadio Hidalgo.	My name is Acadio Hidalgo.
Soy de nación campesino.	I am from a peasant nation.
Por eso es mi canto fino	This is why my song is fine
potro sobre el que cabalgo.	[like] the colt upon which I ride.
Hoy quiero decirles algo	Today, I want to tell all of you something
bien reventado este son.	[with] this well-worn song.
Quiero decir con razón	I want to tell you the truth
la injusticia que padezco	about the injustice that I have suffered
y que es la que no merezco:	and that it is something I do not deserve:
causa de la explotación.	The case of exploitation.
Yo soy como mi jarana:	I am like my jarana:
con el corazón de cedro.	with a heart of cedar.
Por eso nunca me quiebro	Because of this, I never quit
y es mi pecho una campana.	and my breast is a bell.
Y es mi trova campirana	And this is my country ballad
como el cantar del jilguero.	like the song of a goldfinch.
por eso soy jaranero.	For that, I am a jaranero.
Y afino bien mi garganta	And I fine-tune my throat
y mi corazón levanta	and my heart rises
un viento sobre el potrero.	[like] a wind over the pasture (E. González 2013).

Gabriela eloquently states, "as jaraneros, we resist against forgetfulness." If this is the case, then what are jaraneros in contemporary Mexico City trying not to forget, and exactly whose memory do they struggle to preserve? Their own? The public's? The State's? Storytelling through allegory and oblique social critique (as well as occasionally not-so-oblique critique) is one of the defining characteristics of the son jarocho tradition, yet these discursive forms rely on shared epistemologies, both within the jaranero community and between them and their audience. It follows that this resistance against forgetfulness involves the cultivation of a shared sense of son jarocho's history—

establishing a consensus of what does and does not constitute traditional practices, followed by a collective effort to maintain those practices.

In this section, I present a summary of son jarocho's historical development with two specific aims: 1) to explore how son jarocho, a musical tradition deeply inflected by the cultural setting from which it comes, found its way into the ears and imaginations of this tightknit group of urbanites and 2) to illuminate the kernels of subversion and resistance that populate son jarocho's distinct teleology. I argue that these kernels remain preserved in the dance postures, instrument design and technique, musical forms, and in lyrical content that contemporary urban jaraneros both harness and advance. This investigation is indebted to scholars and oral historians alike who have worked to reconstitute the approximately four hundred-year history of son jarocho: revealing the centrality of Afro-descendent heritage in its inception, one suppressed in the consolidation of Mexican nationalism following the Mexican Revolution (A. González 2004 and 2010; Kohl 2007);[104] interpolating gaps in the historical record during son jarocho's prohibition by the Holy Inquisition (Díaz-Sánchez 2013; A. Hernández 2013); and tracking its metamorphosis as an international music phenomenon (M. González 2009; Loza 1992; Madrid 2013; Sheehy 1997).

[104] A major architect of Mexico's post-revolutionary reconstruction, philosopher and Secretary of Public Education José Vasconcelos attempted to foment a sense of shared destiny and national identity from an extremely diverse, regionalized population by forwarding a notion of the *mestizo* (i.e., a person of mixed European and Amerindian ancestry) as a zenith of human evolution, "an entirely new element in human history" (Vasconcelos and Gamio 1926: 84–85). Says dance studies scholar Anita González, one of the outcomes of Vasconcelos's theories of race—"[theories] that later came to predominate in Mexico's cultural imagination"—was that in appealing to the mestizo majority, African identities were ultimately obfuscated (2010: 27).

Son jarocho is a song and dance form that is thought to have originated in the hinterlands of the modern state of Veracruz during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Díaz-Sánchez 2013; A. González 2004; Loza 1992). Son jarocho lies at the confluence of three major cultural tributaries present during the Viceroyalty of New Spain (encompassing modern Mexico): "the Spanish colonizers of Mexico, […] Africans taken to New Spain as slaves, and […] the indigenous population of the southeastern region of Mexico" (Loza 1992: 179). The word "jarocho" ("insolent") was orginally a pejoritive term for Afro-descendent laborers (A. González 2004: 1; Loza 1992: 180) and it is telling in that, according to Chicano studies scholar Micaela Díaz-Sánchez, the Mandinka people of Veracruz, originating in West Africa, presented an early point of resistance for colonial authorities by producing "many verses against the Church" (2013: 195). Díaz-Sánchez notes that Africans and Afro-descendants "outnumbered whites in New Spain [d]uring the early colonial period (1521-1640)" and were brought as slaves to replace indigenous laborer populations that had been decimated by European diseases and "inhumane labor practices" (2013: 188).

Son jarocho emerged in this context of often forced cohabitation, in which multicultural interaction, exchange, and collaboration my have been a matter of survival. The nexus of this cohabitation was the moveable, sometimes spontaneous get-together called "fandango." This multicultural cohabitation, says historian Antonio García de León, was something "unique in the singularity of the [Mexico's] costal region," in which merchants, dock workers, slaves, free rural laborers, miners, and others, accumulated like grains of sand on a beach producing "the principal depository of

mestizaje" (2009: 19). It was the fandango, says García de León, that "gave an identity to the world of the whites, mestizos, blacks and mulattos who shared the local culture without identifying themselves with the Spanish nor with the indigenous population" (2009: 19).

The fandango continues to be an important site of community engagement and exchange in the Sotavento region. Says ethnomusicologist Alexandro Hernández, "fandangos [in this region] usually occur during festivities surrounding Roman Catholic days of saints or in celebration of different manifestations of the Virgin Mary" (2014: 11–12). Since the colonial period, the fandango has represented an enclosed alterity, not only a physical space but a conceptual one that is conditioned both by the attendees and the surrounding environment. Says García de León, the rural fandangos of New Spain

> depended on a specific, natural, and playful atmosphere which was convened around a wooden tarima [dance platform], generally lit at night with lamps, candles or bonfires. The "places" so constructed involved notions of difference and boundary, at times organizing hierarchies of socio-political order: this is why the space of the fandango responded to particular needs, at defined moments, and through it expressed social and cultural barriers, contexts of representation and of identity in rural life (2009: 36).

In the interiority of the colonial fandango, a site of social inversion, expressions of sexuality, sentiments of discontent and social critique, and cultural practices suppressed by the dictates of the Viceroyalty and the Holy Inquisition were released. For this reason, according to ethnomusicologist Gonzalo Camacho Díaz,

> Even before the beginning of the War of Independence, the fandango was acquiring a counterhegemonic character. Subversive talent impregnated the entire musical occasion. The couplets with anti-clerical themes began to circulate during each event, passing from mouth to mouth generating hilarity, drawing the laughter of an audience complacent and complicit. The laughter became a form of civil disobedience in a context of oppression. With its irony, the lyrics besieged the

> Church of New Spain, the verses lashed out against the threat of hell for those who agitated the moral order imposed from above (2011: 55).

The son jarocho verses evolved as a cryptic delivery system for impermissible sexuality, social critique, as well as way to confirm or contest shared values and affiliations. The poetic structure, often contained in different arrangements of octosyllabic lines, provided a scaffolding over which vocalists may sing "both 'known' verses and improvised ones, [and over time] modify a fixed repertory foundation that they acquire throughout most of their lives, what is known as '*la versada*,' meaning a basic, personal collection [of repertoire] that goes to distinguish [particular] singers and their styles" (García de León 2009: 47). The flexibility of son jarocho's poetic structure allowed singers to modify and personalize well-known forms and content, and consequently allowed those singers to announce their presence, incorporate their personal history, and "adjust to specific performance circumstances" (A. González 2004: 57).

Despite the fragmented history of son jarocho, due in part to the censorship imposed on its practicioners,[105] there are two examples of songs/dances that speak directly to the counterhegemonic character of the son jarocho tradition. During the Holy Inquisition of New Spain during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, church officials began to target jaraneros because of "[t]he open physical communication of the dancers combined with the articulated torso movements and the open sensuality of [their] lyrics" (A. González 2004: 58). A particular song/dance, the "El Chuchumbé," took aim at the Church itself, mocking the sexual indescretions and hypocrisy of lusty

[105] According to Alexandro Hernández, fandangos continued to be held in secret in Veracruz until as late as the 1970s (2013: 473).

clergymembers who scrutinized the sexuality of parishoners while breaking their own vows of celibacy (A. Hernández 2013: 477). "El Chuchumbé" is thought to have been brought by sailors and travelers from Cuba during the eighteenth century and caused such a stir that "[a] decree issued […] by the Holy Office of the Inquisition against that son was [so soundly] ignored [by the public] that they were obliged to issue another in 1779" (Kohl 2007: 61).

Díaz-Sánchez explains that "El Chuchumbé" is loaded with sexual double-entendre such as the word "*penado*, […] which references both punishment (*pena*) and the phallus (*pene*) [and] refers to a Pope's sexual desires in Havana, Cuba, perhaps invented or historical [thus reconnecting] 'El Chuchumbé' to its Cuban origins through the sounds of the son jarocho in Veracruz" (2013: 196). "El Chuchumbé" provides a formative example of the "double-entendre verses and complex metaphors [that] became trademarks of the son jarocho" (A. Hernández 2013: 477), and this need for secrecy was no doubt a response to the punishments and imprisonment that individuals received for challenging the edicts of the Church. Consequently, Díaz-Sánchez points out that examples of what she calls "strategic resistance" predominated in son jarocho verses, with only a few examples exhibiting "overt protest" (2013: 196).

Another rare but no less significant example of overt protest during the formative years of son jarocho is the *conga*, a song/dance form that, like the "El Chuchumbé," arrived in Veracruz by way of Cuba, this time in the early nineteenth century (A. Hernández 2013: 479). Unlike "El Chuchumbé," with its suggestive dance and lyrics that inspired the ire of the clergy, the conga was created by Cuban *comparsas* (street bands),

which were often conflated by Cuban authorities with the Cabildos de Nación, Afro-descendent fraternal organizations that "owned land, distributed inheritances to slaves, provided neighborhood police services, and promoted ethnic solidarity" (A. Hernández 2013: 479; see also R. Moore 1997: 277).[106] The conga arrived in Veracruz with a subversive tone forged in the streets of Cuba, and was adapted by shipyard workers and others as "protest songs in the streets of Veracruz [often amounting] to demands for social justice on behalf of the lower classes" (A. Hernández 2014: 50). Building on the rhythmic structure of the Cuban conga, these shipyard workers improvised verses that criticized the duplicity and self-serving policies of church officials and bookended these verses with refrains like "an alm for the poor old man who had to leave his children for the New Year" (Díaz-Sánchez 2013: 198). These refrains, says Díaz-Sánchez, originally represented counterhegemonic critiques and calls for social justice but their message gradually became obscured and these refrains were incorporated into the traditional New Year celebrations in Veracruz (2013: 198).

How is son jarocho's "hidden history of resistance" (A. Hernández 2014) understood by contemporary jaraneros in Mexico City? Jaranero Luis believes that a verifiable connection between this deep history and contemporary counterhegemonic practices is difficult to prove. He explains that there are a few famous verses that allude to political resistance in the early history of son jarocho, but believes "that there is no real

[106] Despite the notable influence of Cuban culture in Mexico and particularly in Southeastern Mexico, Anita González argues that "Afro-Mexican identities [of Mexico's east coast] are often conflated with Cuban customs and practices [and that] although east coast Afro-Mexican communities have produced unique cultural innovations such as Jarocho or the Veracruz Danzón, these practices are assumed to be extensions of Cuban art forms" (2010: 34).

way to know exactly what their music sounded like, how similar it was to what we play now or, to know exactly what those musicians intended." Rather, Luis argues that this connection has largely been invented in the absence of robust information. He says that this invention "serves to generate prevalent feelings but is not something that ever really existed and if it existed, there is no way to verify it." Instead, Luis opines that it is more likely that "perhaps early jaraneros played music that agitated people in power, but not because their music was intentionally conceived as a kind of protest" (interview, 5 February 2016, Mexico City). Jaranera and Veracruz native Viviana Zuñiga Rojas confirms Luis's position, stating "[In Veracruz, son jarocho] is not a political tool for the people, nor do I believe that is an objective of the son. But, if it is a part, maybe we can see it in the verses of Arcadio Hidalgo. He always spoke of life in the countryside, and of the classism and discrimination that peasants experienced and struggled against" (interview, 8 February 2016, Mexico City).

Here, Viviana and Luis present some interesting clarifications. The first is that jarocho urbano is seen by many as a political tool (among other things). But the connection between activism and the music itself is not explicit in the fragmentary written or oral histories of son jarocho, nor is that connection made, according to Viviana, in contemporary Veracruz. Expressing counterhegemonic ideas in coded language, dance, musical technique is clearly different than using musical performance as a mode of public protest. Following Luis, the sense that son jarocho and activism are historically rooted does succeed in generating "prevalent feelings," perhaps ones that add to the momentum of collective actions. However, if we accept that currently, jarocho

urbano is associated with political activism in Mexico City (as my interlocutors do), then that connection must have been forged in the more recent past, after son jarocho was transformed for the entertainment of cosmopolitan elites, after it crossed borders and was appropriated by new communities to support new causes, and after these transregional and transnational flows brought son jarocho back to Mexico City.

Finding Country in the City: Jarocho Urbano

The jaraneros' senses of son jarocho's history as well as their places in that history, do not constitute linear sequences but rather parallels, simultaneities, and cycles of re-contextualization. In reflecting on how son jarocho came into their lives, many jaraneros note that the music always seemed to be in the background since their earliest memories, but at a particular moment they "rediscovered" it. Jaraneras Karina Figueroa Lima and Viviana, both natives of Veracruz, remember being aware of son jarocho during their childhoods but never seriously considered learning how to play it. Rediscovering son jarocho in Mexico City, the music, dance, and lively fellowship of the fandangos took on a special glamour for them, perhaps one of nostalgia for the home that they had left, and they soon found themselves part of a welcoming musical community. Like many of the jaraneros of Mexico City, they began taking pilgrimages to Veracruz to participate in the fandangos there and learn from elder masters. These passages between the capital and the provinces expanded their hermeneutical arcs and allowed them to examine the traditional practices that they grew up with from a new vantage. Jaranero Carlos is in his early 40s and, while a Mexico City native, he also recalls son jarocho

being part of the soundscape of his childhood. His father used to play son jarocho on the radio and though he was not certain at the time, Carlos suspected that the music had been "around for a while" in Mexico City but was not very popular when he was growing up. He recalls, "I knew that it existed but I was not hooked back then because I didn't perceive what I perceive now, the cultural roots of the nation" (interview, 16 April 2016, Mexico City).

Mexico City is on the receiving end of Mexico's largest trade corridor (with the port of Veracruz at the other), and consequently, was a likely destination for itinerant jaraneros during the *Porfiriato* (the dictatorship of president Porfirio Díaz, 1876–1910) and the duration of the Mexican Revolution. However, it was not until the relative political stability of the Cárdenas administration (1934–1940) that son jarocho first became firmly established in Mexico City. According to historian Antonio García de León, it was during this period of urban expansion and the rise of the professional class that certain musicians from Mexico's hinterland had the financial opportunities to establish themselves in Mexico City (2009: 34).

Figure 5.3. A map of the historical trade corridor between the port of Veracruz and Mexico City. Created by author using Snazzy Maps (CC0 1.0 Universal).

It was during this period that musicians from Veracruz such as Andrés Huesca y sus Costeños were first featured on radio and in films and coincided with broader nationalistic projects including education programs and art movements that presented a concretized version of Mexican history to the illiterate multitudes, and selectively reified marginalized segments of society.[107] This period, in which son jarocho was reconstituted for mass consumption was also one, suggests dance studies scholar Anita González, when many of its Afro-Caribbean features were attenuated (2004: 59). At the same time, the genre was promoted as a symbolic representation of an "authentic" (i.e., "rural") expression of Mexican culture.

The popularization of son jarocho as a symbol of authentic Mexicanness reached its zenith with the presidential election of Veracruz native Miguel Alemán Valdés in 1946. Alemán established the National Institute of Fine Arts and made composer Carlos Chávez its director. Historian Randall Kohl asserts that between the influence of Alemán and Chávez, "a distinctive son jarocho [developed], represented by musicians such as Lino Chávez and Andrés Huesca, that had a strong impact in some centers of tourism such as the port of Veracruz and Mexico City" (2007: 11–12). The transformation of son jarocho from a regional to national music soon brought it to new markets. Rising stars of commercial son jarocho such as Huesca and Chávez "frequently traveled to Los Angeles to perform at venues such as the Million Dollar Theater [and their] impact […] inspired

[107] This included a wave of films that drew public attention to the struggles of veracruzano fishermen in *Redes* (1936 dir. Fred Zinnemann and Emilio Gómez Muriel), indigenous peoples in *María Candelaria* (1944 dir. Emilio Fernández), and those of the urban poor in *Nosotros los pobres* (1947 dir. Ismael Rodríguez).

professional son jarocho ensembles to form in Los Angeles in the 1950s" (A. Hernández 2014: 17).

This wide dissemination of son jarocho laid the foundation for two distinct yet mutually influential movements: The Jaranero Movement, launched from Mexico City in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the adoption of son jarocho by Chicano activists in the Southwest United States (particularly in Los Angeles). The latter manifestation of son jarocho, says ethnomusicologist Steve Loza, came to serve as a broad reference for "the Mexican nation and nationalist sentiment, a nostalgic yearning for rurality, a particular sense of Chicano 'tradition,' and a united Chicano resistance in Los Angeles to the cultural hegemony of the United States all at once" (1992: 190). Despite distinct histories of son jarocho in Veracruz, Mexico City, and Los Angeles, the cross-pollination between them has been and continues to be significant. For example, several of the members of the Jaranero Contingent for Ayotzinapa are originally from Veracruz, while others are from the United States and discovered son jarocho through fandangos and community events sponsored by Chicano political organizations. Whether a jaranero is a Mexico City native or from elsewhere, it is a common practice to visit Veracruz and participate in fandangos. Further, some of the jaraneros, like members of the jarocho urbano group La Semilla, have had the opportunity to visit and perform in the United States as well as hosting artists from there.

Perhaps the most enduring influence on jarocho urbano, both in terms of aesthetics and ideology, has been the Jaranero Movement beginning in the 1970s and spearheaded by the group Mono Blanco—founded in Mexico City and originally

comprised of two brothers from Veracruz, Gilberto Gutiérrez and José Ángel Gutiérrez, and Chicago native Juan Pascoe (A. Hernández 2014: 39-40). The sphere of the Jaranero Movement was not limited to Mexico. Frequent collaborations between Mexican artists like Mono Blanco with their Chicano counterparts resulted in a wave of parallel reform. This reform included a reemphasis on the fandango as the core of both learning and performing, an attenuation of the role of the harp (central in the commercialized form of son jarocho) in favor of instruments such as guitarra de son and *quijada* (jawbone of a donkey or horse)—considered to be more traditional—and a reinsertion of the political dynamism that had been obscured or completely omitted during the height of its commercialization.

Well publicized displays of ideological solidarity through music are a significant part of the Jaranero Movement's legacy. For example, provoked by the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN or "Zapatistas") staged an uprising in the Mexican state of Chiapas on January 1, 1994. Members of Mono Blanco as well as other members of the Jaranero Movement (then in its "second wave") visited the Zapatista camps and "engaged in musical and political dialogue with Zapatista insurgents" (A. Hernández 2014: 42). While speculations about a subversive "deep" history of son jarocho factor into the way contemporary jaraneros frame their music as a political tool, these more recent instances of son jarocho's overt politicization have produced a powerful synthesis between a rich musical tradition at once egalitarian and demanding, a sense of the supralocal (i.e., a

conceptual space of production that includes both Veracruz, Mexico City, and transnational circuits of exchange), as well as a robust, left-leaning political ideology.

Figure 5.4. A masked jaranero posing with his guitarra de son during the Ayotzinapa Memorial March, September 26, 2015. Photo by author.

The Interiority of the Fandango

The fandango is marked by its interiority—a nexus of concentration, contribution, and contestation that draws bodies toward its center. Its nucleus is the *tarima* (wooden platform) and the dancers who momentarily claim it. With hands locked in the small of their backs, they bring their full weight down on the tarima. Their heels click and slide over the wood grain as their inverted jaranas swing like pendulums from loose shoulder straps. Seen from the perimeter of the crush, the zapateado dancers look like limbless trunks bobbing at the brink of a whirlpool. Perhaps they are joined by *marimbol*[108] player, seated upon the instrument's wooden chamber, plucking thick metal tines that propagate through the instrument's body, through the diaphragm of the tarima, and back again through the feet of people standing nearby. The fandango respires. Bodies cycle inward toward the nucleus, playing with rising energy, shouting improvised verses, steering the ensemble's tempo with the accent of their steps, and then cycling outward to rest and enjoy the melee from a distance. The fandango is neither a rehearsal nor a performance but a "production process and product [that] present themselves as two inseparable aspects, not as two separable ideas" (Lefebvre 1991: 37). The analogy of respiration is central to this inseparability. The fandango, both in its ritual symbolism and spatial arrangement, provides attendees with a gradient loop between learning and teaching.

[108] The marimbol is a lamellaphone/ideophone. The *marímbola*, as it is known throughout the Caribbean, is of African origin and consists of a wooden box (on which the player sits, like a cajón) and metal tines that the player plucks like a *mbira* (Chamorro 1984). According to journalist Merry Mac Masters, the marímbola first arrived in Mexico in 1928, brought by a musician with Son Cuba de Marianao, a group from Havana, Cuba (1995: 19–20).

Figure 5.5. A fandango in Mexico City. From left to right: Claudio Vega (guitarra de son), Karina Figueroa Lima (marimbol), and Freddy Vega (jarana). Photo by Viviana Zuñiga Rojas. Used by permission.

Beyond the perimeter, one listens to the music and sees only huddled backs. Squeezing shoulder to shoulder within the outermost ring, one can follow along by straining to distinguish the playing of one's neighbors, or by miming the chord shapes that they make on their jaranas. Moving inward, one can see the faces of jaraneros on the opposite side of the ring and hear and feel the syncopated jabs of the zapateado dancers' feet. At the nucleus, one might find an opening to deliver an original verse, momentarily guiding the musical conversation, and then pass the responsibility on to another.

Considering its early development as a site of multicultural cohabitation and exchange, it seems reasonable to argue that a spirit of inclusivity has been encoded into the very structure of the fandango, and in its contemporary manifestations, this inclusivity strikes a delicate balance between forces of conformity and contestation. Following political scientist Mark Mattern's notion of *acting in concert*, the fandango may serve as

a medium through which jaraneros "use music to promote awareness of shared interests and to organize collaborative efforts to address them" (1998: 30) while simultaneously "debate their identity and commitments" (1998: 28). By "conformity," I refer to two things. First, in a fandango, neophytes absorb musical knowledge through repeated exposure. Players conform to often unspoken aesthetic values by listening, imitating, and internalizing them. They mark their progress by cross-checking their sound with others. Second, there is a strong egalitarian aspect that the fandango generates. Individuals must share the spotlight. Thus, participants are exposed to a tacit social pressure to make room (literally and figuratively) for others—to tolerate a degree of musical and figurative discord and acknowledge incongruent desires and objectives.

For jaranera Gabriela, the primary purpose of the fandango is "to build community and preserve tradition" (personal communication, 24 September, 2015). Yet it is a tradition of variability, inclusion, and adaptation that is being preserved. Rather than a ritual practice limited by strict procedures, appropriate sites of execution, and conditions of participation, the fandango is and continues to be a gathering that is informed by the particular place, moment, and most importantly, the people who take part in it. Gabriela explains that "when you're in a fandango, the fandango turns out to be whatever the people in the fandango want it to be, whatever their intention is in organizing it or participating in it. This can vary from fandango to fandango and from person to person" (personal communication, 24 September, 2015).

By "contestation" I refer to the playful competition between jaraneros that drives their collective music making to new plateaus and allows them to tailor past ideas to

present circumstances. Lucia has grappled with this tension between preservation and innovation for some time. She explains that she has spent years visiting fandangos in Veracruz and studying with masters. She realized that at a certain point, her search for authenticity was inhibiting her artistic growth. She argues that son jarocho is a living tradition; it has always changed. "My band [La Semilla] and I decided to make a break with tradition," Lucia explains, "and that it was important to propose something new. […] I didn't want to be the typical 'Chilanga'[109] that appropriates traditional things in a superficial way. Instead, we have a style of playing and dancing that is distinct to our own region" (interview, 3 November 2015, Mexico City).

The concentric circles of the fandango are essential in this process of conformity and contestation. The fandango's nucleus is a point of multisensorial engagement where it is possible to not only hear the music being produced but *see* the faces and bodies of participants, feel the rise and ebb of group energy through the exchange of body heat, and smell the odor of perspiration, perfume, and other fragrances of urban consumerism, as they are activated by the heat and motion. To sing with an operatic *bel canto* would mean being subsumed by the piercing vocal delivery of the jaraneros—a sound that is somewhere between singing and shouting. To strum a jarana without the *rasgueo*[110] or pluck the strings of a guitarra de son as one would a guitar would mean to render oneself

[109] *Chilango/a* is a pejorative term for a person from Mexico City but is frequently re-appropriated.

[110] A strumming technique for stringed instruments (in this case, the jarana) in which the player strikes the strings by flicking the fingers of his or her strumming hand, from pinky to index finger, in quick succession. The effect is used by jarana players to add accents to rhythmic patterns. Because articulated syncopation is both aesthetically important and necessary in coordinating instrumentalists and dancers, the rasgueo is a foundational playing technique in son jarocho and one that new players are encouraged to prioritize.

inaudible. A player who fails to comprehend the underlying syncopation or structure of a song will most likely be pressured in line by the force of the collective sound.

While fandangos in Mexico City are often places of inclusivity and playful freedom, son jarocho is also a musical tradition of extreme subtlety, deceptive simplicity, and one of largely unspoken aesthetic and performative expectations. A possible trap for a neophyte, especially one with some previous musical experience, is to focus on the typically simple harmonic structures of the songs (normally limited to between two to four diatonic chords), extremely repetitive forms, and deceptively prosaic lyrics that often present themes concerning romantic dilemmas and aspects of rural life. In doing so, novices trod over performative nuances and layers of poetic meaning that are extremely challenging both to comprehend and to reproduce. In a sense, an arrogant neophyte might be deceived as were the officials of the Holy Inquisition. African drums are still hidden in the wooden tarima and in the percussive playing techniques of baroque-looking stringed instruments. The dancers' bodies belie the lateral hip-driven sway of colonial dances in their stiff, vertical plunge.

From the Fandango to the Street

What becomes of a fandango's circle when it is reconfigured into the column of a protest march? The heavenly body with its spinning satellites becomes a radiant projectile. The cognitive praxis of the fandango, the "collective and interactive process of learning [through which] both the frames and their content are reflexively constituted" (Eyerman and Jamison 1998: 22), is channeled outward to the public sphere. Says

jaranera Gabriela, "in the fandango, there are relationships with people. Sometimes people you don't connect with arrive and it can be awkward. People even make subtle verses to like, tease or criticize each other. But in a protest, it's like those things kind of fade away. You join together with those people" (personal communication 24, September, 2015). The reconfiguration of son jarocho between the fandango and protest march opens the possibility of encounters between the jaraneros and a range of actors including other protesters, police, provocateurs, and bystanders who have come to observe or those whose path has been blocked by the march. Through this public display, the jaraneros present outsiders with a "declaration of both creative renewal of tradition and an attestation of identity" (A. Hernández 2014: 110).

Video 5.1. A contingent of jaraneros marching in commemoration of Ayozinapa, September 26, 2015. Created by author.

Between the fandango and protest, musical expression modulates from a device of self-regulation and revelation to a conduit through which "[c]ommunity members […] enlist sympathy and support for the claims of their community, to draw attention to their concerns, and to assure that the interests of their community take precedence over the interest of other communities" (Mattern 1998: 25). "In the protest marches," says Karina, "it is important that the public recognizes you as part of a collective. That is to say, I go as a part of a group of musicians in order to express our shared repudiation of the State, to demonstrate our disagreement or to reclaim something in particular" (interview, 11 February 2016, Mexico City). During a march, says Alexandro Hernández, the tension between tradition and innovation is often relaxed and "jaranera and jaranero activists, […] appear to maneuver these debates by focusing on social actions" (2014: 107).

The projection of solidarity delivers a clear message. Through their manner of dress (e.g., white *guayabera* shirts and hats), their comportment, and their music, the jaraneros present the public with a counter-narrative to that of the Mexican state. They play with acoustic instruments and unamplified voices. They may sing about tragedy and loss but just as often, about resilience and hope. Through their egalitarianism, their sincerity, and their commitment, jaraneros present the public perhaps both with a representation of an imagined, rural past but also a projection of the future, something that urbanist Quentin Stevens describes as the "utopian impulses" of *disruptive play* that serves to invert the "social order and the mythologies which sustain it [by unravelling] the mythic *from within*" (2007: 24). Music then, as a form of social activism, "can be [both] utopian and premodern [by recalling] meaning that lies outside and beyond the self" (Eyerman and Jamison 1998: 24).

Repertoire of Rememberance

In the context of the march, jaraneros, one unified voice among many, battle against forgetfulness. A number of scholars exploring musical performance as social activism acknowledge the momentum that may be garnered in connecting past events to the present struggle (Fast and Pegley 2012: 20; Manabe 2015: 14; Mattern 1998: 18). Music, at once emotionally charged yet associatively "broad shouldered" (Johnson 2009: 64), provides activists with a particularly potent way of positioning their cause within the slipstream of historical memory. Discussing the wayno musical genre and its relationship to Peru's armed internal conflict (ca. 1980–2000), ethnomusicologist Jonathan Ritter

argues, "The intertextual references […] between not only different experiences of violence but also different well-known songs about those experiences, point to a certain self-referentiality within [protest song movements], allowing meanings to stack upon meanings, remembrances upon remembrances, to accrue and sediment to particular texts and songs" (2012: 214). Acting in an admittedly different historical moment and context, the jaraneros deploy a similar sedimentation of meaning both in their song choices and invention of new verses but also in how, when, and where they play along the march route. For example, simply by playing the song "Las Poblanas"—a song about the suffering of women whose husbands have gone to war and not yet returned—in the Plaza of the Three Cultures where the forty-three normalistas were expected to arrive, the jaraneros are able to link a historical narrative to a contemporary one. Says Viviana, "songs like 'Las Poblanas' speaks of things that happen every day in the states of Guerrero, Michoacán, and Oaxaca. They speak of the people who live in the country and are defending what is theirs" (interview, 8 February 2016, Mexico City).

Much like the wayno genre as a medium for commemoration, the urban jaraneros allow the past and present to speak by selecting songs of transcendent relevance—"old songs about pain, loss, and migration were given new meaning"—and in preparing (and improvising) verses that speak to the situation at hand, "some full of oblique metaphor and others as direct as a gunshot" (Ritter 2012: 205). Jaranera Anna explains that joyful songs have their place in the march, being necessary to the bolster morale of jaraneros, raise the spirits of the other marchers, and to endure the physical challenges of the long procession. However, she adds that the objective of the jaraneros in protest is

> more about producing a force. The verses we sing are either written specifically for the issue at hand or are selected because they relate to what's going on. There were a lot of verses written for Ayotzinapa, written while we were waiting for the forty-three to come back. There's also a lot of traditional verses that are specific to political struggle, using your voice, standing up. "Señor Presidente" is a good example. We don't sing that song at a fandango very often but in a march, it gets pulled out often (interview, 29 October 2015, Mexico City).

"Señor Presidente," written by Karina Figueroa Lima and Eduardo Castellanos, is a scathing rebuke to president Enrique Peña Nieto for his complacency and silence in response to Ayotzinapa.[111] Karina and Viviana produced a music video for the song and promote it on social media. Karina explains that her motivation for composing the song was "to express disagreement with the president and nothing more" (interview, 11 February 2016, Mexico City). For that reason, she chose to present an overt critique of president Erique Peña-Nieto in her lyrics rather than a more traditional, euphemistic one.

The song begins:

Señor presidente abra bien los oídos: ya no toleramos más muertos ni heridos.	Mr. President, open your ears: we will no longer tolerate more dead and wounded.
El pueblo ya tiene bien memorizada la actitud del PRI y aquí no pasa nada.	The people are already very familiar with the attitude of the PRI and here, nothing ever happens.

[111] Karina requested that I include the following credits for the music video of "Señor Presidente" as well as a link to where the video can be viewed: "performed by Lucía Escobar, Pablo Emiliano, Sergio Medrano, and Karina Figueroa Lima (voices during verses); Eduardo Castellanos (rap vocal); Citlali Fuentes, Natalia Cobos, and Sergio Medrano (choir vocals); Sergio Medrano (guitarra de son); Luis Argüello, Pablo Emiliano, and Eduardo Castellanos (jarana); Lucía Escobar (tarima); Karina Figueroa Lima (marimbol); César Martínez (accordion); Citlali Fuentes (quijada); Natalia Cobos (guiro); Miguel Carlón (congas); Edson Ontiveros (violin); directed by Mónica del Carmen; produced by Viviana Zuñiga Rojas and Karina Figueroa Lima; verse lyrics by Karina Figueroa Lima; rap lyrics by Eduardo Castellanos; recorded by César Juárez-joyner at Tinta Negra Estudio; director of photography, Elena Goméz; edited by Sergei Ramirez; color corrected by Fermin Ramirez." "SR. PRESIDENTE #FueElEstado." YouTube video, 5:48, posted by "La Vera." August 31, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UAqK2KBdnv4(accessed October 29, 2015).

Karina uses an interesting poetic device, the juxtaposition of the prosaic (listing foods) with questions and declarations directed at Peña-Nieto:

Nos gusta la leche y un verso jarocho pero estamos peor que en el '68.	We like milk and a jarocho verse but we are worse off than we were in '68 [i.e., Tlatelolco].
Nos gusta la leche, nos gusta la papa, pero que resuelvan lo de Ayotzinapa?	We like milk, we like potatoes, but what happened with Ayotzinapa?

In part, the contrast between antecedent and consequent phrases supports the rhyme scheme but the toggle between the mundane and serious seems to reflect an aesthetic sensibility that can be found in many traditional son jarocho verses, a kind of playfulness and tragic irony. Karina continues, describing the crisis in no uncertain terms, and marking a departure from the subtle allusions and double-meaning characteristic of the repertoire:

Señor presidente escuche en verdad: estamos tan hartos de la impunidad.	Mr. President, hear the truth: we are so sick of impunity.
En este país si al corrupto denuncias, seguro el gobierno tu muerte pronuncia.	In this country, if you denounce corruption, surely the government with pronounce you "dead."

She then begins to list past atrocities, positioning Ayotzinapa as part of sequence of state violence:

Nos gusta la leche, nos gusta e café, tampoco olvidamos lo del ABC.	We like milk, we like coffee, but we won't forget ABC[114] either.
Nos gusta la leche, nos gusta el batido, ni Atenco ni el Tec se fueron al olvido.	We like milk, we like milkshakes, but we will not forget Atenco[112] or Acteal.[113]

Reminiscent of "Sexista Punk" by Las Hijas de Violencia, Karina presents her lyrics in part as an appeal to Peña-Nieto's "better angels" but in effect, is expressing the anger and fear that many people bear but have no outlet to express. Karina concludes with a haunting refrain, this time perhaps no longer directed at Peña-Nieto but to the listener:

Nos gusta la leche y hasta el champurrado, pero si nos matan es que "Fue el Estado."	We like everything from milk to *champurrado*,[115] but if they kill us, "It Was the State."

[112] Despite having an agreement with municipal authorities to sell flowers in the central plaza of San Salvador Atenco in the state of Mexico, flower vendors were greeted by municipal police on May 3, 2006 who attempted to remove them. The purge resulted in two deaths. Vendors responded by staging protests the following day. The police responded to the protests harshly—beating some, confiscating property, and detaining people at random. According to a report produced by Amnesty International, "Of the hundreds detained, at least forty-five were women. On the way to prison, in the state police vehicle, many of the women were beaten, raped, and otherwise sexually assaulted by police officers who had arrested them. Upon arriving at the prison, more than two dozen of the women complained of being sexually assaulted, but the prison's medical staff merely stitched up their most obvious head wounds, conducting no forensic exams" ("Raped, Beaten, Never Forgotten").

[113] Karina refers to the massacre of forty-five members of the pacifist group the Bees (*las Abejas*) by a paramilitary group called The Red Mask (*la Mascara Roja*) in the primarily indigenous village of Aceteal in the state of Chiapas on December 22nd, 1997. Allegedly, the Bees were targeted for their support of the Zapatista Movement and accusations have been made that the Mexican government colluded with The Red Mask. Says journalist Jesús Ramírez Cuevas, "the slaughter […] was the consequence of official policy implemented in order to punish and dismantle the indigenous communities of San Pedro Chenalhó [the municipality that encompasses Aceteal] that had chosen the path of resistance and to construct their own government" (Ramírez Cuevas N.D.).

[114] Here, Karina alludes to an incident that occurred on June 5, 2009 in the city of Hermosillo in the state of Sonora, when the ABC Daycare facility was engulfed in flames resulting in the death of forty-nine children and over one hundred children and adults treated for burns. One of the owners of the facility, Marcia Gómez del Campo Tonella, is the cousin of then-president Felipe Calderón's wife, Magarita Zavala. Allegedly, Gómez was able to deflect her responsibility in the tragedy through the intervention of Zavala and the Calderón administration (Escobar 2016).

[115] A thick, warm drink typically made of *masa* (corn flour) and chocolate

In addition to new compositions like "Señor Presidente," son jarocho standards like "Las Poblanas," "La Llorona," "El Siquisirí," "La Morena," and "El Cascabel" — songs of bitter struggle and suffering—are frequently deployed by the jaraneros at marches. Jaranero Luis explains that during marches, the jaraneros "conserve the octosyllabic structure of the four-line and six-line stanzas, traditional verses that identify the song and over that, improvise and prepare verses for the occasion. The musical and lyrical structure remains intact and only the content is changed" (interview, 5 February 2016, Mexico City). Luis reflects on the importance of "tuning" the song selection to relate to the situation at hand. For example, during one of the first Ayotzinapa marches in the autumn of 2014, Luis was invited by the other jaraneros to call out the first song: "I chose 'El Gallo,'" he explains, "because it was important to me to sing verses that made reference to 'waking up' or 'opening one's eyes'" (interview, 5 February 2016, Mexico City).

Similar to the "intertextuality" of the Peruvian wayno, the many traditional son jarocho songs are connected by a *repertorial drift*: certain verses may be associated with, or easily incorporated into several different songs. This combined with the fact that the pre-composition and improvisation of new verses are often encouraged explain, in part, why son jarocho, as a living musical tradition, is so effective in bridging past and present events. Karina notes that son jarocho "may be played however and for whatever reason. That is why the musicians make the arrangements how they want, turn it into something else, combine it with other things" (interview, 11 February 2016, Mexico City). Anna

recalls a particular verse that she associates both with "Las Poblanas" and "El Compromiso":

Cuando ya no cante sones, ni calbalgue por el viento, escucharás mis pregones porque dejo el sentimiento.	When I no longer sing sones, nor ride on the wind, you will hear my pregones because the feeling remains.

"That's a traditional verse," she explains, "but it completely applies to the situation in Ayotzinapa" (interview, 29 October 2015, Mexico City). Viviana and Karina point out that several of the songs deployed in the marches, such as "La Morena" and "Las Poblanas," are particularly demanding "to dance, to play, and to sing because *se cantan en el aire* [they contains cross rhythms]" (interview, 8 February 2016, Mexico City). The fact that these songs are regularly pulled out during marches, despite the technical challenges of synchronizing a large group comprised of players with a range of skill levels, points to the primacy of selecting songs that frame the crisis at hand within cultural memory.

Exteriority: The Mechanics of a March

What does it mean to dance nimbly along the rim of an abyss, to throw your head back and laugh, sob, and shriek at the spiraling indifference below? Jaraneros are lucid about what they risk in marching (e.g., bodily harm, arrest, being "disappeared" as so many others have, etc.) and are articulate about the responsibilities they believe that they bear—to resist against forgetfulness, their own and that of the public, and through this resistance, bear witness to the present.

People come to the marches for very different reasons and this range of intentions is manifested in the sounds of the marches themselves. I remember a particularly dramatic example of this during an Ayotzinapa march in the autumn of 2014. Protesters were making their way along Reforma Drive toward the Angel of Independence monument. I stood on a barrier wall between the two lanes of Reforma in order to record the sounds of the marchers as they passed. On the right came a contingent of students from Mexico City's National Polytechnic Institute (IPN): grinning faces, hiccupping laughter, and bawdy *consignas* (rally chants).[116] On the left came a solemn procession of students from a rural "Normal" college in Guerrero. In their vanguard, these normalistas carried their college banner. Many marched with eyes downcast. They did not speak to each other and they did not shout. Standing between the two marching columns, attending to them in my binaural field, I was struck by how powerful the silence of the normalistas was, how it seemed to demand my attention like a pocket of freezing air in a stuffy room.

There is an enduring refrain among jaraneros that the fandango is where one can find "authentic" son jarocho. Participation in protest marches fulfills what many consider to be an important social obligation, but these activities remain tangential to the fandango. Yet the marching column of jaraneros found in contemporary Mexico City does not mark a complete divergence with tradition. "Have you seen the religious

[116] Consignas are rally chants that, in Mexico City, can often be heard at both sporting events and protest marches. Each of the major universities have their own distinct consigna and in both contexts, serve to announce the presence of students, faculty, and alumni from their respective universities. They are occasionally bawdy, other times nonsensical but as a practical matter, always rhythmically distinct. This rhythm makes it possible to coordinate the chants of hundreds of participants and also makes these consignas easy to recognize.

processions they do in Tuxtlas [Veracruz]?" Luis asks me. "The way we march reminds me of the way that people carry icons of the saints in Tuxtlas. It's practically the same: we walk with instruments instead of icons of saints but the ambiance, the feeling in the air is the same. To walk with your instrument in a compact group of jaraneros, it's much more like a religious procession than a fandango" (interview, 5 February 2016, Mexico City).

As in the case of the adaptation of the Cuban conga in Veracruz, there are historical precedents for jaraneros to take to the streets. Further, there are interesting corollaries between religious processions and forms of popular protest in Mexico City. In both situations, participants "announce" the event and call others to join in by producing some combination of music and noise. *Cohetes* (noise-making firecrackers) can frequently be heard during both religious processions and protest marches. According to human rights lawyer and ex-street vendor José Luis Gutiérrez Román, both church bells and cohetes serve as important long-distance communication systems throughout Mexico. He adds that during his childhood in Iztapalapa, people used to set off cohetes in a sequence of controlled bursts to produce a coded system of communication (reminiscent of Morse code). There is also a celebratory aspect to cohetes: they herald the approach of something perhaps different and exciting. Similarly, both religious progressions and protest marches seem to contain a curious duality, they may modulate between festive and solemn moments. This modulation is reflected in the playing and song selection of the jaraneros: jaraneros play to the moment, emoting sorrow to commemorate at one moment, and then joy to lift the spirits of the multitude in another.

Multimedia artist and activist Mónica Mayer suggests that while the objectives of protest marches and religious processions are different, in Mexico City, they both bear a striking resemblance in terms of their performativity and narrative arc. She explains, "I have a theory that Mexico City used to have a lot of rivers. We continue to have rivers but now they are rivers of people. The rivers of people flow through demonstrations as they flow to the basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe" (interview, 19 February 2016, Mexico City). In his investigation of peasant revolts in nineteenth century Mexico, anthropologist Medardo Felipe Castro Gutiérrez makes a similar analogy:

> Violent disturbances were, in this sense, a human river that came from the margins to flood the center. It did not matter where it came from; the plaza mayor [central plaza] was almost always the destination. For a time, the persecuted and the marginalized would occupy public spaces and seize the symbols of power, despite the ephemeral nature of their action. Sometimes this appropriation would be literal (2012: 59).

Distilled to its essence, Mayer believes that these human rivers, be they guided by religious devotion or to demonstrate political discontent, amount to something between a demand and a plea. "It's the same effect," she says: "A lot of people walking together and asking for something. So I think they are the same structure. One is to one authority [i.e., the Church] and the other is to another authority [i.e., the State]" (interview, 19 February 2016, Mexico City).

My research for this chapter began as an examination of the Ayozinapa marches *in toto*. Before arriving in Mexico City, I had never witnessed protest marches so large, so intense, or so filled with frightening and captivating sounds. I wanted to understand these marches—how it felt to be immersed in their charged spaces and how individuals experience and navigate these spaces differently. What occurred was that the jaraneros

called me. In a particular moment, I found myself immersed in the "affective tone" of the march—my own ambience of dread (Goodman 2010). Crushed by bodies, shuddering at the thunderclap of shots, teargas canisters, and fireworks (sounds I could not initially distinguish), the jaraneros' music, now honey-yellow in my memory, beckoned me closer. Hearing any kind of music amid the din of shouts and small explosions would most likely have grabbed my attention, but there is something inherent about the composite timbre of a son jarocho consort. It is what Alexandro Hernández refers to as the "sonic power" of the instruments themselves; the percussive immediacy of these instruments not only allow jaraneros to "shape spaces" within the fandango but also produce a "demand for recognition […] at marches, protests, and cultural centers, as these instruments do not need electric amplification in order to captivate an audience" (2014: 109).

Enrapture: Attention and Time

Do the listening practices of jaraneros change between a fandango and a march? Does their sense of time change? How does the task of dividing their attention between their own music and their surroundings influence their emotional state? Does the labor of collective music making bolster their courage or leave them feeling distracted from potential threats to their safety? Jaranera Anna remarks on an intriguing sensation that she feels when she plays music at a protest march:

> I really do feel like if I'm carrying my jarana or leona, it's like a shield in some way. It *is* a form of protection. I mean, I've been in places that are "hot" [dangerous] and fortunately, nothing has ever happened to me. And I do feel like the music is a protection in and of itself. People appreciate the music. People see

> you as, "Oh, they're just musicians. They're not going to get into mischief." I have a lot of friends who were in Michoacán when it was really "hot" and so many times they were stopped. And they would have to take their instruments out and actually prove that they were musicians. And as soon as they realized they could play, "Ok, great, go ahead" (interview, 29 October 2015, Mexico City).

What jaraneros demonstrate, in the volatile and unpredictable setting of the protest march, is a literal and figurative form of *play*. Following Stevens, play is a form of social resistance that involves activities understood by the general public as being "non-instrumental" to the everyday pursuits of monetary gain or social status. Such play inverts social expectations and in urban spaces, "very often involves encounters with strangers" (2007: 27).

The streets of Mexico City are replete with the music of street performers: practicioners of son huasteco, solitary guitarists playing rock classics, and brass and drum consorts playing for donations. It is somewhat unusual to spot jaraneros performing on the street, prefering instead to congregate at fandangos, workshops, and scheduled performances. The participation of jaraneros in protest marches represents a kind of "special engagement" with the public. People who rarely hear son jarocho in their daily treks around the city may hear it in the marches, thus entrenching the popularly-held connection between son jarocho and social activism.

The performance of son jarocho is "non-instrumental" in the sense that it involves tremendous effort, a commitment of time, and personal courage to to execute, but presents the jaranero with no real potential for material gain. Instead, the participation of the jaraneros represents a deliberate act of symbolic, counterhegemonic resistance that both challenges the State but also, as a form of play, neutralizes safeguards by which the

State identifies and supresses threats. Armored columns of riot police, blast walls, helicopters, and undercover agents are the tools that the State uses to deter violent, popular uprisings, but these are not designed to squelch the musical play of the jaraneros. This fact might explain why many of the jaraneros remark on how they feel shielded by their music during the marches and also why, despite their normally oblique but occasionally overt criticism of the State, they are able to side-step some of the physical violence that occasionally transpires between protesters and law enforcement. Jaraneros effectively bypass "old mechanisms of political expression and communication [and, in] the configurations of unrest and social protest, they speak of the re-appropriation of the body through which they express what they have come to achieve" (Nateras Domínguez 2015: 369).

Figure 5.6. Barrier walls raised to protect the Palace of Fine Arts in anticipation of the Tlatelolco Memorial March on October 2, 2015. Photo by author.

Jaraneros contribute to marches in a unique way: they present everyone within earshot with the emotionally-laden dynamism of their music, an acoustic representation of the spirit that the jaraneros seek to project, and one that is historically informed, peaceful, yet unwavering. As musicians, armed only with fragile instruments and their sounding bodies, the jaraneros present a symbolic, disarming vulnerability; one that is, says ethnomusicologist Benjamin Tausig, "an urgent ontological necessity [a]t protest events in the current historical moment" (2013: 122). Perhaps the jaraneros are able to adopt this posture of disarming vulnerability because of the intense sense of security that the contingent provides—"[a] sense of pervasive wellbeing [and] a strange sense of personal enlargement; a sort of swelling out, becoming bigger than life, thanks to participation in collective ritual" (McNeill 2009: 2).

What is it to *flow* in an ambience of dread? Referring to psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's concept, Turino defines flow as a "state of heightened concentration, when one is so intent on the activity at hand that all other thoughts, concerns, and distractions disappear and the actor is fully in the present" (2008: 4). In the context of a protest march, jaraneros exhibit a kind of flow that does not simply shut out danger or distraction but in fact, seems to blossom in opposition to them. Setting is crucial in understanding this distinction. Protesting jaraneros are not "playing" as they would at a concert or a fandango. They are playing in physical spaces and conceptual territories that seem to be, at least on the surface, incongruous with play. Jaraneros cannot afford to get "lost" in the music the way, say, a group of improvisers in a tiny night club might. The concept of flow in the marches is much more like the adrenaline-fueled call to action that

one may experience when faced with grave danger—perhaps something like the "fight" side of the "fight or flight" response. Jaraneros may not have the luxury of "becoming the music" while they are perceiving and interpreting their surroundings. And yet, despite the unusual venue of a protest march, jaraneros undergo, just as many musicians do, a distortion in their perception of time.

Among my interlocutors, this distortion is most obvious when they compare their memories of musical and non-musical participation in marches. Gabriela explains that when she has marched without her instrument, the protest seemed to drag on and on. Monuments and historical sites present points of reference during the march, making it easy to not only regroup at certain points but also maintain a sense of progress. March routes often begin at Los Pinos (the presidential residence), pass Chapultepec Park, then along Reforma Drive passing the Angel of Independence, "el caballito,"[117] Alameda Park (near the western-most edge of the former island of Tenochtítlan), and then into the Historic Center and collecting in the Zócalo. During a crowded march, this can be a slow walk spanning about eight kilometers. "But if you are playing music," says Gabriela, "you're suddenly already there. You started playing and suddenly you're at el caballito. It's just like a fandango. Sometimes you arrive at a fandango at 9 p.m. and suddenly it's 4: 30 in the morning. I guess that happens a lot when you do what you love. Time flies and it's like you enter in some kind of trance. And this can happen in a protest even though you are still under threat" (personal communication, 24 September, 2015).

[117] A large, bright yellow statue (an abstract representation of a horse head) by sculptor Sebastián

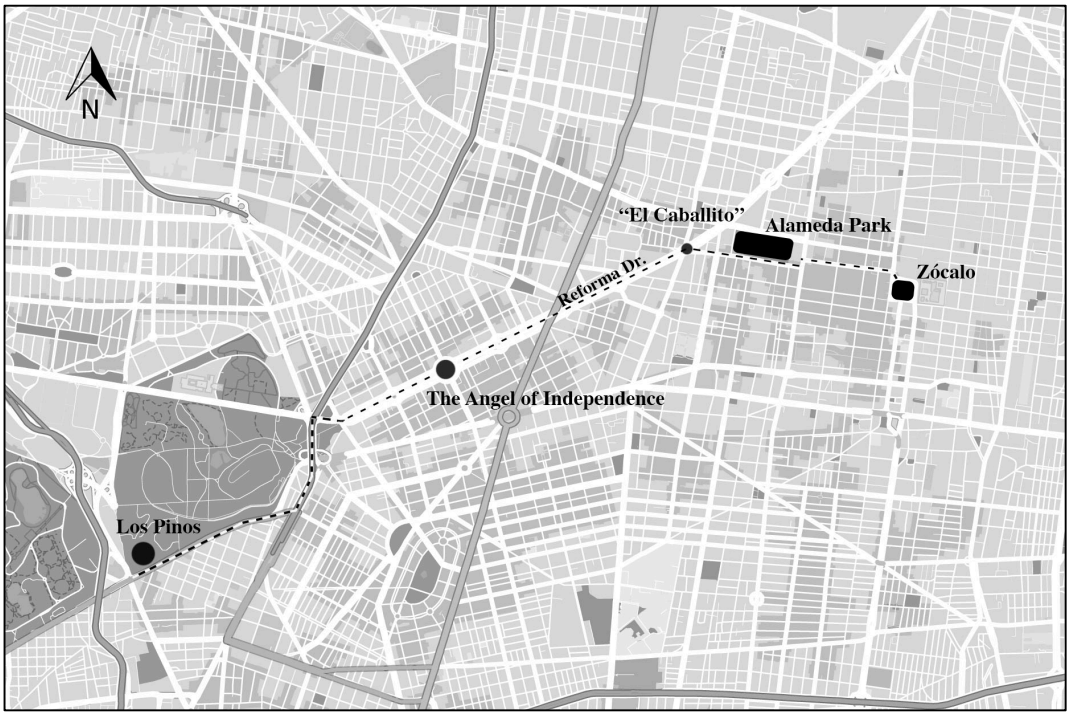

Figure 5.7. A Map of a common march route from the presidential residence (Los Pinos) to the Zócalo. Created by author using Snazzy Maps (CC0 1.0 Universal).

How does the experience of marching as a jaranero compare to marching in a non-musical capacity? Viviana, a professional photographer, has attended marches in both situations, sometimes switching roles over the duration of a single march. She explains, "When I've gone to the marches working as a photographer, I felt that I was 'there' but at the same time that I wasn't. I was there physically. I was there but not in terms of my conviction and commitment" (interview, 8 February 2016, Mexico City). She explains that as a photographer, she must, in order to do her job, separate her feelings from the melee that engulfs her. But this emotional separation is frustrating for Viviana. She confesses that this it is "difficult not to feel." For her, to play as a jaranera is an opportunity to reengage with the march—to attend to both the sensations that accompany actually being there and to her emotional responses as well. To be part of the unified

voice of the jaranero contingent fills Viviana with "another energy. I remember having a very unusual sensation during the marches" (interview, 8 February 2016, Mexico City). Gabriela describes the musical journey of the protest march as an "emotional rollercoaster." "Sometimes, you're singing," she says, "and you come to a verse and you might cry because of what you're singing. Even though the music is lively," she says. Emotions seem disproportionate, swinging on their axis, irreconcilable yet emerging from the same place. She adds, "Speaking of the students of Ayotzinapa… If you think about why you're there and you're playing a song and you're smiling, you're also aware that you are there for a reason that is terrible" (personal communication, 24 September, 2015).

For jaranero Quique, the contrast between marching while chanting consignas and marching as a musician is also an emotional one. In his experience, to march with student or labor organizations was to "always be in a state of hate." Quique explains that the aggressive consignas of protestors directed toward politicians constitute "the same state violence that provoked it and for that reason, I have tried to do something different, to look for a way to participate comically, joyfully, something else" (interview, 9 February 2016, Mexico City). Jaranero Carlos regards the relation of protest music and consignas differently. He explains that the consignas bear some similarities to protest music—they produce a composite mass of sound that coordinates movement, announces the presence of a particular group, and present the listener with a sonic representation of the posture that the marchers seek to project. But he adds that in order for these consignas to be easy to remember they are normally fixed. Carlos gives an example, "'We are not one, we are one hundred! Fucking government, count us well!'" Carlos explains that these consignas

are often recycled over decades and even occasionally borrowed from other places where they may have been created for vastly different purposes. He adds, "these groups in the march go shouting these consignas and the whole process starts to get really repetitive. They are the same slogans even when they are driven by distinct motives" (interview, 16 April 2016, Mexico City). Generally speaking, these consignas are clumsy tools for connecting past events to present ones. The jaraneros are important to the cause of the march for this very reason, argues Carlos. The capacity of jaraneros to extemporize and adapt their music to a given situation "renders each march unique." "I can clearly remember almost every march where I played music," says Carlos, "because the way we played, what we played, and who participated was different every time. So I can remember because each march was like a different concert" (interview, 16 April 2016, Mexico City).

In order to render the present unique by playing with and commenting on ontological reality as it is filtered by the senses, "one must observe," says Gabriela. But how do jaraneros manage to observe (and signify these observations) while walking, coordinating with others, and doing so in an imposing atmosphere? Jaraneros delegate and share responsibilities (both musical and otherwise), and frequently do so automatically or with little preparation. Following Turino, this is a common attribute of participatory musical practices in which participants assume "a variety of roles that differ in difficulty and degrees of specialization required" (2008: 30). For example, in a given moment, one jaranero might be particularly involved executing an improvised variation while others, perhaps providing a simplified rhythmic accompaniment on jaranas, focus

on the behavior of the crowd ahead of them. It is precisely the variety of roles available in a jaranero contingent, and the flexibility to glide between more casual and more demanding ones, that make seemingly impossible feats of attention splitting possible. These atributes are first developed in the fandango. As a participatory musical practice, son jarocho leaves room for virtuosity, but also for contributions of eloquent simplicity. According to Gabriela,

> On a long march, you might start playing your instrument almost mechanically. I mean, if you want to play something special then you pay attention to your instrument but if you want to think about the verse you plan to sing later on, you can still keep on playing your three or four chords. That gives your brain the room to fly and observe and make stuff up. You can even start talking to your friend while you're playing those chords. And obviously, a lot of our interaction [i.e., between jaraneros] is done with the eyes. This is very common (personal communication, 24 September, 2015).

Human Rivers: The Contingent Body

During a march, the configuration of jaraneros within the contingent is normally improvised *ad hoc*. "Who leads the column?" I ask Anna. "It's random. It changes," she explains. "It's important that the people up front can play well and can lead" (interview, 29 October 2015, Mexico City). Jaraneros organize marches much like fandangos. For a particularly large march or one considered to be especially important, as in the Ayotzinapa marches, jaraneros use social media (primarily Facebook) to coordinate meeting places and organize logistics. If it is a smaller march, jaraneros arrange themselves in smaller groups, arriving and leaving together at predetermined locations and sticking together through the march. In either case, groups of jaraneros tend to snowball. Members of one group may hear another at a distance, join forces, and

continue to accrue members along the march route, growing into a mass by the time they reach the Zócalo (the terminus of most marches). Beyond the initial preparations done with the aid of social media, the actual spatial organization of the jaraneros, the delegation of responsibilities, and song selection during the march are more or less un-programmed. Gabriela suggests that this appearance of disorder is misleading and that the jaraneros are using rather complex, unspoken participatory strategies that are developed in fandangos:

> When you start participating in fandangos, you learn to automatically understand things that are very subtle. Like, when people sing you have to play softer. There are these signals that flow and they become part of your understanding. They turn into automatic responses. And maybe this is translated in the protests. You respond accordingly because of your fandango training (personal communication, 24 September, 2015).

These automatic responses manifest in a number of ways. Jaraneros may adjust their volume and rhythmic and polyphonic complexity depending on where they are on the march route, who has joined the group, and what is happening around them. One jaranero may begin to play a particular song and others join in, matching the de facto leader's key and tempo. They may cycle temporary leaders to the front of the column without speaking as others, in exhaustion, moves to the rear. They do all of this while using their ears, eyes, sense of touch, and even nose (noxious smoke may signal a car fire or teargas) to probe their environment, all while keeping a beat. The jaraneros' extemporaneous coordination is not limited to the movement and positioning of bodies. The jaraneros move together along an emotional contour: the intensity of an individual's performance may crest and trough with the energy and size of the group, an emotive verse or display of virtuosity may re-energize others, and tacit musical cues pull outliers

back toward the center in a cycle of collective self-regulation. These automatic cues congeal in what Stevens dubs *metacommunication*, "the message 'this is play' is continuously being communicated between participants" (Stevens 2007: 35). The musical play of the jaraneros extends the possibilities of group coordination, placing the motion of bodies in a complex rhythmic universe, at once definite and yet laden with the possibility of deviation.

But what social forces guide the arrangement of jaraneros within the contingent body? Women are well represented in this tight-knit community. Women play all the instruments, compose and improvise verses, dance, assume organizational and leadership roles, and act as both teachers and pupils. The topic of gender dynamics within the contingent is a nuanced one, informed by a range of interactions between urban fandangos, traditional practices found in Veracruz,[118] as well as the behavior of other protest marchers. Among the jaraneros themselves, opinions vary and seem to depend heavily on one's particular experiences. Jaraneros are improvisers and whether playing in a fandango, in a concert, or at a march, they often rely on what Gabriela refers to as "automatic responses to changes." When I ask Anna if she observed gender dynamics influencing the coordination or arrangement of jaraneros within the contingent (e.g., men occupying the edges of the group to protect women) she answers, "not necessarily. I have seen that in some contingents but not always. And with the jaraneros, not always. I think

[118] Alexandro Hernández gives two common examples of dances that demonstrate what he calls, "hetero-patriarchal gender practice": the *sones de montón*, danced almost exclusively by women and *sones de pareja* ("La bamba" and "El Chuchumbé" being some of the most well-known examples) which were originally courtship dances between a man and woman (2014: 11–12).

there are moments when things get really heated and friends say, 'Hey, go to the middle.' But it wasn't organized" (interview, 29 October 2015, Mexico City). She emphasizes the importance of mutual protection during a march; because everyone is in a relatively equal position of risk, Anna believes that jaraneros protect each other but does not consider this to be a gendered practice. On the other hand, Karina has witnessed men assuming the role of protector over women "in various contingents. Not only among musicians" and adds that "the men generally go ahead to see what is happening in the march and they remain vigilant" (interview, 11 February 2016, Mexico City). However, Karina does agree with Anna in that she suggests that this behavior is an expression of deeply entrenched conceptualizations of gender roles and are not particular to the jaraneros.

For his part, Carlos has not observed an intentional division of roles in either the marches nor fandangos and explains that "we [have] equal participation. There were women playing quijada or the leona, just like they do in fandangos, or playing with the same or more enthusiasm than the men" (interview, 16 April 2016, Mexico City). The contributions of jaraneras to the son jarocho tradition are readily apparent. Jaraneros, both in words and action, are fiercely egalitarian and, as Carlos says, this attitude is one that is generated in fandangos and is carried into the marches. Perhaps then, like the crisis of acoso callejero, the special challenges that some jaraneras face in the marches are difficult for men to recognize and fully comprehend, perhaps despite their best intentions.

These challenges do not appear to stem from the community of jaraneros themselves but instead, spill over from larger patterns of inequity. For example, Gabriela explains that simply getting to and from a protest march is a challenge for her. She says,

"As a woman, there are times of the day that I avoid or I might just leave earlier. It can get crowded on the metro when you leave a protest and people are very fired up. I have heard a lot of stories about harassment in protests" (personal communication, 24 September, 2015). She argues that the march itself is often a space of social inversion where, in the spirit of fighting for social change, many protesters temporarily suspend or dampen certain behaviors, such as sexual harassment. However, Gabriela adds that this space of social inversion has stark boundaries. "In a protest march," she explains,

> I think people have a bit more solidarity with each other. It's really funny. There is a kind of feeling of less tolerance of abuse in general in a protest. Although those same people might just hop on the metro when the protest is done and harass somebody. But just walking in the street, the experience of a man in a protest is not the same. I'm speaking as a woman. It is something that I always keep in mind but it isn't limited to the protest. It goes everywhere that I go (personal communication, 24 September, 2015).

While the protest march may for some be a space in which certain types of abuses are temporarily suspended, Quique argues that the consignas of many protesters are rife with misogynistic and homophobic language. Quique gives an example of one such consigna:

¡Enrique! ¡Culero!	Enrique![119] *Culero* (asshole)!
¡Enrique, Enrique, Enrique!	Enrique, Enrique, Enrique!
¡Culero, culero, culero!	Culero, culero, culero!
¡Tan simpático, tan agradable, tan hijo de su pinche madre!	So nice, so agreeable, so much the son of your fucking mother!
¿Qué la chingue? ¿Qué? ¿Qué la chingue? ¿Qué?	What the hell? What? What the hell? What?
¡Por puto! ¡Por puto! ¡Por puto! ¡Por puto y prostituto!	*Por puto* [because you're a male prostitute]! Por puto! Por puto! Por puto! Por puto and a prostitute!

[119] Referring to Mexican president Enrique Peña-Nieto

Quique believes that it is hypocritical for protesters to "try to eradicate state violence and then replicate that same violence within the contingents" (interview, 9 February 2016, Mexico City). He explains that these consignas are part of the reason that he chose to no longer march with university contingents and now only participates with the jaraneros who he believes, project a more positive energy.

Viviana speaks frequently of the positivity that the jaraneros' collective voice contributes to the often frightening protest marches, but she also admits that it has been occasionally challenging for her to find her place in that voice. Viviana reflects on her early experiences with son jarocho and describes how the dominance of men in some areas was initially discouraging to her. She explains, "you almost always find more female dancers than male dancers because the first thing that you learn (as a woman) is to dance. The first thing that I wanted to do was to play an instrument just like the men were doing. It's always pure men, and though they invent and sing verses very well, I wanted to have a chance to give my point of view and express how I feel" (interview, 8 February, 2016). She describes a musical subculture bisected by implicit barriers that she believes are not imposed intentionally but nevertheless exist. And she breached those barriers in order to gain the channel of personal expression that attracted her to the music in the first place. She adds that within the marches, the struggle for equal access becomes a sonic manifestation in which, "the men sing really loudly and the women keep the volume down because they are intimidated in that context. They're frightened. In the marches, the men assume the role of protector. They allow a lot of participation by women but not in every case" (interview, 8 February 2016, Mexico City).

Finding One's Voice

Like Viviana, Gabriela has also struggled to "find her voice" and consequently, her place in the jaranero contingent. But ironically, it was the ambience of dread, the resolute urgency of the protest march that provided the catalyst through which she found her voice. She recalls, "When I started taking son jarocho classes, I couldn't sing because I was too shy. I just didn't have my voice. When singing in a fandango, you really need to yell it out. You put yourself in a very vulnerable place because everybody, in some way, is paying attention to what you're saying" (personal communication, 24 September, 2015).

Exposing one's self to vulnerability is an important part of the jaraneros' practice, one that they engage both in fandangos and protest marches. Tausig points out that loud noises often preocupy protest music researchers, but argues that sonorous displays of "vulnerability and meekness are often equally successful modes for dissident performers" (2013: 247). Jaraneros perform vulnerability in a very public way. In sharp contrast to the majority of protesters who repeat their angry, often abusive consignas in a perpetual loop, jaraneros offer themselves as conduits, real-time mediators of the emotional currents that surround them.

Gabriela elaborates on how a moment of urgency in a protest march gave her a new and enduring relationship with her own voice:

> During a protest in 2012 opposing Peña-Nieto's election, we had prepared our own verses at home and passed them out among the contingent so everybody could sing along. And on that particular day, I was able to yell really loud. And by enabling myself to yell really loud, like the voices of the people I had learned from, my voice came out. I felt more anonymous because of the large size of the group and unlike a fandango, we weren't looking at each other but all in the same

> direction. That changed everything for me. My real voice came out during a march. When you're in a fandango, you also want to say things. And that was something that changed. From then on, I was able to *say* things. I was able to sing in fandangos anytime because after singing in front of a protest crowd, singing at a smaller fandango doesn't make a difference (personal communication, 24 September, 2015).

Jarocho singing is quite distinct from otherwise closely-related traditions in the son complex. For example, while traditional son huasteco singing demands a wide tessitura, ornamented by vocal breaks between the chest and head voice, jarocho singing tends to hover in the high-tenor/alto range; a tessitura that corresponds closely to that of the guitarra de son, one of son jarocho's primary melodic instruments.[120] Generally speaking, son jarocho singing is unornamented, timbrally bright and loud, and delivered in short, percussive phrases within a focused melodic range. The vocal quality itself hovers somewhere between singing and shouting and this (I have found in my own practice) is the hardest aspect to master. The singspiel of the jaraneros amounts to a kind of *tonal blur* reminiscent of a sounding object with non-integer partials or string instruments with multiple courses, each slightly de-tuned. Karina points out that many of the traditional practitioners of son jarocho "say that singing in tune isn't so important as long as one sings with intention and feeling" (Interview, 11 February 2016, Mexico City). But she argues that the dichotomy between vocal accuracy and "singing with feeling" is misleading. Son jarocho singing is the sonorous equivalent of hitting a small target with a massive hammer. The hammer might strike the target but also the area around it. It is a

[120] There are many tunings for the four-string guitarra de son but the most common produces the following intervals from lowest to highest string: major second, perfect fourth, and perfect fourth (e.g., C-D-G-C or G-A-D-G). The tessitura of a requinto (i.e., most common size of guitarra de son) tuned in "C," corresponds very closely with a tenor vocal range (C_3–C_5).

sonic spilling-over; tonal harmony seems to be stretched to its limits in containing the emotive intensity of the jaranero's voice. This tonal blur is a deliberate, aesthetic attribute of son jarocho, a fact I gradually learned as I tried to sing in this way, found myself "correcting" the tonal ambiguity of the delivery, and realized that I was doing that because I simply could not replicate what I was hearing.

Siren Song: Bringing Protesters Together

In *The Ludic City*, Stevens develops the concept of *triangulation*, put forth by urbanist William Whyte in his book, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* ([1980] 2001). Triangulation describes a scenario in which the shared perception of external simulus momentarily suspends normal social boundaries between strangers and provides a special catalyst for social interaction (Stevens 2007: 62). Stevens explains that triangulation promotes interaction in three ways: 1) strangers may linger in close proximity as they observe an unusual occurrence; 2) the attention grabbing spectacle might direct the observers' attention outward, easing the tension produced by the invasion of personal space; and 3), mutual witnessing (i.e., shared experience) creates common ground for further interaction (2007: 63). It is interesting to consider that the presence of jaraneros at a protest march may offer two opportunities for triangulation, both within and without the membrane of the contingent. Because the jaraneros are not reproducing a fixed performance but engaging in a dynamic musical interaction with their environment, the cohesion of the group benefits from triangulation as well. By perceiving and playing together, jaraneros may be, to some degree, distilling distinct subjective

experiences into an intersubjective narrative of the event. More than simply sharing a moment together, the shared labor of documenting that moment in music transforms the event. The story about the moment becomes the moment.

The accumulation of shared experiences is essential for the metacommunication of the contingent that in turn, says Anna, fosters the intense, mutual trust necessary for the contingent to feel safe enough to function. In addition, jaraneros produce a visual spectacle as well as a mobile soundtrack that demands the attention of outside observers. As previously mentioned, jaraneros stand out from other demonstrators; their dress, the music they produce, their comportment and energy often complement other protesters, but also distinguish the jaraneros. The soundtrack they provide is a sort of impression of the phenomenological moment. Not only are songs selected and altered to comment on what is happening, but the mass of sound they produce in and of itself molds to the stations of the march: jaraneros play harder when the energy of the crowd swells, they relax a bit on long stretches when the crowd's energy wains, and they may stop all together if a scuffle breaks out, punctuating the moment with their silence. They trace the emotive current of the multitude and both guide and are guided by it. Reflecting on my own experience, to witness the approach of the jaraneros during the march is to be carried along with them, if only for a moment—to exchange a knowing smile with a neighbor and to forget the heat, the uncomfortable rub of fabric and flesh, and the shriek of sirens and angry shouts. It is to be lifted up and out of the maelstrom.

Figure 5.8. Whyte's "triangulation" at play as spectators watch the Tlatelolco Memorial March on October 2, 2015. Photo by author.

Mattern suggests that music, as opposed to spoken words, can give listeners "more immediate access to emotions and ideas" (1998: 17) and in Mexico, where a history of cross-cultural exchanges and synchrotisms have deeply embedded Western European constructions of harmonic consonnance and dissonance, "harmony is often a metaphor for conflict resolution" (O'Connell 2010: 5). In the son jarocho repertoire, somber subjects are often accompanied by diatonic harmony in a minor key with joyous subjects in major. In this cultural context, the diatonic harmony that the jaraneros bring to the march, arguably a culturally inflected representation of ordered, emotional expression, provides a powerful contrast to the disordered roar of the march and in doing so, alludes to the social harmony that the jaraneros seek to project.

Figure 5.9. Jaraneras enliven a street performance against gender violence as part of the Ayotzinapa protests during the fall of 2014. Photo by Viviana Zuñiga Rojas. Used by permission.

Viviana notes that other protesters frequently approach her and the other jaraneros saying things like, "it's so cool to listen to you guys in the march because otherwise, we would only hear people with drums and making other kinds of noise but no melodic instruments" (interview, 8 February 2016, Mexico City). However, Karina adds that the music of the jaraneros explains only part of their appeal to the public. She explains, "there is a greater impact when the expressions speak together, to the visual, the auditory, to the entire movement" (interview, 11 February 2016, Mexico City). Taken as a multisensorial whole, Karina asserts, "the emotive potential of this creative expression is limitless." Anna explains that when the jaraneros stop playing (sometimes because of physical exhaustion), the energy among the surrounding crowd instantly drops. "We start playing again," she adds, "and you can see the energy of the people in front of you pick

up. A lot of people come close to listen and watch" (interview, 29 October 2015, Mexico City). Gabriela recalls a smaller march in support of a Oaxacan teachers' strike.[121] It was only Gabriela and Karina on that particular march and because of the small turnout, they both felt a particular duty to support and motivate the embattled teachers with their music. Gabriela explains, "There were times where the teachers were tired and sat. When we started to play again, they'd get right up! The teachers who were out there every night camping would come out of their tents and they'd come around and start dancing. The music just lifted their spirits" (personal communication, 24 September, 2015). On many occasions, Gabriela has been approached by protesters during a break who thank her and beg her to continue playing. She explains that playing music at a protest is "like a service":

> Not like a capitalist commodity. Like a service to the people you are playing for. The cause you are playing for. So, you have a responsibility with the instrument that you're holding in your hands and what you're saying. It's a responsibility, not so much a responsibility to play well, but to try your best. At certain points in these marches, I felt that what we were doing was providing the service of joy (personal communication, 24 September, 2015).

Like the circular fandango, these emotional currents seem to respire; they draw back and forth between the jaraneros and the surrounding crowd. In sharing these emotional currents, the distinction between the two begins to fade. Carlos explains that the contingent of jaraneros not only tends to absorb smaller groups of jaraneros becoming

[121] Gabriela did not recall the date of this particular protest, but refers to an ongoing movement by the National Coordinator of Education Workers (CNTE), a dissident faction of the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE), centered in Oaxaca and struggling for education reform. Confrontations between union teachers and state police have been increasingly violent and as recently as June 19, 2016, nine teachers were killed and approximately one hundred injured during a police crackdown in Nochixtlán, Oaxaca (Stockwell 2016).

one large mass, but also accumulates a comet-tail of non-musical followers. He explains that other protesters will often request to walk along with the contingent. Similarly, Quique remembers that several times he has been approached by protesters and asked, "'Who are you guys? Some kind of a group, or what?' They were questions without answers because we weren't a group, only people that enjoy this music and are joined by the same cause" (interview, 9 February 2016, Mexico City). Stevens explains that public displays of play as well as reactions to it, something the jaraneros accomplish through their oblique contestation of authority, "define and legitimize or invalidate its boundaries" (2007: 47). Walking together in stride, the dissolution of boundaries between jaraneros and non-musicians operates at the haptic level. Says Stevens, "Proximity enhances the reciprocity of social relations, because it tends to provide heightened sensory information to all parties" (2007: 65–66).

While the eagerness of many protesters to march with the jaraneros may suggest an appreciation for the jaraneros and their music, this may not always be the case. As Anna afirms, jaraneros are "shielded" by their instruments not only in the sense that making music in a group makes them feel secure, but also because it identifies them as musicians to the police and city inspecters who regard them as more of an annoyance than a threat. I have spoken to several students who used to march in university contingents but now find it safer to march with jaraneros or organizations like Amnesty International, all in an effort to participate while distinguishing themselves (in the eyes of the police) from provocateurs.

Playing the Space

The protest begins with an overture. Streets are cordoned, barricades raised, and the warbling din of the crowd expands. "It's like those different sounds turn on," says Gabriela. "They start running and become gradually intertwined into a whole event" (personal communication, 24 September, 2015). As the crowds mobilize and gain momentum, individuals pass through familiar settings that have become unrecognizable by the compression of bodies. Gabriela explains that

> visibility is very limited [during protests]. So, even though there might be a fight or something happening fifty meters ahead, people might go on chanting because they can't see it. At certain moments when things get bit violent, there are different silences or people yelling, "Hey, this is a peaceful protest!" Violence does create silence because people are trying to find out what's going on (personal communication, 24 September, 2015).

Without a clear line of sight, protesters follow the *kinetic shadows* of monuments, underpasses, bottlenecks, and open spaces. This kinetic shadow, the sense of touch transferred through compressed bodies, may correlate to the acoustic properties of a given space (e.g., a narrow passage both increases kinetic pressure and produced acoustic reflection). Changes in the sounds and the feel of a crowd may hint at what lies ahead. The Angel of Independence is one such example of a kinetic shadow. On the route from Los Pinos to the Zócalo, the Angel is a major landmark and point of reunion for marchers. Despite the relatively flat terrain of Reforma Drive, the massive monument is difficult to see from more than about a block away because of tree cover. During a march, the sound emanating from the marchers who gather around the monument is an otherworldly roar.

Figure 5.10. Protesters gather at the base of the Angel of Independence. Photo by author.

Video 5.2. The otherworldly roar of protesters at the Angel of Independence Monument. Created by author.

In his investigation of funeral parades in the Tremé ward of New Orleans, ethnomusicologist Matt Sakakeeny observes, "[m]oving *through* space requires an orientation *to* space, and sound is one way that people orient themselves to one another and to the environments that they cohabit. […] I found that orientations are not fixed or culturally assigned but are as dynamic and mutable as the landscape itself and the sounds that animate it" (2010: 4). A jaranero en route from Los Pinos to the Zócalo is often unable to see beyond a short distance and instead, "touches" the surrounding space by producing music. The sounds of his or her instrument or voice are different in different places and by "playing" the space, the jaranero is effectively being "touched back." This is not only accomplished through sound but through "haptic sense data," the perception of body heat and the pressure of bodies against bodies (Stevens 2007: 55). In a sense, this

auditory and tactile data are gradations of the same kinetic orientation: sound may both reflect and affect jaraneros' bodily alignment and coordination, but direct physical contact with others (the absence of personal space) may also provide a rather precise guide to the unseen environment. Increased pressure on the left shoulder and a bit of relief on the right might indicate a turn in the current. A push from behind or a sudden vacuum ahead may indicate a reaction to some sort of unseen disturbance.

This peculiar kinetic-based navigation is oddly similar to moving through liquid space. Ethnomusicologist Noriko Manabe argues that the reverberance and filtering of architectural features have an enormous bearing on the affect and behavior of both protesters and bystanders. Specifically, she explains that acoustic spaces that amplify rather than diffiuse protest sounds, "can make the protest group seem larger and more powerful, exciting the participants and impressing the onlookers" (2015: 235). Speaking specifically about the reverb tank of freeway underpasses, Sakakeeny states that in these resonant spaces, "dancing bodies are closest together; the band is playing at its loudest; the built environment provides optimal acoustics; these human, technological, and environmental forces interconnect, and everybody is hyped" (2010: 12).

Despite the energy that reverberance can produce in a crowd, such spaces present an aesthetic and practical challenge for jaraneros. Moving as a column, sometimes amassing between fifty and one hundred participants, the jaraneros struggle to play together in time. Rhythmic phasing, reverberance, and acoustic layering may energize a crowd but they also undermine two major objectives of the jaraneros—to produce a rhythmically and harmonically unified sound and to have their lyrics (not to mention the

subtle implications of their lyrics) be heard and understood. Anna explains that "our playing is more powerful if it's heard as one song. If you have a marching band and they're all on different parts of the same piece, it doesn't make the same impact as when you're doing it together. That's why it's a challenge when there are a lot of us but it's also really cool when we get everyone playing in sync" (interview, 29 October 2015, Mexico City). Unlike a fandango where jaraneros can supplement their sense of time with visual cues, the extended column of the protesting jaraneros presents a problem of synchronization. Anna explains that she always brings her leona to marches and that it is important to incorporate at least two or three of them in a large contingent "because the lower sound waves carry more and the people can hear it from a far. Maybe jaraneros who haven't joined our group yet can hear the low frequency and thing, 'oh, they're coming!'" (interview, 29 October 2015, Mexico City). The leona provides not only a bass line that can travel farther than the other instruments before the sound is absorbed by impediments but also, due to the mass of the strings and the force required to drive them, the instrument produces a very audible *clack* each time the *espiga* (a plectrum made from cow horn) makes contact with the strings. Thus the composite sound of the leona gives the contingent a necessary rhythmic anchor.

The plucked string instruments of the jarocho contingent are timbrally bright in comparison with their Western European counterparts. Gabriela believes that the history of son jarocho is written into the design of the instruments themselves speculating that, "instruments like the jarana and guitarra de son were adapted to trick the Spanish into thinking that they were still baroque instruments, but were actually meant to replicate

African drums" (personal communication, 24 September, 2015). Considering that "[t]hose who sang, played, or danced banned sones were punished and jailed during [Holy Inquisition]" and this imminent threat had, in part, the effect of transforming the driving percussive element of son jarocho from hand drums to the feet (A. Hernández 2013: 476), it seems plausible that these changes may have extended to other instruments, namely putting plucked strings at the forefront of the ensemble and requiring modifications in their design.

In terms of both sound and playing technique, every instrument of the son jarocho ensemble essentially functions as a drum. For the guitarra de son and jarana, the relationship between a relatively long neck length and small body size cuts lower frequencies and thus emphasizes upper partials (think of the nasal quality of the viola in relation the a cello). This design makes for an extremely punctual, percussive attack with very little decay. The drum-like nature of instruments like the leona and guitarra del son is further enhanced by the technique of sounding the strings. The use of the espiga is akin to striking the keys of a marimba with a mallet with one added feature: the espiga (being a slice of a curving cow's horn) hooks the string for a fraction of a second before releasing it thus driving the string even harder. The lack of string decay on the guitarra de son and jarana allows both instruments to produce extremely articulate rhythmic patterns.

Heard from a distance, the contingent of jaraneros is almost like a squadron of drummers beating tiny snares. Competing with amplified voices and low-frequency rumble, the jaraneros carve out an acoustic niche through both the bright timbres and rhythmic distinction of their instruments and voices (Augoyard and Torgue 2005: 79–80;

see also Chapter 3). Many jaraneros have mentioned to me that in order to coordinate amongst themselves and compete with the other sounds of the march, they must strum harder, strain their voices, and dig in their nails and finger pads. Says Karina, "to sing in a fandango or in an auditorium is nothing compared to the number of people who listen to you in a march. In a protest march, the volume of your voice must be very strong. You must be very conscious of it and why you are there" (Interview, 11 February 2016, Mexico City). The forceful, slightly nasal singspeil of jarocho singing and the bright, percussive quality of the strings all contributing to one of the central, aesthetic features of son jaracho—the *punch* (i.e., the tactile immediacy of the sound). The punch says "we are here!" and the verses explains "why we're here."

Approaching the Zócalo

Describing the cities and villages of colonial New Spain, Castro Gutiérrez notes a formulaic spatialization of social hierarchy realized as "a series of concentric circles containing the suburbs of Indians on the margins, the neighborhoods and improvised huts of the poor mestizos and mulattos, and the streets and central blocks where the homes of merchants, clerical canons, and large land and mine owners were found" (2012: 59).[122] At the center of these constructions says Castro Gutiérrez, "was the plaza mayor, the town or

[122] Concerning the spatial arrangement of Latin American cities, author Ángel Rama states: "Circular plans constituted a frequent option in Renaissance thinking [and] perhaps conveyed even more precisely than square ones the social hierarchy desired by the planners, with governing authority located at the center and the living spaces assigned to respective social strata radiating from the center in concentric circles. Both designs were simply variations of the same conception, in which the application of reason imposed a specific order on social reality through the engineer's 'taut line and rule,' as the royal instructions to the advancing conquerors frequently specified verbatim" (1996: 5).

royal square. From there rose the buildings of authority: the main church or cathedral, the buildings of the town hall, the public jail, and, of course, the pillory, where criminals were flogged or executed" (2012: 59). This organization of urban space is remarkable in its consistency. I have rarely visited a small village, town, or city in Mexico, from the mountains of Oaxaca to the karst plateau of the Yucatan, that does not contain some iteration of this spatial model—rings moving inward from slums to luxurious homes and at its center, a main plaza, a church, and a government building. Coming from the center-less urban sprawl of Los Angeles, it is fascinating to me to consider what a central plaza grants those who wield power. It makes it possible to dominate a population that has pooled in a single location and present spectacles and displays of power to condition public sentiment and dissuade revolt. Such an arrangement also opens the possibility of breaching these circles by offering the masses a clear, symbolic target to occupy. In Mexico City, the symbolism of occupying the Zócalo is readily apparent (see Chapter 2). To take hold of the symbolic heart of the nation is to temporarily assume command of it. To commandeer or destroy architectural structures is to do symbolic violence to the regime that those structures represent (Castro Gutiérrez 2012: 60). Storming and occupying religious and government buildings has occurred throughout Mexico's history and continues today. As recently as November 8–9, 2014, during a massive protest rally in response to the abduction of the forty-three normalistas, unidentified protesters tried to break down the doors of the National Palace and succeeded in briefly setting the doors ablaze (L. Hernández 2014).

As the contingent of jaraneros funnel through the narrow streets to the expanse of the Zócalo, a transformation occurs. The transformation is multisensorial, emotional, and ideological. To isolate one aspect of this transformation at the expense of others is to give short shrift to the totality of the transformation. The jaraneros have arrived. Perhaps for the first time during the march, they can see the swarming mass of the crowd. Passing through the threshold of the great plaza, sounds instantly change. There is more propagation and less reflection. The jaraneros have more space to maneuver, to breathe. In the treeless Zócalo, they are also more exposed to the elements, released from the cocoon of warm bodies and into the zigzag of cold shadows, beating sun, or rain and driving wind. Manabe speaks to a similar transformation: "an intersection opens one's field of vision in different directions. It also increases the aural arena: Sound usually projects more loudly and in more directions […] Hence, intersections are key points in a demonstration: They are where the demonstration can be seen, heard, and even felt by more people in more directions" (2015: 245).

The jaraneros have reached the narrative climax of the march, and now stand toe to toe with soldiers and riot police who normally wait for the Zócalo to fill before driving protesters out with teargas. This is the site of confrontation, not only for the jaraneros but for protesters with drastically different objectives and tactics. Occasionally, jaraneros get caught in the crossfire. Quique recalls that during the Ayotzinapa march on November 20, 2014, there was a heavy rain and the contingent took shelter under the portico at the southern edge of the Zócalo. "There," he says, "We played a song that we've used a lot to demand justice, 'Señor Presidente.' While we played, a group of hooded men in disguises

began to throw dozens of explosives near the National Palace" (interview, 9 February 2016, Mexico City). Less than two weeks later at another major protest march, Quique recalls that along the route from Tlatelolco to the Zócalo, his contingent was followed by people he identified as "anarchists" who set off firecrackers for the duration of the march. He explains, "the atmosphere was getting more and more violent, so much so that by the time we reached the Zócalo, we all had to run" (interview, 9 February 2016, Mexico City).

In the Zócalo, the jaraneros play differently. Viviana considers entering the Zócalo during a march to be a special moment, one in which the senses seem to align and focus. She recalls, "When we arrived at 5 de Mayo Street and just before we turned into the Zócalo, I could, because of the way the acoustics changed, hear each jarana. The sung verses were clear and powerful. It was very beautiful" (interview, 8 February 2016, Mexico City). It is an electric moment, one in which "everyone plays louder because it's like, 'you've arrived.' It's a big thing" (interview, 11 February 2016, Mexico City). Carlos affirms that entering the Zócalo marks a "change in attitude." He explains that in passing from the narrow streets of the Historic Center to the open plaza, one "immediately feels more emotion, the musicians play with more intensity, and one can hear more clearly" (interview, 16 April 2016, Mexico City). In the acoustic cut out between street and Zócalo, perception acts upon comportment and comportment acts upon perception. Such an interchange between affect and sensory perception cannot be reduced to a chain of cause and effect, but instead represent "an unfolding phenomenon that arises through complex material interactions" (Eidsheim 2015: 2).

In the Zócalo, the jaraneros form a circle as they do during fandangos. For the first time in the march, they are able to see each other's faces and direct their playing towards the center. But Viviana points out that the climactic circle formed in the Zócalo is one distinct from the fandango. In the fandango, the tarima represents the nucleus. The tarima is "like an altar where you deposit offerings," she says, "where you create and destroy everything. Many people talk about the experience of catharsis that they have in a fandango and I certainly have experienced it" (interview, 8 February 2016, Mexico City). The tarima is a stage for rupture and reconciliation between the individual and the collective. But in the climactic circle of the marches, Viviana believes that the purpose is not to provide a cathartic outlet for contestation, but to demonstrate a unified front in which "playing son jarocho rallies us around a single cause" (interview, 8 February 2016, Mexico City).

Conclusion

In November of 2016, deputy César Camacho Quiroz, under direction from president Enrique Peña Nieto and Secretary of National Defense, Salvador Cienfuegos, proposed a new Law of Internal Security in the Chamber of Deputies. This law "had the objective to normalize the unconstitutional participation of the armed forces in duties of public security and internal, social control" (Ackerman 2016). This initiative would effectively legalize the occupation and intervention of the Mexican military over its citizenry—a policy set in motion at the beginning of Felipe Calderón's Drug War (2006–2012)—under the pretext of protecting the public from organized crime. Speaking in

favor of the new law, which would make the military responsible for ensuring public "order," journalist Ricardo Homs argues, "military discipline is the best guarantee of order and control of the bases of these institutions, something that does not exist in police organizations, ones that act with impunity. And while there are honorable police officers, there is also exaggerated corruption and conspiracy with criminals" (2016). Yet Homs's position is chillingly similar to the justification of the Giuliani Plan in Mexico City's Historic Center which involved the layering of new security forces over older ones deemed to be ineffective, rather than addressing systemic problems (see Chapter 2). In hindsight of over a decade of Calderon's war, with approximately 150,000 people dead and 30,000 missing (compared to the roughly 103,000 civilians killed in Afghanistan and Iraq from 2007–2014) (Gómez Romero 2016), the idea of the military being "the best guarantee of order" contradicts the evidence. Journalists Anabel Hernández and Steve Fisher, writing for the Mexico newspaper *El Proceso*, reported the involvement of federal police and the "complicity or outright collaboration" of the military in the abduction of the forty-three Normalistas as early as December 13, 2014, a position that was later supported by the findings of the GIEI and CNDH. Further, according to journalist Patricia Dávila, soldiers have also been implicated in the cartel-run prostitution rings linked to the wave of femicides in Ciudad Juárez (2015; see also Palomino 2016). Journalist John Ackerman argues that the normalization of military involvement in domestic security would be in direct violation of article 129 of the 1917 Constitution that states, "During peacetime, no military authority may exercise more functions than those that have an exact connection with military discipline" (2016). Yet, as can be observed in

numerous examples across the globe, the specter of an endless, internal war, without boundaries or sides, is used as a pretext for the unchecked liberty of military states. Ackerman warns "Today we witness the equivalent of a surreptitious and silent coup. If society does not stop rampant militarization, a general could soon occupy Los Pinos [the residence of the Mexican President]" (2016).

In light of these developments that carry the cumulative momentum of decades of systemic abuse, what do the jaraneros believe that they have achieved by marching? Sociologists Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks opine that music may stimulate social change in "that it presents or preserves some sense of an *alternative* way of life" (2011: 194) and Mattern adds that music may increase "political capacity by increasing opportunities for participation in communal and public life" (1998: 35). This may be true in certain historical moments, but as Mexico drifts closer to the possibility of a military dictatorship than it has in a century, when midnight abductions and femicide are so routine that they no longer receive national press coverage, what does this "political capacity" amount to? What could a "sense of an *alternative* way of life" offer people who are facing an occupying military force composed of their fellow citizens? During my time as a musician and ethnomusicologist, I have never found a satisfying answer to these questions. So I put these questions to people who have devoted years of their lives and put their bodies in the line of fire to the cause of fighting for social change through music—the jaraneros themselves.

After years of marching, Karina has come to a hard conclusion: "I am in solidarity with protesters and I agree the people who are expressing their discontent, but although

that helps us let off steam, a march does not change things" (interview, 11 February 2016, Mexico City). She believes the video of "Señor Presidente" has the potential to reach more people and thus have a greater impact than fleeting moments of solidarity during a protest march. She concedes that the intersection of political discontent and artistic expression does constitute a "good contribution" in that it seems to "helps to raise awareness among the general public. But that is not the solution" (interview, 11 February 2016, Mexico City). Luis seems to agree stating that whether it is son jarocho, rock, jazz or some other musical tradition, "the music, in and of itself, does not have a particular weight" (interview, 5 February 2016, Mexico City).

There is a certain attitude, a cluster of beliefs about politics and social action that I have encountered again and again in my investigation. This attitude, so different from that that I have found in the United States, seems to be a mix of realism about the possibility of creating substantial, enduring social change in Mexico—one almost approaching cynicism—yet coupled with a willingness to take political action at great personal risk. This is not unlike the conclusions of Mónica Mayer and Las Hijas de Violencia who believe that their resistance against systemic gender violence is more about boosting a sense of agency and solidarity among victims than decisively reversing entrenched misogyny and homophobia (see Chapter 3). The toreros who fight daily battles with the police do so without expressing any expectations that they will permanently succeed in legitimizing their way of life (see Chapter 2). Likewise, the jaraneros seem to direct their efforts toward winning small victories by energizing the marches and keeping their traditions alive.

Carlos, for example, concedes that marching may not always accomplish much, but he still believes that it is important: "People must take to the streets to show that they disagree with things. In the case of Ayotzinapa, I believe that it worked: the governor [of Guerrero] quit, the mayor of Iguala and his wife were arrested and all that happened because of the demonstrations.[123] The movement has spread everywhere and become a global phenomenon. It was really cool and enriching to participate with my friends, the jaraneros" (interview, 16 April 2016, Mexico City). Viviana believes that standing up to social injustice is her responsibility as a Mexican citizen, and explains that occasionally during marches people have approached her asking, "What is the use of singing?... Of being in a march and shouting?" To this she answers, "I believe that just getting out there and being a part of a group of people who disagree with what's happening in Mexico…That *is* something" (interview, 8 February 2016, Mexico City). Lucia informs me that in asking what impact the jaraneros believe that they have, I am asking the wrong question. She explains that "we haven't gotten anything" by marching:

> In Mexico, protest marches are no longer something to get something. Now, it is a social act done in order to not forget. For example, in the case of '68 [i.e., the Tlatelolco Massacre], we are not going to forget and we are going to continue to go out into the streets. We will not forget what happened in '68 and now what happened in 2014. People continue to disappear. They continue killing students. Marching hasn't stopped this but we are not going to forget! We are going to add causes to be remembered. So, in that sense, music, poetry, photography, and art, begin to turn into necessary acts of remembrance for our society (interview, 3 November 2015, Mexico City).

[123] Here, Carlos is referring first to the former governor of the state of Guerrero, Ángel Aguirre Rivero, who voluntarily resigned from his post during the investigation of the abducted normalistas and second, former president of the municipality of Iguala José Luis Abarca who, allegedly fearing arrest for his involvement in the crimes, escaped with his wife, María de Los Ángeles Pineda. The couple were arrested on November 4, 2014 in the Iztapalapa borough of Mexico City (Romo and Botelho 2014).

Lucia suggests that, at least in Mexico, music as a form of protest is not necessarily intended to achieve tangible changes in laws or behavior. By mobilizing their tradition in response to Ayotzinapa, jaraneros have renewed that tradition once more, ensuring that long after the picket signs have been discarded and marchers have gone home, "the music remains as a memory and as a potential way to inspire new waves of mobilization" (Eyerman and Jamison 1998: 2). Musical activism is a "necessary act of remembrance" that, despite crests and troughs in public participation and interest, may endure in the lives of those musicians who remember, and through remembering, change themselves forever.

Afterword

Mexico City's human rivers often flow to the Zócalo. It seems only fitting that "Resistance Resounds" should end there as well. This dissertation has addressed the contestation of public space through sound, and there is perhaps no space more contested in all of Mexico than the Zócalo. It is the spot where protesters from across the nation pool, and where jaraneros join in a circle to voice their outrage directly at the president's door. It is where politically-active choperos decouple from the sectarian balancing act of El Chopo and hurl themselves unto the breach. In the Zócalo, anti-gender violence demonstrators channel the accumulated abuse of countless unwanted encounters and force authorities to listen. And there too, toreros live, run, fight, and sometimes die because the menace of starvation eclipses their fear of the police.

Yet the Zócalo is Janus-like. It is a multi-purpose stage on which the State articulates the story of the people to the people themselves, and in doing so, reifies its own inevitable permanence (Herzfeld 1997: 25). Each year on Mexican Independence Day (September 16), the Zócalo serves as a showroom for the State's military might. A phalange of fighter jets heralds a parade of specialized battalions: snipers in ghillie suits, grenadiers, mounted soldiers who look as though they had just wandered back from the battle of Puebla in 1862, even a squadron of falconers. Yet the story that the State tells from the stage of the Zócalo is a nuanced one—a negotiation between the coexistent logics of an exceptionally diverse nation. I have witnessed the Zócalo transformed into an ice-skating rink, a baseball diamond (a carpet of Astroturf unfurled over concrete), a

gigantic ofrenda for the Day of the Dead (el Día de los Muertos). I even attended a "collective wedding" there in March of 2016 featuring dozens of same-sex and heterosexual couples of all ages—a gesture presumably meant as a show of tolerance and a tacit acknowledgment of the surging public outrage toward homophobic violence specifically and gender violence in general.

Figure 6.1. A collective wedding ceremony held in the Zócalo in March, 2016. Photo by author.

Figure 6.2. A concert by Roger Waters held in the Zócalo in September, 2016. Photo by Karla Ponce. Used by permission.

Figure 6.3. *Ofrendas* (offerings to the dead) held in the Zócalo to celebrate el Día de los Muertos, November 2, 2014. Photo by author.

The Zócalo also serves as an arena for massive music concerts. In an especially large concert in September 2016, Roger Waters of Pink Floyd used the opportunity and the symbolism of the location to take the Mexican government, and in particular President Peña-Nieto, to task over the handling of the abduction of the forty-three normalistas. While humiliating to the Peña-Nieto regime, the Mexican state must walk a fine line between repressing public discord at home and projecting the image of a tolerant, democratic, and perhaps most importantly, *relevant* actor on the world stage.

There is no event that better crystalizes the State's story of inevitable permanence than the *Grito de Dolores* (the Cry of Dolores). Each year on the eve of Mexican Independence Day, municipal leaders and mayors of villages and cities throughout Mexico appear before the people in plazas large and small, ring a ceremonial bell, and play the role of Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a celebrated leader of Mexico's War of Independence (1810–1821), who is thought to have summoned the people of Dolores to rebel against Spain in similar fashion:

¡Mexicanos!	Mexicans!
¡Vivan los héroes que nos dieron patria!	Long live the heroes who gave us the homeland!
¡Viva Hidalgo!	Long live Hidalgo!
¡Viva Morelos!	Long live Morelos!
¡Viva Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez!	Long live Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez!
¡Viva Allende!	Long live Allende!
¡Vivan Aldama y Matamoros!	Long live Aldama and Matamoros!
¡Viva la independencia nacional!	Long live national independence!
¡Viva México!	Long live Mexico!
¡Viva México!	Long live Mexico!
¡Viva México!	Long live Mexico!

In Mexico City, in addition to the borough leaders who each present their own Grito de Dolores, the president performs his from the balcony of the National Palace to

crowds assembled in the Zócalo. On September 15, 2014, I attended my first. At that time, I had been in Mexico less than a month, and making my way through security check points into the Zócalo, I found myself part of the largest crowd I had ever been in. I had no frame of reference for many of the things I was perceiving: confusing sounds, suspensions of body etiquette, and unfamiliar cues about how to move with, through, and against the current of bodies. I had virtually no understanding of the political context of the mass encounter, nor what participation meant to attendees nor to those who chose to stay at home. It was one of the first times that I heard what I now know are cohetes (thinking they were gunfire). It was also my first real experience with kinetic-based navigation and kinetic shadows. It was a pivotal moment of hermeneutic expansion for me and one that I found exhilarating. I felt myself being pushed in several directions at once and moved along the path of least resistance, like clay oozing out of a clenched fist. Unable to see more that the backs of heads, I could hear what obstructions lay ahead by the composite sound of people trapped against them. Each fraction of a second brought a new encounter, a new person whose personal space I was invading while they invaded mine, piquing my anxiety to such a degree that after about forty minutes I exhausted myself and submitted my body to the current.

Like victims of acoso callejero who use personal listening devices to not only condition their affective environment but also to appear (to potential harassers) that they are not listening, I have found my recording gear (used to gather material for this research) to be a powerful talisman in counteracting my occasionally paralyzing anxiety in Mexico City's public spaces. Like Viviana Zuñiga Rojas's contrasting experiences of

participating in protest marches as a jaranera (where she feels emotionally engaged) and as a photojournalist (where she feels, "there but not there"), I experienced a strong sense of not only emotional but corporeal detachment while documenting sound in the streets. The harmonically thinned, spatially flattened monitoring signal from my hand-held recorder did not quite seem to correspond to the surrounding world. Attending to the signal, anticipating digital distortion and the rumble of wind, I did not feel the heat of the pavement through my shoe soles, nor saw the gait of people walking past me. The effect was an *acoustic cocooning* but of a different kind than sound studies scholar Karin Bjisterveld describes (2010). As I recorded the sounds of Mexico City's public spaces, I did not block out unwanted sounds in favor of others. Instead, I attenuated my multi-sensorial perception as well as my emotional responses to them, by focusing on the *object* of a digitized audio signal (Eidsheim 2015: 8).

I have devoted a large part of this dissertation to considerations of the broad social forces that inform and are informed by listening and sound production as well as the imbrication of aurality with the other senses. I have also attempted to juxtapose the object of sound with testimonies, images, and video in order to give a multilayered mediation of the context in which these sounds momentarily exist. Nevertheless, occasionally *objectifying* sound by recording has been important to this work not only in providing me with data but also in making it possible to conduct the work in sometimes treacherous social settings. Like interlocutors who adhere to strict routes and behaviors and listen to music on headphones to exert some control over their surroundings, I found that monitoring sound through headphones calmed me, gave me focus, and occasionally

emboldened me to venture where I otherwise would not have. And during my first Grito, anxious and experiencing sensory overload, I slipped on my headphones and started to record. Like my (mis)hearing of the camoteros steam whistle, this moment of hermeneutic expansion was also one of audile infidelity. However, in this case, I not only (mis)heard the sounds around me but was failed by my prosthetic ear. After a long pause—thousands standing shoulder to shoulder in a light drizzle—Peña-Nieto began: "Mexicans! Long live the heroes that gave us the homeland! Long live Hidalgo! Long live…" *Click*. Rain water had seeped through the plastic casing of my recorder and it died with a crackle in my ears.

Determined to correct my mistake, I returned to the Zócalo the following year to document the Grito. This time, security had increased, some guards even giving pat-downs to small children and rifling through Spongebob Squarepants backpacks. Somehow, I managed to get through with my recording equipment—a handheld audio recorder and camera attached to a metal bracket and all wrapped carefully in plastic. The crowds in the Zócalo, while still massive, were notably smaller compared to the previous year. New barricades had been erected to protect the National Palace and Metropolitan Cathedral, reducing the open area, thus making the smaller crowd appear artificially dense. I had heard a rumor, later corroborated by newspaper reports, that thousands of PRI supporters had been bused in from PRI strongholds in the state of Mexico to ensure a supportive audience for Peña-Nieto, a routine practice of the political party since it first rose to power in 1929 (Flores and Rincón 2015; see also "Con dinero, transporte y comida" 2016).

The energy of the crowd felt different compared to the previous year. The Grito of 2015 was the first to be held after the tragedy of Ayotzinapa. Some attendees at the Grito, Mexico's most solemn ritual of patriotism, held signs that declared, "It was the State!" alluding to the alleged collusion between government officials and organized criminals in the abduction of the forty-three, and others saying, "Get rid of Peña-Nieto!" The ceremony began with a musical concert headlined by La Arrolladora Banda El Limón, a Sinoloan group specializing in ranchera and banda music. Some attendees tried to dance in the limited space, others sang along to familiar songs or just watched and chatted with friends. During a moment of stage banter, bandleader René Camacho announced, "In my village, a woman belongs to her man but a man belongs to *women*!" The response of the crowd was as mixed as the people's reasons for being there. Some cheered in approval at Camacho's remark while others audibly groaned or booed.

As Banda El Limón concluded their last number, the ceremony proper began, announced by a march of snare drums and trumpets by a military band near the entrance of the National Palace. As the triangulated attention of the crowd shifted, an opening began to form and I took advantage of the opportunity to move myself as close as possible to the president's balcony. After several minutes of playing, the military band concluded and was followed by a long, pregnant pause. After about five minutes, the steady murmur of the crowd began to be peppered by special whistles meant to connote impatience—a long portamento from low to high pitch reminiscent of the sound of a slide-whistle.

I was too far from the balcony to see when Peña-Nieto appeared but I could hear

the reaction of others—cheers, jeers, and shouted insults in a single, rolling wave from the front to the back of the crowd. The president began his Grito, "Mexicans! Long live the heroes…" A curious thing happened as the president began to speak. As far as I could hear, no one interrupt him. Everyone was listening, willing participants in this ritual celebration of the singularity of Mexican national identity. Peña-Nieto began to list the great heroes of Mexican Independence, wishing them long life in our collective memory: "Long live Hidalgo! Long live Morelos!" Each benediction was answered, not by a few but by an enthusiastic roar from the crowd, "¡*Viva* (Long Live!)! ¡Viva! ¡Viva!" Peña-Nieto concluded his Grito with one final, "Long live Mexico!" and the echo of his amplified voice was swallowed by the Zócalo.

Within a matter of seconds, the energy of the crowd shifted again. A man with a gruff voice shouted "¡*Culero* [Asshole]! ¡Culero! ¡Culeeeeero!" provoking others to join in what became, reminiscent of the consignas of protest marchers, a unison refrain of "¡Culeeero! ¡Culeeero! ¡Culeeero!" Some began to whistle the transposition of "¡Chinga tu madre!" and others transposed it once again, further amplifying their discontent through plastic party horns (basically large kazoos) adding a reed section to the ensemble of piccolo-like whistles. This rapid, collective shift, from vocalized insults directed at Peña-Nieto, to solemn participation in the ritual of the Grito, to insults again, marks a very pronounced, sonorous performance of the coexistent, multiple logics that García Canclini describes (1995: 9). In this encounter between the president and the public, one charged with historical trajectories that have unspooled into the present moment, individuals, *en masse*, used sound to convey a nuanced message, simultaneous

affirmation of patriotic fervor and an unequivocal rebuke of the nation's leader. These vocalizations, both the shouts of "¡Viva!" and the insults directed at Peña-Nieto in the form of words, whistles, and plastic instruments, were powerful because they were understood by nearly everyone in attendance. Attendees heard the sounds of others and joined in the sonorous avalanche. Peña-Nieto, standing on his balcony at the edge of the acoustic arena, most likely heard those sounds as well, knew what they meant, and knew they were directed at him.

Then a fireworks show commenced and, having seen it the previous year and also knowing how congested the Historic Center can be as people try to return home all at once, I decided to slip out through the southern edge of the Zócolo. Unfortunately, it turned out that thousands of people had the same idea and I quickly found myself unable to move. In order to manage the exit of the crowd from the Zócalo, the police announced over a loudspeaker, "Attendees wishing to leave must proceed to Pino Suárez Avenue." Standing too far away to hear the announcement, I found out about it as it spread from person to person like a game of telephone. The people in my immediate vicinity proceeded to push and squeeze toward Pino Suárez and I followed along in their wake. Nearly reaching the edge of the Zócalo, I heard another announcement, "Pino Suaréz is now closed. Please proceed to 20 de Noviembre Avenue." Without hesitation, the current of people jerked forty-five degrees to the south and pushed ahead. We came within sight of the second exit and another announcement sputtered over the intercom: "20 de Noviembre is now closed. Please proceed to 5 de Febrero Avenue." At that moment, something happened that impressed upon me precisely how powerful sound can be in

Mexico City. The crowd, crushed against the police barricades and struggling to breathe from the compression, began to whistle. Like the sonorous rebuke of Peña-Nieto, some began to direct their whistles at the police behind their barricades, and the practice was echoed by more and more people until it was almost deafening. After a few minutes of this, the police hastily dragged the barrier away and the crowd stormed through with a victorious cheer.

Video 6.1. *El Grito de Dolores* issued by president Enrique Peña-Nieto to a crowd assembled in the Zócalo. September 15, 2015. Created by author.

Was it just a coincidence that the police changed their minds and moved the road block when they did? Could they possibly be so thin-skinned as to be swayed by the whistles of an angry crowd? If we accept the veracity of Ochoa Gautier's claim that sound is more than ever a determinant in Latin American power dynamics, it seems reasonable to make this conclusion. Crystallized in my experience of the Grito are a number of themes that run throughout this investigation. In this meta-encounter, both the State and members of the public vied to invoke distinct historical imaginaries through music and the voice. The music and stage banter of La Arrolladora Banda El Limón indexed a hyper-masculine anti-cosmopolitanism, the military cadence a performance of discipline and might. The crowds zig-zag between solemn silence and mockery articulated a conceptual distinction between "Mexico" as something eternal and its current condition. The sonorous impact of this contestation was made possible through mutual recognition. The sonic artifacts at play (music, slogans, whistles) connoted symbolic worlds that through their juxtaposition and arrangement, generated new

symbolic meaning. And if "negotiation is a mode of existence" (García Canclini 2001: 146) in Mexico City and sound is frequently its vehicle, then the whistles of an angry crowd forcing open a police barricade presents a clear example of this negotiation.

In the four case studies presented here, I have explored a range sound making and listening practices by diverse individuals under dramatically different conditions. The historico-cultural meanings behind these practices are as profound as are their implications. Each of these case studies warrants additional research, as do the topics that transect them. For example, the urban whistle practices discussed throughout this dissertation are under-researched and would benefit not only from a detailed analysis of their acoustic structures, semantic organizations, and pedagogies, but also a broader investigation that juxtaposes these urban practices within the fragmented whistle practices found throughout Mexico. In fact, a number of the topics presented here—piropos, albures, the urbanization of folkloric musics, the Mexicanization of transnational musics—open possibilities for further research across regions and through the centuries.

Nevertheless, in presenting these case studies as a composite whole, the connective threads that join them begin to emerge. For example, In Mexico City, discursive modes like the albur, piropo, and the chiflido sculpt encounters in the public precisely because they are widely understood. The ability to use language (and sounds that represent language) to mock, provoke, or insinuate something to another person is wholly dependent on the comprehension of that other person. "This is one of our identity traits," exclaims Sofía Trejo. "If there is some kind of tragedy, we must sing together and have a few tequilas; if we don't get along with someone or they appear ridiculous to us,

we have to immediately assign them a clever nickname or shout something at them, something with a musical inflection, sometimes bitterly and sometimes sweetly, but always in a unique, inventive way" (interview, 31 May 2016, Mexico City). As an ex-torera and current political director of the United Vendors in Motion, Trejo is perhaps uniquely qualified to elaborate on the significance of aurality in Mexico City life. She spent much of her adolescence and young adulthood teaching herself how issue her pregón with "a singular joy" and now uses her voice to calm, uplift, and occasionally mobilize the toreros she now represents. Trejo explains that many *capitalenos* (Mexico City natives) draw a connection between vocalizations and culture because, "these sounds hint at our roots, where we come from." She says that the influences of the tonal, indigenous languages of Mexico endure in a number of expressions, pronunciation, and what she calls "speaking with music in your voice" that she believes distinguishes capitaleno accents from others. It follows that the power of sound is not derived solely from its mutual recognizability, but also exactly what that sound is recognized to be or represent.

A recurrent theme in this dissertation concerns the potential of sound to invoke and recontextualize historical imaginaries. They trigger memories, tell stories, and index people and places. According to García Canclini, social processes alone cannot account for the configurations and modalities of the Latin American city. The city is also composed of

> the imaginaries that each group deposits in it. [These imaginaries] can be the planes that invent and order [the city]. And novels, songs and movies, and the stories of the press, radio and television [contribute to an imagined] sense of urban life. The city becomes dense when loaded with heterogeneous fantasies.

> Programmed to function, designed in a grid, the city overflows and multiplies in individual and collective fictions (1998: 19).

In each of the four case studies, the production and interpretation of sounds are conditioned by diverse yet overlapping imaginaries. Despite this diversity, these imaginaries often coalesce in their appropriation of Mexicanness (*mexicanidad*). One may assign authenticity (thus value) to sounds (and by proxy, the sound makers) in relation to the degree to which these sounds adhere to one's sense Mexicanness. For example, the music of the organillero and the panpipe melody of the afilador, two of the most cited "favorite street sounds" in my interviews, are considered by many of these interlocutors to be "authentically" indicative of Mexico City and thus, important to society and deserving of protection. On the other hand, to dismiss a type of music (or person) as *malinchista* (cultural turncoat) is to suggest that it represents a betrayal of Mexicanness. The toreros, for example, frame their territorial claim over the Historic Center through a collective belief that they are part of an unbroken tradition that preceded the Spanish conquest. They also frame the pregón as a traditional practice with its roots in barrio culture, and by extension, the rural village. In effect, they see these places, the urban barrio and the rural village, as sanctuaries of authentic Mexican culture, places where foreign influences have failed to penetrated completely. Thus, toreros believe that they carry this unsullied Mexicanness with them through their work. As García Canclini points out, media culture is deeply implicated in such historical imaginaries. The post-revolutionary unification project, involving education and public policy initiatives as well as arts and entertainment, marked a sea change of collective imagination in which Mexican culture became a single, unbroken stream, and laborers, rural peasants, and

indigenous forebears became valorized tokens in a new cosmology.

If the emergence of the post-revolutionary narrative helped define a sense of Mexicanness, it also served to repudiate and redact what falls outside of this definition. With this period of national consolidation came a pronounced redefinition of gender roles including the articulation of a new kind of Mexican masculinity. Through the revolutionary corridos, muralist movement and cinematic Golden Age, the public was presented with the figure of the idealized revolutionary leader (personified by Emiliano Zapata and Francisco Villa) and the rugged *charro* (cowboy). They personify an architype of the masculine protector—virile, incorruptible, and beholden only to his family, the land, the nation. Regarding this architype, media studies scholar Magdalena Red explains,

> The myth [of the Mexican Revolution] naturalizes and depoliticizes certain behaviors, particularly proper performance of masculinity and disdain for outward-looking, internationally-oriented styles, tastes, and attitudes. [It] is able to do all of this because of its long established use by the Mexican government (through popular culture and especially popular music) to create a strong sense of national identity and unity. Even as the government's tight grip on mass media and popular culture has weakened in the past two decades, the myth and legacy of the Revolution have remained strong (2014: 115–116).

This has been and continues to be a virulent model for gendered behavior in Mexico and Mónica Mayer believes that it is one that is under threat. She opines that the social changes and economic imperatives that triggered women's growing participation in public life have also undermined this model of masculine control. Women are increasingly independent of traditional family structures and consequently, are less beholden to male protectors. Acoso callejero is, in part, a reaction to these changes. It reflects an effort to reassert a gendered Mexicanness. And since acoso callejero is

frequently performed by groups of men and boys, it may serve as both a sanction to those who do not conform to Mexicanness (e.g., women who travel without male protection) and a quest for validation from one's peers. The sonic devices of acoso callejero themselves (e.g., chiflidos and piropos) are masculinized (women perform them less frequently) and, like the torero's pregón, are also indeces of barrio culture, thus reflecting an additional claim on authentic Mexicanness.

Similarly, the founding of El Chopo coincided with an epistemological reordering of Mexican rock with Mexicanness at its heart. Singing in Spanish became not only a matter of engaging monolingual audiences but an expression of the grassroots nationalization of rock. Band names and lyric content became highly localized, simultaneously valorizing and criticizing the street life in which this music was conceived. El Chopo was endowed with this sensibility by its founders, largely urban rockers (*rockeros urbanos*) and punks, who, while influenced by parallel music scenes throughout the world, considered Mexicanness to be a measuring stick of countercultural worth. El Tri frontman Alex Lora derides those he considers opponents of Mexico City's rock underground by calling them malinchistas. And Red posits that the recent hostility of Mexico City punks and their allies toward emos is similarly rooted in contestations of Mexicanness. She proposes that, through the filter of the Myth of the Revolution, emos have been conflated with *catrines* (dandies), the ruling elites of the Porfiriato, popularly depicted as effeminate, corrupt and incompetent, and Eurocentric in their tastes and values. Punks, on the other hand, cast themselves as the standard bearers of the rugged, resourceful, and unbeholden heroes of the Revolution. She concludes, "Disdain for the

emos, then, is a conservative response that reproduces Revolutionary values around both macho bravado and anti-imperialism" (2014: 114–115).

Jaraneros perform a distinct, yet equally forceful claim on Mexicanness. In their lyrics, performance techniques, comportment, and rhetoric, jaraneros reify the resourceful ingenuity of the rural poor, reintegrate Afro-Mexican culture as a critical part of the national narrative, and project an inclusive egalitarianism that troubles the boundaries of a deeply stratified, class-conscious society. The power of the jaraneros' message lies in its ability to index and amend popular conceptions of "authentic" Mexican culture through the intersection of music and poetic allusion. The jaraneros claim on authenticity is grounded in their maintenance of traditional values and practices, but as we have seen, these are ever-evolving, compiled from a fragmented history and rendered coherent through the confluence of parallel musical and political movements. Jaraneros endow their tradition with the glamor of inevitable permanence by drawing it into the present moment, using it to frame crises as they unfold. In this sense, the jaraneros' performance of history is a generative one; by signifying the present they expand their interpretations of the past.

Another theme that runs throughout this dissertation is the function of aurality in conceptualizing urban space. Anthropologist Angela Giglia suggests that individuals render the tumult of the city comprehensible through the creation of *scapes* or networks of familiar localities (2012: 153). Through the accumulation of sensory experiences and the exchange of information, victims of acoso callejero navigate the city through personalized topographies of fear, spatiotemporal arrangements of safe and dangerous

places subject to continual renewal. Time and space are key for the toreros as well. Customers find their favorite toreros by following distinctive pregones but also by predicting when and where a particular torero will be. Disruptions like police raids upend the toreros routines and redraw their territories. Through shouts, chiflidos, and radio messages, toreros maintain these territories. By attending to the acoustic arena, toreros learn about changes in the territories of their competitors. Taken as a whole, the character, embedded meaning, and spatialization of sounds extend the toreros perceptual field beyond their line of site and, considered over a span of time, indicate the tectonic drift of shifting alliances and conditions. This is also the case with the choperos *mental map* (Urteaga Castro-Pozo 1998: 61). In El Chopo, the placement and relative strength of amplified musics draw choperos to likeminded listeners while exposing them to others. The simultaneity of these musics is understood by many as a manifestation of community harmony. Examined more closely, the spatial distribution and relative dominance of some musics over others mirror power dynamics between bandas. In turn, the gradual transformation of El Chopo's soundscape, the attenuation of live music and the inclusion of new styles, portend shifting values and external pressures. In *playing the space*, jaraneros construct a conceptual topography as well. Their engagement with their surroundings consists of a series of alignments, snapshots of where they are, who they are playing with, and what is happening around them. While the march routes are often the same, each march is rendered unique because of these variables. Jaraneros customize their play to the slipstream of lived experience, filtering and signifying moments as they occur, and appropriating those moments into a collective, musical narrative of the event.

These conceptual topographies are populated by variable notions of *public* and *private* space. In the sonorous encounters of Mexico City's public spaces, notions of the private (e.g., the home, the circle of intimates, the interiority of the body) are never entirely absent. Indeed, in their open-endedness, public spaces represent "a threshold between an interior and an exterior" (Labelle 2010: 88). The public space cannot exist without a parallel, private one and yet the public "is perverse, for while it is placed always relative to an inside, it observes no faith to the consistency of this inside" (Grosz 2001: xv). Through their respective sonic practices, toreros and the bandas of El Chopo alike lay claim to public spaces, transforming them to semi-private *places* endowed with insular logics and significations. Yet they are *semi*-private in that they can not be fully integrated or controlled; in both cases, these semi-private places exist not only because of their proximity to outsiders—against whom these groups define themselves—but also due to their very dependence on interfacing with these outsiders. El Chopo is a place where bandas gather to enjoy each other's company, but in doing so, they also stage a countercultural spectacle for tourists and non-committed shoppers. El Chopo's very existence depends not only on the revenue stream that outsiders provide, but in inculcating these outsiders in the belief that El Chopo is safe, harmonious, and culturally significant. Likewise, the toreros are entirely dependent on developing lasting relationships with customers, suppliers, competitors, and occasionally government agents. The expressive and interpretive art of the toreros, perhaps best exemplified in the pregón, serves to draw the customer closer, both literally and figuratively. Through the language of intimacy and familiarity, toreros invite their customers into a semi-private

place while never losing sight of the imperative to sell.

During protest marches, jaraneros unspool the concentric circles of the fandango into a column. Jaraneros harness the experiences, meanings, and sense of solidarity nurtured in the fandango and reconfigure them for public engagement. The marching jaranero contingent is a mobile, semi-private place, one that delimitates itself from other marchers and spectators but is also reliant on their *othering* presence. The jaranero column shields the jaraneros, enlarging them and making them feel relatively safe. But it is not a cocoon. It is a transmitter, turned outward to the listening world. The jaraneros energize, synchronize, and beckon others closer to its orbit.

I have made the case that acoso callejero is, essentially a practice meant to deny women (or those who are identified as women) access to public spaces. Frequently, acoso callejero is performed by packs of men or boys who issue catcalls and whistles from the safety of a huddle (another semi-private place). They perceive the unencumbered mobility of women as a threat, a diminution of their own status and harass from the safety of the group to address some need for protection and enlargement. Likewise, victims of acoso callejero are often expert at insulating themselves, creating mobile, semi-private cocoons with the help of an iPod soundtrack or simply through what Benjamin Tausig dubs *aural refusal*, the cognitive labor of denying consciousness to what the ears cannot (2017).

If notions of the public and private are mutually reliant, it is perhaps not surprising that I learned the most about the sounds of the street behind closed doors. Casual conversations, parties, dinners, fandangos, and Mayer's gender violence

workshops provided a place where the imperative immediacy of sound was muted. They provided both me and my interlocutors with a necessary distance to reflect. I have discussed the missteps and adjustments in my own hermeneutical arc, but in these conversations, by the very nature of the subject matter, I found myself a part of a dialogic reevaluation. Mayer believes that the significance of sound in Mexico City lies partially in the fact that it is so frequently ignored. And repeatedly, interlocutors commented on how they had never really thought about these subjects before but in talking about them, were surprised by the sudden emotional responses these subjects provoked. Some have informed me that since our discussions, they find that they listen differently and are more conscious of the feelings and associations that certain sounds dredge up. Others still have become very invested in my research, occasionally sending me audio recordings that they have made or articles that they suspect I might be interested in. These mutually transformative dialogues continue to unfold. Perhaps then, the hermeneutical arc is not so much a rigorous methodology for scholars and cultural outsiders, but rather a way of understanding how people draw meaning for their daily lives and expand and reorder meaning through the accumulation of experience (Rice 1994: 6).

In an effort to expand my own horizons to encompass just a bit of the symbolic worlds that others inhabit, I have worked to foreground my biases and expectations and integrate them into my consciousness. Gadamer suggests that comprehension of alterity (be it a text, a person, or a situation) begins with expectation because "[a] person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting" ([1975] 1989: 267). Yet it through the revision of these expectations in relation to what emerges that "the text can present itself

in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings" ([1975] 1989: 269). For this reason, I present imaginaries not as barriers to understanding but as operationalized forces in human interaction and coprehension. "Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination," says Gadamer, "we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live. […] That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being" ([1975] 1989: 276–277).

My foray into the transmusical reflects this position. By foregrounding my own transmusical biases, my tendency to hear rhythms in the raindrops, I have sought to engage the broad-shouldered multiplicity of aurality. I have attempted to place music in its phenomenological moment in order to convey the "thickness" (a la Geertz) of both its production and reception. In the live and amplified music of El Chopo or the performances of the jaraneros, or even the headphone-subterfuge of victims of acoso callejero, it is inadequate to approach these musical sounds as simply pieces with a beginning and an end. In the melee of the city streets, they represent so much more: barriers, cocoons, lures, and markers of affiliation and ideology. And conversely, the "non-musical" sounds of Mexico City often carry melodic and rhythmic dimensions from live to digitized pregones, to the bells, whistles, and pipes of various street vendors, to the lilting accents heard throughout the city. Speaking to the latter, Trejo opines that these manners of speech, "unique and incomparable in their particular intonations," collectively

represent "an important identity trait of the *cultura popular* [folk culture][124] of Mexico City." However, she remarks that this trait is also a subtle one that capitalenos frequently overlook. It becomes obvious, Trejo explains, when they leave Mexico City. She gives an example of a typical encounter she has had while traveling through other Mexican states: "'You're from Mexico City, right?' a stranger asks. 'Yeah, why?' I reply. 'Because you sing when you speak.' We capitalenos are known throughout Mexico for this—the musical way we speak, our lexicon and intonation, the way we always whistle" (interview, 31 May 2016, Mexico City).

The subject of aurality in Mexico City is of a similar order of complexity as that of the city itself—mythic territories laden with limitless possibilities for reimagining. Rather than a conclusion, I propose a point of departure. This dissertation is the outcome of countless encounters, both unexpected and ones that I sought out. This is a work of mediation, but one in which I have attempted to cast myself as one of the actors rather than an unseen, omnipotent narrator. My subject position has informed the terms of this mediation, but it is also one that has been radically transformed by the individuals whose testimonies I mediate. As a reflective investigation of aurality in Mexico City that evolved, through the accumulation of these encounters, to one of sound as power, it is intriguing to consider how this same approach would have evolved in a different setting, historical moment, or guided by different contributors. Further, I have not relied on

[124] In Mexico as well as a number of Latin American countries, *cultura popular* does not correspond to "popular culture" as it would be understood in the United States (i.e., practices or conceptualizations shared by the majority) but rather connotes cultural practices and understandings derived from long-standing traditions, or inherited through the family or community.

deductive reasoning, but rather have attempted to adapt to the revelations and challenges enacted in these encounters. As such, the hermeneutical arc that this dissertation represents has opened up the possibility for future investigations.

I have attempted to demonstrate that the acoustemologies of Mexico City have settled in distinctive ways, contoured by historical and cultural specificities, and represent a pronounced aspect of social interactions and conceptualizations. As such, it seems reasonable to infer that a similarly organized investigation of sound in another urban setting would lead elsewhere. I suggest that this work has the potential to contribute to the interdisciplinary area of urban sound studies precisely because of this emphasis on the particular. Foregrounding the subjective perceptions and interpretations of sound has, in this case, proven to be generative rather than reductive. Ideas put forth by interlocutors that first seem to me to be anecdotal rumors or singular experiences, were often corroborated, enriched, or contradicted by others in such a way as to bring underlying social forces into stark relief. In reaching for the truth, I have found multiple *truths*—ones that, in the force of their declaration and the open-endedness of their graceful decay, gradually resemble the substance of sound itself.

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Appendix A – Glossary of Frequently Used Spanish and Slang Terms

Acoso callejero	Street harassment
Afilador/a	A person who sharpens knives
Albur	A humoristic, pseudo-sexual word battle
Banda	A social clique, gang, or ensemble of musicians
Barrio	Neighborhood
Bocinero/a	An informal vendor who hawks unlicensed CD mixtapes and advertises through a backpack-mounted speaker (*bocina*)
Caló	Slang
Camote	Sweet potato
Camotero/a	A street vendor who sells *camote*
Chiflido	A whistle that may either be a tonal signal or a melodic representation of a Spanish word or phrase (also *silbado*)
Chopero/a	A self-identified member of the Chopo community
Cohete	A small, primarily noise-making firecracker or rocket
Consigna	Rally chant
Fandango	A party in which son jarocho musicians play and learn
Güero/a	A light-complected person
Guitarra de son	A plucked string instrument with four or five courses, usually made from a solid piece of wood. The instrument is traditionally played with an *espiga* (a plectrum made from cow horn) and provides a melodic element in son jarocho ensembles (also called *requinto jarocho*)
Jarana	A strummed string instrument (normally five-courses) that provides much of the rhythmic support in son jarocho ensembles

Jaranero/a	A person who plays son jarocho music
Marimbol	A lamellaphone/ideophone consisting of a wooden box (on which the player sits, like a *cajón*) and metal tines that the player plucks like a *mbira*)
Normalista	A student of a "Normal" school (i.e., teacher-training college)
Organillero/a	An organ grinder (also called *cilindrero/a*)
Piropo	A poetic monologue meant to engraciate or woo another
*Pregón (*pl. *pregones)*	A street cry
Son jarocho	A folkloric dance and musical tradition from Veracruz
Tianguis	A bazaar or temporary, outdoor marketplace
Torero/a	A street vendor who works in a manner or location unauthorized by city officials
Vagonero/a	An informal vendor who works in metro cars and buses