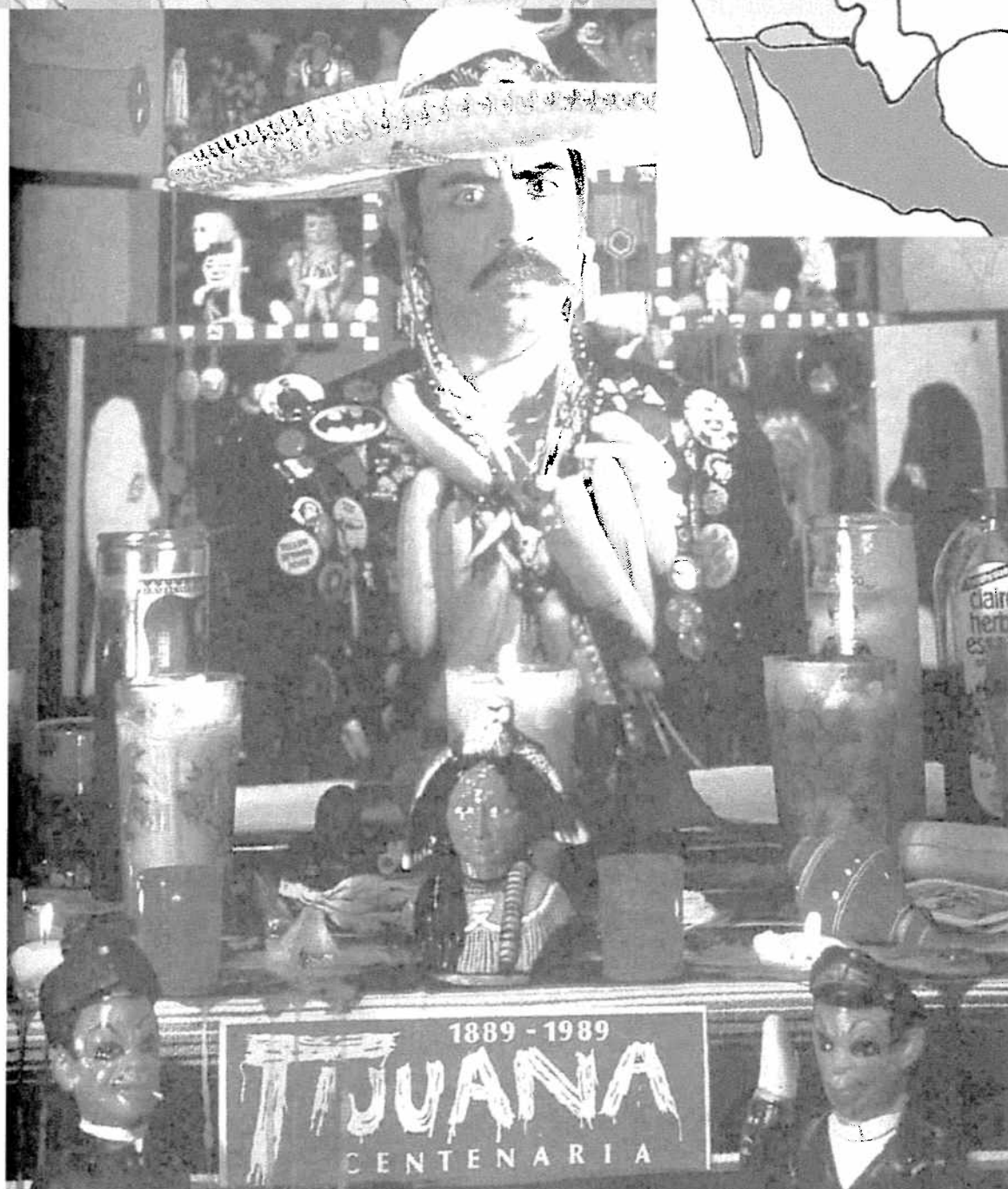


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¡Entrepernemos! Crossing the Body and the Border:

Guillermo Gómez-Peña and the Performance of Border Identity in *Border Brujo*

by

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Cover Art:

Digitally altered map from Virginia M Fields and Victor Zamudio-Taylor's The Road to Aztlan: Art from a Mythic Homeland, (Los Angeles : Los Angeles County Museum of Art ; Albuquerque, NM : Distributed by the University of New Mexico Press, 2001), p. 36.

Map sketch of Southwest and Mexico area by Author (December 2004).

Photograph of Guillermo Gómez-Peña in *Border Brujo*, which premiered at the Border Arts Workshop's "Border Realities IV: Casa de Cambio" project at the Centro Cultural de la Raza, San Diego, 1988, and filmed by Director Isaac Artenstein, Executive Producer Lynn Schuette, distributed by Video Data Bank (Chicago), Third World Newsreel (New York), and Cinewest Productions (San Diego), 1990.



Your Columbian nose smells the moisturizer—SPF 15—that will match
English freckles to Chinese skin, when your red hair would sunburn to a crisp.
Indigenous ears hear Asian eyes cry tears of beautiful whispered words.
Love is an amalgamation. You make the other half of me make sense.

This is for that, for my family deterritorialized across time and space,
for my mother and her strength.

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“but all these hundreds upon thousands
of people socalled if multiplied by
twice infinity could never equal one”
—e.e. cummings

I must admit that I only merely stumbled upon performance art through a fortunate accident one evening that lead me down a dark hall, just past the bathrooms, to a small room far from the photography class I had intended to take. A fortunate accident indeed—Holly Hughes introduced me to performance art (and incidentally Guillermo Gómez-Peña), encouraged my writing and multiracial concept, showed me New York, and welcomed me into the multi-centered margin despite my seemingly conservative character.

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M.J.C.

Abstract

The cultural, political and artistic revolution of the 1970's was followed by the 1980's. The *Immigration Act of 1965* opened the United States to new non-European diversification. The Supreme Court put down the last laws prohibiting interracial unions in the United States: *Loving v. Virginia* (1967). And, the Civil Rights movement in general pushed forward a new changing perspective of American racial politics. The babies weren't booming quite like they had in the years following WWII but the multiracial baby boom was down to the wire and about to explode. The last vestiges of official institutional regulation of social borders fell away, and the United States took up the banner of multiculturalism. Now, this didn't sit well with everybody. As the U.S. was concluding the Cold War, the U.S. turned her attention to Mexico and began to militarize the U.S. – Mexico border. Though social borders were being deconstructed, there were still borders on the country and as the iron curtain fell the tortilla curtain was raised.

Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Mexican American performance artist, took the dialogue to the militarized U.S. – Mexico border. *Border Brujo*, performed from 1988-1990, engages deterritorialization in two aspects of performance (the post-avant-garde and plural identities), three possible interpretations of the border (community, exchange, and wound) and in language (across the spectrum between English, Spanish, and Nahuatl). First, we place Gómez-Peña within a performance context of the avant-garde in the postmodern period. Then, we take a step back to survey the whole performance and multiple personalities of *Border Brujo* attempting to establish thematic trends and purpose. The second major section discusses the border in its multiple manifestations. Gloria Anzaldúa calls the border a wound running along the length of her body, but Gómez-Peña takes the metaphor further and calls it an infected wound. He also conceives of the border as a maquiladora city of material and possibly artistic exchange. In the end, the border can be a place of regeneration and birth.

The last section looks at Gómez-Peña's use of different languages in *Border Brujo*—English, Spanish, Spanglish, and Nahuatl—and to what effect. To end, I more fully draw out the similarities between Gómez-Peña's border identity and the multiracial experience. Guillermo Gómez-Peña never explicitly equates multicultural with multiracial, and only speaks of the "multicultural." How can the multiracial individual also represent the dialogue between the racial or cultural Self and Other? Gómez-Peña locates the border at the groin when he says *entrepierman*, a word that makes the noun *groin* into a verb. What does it mean "to groin"? It's not *to fuck*, but the comparison is apt, a violent act of creation. And, when it comes to miscegenation, the border crisis of race is physically apparent in the multiracial child, who is the product of two people coming together across racial boundaries. The conclusion of this thesis opens up onto the wider implication for today and how a new generation coming to age is redefining race through the perspective of a multiracial experience.

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Introduction: Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Latin American Multiculturalism

“People define self in terms of the subjective experience of the *other*. In this case, multiracial people are the inkblot test for the *other's* prejudices and fears.”
—Maria P.P. Root¹

The first right that Maria P.P. Root claims in A Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People is “the right not to justify my existence in this world” (Multiracial Experience, 3). Ever since the discovery of the Americas by Europeans there has been racial and cultural mixing and drawing and redrawing of borders—racial, cultural and political—in the United States and Mexico. However, the United States and Mexico differ in two distinct ways that affect each other. The United States, almost from the beginning, has attempted to maintain the borders, between races and between itself and Mexico. The first anti-miscegenation law prohibiting the interracial marriage of a white and black person was established in Maryland in 1661, which of course was followed by other laws prohibiting other types of interracial relationships as the case arose. Mexico, however, already had a large population of Mestizos, people with Spanish and Native background. This population grew to include mixed-race people of African, Anglo, Spanish and Native backgrounds, all of whom are now simply considered Mexican.

Just as they cover all different areas of race, Latinos are part of a community spanning from California through Mexico to Central and South America. This transcendence of geopolitical borders is actually the consequence of the United States’ attempts to solidify the U.S. – Mexico border (refer to Figure 1). Texas claimed their independence from Mexico in 1842 along with all the land south to the Rio Grande; three

¹ Maria P.P. Root, “Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People,” The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1996), 9.

years later the United States claimed Texas. Then in a rush of Manifest Destiny, the United States acquired the Oregon Country (Idaho, Oregon and Washington). And, lastly, the Southwestern United States

(California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas) was all originally part of Mexico until the end of the Mexican American War in 1848. The only land that the United States paid for was the most southern third part of Arizona in the Gadsden Purchase

of 1853 (King, 127). The United States had managed to acquire half of Mexico for itself along with a

substantial Hispanic population, one whose very presence challenged the racial and political borders of the United States.

The U.S. Census Bureau separately collects Hispanic from racial demographic information. Previous to Census 2000, when asked to pick only one (White, African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American and Other) the majority of mixed-race and Hispanic individuals could do nothing but identify as the “Other.” For the first time in the United States, Census 2000 allowed respondents to identify with two or more races. At the same time, however, Alabama was the last state to overturn anti-miscegenation laws, but only by a 60% margin (“Mixed Race History 101,” Mavin, 23). Census 2000 is a clear example of America’s changing notions of race; 2.4% of the population identified with two or more racial identities. The Immigration Act of 1965 opened the United States



(Figure 1) The major U.S. land acquisitions in the mid-1800s created today's U.S. – Mexican border. Map by Mark Bloomfield in Rosemary King's Border Confluences p.127.

immigration quotas up to an increased number of non-European immigrants, and the U.S. Supreme Court declared state bans against interracial marriages unconstitutional. With this and in general the civil rights movement, intermarriages between races or Hispanic and non-Hispanic more than quadrupled from 1970 to 1998 (Morning, 50).

The War Brides Act in 1957 allowed military personnel to bring their foreign brides and children, as the case may be, to the United States. This specifically affected men who had married Japanese women while in Japan post-WWII. For the first time interracial families were not legally forbidden to exist in the United States, although anti-miscegenation laws were not ruled unconstitutional until 1967 in *Loving v. Virginia*. The term *interracial* was first used as a concept of identity in 1979 in Berkeley Public School census forms. Interracial and multiethnic organizations have only been established for the last 25 years ("Mixed Race History 101," Mavin, 23).

The evidence of the increased rates of intermarriage is the increased population of multiracial people. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 1.9% of all adults over the age of 18 are multiracial. But, more importantly, 4% of the population is multiracial children, contributing to 42% of all multiple race response even though children as a whole only constitute 26% of the U.S. population ("Two or More Races," Census 2000). Thus, we see an increase of multiracial children in the early 1980's, the period when the adolescents and young adults of the civil rights era began forming their own families. Perhaps, we could say that multiculturalism and border crossing succeeded the postmodern period. Performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña says that today we are "intercultural not postmodern" ("The Border Is," 43) because crossing the border itself is

involuntary postmodernism. You cross the border and in a matter of seconds you move from Catholicism to Protestantism, from the past to the future, from Spanish

to English, from pre-Columbian to high tech, from hedonism to Puritanism. This experience of disjunction, this experience of rupture, is a quintessential contemporary experience. (“Bilingualism,” 156)

Multiracial people live in a constant state of border-crossing, because they are the production of a border contact of two people from different racial or ethnic groups. They are the evidence, the constant reminder, that we live next to and among the Other, a fact that is also clearly evident at the U.S. – Mexico border.

Mexico has a several hundred year advantage over the United States when it comes to multiculturalism. The United States has only recently begun to acknowledge the existence of a multiracial population. Diversity in the U.S. is still riddled by cultural appropriation and racial commodification. Multiculturalism continues to be a “border wound.” While the multicultural trend values diversity, it is too often manipulated to justify the commodification and consumption of ethnic otherness, while ignoring the fact that xenophobia and nativism in government policy have intensified and economic disparity still falls along racial lines. Cultural appropriation is marked by a legacy of violence, oppression and imposition of a new symbolic and signifying order. Border-crossing does not fractionate or alienate or threaten the autonomy of either side; rather, it provides an opportunity for dialogue as well as the right to have multiple identities.

Performance artist, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, born in Mexico City, came to the United States in 1978 in his early 20’s. Since then he has been exploring cross-cultural issues through performance, multilingual poetry, journalism, video, radio, and installation art. His performance work and critical writings have helped to develop debates on cultural diversity, identity, U.S. – Mexico relations, and general issues of multicultural competency. Gómez-Peña recognizes that he is a Mexican in the process of Chicanization (“Bilingualism,” 153).

He is from Mexico City but permanently resides in the United States. Gómez-Peña clearly lives on the border of a multiplicity of identities. Gómez-Peña's border-crossing insists on the right not to have to keep races and cultures delineated, to identify differently at different times, and not to have to justify his existence in this world. His performances assert the right not to have to prove the authenticity of identity. Guillermo Gómez-Peña explains: "the Mexicanization of life in the United States is more likely to be seen as the Americanization of Mexicans" (Bartra, 11). A Chicano is a Mexican American; however the term generally assumes a sense of being Mexican as well as being American, as the second generation of Mexican immigrants. A Chicano may or may not speak Spanish fluently, and probably did not grow up in Mexico but rather a barrio in the United States. He can be both Chicano and Mexican and American at the same time.

What is the border? To the Mexican national, the border is blocked by a wall maintaining and defending the Mexican culture against the influence of the United States. The Mexican who crosses the abyss of the border is a traitor. To the Chicano, or rather the Mexican American born on the United States side of the border, the border is the regenerative umbilical cord to Mexico, "the place to return to, to regenerate" ("Bilingualism," 148). To the Anglo American, the border is a war zone of national security import ("Bilingualism," 148). It is the separation between the First and Third World. Latin America is deterritorialized across the U.S. – Mexico border and populated by Cubans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago and New York, Chicanos in the Southwest, Mexicans and Central Americans extending as far south to include the Nuyoricans. Because it lacks physical borders, Latin America is defined socially and so consequently is always in a constant state of border crisis. This border experience applies to anyone in a state of what Guillermo Gómez-Peña calls deterritorialization. When people are living outside of or excluded from

the original context of their social identities, they live life as a perpetual border experience where they are forced to express themselves in a secondary language, whether an actual non-native language or a different cultural language of symbols and paradigms.

Latin America has no set political boundaries as well as no set racial boundaries. *Chicano*, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, originally was a spelling alteration of the Spanish *mejicano* Mexican (“Chicano,” OED, def. 1a). There are several different words to identify an individual with a racial background related to Spain. These include but are not limited to Hispanic, Latino/a, and Chicano/a. In the United States, the Hispanic demographic is recorded and analyzed separately from racial demographics because Hispanic refers to cultures connected by a common historical experience of language—Spanish. A Hispanic person can racially be White (European), Native American, Black and all the interracial varieties in between. Latino/a is a self-identification that is synonymous to Hispanic by definition, but without the connotation of European colonialism. However, because the Chicano culture has developed its own unique history and particularities, it is differentiable from Mexican culture. The Chicano population is a product of border crossing which challenges Mexican solidarity at the same time as resisting Anglican assimilation into the United States.

Race is a social construction as well as a social reality. Gómez-Peña’s performances do more than just deal with crossing borders; they push the performers and participants to cross the racial borders that, even though they are imaginary constructions in the social psyche, are very real and tangible. His performances articulate a complex range of tensions and projections—desires and fears—that characterize U.S. – Mexico relations. With ever-increasing integration towards a multicultural and multiracial United States, Gómez-Peña asks us to find the racial Other in ourselves. He sees his performance as placing a mirror at

the border and then shattering it². In the spirit of the avant-garde, he forges new paths and tears down the old social structure of the colonial construction of race. Notions of identity need to be redefined and geopolitical borders crossed in the wake of cultural hybridity (Wolford, 277).

Gómez-Peña's extreme and campy use of immigrant, minority and multiracial characters helps us to find the "inner savage" within and discover that the Other we fear only exists inside of ourselves. His performances also bring the marginalized and hybrid cultures to the center utilizing particular avant-garde techniques to engage the audience in a sociological discourse of racial politics. In order to understand Gómez-Peña's performances, there must be some explanation of American avant-garde theater in order to establish a sense of what performance art is. I will then focus largely on the performance of the Other in relation to racial identity, the use of multiple languages, and the use of tourist merchandise as sacred objects in Guillermo Gómez-Peña's 1988-1990 performance, *Border Brujo*. From a precise interpretation and analysis of the performer's racial and cultural interaction with the audience—within the context of the Chicano movement beginning in the decade prior to *Border Brujo* and the recent multiracial movement—we can begin to understand how America creates racial identity and how racial identity needs to be redefined today.

This kind of performance greatly contributes to the dialogue and (re)construction of racial identity in America. The racial/ethnic border is the place to talk about these issues because at the area of border crisis we have more control over the contextual meaning that shapes the racial dialogue ("Bilingualism," 149). Gómez-Peña's performances challenge the guilt-free consumption and commodification of racial/ethnic cultures: "Unlike images on TV or in commercial cinema depicting a monocultural middle-class world existing outside of

² Guillermo Gómez-Peña admits that he is not the only artist crossing borders: "They are making a new kind of art that shatters the distorting mirrors of the 'Western avant-garde'" ("Binational," 16).

international crisis, contemporary U.S. society is fundamentally multiracial, multilingual, and socially polarized. So is its art” (“Multicultural,” 46). The desire for the Other does not in itself eliminate racial inequality; it is still a process of marginalization. What is so attractive about other cultures and peoples? What is exotic about racial difference? What needs is the dominant culture fulfilling through cultural appropriation? It is at this border that we can recognize that the racial other, which has been identified as different, is in fact not different. Within ourselves we have a multiplicity of identities to which we can give voice at the border.

Border Brujo will be the primary performance text of reference. The discussion will provide background on Guillermo Gómez-Peña as well as his relationship as a performance artist to avant-gardism and identity politics. I will then take a look at the performance of hybridity and border culture and what effect the use of multiple languages—English, Spanish, Spanglish, and tongues—has on the audience. I also discuss how Gómez-Peña’s use of tourist merchandise as sacred objects exposes the Chicano metafiction of Aztlán as well as American cultural appropriation. Last, I discuss the most important question that *Border Brujo* addresses—the Racial Other—the mestizo and mixed race person.

SECTION 1: PERFORMANCE / PERFORM THIS

Chapter One

The Avant-Garde on the Border: Guillermo Gómez-Peña's Deterritorialization and Relocation of the Avant-Garde

“We [the conqueror] travel to the margins to fulfill some part of us that is marginal to our own culture but is becoming increasingly, embarrassingly, central” –Lucy Lippard³

Performance art draws on the history and tradition of the American avant-garde. Avant-garde theatre began as the Modernist product of a Romantic sensibility combined with an Enlightenment ideal of progress (Aronson, 201). Led by inspired individuals whose spiritual and artistic vision looked forward to a utopian future, the avant-garde forged new paths and tore down old structures of society. The Hegelian model (of the romantic era) positions the avant-garde as the antithesis to the status quo. In the 20th century, the avant-garde turned to restructuring how spectators viewed and experienced theater. The Aristotelian-Renaissance model of linear thought and objective imagery turned into an image-driven associative model of structure (Aronson, 202). However, the synthesis of the avant-garde and the status quo somehow combines the avant-garde with the norm in such a way that it can no longer be anti-establishmentarian. By the end of the twentieth century the establishment culture had caught up with the avant-garde. Technological advances have allowed television, film and life to be chock full of the momentary images and subjective perspectives that the avant-garde theater had tried to create on stage. What becomes of the avant-garde when it is no longer new? How does the avant-garde innovate upon the new?

The original French term *avant-garde* referred to the section of the army that marched into battle ahead of the main body of troops (the ‘van’). However, it “has come to be used

³ Lucy R Lippard, “Doubletake: The diary of a relationship with an image,” in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (Routledge: New York, 2003), 349.

in both French and English to describe pioneering or innovatory trends in the arts” (“avant-garde,” PDCT, 25). Thus, the avant-garde is the elite of artists, scientists and industrialists who lead the “main body of troops” of the mainstream into a new social order. “The idea of avant-gardism implies that progress is always the result of a rebellion against an entrenched establishment” and the form this rebellion takes in art is often shocking and unsettling (“avant-garde,” PDCT, 25). Dadaism and surrealism, both movements typical of the avant-garde, approach the insane and sublime. However, both art traditions reach the limits of conventional Enlightenment models of reason and do not breach the border into the psychedelic. The avant-garde does not ever cross over into the truly ridiculous and thus is distinctly modern when placed in a dichotomous division between modernism and postmodernism.

Although the avant-garde begins to challenge traditional conventions of art and theater, modernism continues to maintain the distinction between the avant-garde and kitsch, the audience from the performance, the mind from the brain, the self from the body, the Other from the Self. Lucy Lippard contends with the modern and postmodern understanding of a particular photograph taken by Mary Schäffer in the 1906 Canadian Rockies, which mixes conventional photographic narrations of the family and the Native American⁴ (see Figure 2):

Even today, when Indians wear rubber boots or sneakers at ceremonial dances, or an Apache puberty ritual includes six-packs of soda among the offerings, tourists and purists tend to be offended. Such anachronism destroys the time-honored

⁴ Lippard’s argument assumes the understanding of the proliferation of exaggerations and idealizations of the “savage.” Native Americans, at this time, were never photographed this intimately, personally or afforded such humanity.

distance between Them and Us, the illusion that They live in different times than We do. (Lippard, 349)

This is precisely the effect that Gómez-Peña's *Border Brujo* has. The effect of the deterritorialization of the audience is achieved through the postmodern concept of hyperspace: "This latest mutation in space – postmodern hyperspace – has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surrounds perceptually, and to map cognitively its position in a mappable external world" (Jameson, 15). Thus, *Border Brujo*'s multiple and sometimes inherently contradictory personalities destabilizes the audience's preconceived notions of what it means to be Mexican American and consequently what it means to be not Mexican American.⁵ *Border Brujo* disturbs the previous spaces of Them and Us by deterritorializing the border between Them and Us.



(Figure 2) *Sampson Beaver, Leah Beaver, and baby Frances Louise*, photographed by Mary Schäffer (1906), in Lucy Lippard's "Diary of a Relationship with an Image" *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells, p.345.

This deterritorialization of the border follows in the spirit of the Copernican Revolution, Darwinian Revolution, and Psychoanalysis. The discovery of the unconscious which disprivileged the ego from the center of the universe is a distinction between Us and Them. So it also is that the Earth revolves around the sun; humans evolved by natural

⁵ Robert Neustadt of the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Mississippi argues that Guillermo Gómez-Peña creates a "counter-hegemonic discourse (whether feminist, postcolonial or neoavant-garde) [by taking a] collective (non)identity...the postmodern position." By "plastering himself with a (con)fusion of signs [such as cultural stereotypes and icons]" Gómez-Peña creates a "collage-like 'text' with his body" (Neustadt, 2).

selection; and, the Superego and Ego cannot control their subconscious Id. In all theories of decentering, “human beings are governed not by their conscious thoughts, but by unconscious forces and drives. The idea of a loss of the conscious self-control exercised by a rational subject is implicit” (“decentering,” PDCT, 85). From the Cartesian cogito, *I think, therefore I am*, Lacan gives us: *I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think* (“decentering,” PDCT, 85). This is where Guillermo Gómez-Peña wants to take his audience—to the Other which we are not fully conscious of having marginalized and suppressed. Guillermo Gómez-Peña references this specific cogito when he says:

I speak Spanish therefore you hate me
I speak English therefore they hate me
I speak in Spanglish therefore she speaks Inglesñol.
(*Border*, 78)

We will return to this in a later section on crossing language borders, but for now it is enough that language and thought are clearly connected. When language is conceived of as speech acts with the creative power to control and define thought, crossing borders creates dialogue.

Border Brujo aspires to the fusion of cultures, ethnic and artistic. The postmodern also fuses both high and low culture, thus the most innovative postmodern artists and thinkers cannot be easily identified or classified into an elite group such as the modernist avant-garde. Multiculturalism, which at first appears to be a change in cultural thinking, is for Gómez-Peña the new art movement emerging from postmodernism. Guillermo Gómez-Peña emphasizes the multiple identities of postmodernism: “As artists, we now understand that we can speak two or more languages, have two or more identities and/or nationalities, perform different roles in multiple contexts, and not necessarily be in conflict with ourselves and others” (“Art-mageddon,” 56). Modernism has one unique self:

The modernist aesthetic is in some way organically linked to the conception of a unique self and private identity, a unique identity, a unique personality and individuality, which can be expected to generate its own unique vision of the world and to forge its own unique, unmistakable type. (Jameson, 6)

In contrast, postmodernism implies multiple selves. Macey defines poststructuralism, most often associated with postmodernism, as “an insistence on the inevitable plurality and instability of meaning, a distrust of systematic scientificity, and the abandoning of the old Enlightenment project” (“poststructuralism,” PDCT, 309). When there is a Self, there is inevitably a plurality of other versions of the self. The postmodernist hope for the actualization of artistic vision “insist[s] that it affords liberation from a rationality that has...become an ‘iron cage’” and “usher[s] in an era of relativism and a welcome pluralism” (“postmodernism,” PDCT, 307). Postmodernism is not just irrational or ludicrous, rather modernity is so rigid that reason has locked the mind up. Unlike the modern, the postmodern understands that the art process itself is inherently artificial and thus there is no need to draw attention to the medium or the craft.

The autoreferentiality of modernism calls attention to the medium and artfulness and it is consequently accompanied by high aestheticism. Modernism takes itself with the utmost seriousness. Postmodernity, in contrast, is “an irrational anti-modernism which turns against the heritage of the Enlightenment” (“modernism,” PDCT, 258). Yet, the modernist movement is hung up on its own paradox. Macey points out this flaw in his definition of *modernism*: “the image of modernity is profoundly ambiguous. Change is so rapid that it becomes a form of changelessness; as Benjamin puts it, ‘the new’ becomes the ‘almost the same’” (“modernism,” PDCT, 258). What happens when the new is old?

Before we can articulate the postmodern parallel with the avant-garde, we must first be clear that the avant-garde is clearly a modernist construction. David Macey's definition of the postmodern points out that the deceptive nature of the word *postmodern* implies that the postmodern directly follows the modern. "Although the postmodernist debate is mainly a product of the 1970s" it has always existed as a "reactionary tendency within modernism" ("postmodernism," PDCT, 306). Frederic Jameson in his writings on the postmodern explains more fully how postmodernism is a reactive trend:

Radical breaks between periods do not generally involve complete changes of content but rather the restructuring of a certain number of elements already given: features that in an earlier period or system were subordinate now become dominant, and features that had been dominant again become secondary. (Jameson, 18)

Can the avant-garde then not also have postmodern characteristics? We must take a larger chronological view of this. Modernism was most clearly defined in the 1920's by such works as T.S. Eliot's The Wasteland, James Joyce's Ulysses and Virginia Wolfe's Jacob's Room, and by people such as Gertrude Stein, Cezanne and Pablo Picasso. In other words, Modernism was defined by the (European) Avant-Garde. Then who defined the Postmodern? In the 1970s, performance artists such as John Fleck, Karen Finley, Holly Hughes and Tim Miller (the NEA-4) brought the postmodern to the forefront in their battle for funding.⁶ The performance spaces of bathrooms and streets became the laboratories of what really has no name. It is not the avant-garde because it does not value a modernist aesthetic, and it is not

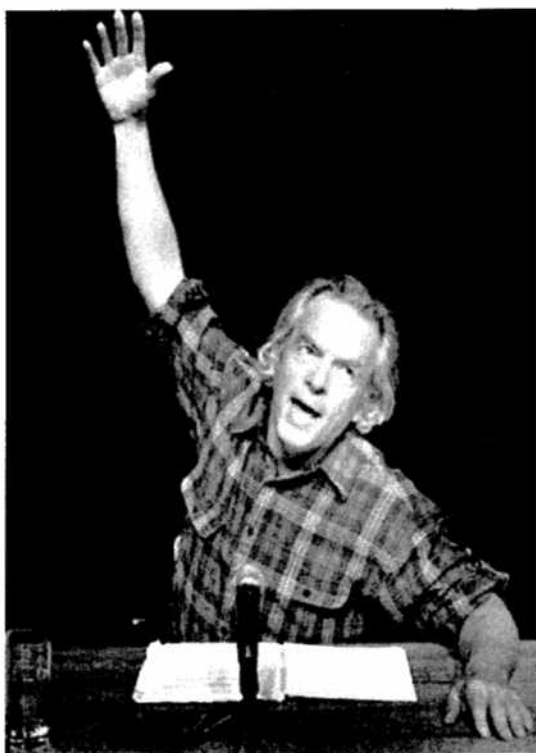
⁶ In 1990, after losing their National Endowment for the Arts Solo Performer Fellowship for homosexual performance content, John Fleck, Karen Finley, Holly Hughes and Tim Miller, with the help of ACLU, successfully sued the federal government for violation of their First Amendment rights and won a settlement in the amount of the defunded grants and court costs. The NEA "decency" clause was declared unconstitutional by Judge Wallace Tashima of the Ninth Federal Circuit Court but after the Justice Department's appeal the Supreme Court upheld the clause as constitutional by an 8-1 margin in 1998 (Finley v. National Endowment for the Arts).

the avant-garde because these performers would hardly consider themselves the elite. We can only call it the post avant-garde.

Modernism conceived of avant-garde art as elite and therefore set apart from life, but “there is no discontinuity between art and life” (Greenberg, 14). Thus, to the avant-garde there was a rear guard or kitsch, a commodifiable and consumable everyday art that “borrow[ed] from it devices, tricks, stratagems, rules of thumb, themes, convert[ed] them into a system, and discard[ed] the rest” (Greenberg, 10). As Greenberg says “Where there is an avant-garde, generally we also find a rear-garde” (Greenberg, 9). Is the post-avant-garde also the rear guard? We must hesitate to say so. Perhaps postmodernism is a kitsch that is hard to comprehend and consume. Postmodernism, according to Jameson, is related to the emergence of consumer or multinational capitalism. That is to say that postmodernism reinforces and resists the logic of consumer capitalism at the same time. The transformation of reality into images facilitates both the consumption and the fragmentation of time which perpetuates the present (Jameson, 20). Thus, postmodernism is related to kitsch in so much as they are both reactive trends to the avant-garde and means of increasing the image production of consumer culture. However, the post avant-garde also resists appropriation or explanation; it is the performance or process rather than the product that is valued as art.

If the avant-garde is the elite of the modernist movement, then who is heading postmodernism? For now, we are calling it the post avant-garde. The avant-garde means to achieve enlightenment and actualize their artistic vision by pressing on ahead and leaving the kitsch behind. However, the beauty of campy performance art is that it achieves inspiration within an eclectic mess of triteness and superficiality. Indeed, performance artists hope to find their art from the garbage. That is the post avant-garde project. What happens when the new is old? For the post avant-garde nothing is new and thus always new.

Does *Border Brujo* have a place in the avant-garde? It does challenge the old social order and its assumptions about art, performance space and the border between art and life. However, in *Border Brujo*, the emphasis is on the border and multi-hybrid nature of borders in general. In fact, the performance art tradition arising in the 1970s, in relation to the modernist notion of the avant-garde, is more postmodern and the avant-garde more modern. The early form of modernism in Latin America, in the 1890s, was called modernismo. It was a poetic and literary movement that adapted French romanticism and symbolism in order to assert cultural independence from Spain (“modernism,” PDCT, 258). In the face of U.S. cultural consumerism and manifest destiny, Guillermo Gómez-Peña must not only



(Figure 3, *left*) Spaulding Gray, *It's a Slippery Slope*, Lincoln Center, 1997. Photo by Paula Court in Arnold Aronson's *The American Avant-Garde*, p.154. Despite venue size, the simple format (table, glass of water, and notebook) remain constant for Spaulding Gray.

(Figure 4, *top right*) and (Figure 13, *bottom right*) Still frame captures from *Border Brujo*, dir. Isaac Artensein, prod. Lynn Schuette, (Cinewest Productions: San Diego, 1990). Although Gómez-Peña's table is overcrowded with a hundred times as many objects, it still all fits in a suitcase. The basic format—table, glass of water, and prop(s)—is the same.

reassert the cultural independence but also the presence of Chicanos, Latinos and other border crossers. Modernismo was not enough to redefine modern notions of pure culture.

Guillermo Gómez-Peña differs from other non-ethnic performance artists in performance content but not style. His performances bring the marginalized and hybrid cultures to the center in a culturally tangible and visible manner. However, compare contemporary performance artist Spaulding Gray (Figure 3) and Guillermo Gómez-Peña (Figure 4 and Figure 13); the performance art context and set up are the same. Gómez-Peña describes the minimalism of his solo work saying “I use a megaphone, a mike, and a ghetto blaster as my only technical support. I often perform behind a table filled with votive candles and ritual props. My props and costumes can easily fit in a suitcase” (“Binational,” 29). The rejection of “complex infrastructures,” actors, and theatrical conventions of illusion firmly groups Gómez-Peña with the performance artists of the American (post) avant-garde. However, the campiness of the performance, the possibility of audience interaction, and the portability of the performance distance *Border Brujo* from elitist, inaccessible art.

In a history of American avant-garde theatre, Arnold Aronson describes the process by which “the visual style and rhythmic structures of avant-garde theatre ha[s] been absorbed into and permeates fashion, music, graphic art, and a variety of media, which in turn feed back into multimedia performances, performance art, and the hybrid theatre of clubs and discos” (Aronson, 211). Is MTV really on par with the Wooster Group? Yet, MTV has become as visually confusing as the avant-garde theatre of the early 20th century. Aronson concludes that there is no longer an avant-garde in American theatre because “there is, in a sense, no establishment versus antiestablishment – only a monolithic culture scene with internal variations” (Aronson, 206). Although the avant-garde is based on a linear paradigm

of forward motion and progress, Aronson cites the lack of boundaries as the dissimulation of the avant-garde: “With almost no boundaries, it is hard for an art to develop or to exist *outside* the mainstream. And, more important, with no sense of forward motion, there is nothing to be ahead of; one cannot be in the vanguard” (Aronson, 2007). Aronson concludes that the loss of a clear boundary between art and life has made it impossible for there to be a vanguard. The boundary between art and life is as artificial and self-constructed as the U.S. – Mexico border. The avant-garde permeates the boundary between art and life, but the post avant-garde does not recognize any artistic borders.

Unlike Arnold Aronson, Guillermo Gómez-Peña does not concede that the avant-garde has become the mainstream just because it is no longer in the front. Rather, he argues that the avant-garde has become decentered and the once invisible and marginal non-elite is in charge of artistic movement:

Unlike the avant-garde of modernist times, today’s avant-garde has multiple fronts, or, as Steven Durland has stated: ‘The avant-garde is no longer in the front but in the margins.’ To be avant-garde in the late 1980s means to contribute to the decentralization of art. To be avant-garde means to be able to cross the border; to go back and forth between art and politically significant territory. (“Multicultural,” 49)

Gómez-Peña values the avant-garde only in its ability to recontextualize the border between art and life. Once the avant-garde had decontextualized the border between art and life, the performance artist could recontextualize art and perform and create art in both artistic and non-artistic contexts—“the world, not just the art world” (“Multicultural,” 49). The (post) avant-garde can best decentralize art not from the front but from the margins. Gómez-Peña’s conceptualization of the avant-garde is that of multiple perspectives and the conflict and possibility of multiple, non-static borders between the mainstream and the non-

mainstream. By pressing forward and backwards and centrifugally, the avant-garde becomes the mainstream while simultaneously remaining the Other.

The negotiation of performance as a dynamic system focuses an audience on the dynamic nature of the world and on the multiple versions of a culture, a social paradigm, and an individual. This is Guillermo Gómez-Peña's art. This is dialogue and the free exchange of ideas. Guillermo Gómez-Peña performs the individual as a microcosm of bordering cultures, different personalities and conflicting ideologies. Furthermore, the multiracial individual dramatizes the border conflict of race. *Border Brujo* summarizes the negotiation of cultures familiar to the multiracial individual without the biological condition of the border conflict, rather with only the physical condition of the presence of the border. The character Border Brujo is a border-crosser. The physical borders of the United States and Mexico precede the biological border conflict of the multiracial person and the necessity of crossing the metaborders in our own minds. This experience of the multiple and simultaneous existence of the Self, the Other and the Other Self is common to us all.

Chapter Two
**Border Brujo: The Performance
 of the Self, the Other, and the Other Self**

“Let her take over or just get to know her. If you can find her and free her, Juanita will unchain your heart.” --ShaniaTwain⁷

“The struggle is inner: Chicano, *indio*, American Indian, *mojado*, *mexicano*, immigrant Latino, Anglo in power, working class Anglo, Black, Asian—our psyches resemble the bordertowns and are populated by the same people.” --Gloria Anzaldúa⁸

Guillermo Gómez-Peña's character Border Brujo is a wizard who has many different shapes, voices and faces—he is all the people of the border. He surpasses any of Gómez-Peña's previous hybrid characters including Wrestler Shaman, Multimedia Pachuco and Aztec Princess (“Binational,” 24). Guillermo Gómez-Peña describes his identity not as “a monolith but a kaleidoscope; and everything I create, including [the performance text *Border Brujo*], contains a multiplicity of voices, each speaking from a different part of myself” (“Binational,” 21). In this one-man performance, the character Border Brujo speaks in many different voices; some are marked in the performance text adjectivally: authoritative, normal, drunken, stoned, agitated, and epiphanic. Other voices are ascribed a particular persona: transvestite, smooth-talker, hipster, upper-class Latino, drunken tourist, redneck, newscaster, Mexican soap opera, Mexico City *Ñero*, Merolico, Norteño, Mexican, TV evangelist, Macuarro, Pachuco Dandy, Cantiflas. Only once is the voice specified by language: Broken English. Otherwise, the language falls somewhere between English and Spanish; the implication is that the language is correlated to the persona or adjective indicated. The times

⁷ Shania Twain, Perf. “Juanita,” by R.J. Lange and Shania Twain, Mercury Records, 2002.

⁸ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, (Aunt Lute Books: San Francisco, 1987), 109.

when he speaks in Nahuatl or in tongues are not assigned to a particular persona, nor is the language written out in the performance text. There is no shaman character, although there is an “epiphanic voice” and he is speaking from an altar. Section VI begins with a psalm in Latin and continues like a Catholic chant. *Border Brujo* does not respect or acknowledge the borders between race, religion and language, which are crossed by any border (non)identity. Thus, although different types of voices and personas are made explicit in the performance text, race, religion and language are not.

Four years prior to *Border Brujo*, in September 1985, Gómez-Peña returned to post-earthquake Mexico City and like many of other artists his artwork was profoundly affected by “the dimensions of the tragedy.” Gómez-Peña says that “Mexican artists learned a harsh lesson: in times of disaster, the function of art becomes strictly utilitarian” (“Binational,” 25). This was the founding principle of the community paper established in part to help rebuild the city. The paper was called *El Ñero*, short for *El Compañero*, and thus the name Mexico City Ñero. Other Mexico City specific *Border Brujo* personas include the Merolico and Macuarro. The Merolico, as defined by the Concise Oxford Spanish Dictionary from is simply a “quack” selling his wares with wordiness and much show. The term also refers to Mexican street performers, or as Gómez-Peña calls them “chroniclers of urban tragedies” (Carr, 195). Since Gómez-Peña also calls the Mexico City earthquake of 1985 a tragedy, then his definition of the Merolico also references Mexico City.

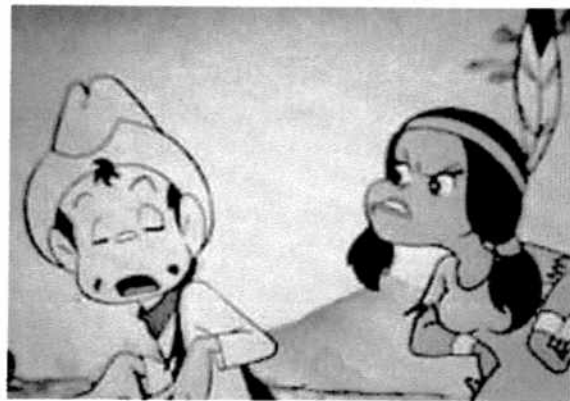
The last Mexico City specific character is the Macuarro, which is, as noted in the performance directions, a “racist depiction of a Mexico City urban mestizo” (*Border*, 85). Guillermo Gómez-Peña is literally all of these types of people; he is *Border Brujo*. The precise border between the artist and the character is particularly unclear because of the basis of performance art in the (con)fusion of Self and Other. If all identity is performed, then

how can we say that the performance of Border Brujo is not the performance of Guillermo Gómez-Peña? Well, one is scripted, and one is not. The character Border Brujo is molded and sculpted to reveal our fears and desires.

Gómez-Peña performs the identities of those whom we fear: the transvestite, the hipster, the drug dealing junkie, and the Pachuco Dandy. The term *Pachuco Dandy* exemplifies the concept of the conflicting duality of identity. He has the machismo of a Latino gangster, Pachuco, while also being a dandy. Either way, it is the Other who is feared whether it is his machismo or homosexuality. The Pachuco is the threatening figure that the pocho, or Chicano migrant worker, can become. Gómez-Peña also performs the Other, which for him is the upper-class Latino, the provincial Norteño, the redneck, and the drunken tourist. Referencing TV popular culture, he takes on the identity of Mexico soap opera actor, Mexican wrestler, TV evangelist and Cantiflas. While only noted in the performance script by persona, voice and repeated costume changes (wigs, hats, glasses, bandanas, wrestling masks) signify character shifts.

Cantiflas is a popular Spanish-speaking comedian, whose children's cartoon program was originally released in Mexico in 1980. After two seasons, the episodes were redubbed into English and then into a bilingual format.

In each episode, called in English *Amigos and Friends*, Cantiflas, or your Hispanic (but white) cowboy friend, pictured on the right talking with a more stereotypically depicted Native Mexican women, leads children on fun learning adventures like visiting Shakespeare and the pyramids (see Figure 5).



(Figure 5) "Amigos and Friends" 80's Carton Central. Aurora, 2004. Hanna-Barbera/Diamex S.A./Televisa, S.A. Production. 16 March 2005 <<http://80scartoons.net/toons/cantinflas.html> >

Guillermo Gómez-Peña's choice of the Cantiflas-voice for the monologue defending the position of his Border Brujo character emphasizes the (post) avant-garde notion that the performer is leading the audience on a fun and exciting adventure exploring identity and performance. Furthermore, he is reclaiming the stereotypes and caricatures in his performance to relay a greater message of multicultural understanding and exchange.

Performance art draws on the personal, the real, and even the kitsch and commodified. There are no borders in art for Guillermo Gómez-Peña as there are no borders whether respect to time or place. In the middle of the performance, section XVI, Border Brujo says in a very fast

"Cantiflas-like voice":

they say I have to stop riding
my experimental donkey
and put my feet on the ground
once and for all
but let me tell you something
I feel no ground under my feet
I'm floating, floating
on the ether
of the present tense
of California
and the past tense
of Mexico
[*He speaks in tongues*] (*Border*, 85)



(Figure 6) Duncan Eccleston, Central American Odyssey.
"Tijuana (Part 1): The Tourist Experience" 4 October 2000.
Adventures Club. 16 March 2005.
<[http://icsdev.soe.umich.edu/confur/stories/reader/fall/ody\\$7b48f736ed8080d00edafcc77d6a5b23](http://icsdev.soe.umich.edu/confur/stories/reader/fall/ody$7b48f736ed8080d00edafcc77d6a5b23)>

This section of the performance text has two effects. First, it articulates a metaphor of the border experience as timeless and placeless, neither in the present or the past, California or Mexico, the ground or the air. Second, it compares the performance to riding a donkey, which in the context of the performance content discussing border towns references the many photo stands in border towns that have tourists dressing up in sombreros and blankets

sitting on a cart behind a donkey painted with zebra stripes (see Figure 6). Gómez-Peña, like these border town tourist photographers, takes the stereotypes to a level of absurdity. For instance, Duncan Eccleston's photograph accompanies the following description of *Tijuana* (Part 1): *The Tourist Experience*:

Tourists visit for a day or two to get the "South of the Border" flavor, and the local merchants oblige by selling them souvenirs that fulfill every Mexican stereotype perpetrated by Speedy Gonzales....On every block, industrious Mexicans have set up photo stands, where visitors pay to don sombreros, drape blankets over their shoulders, and sit on a cart behind a live burro improbably painted with zebra stripes. (Eccleston, Screen 2)

Gómez-Peña, like the Tijuana street-hustler, reclaims the stereotypes for his own purpose, which is altogether different from the monetary profit of a few dollars for a Polaroid. That is not to say, though, that the local economy of the maquiladora profits much—given social and environmental costs—from the tourist velvet paintings and plastic bobble-head dolls produced. The Tijuana street-hustler persona emerges early in the performance welcoming us to the Casa de Cambio⁹ and trying to sell us the idea of border crossing: "gabacho¹⁰ wake up and cross" (*Border*, 80)! Gómez-Peña is trying to sell, or more precisely exchange, artistic ideas of a borderless world that is perpetually a border. On the one hand, he is comical and entertaining, floating on the ether of the past and the present, yet also seriously performing a Chicano identity that is connected to a present Chicano culture in California and a past Hispanic culture in Mexico.

⁹ The next section, *The Border Is A Chicano Community of Aztlán*, will elaborate on the border town paraphernalia that contextualizes Border Brujo's altar.

¹⁰ *Gabacho* like *gringo* is a Mexican word for an Anglo, although slightly derisive.

The first half of the performance is selling you something in one way or another. There is the Tijuana hustler at the Casa del Cambio in Section V, and there is a tequila advertisement performed in a “Transvestite Voice,” and then a shampoo bottle advertised in an “Indian dialect” in Section XII. The Cantiflas section is preceded by a TV evangelist speaking about the loss of borders as if it were the apocalypse: “the border has been cancelled...we are running out of time, pesos & faith” (*Border*, 84). Finally, the end of the first half of the performance is the Street-Hustler. Although the Street Hustler is not selling us anything this time, he embodies the quintessential Tijuana merchantman. He calls out, “hey mister . . . mixer” (ellipsis original) and tells us:

you thought Mexican art was a bunch of candy skulls & velvet paintings
 you thought Mexico represented your past
 & now you’re realizing Mexico is your future
 you thought there was a border between the 1st and the 3rd worlds
 & now you’re realizing you’re part of the 3rd world (*Border*, 86)

It is the United States “mister” that is the “mixter” not the bordertown persona. As much as the Anglo American attempts to maintain a border between “Us and Them,” cultural consumption, commodification and appropriation by the mere fact of bringing cultures together produces the “border” and (non)culture or rather multi-culture. Overall, the idea that there is no border dominates this passage. Moreover, the responsibility is placed on the border-maker—the gabacho must wake up and cross south, rather than the Mexican crossing the border north. Chicana theorist Gloria Anzaldúa ends her book Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza with the same assertion of legitimate Mexican presence in North America: “This land was Mexican once was Indian always and is. And will be again” (Anzaldúa, 113).

Section IX, in a “Vulnerable and Tender Voice,” Border Brujo addresses the gabacho as “estimado compañero” esteemed companion, “del otro lado del espejo” the

other side of the mirror, and “maestro” master (*Border*, 82). He posits the master’s weapons against his words. He says, “my tongue is licking your wounds” and “it hurts” (*Border*, 82). Whether he is referring to his tongue or to the wound is unclear, but either way “it’s up to you to dialogue” (*Border*, 82). This tongue could also be his “wild tongue” that speaks English, Spanish, Spanglish, and Nahuatl in the wound of the border.¹¹ Either interpretation offers only dialogue as solution.

The next section puts forth a similar message: “It’s me, the Mexican beast we are here to talk, to change, to ex-change” but asks us to remember “I’m not your tourist guide across the undetermined otherness” (*Border*, 82). He is not your Cantiflas Amigo, although he is taking us to the other side of the mirror, revealing the reverse of what we see of ourselves. There is a Mexican beast, or as Anzaldúa calls it, a Shadow beast, in all of us: “If we can’t see the face of fear in the mirror, then fear must not be there. The feeling is censored and erased before it registers in our consciousness” (Anzaldúa, 67). Border Brujo will not just show you what the Redneck in Section XX wants: Speedy González, “Fritou banditou, Johnny McTaco, Pancho de nacho,” “the Baja Marimba Band y sus cantina girls,” or a “real representation” (*Border*, 87). Border Brujo will smash the mirror between the Other and the Self. His response to the Redneck: “I represent you, yet you don’t represent me & you think you still have the power to define” (*Border*, 87)? Despite the implicit insult and underlying anger, the act of performing the Other sets the example for dialogue: “a micro-universal expression of international cooperation. When it is effective, we recognize ourselves in the other and realize we don’t have to fear” (“Multicultural,” 48). Border Brujo as the Mexican migrant worker, cook, busboy, mechanic, gardener, painter and nanny says:

¹¹ In Section XXV, Border Brujo says, “& you ask me ‘are you implying that the U.S. is a police state?’ but I can only answer in náhuatl” (*Border*, 92). Border languages will be discussed more in detail in a third section, *Speaking in Tongues*.

“go South, Califa abandon your dream & join the continental project” (*Border*, 81). Above all, *Border Brujo* is “a strategy of social communication and an exercise in cultural translation” (“Binational,” 16), because “the only way to regenerate identity and culture is through ongoing dialogue with the other” (“Multicultural,” 48).

The second half of the performance focuses on the effects of the Otherization by Anglos and Mexicans on the Chicano: alienation. In Section XXI, *Border Brujo* says that he is “just a deterritorialized ‘chilango’ who claims to be a Chicano” but he could have easily been mistaken for the “typhoid & malaria” infected, undocumented, alien whose back is still wet from the river he just crossed ready to fight, rape, deal drugs, abuse the welfare system, steal and plot to overthrow the “U.S. government & the art world” (*Border*, 87). He describes many times when he has been held at the border for being thought to be such a dangerous man, when really he is just a man who was born in Mexico City but moved to California when he was 20. He is a chilango who, once taken out of context, is not exactly a Chicano, not having been born in a barrio in the United States; neither is he Mexican anymore, and yet he is not an Anglo American of the United States. This is the same plight of the multiracial individual. Section XXI makes this connection. The Macuarro, or Mexico City urban mestizo, was “born in the middle of a movie set they were shooting ‘La Migra Contra El Príncipe Chichimeca.’ I was literally born in the middle of a battle” (*Border*, 88). While Guillermo Gómez-Peña never explicitly discusses any experience beyond the multicultural, this speaks directly to Anzaldúa’s poem “To Live in the Borderlands”¹² which explicitly compares the mestizo experience to a battleground. This can be an experience of intense violence and alienation, yet it has the possibility of being the solution.

¹² This will be discussed further in Chapter 6, *A Wound: Pain and Regeneration*, and in the conclusion, *Check All That Apply: A Multiracial Nation*.

Gloria Anzaldúa concludes that because she is a mestiza she has no country and all countries. The multiracial person is fractionated and split among his/her inherited community, often being rejected by them all. Anzaldúa's solution then is "a massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness," which though "the beginning of a long struggle [is] one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war" (Anzaldúa, 102). Section XXV plays through all the variations on the word *alienation*:

alien-ation
 alien action
 alienated
 alguien ate it
 alien hatred
 aliens out there
 hay alguien out there
 (Border, 90)

From alienated, Border Brujo thinks of "alguien ate it" or someone ate it, which sounds like alien hatred. How apt, because hatred of the alien, or the Other, is the motivation to alienate. Yet, the word play doesn't end here. It continues to "aliens out there" and then "hay alguien out there" or there is someone out there. Thus, feeling alone and knowing that you are not alone are connected. Is it that alienation implies that there is an Other who is feared and hated? Perhaps, it is the fact that there is fear that it is known that there are aliens out there. More than this, it is what is not there that speaks the most. The most obvious wordplay of alienation is not there: alien nation. Because, despite the Spanish and Spanglish and Nahuatl, despite the performance that is all meant to make the audience feel somewhat alienated, Guillermo Gómez-Peña does not mean to imply that this is a nation of aliens, neither that we are all foreign to each other nor that no one belongs. In fact, he means to show how we can find ourselves in anyone. Although "there's no insecticide for the Mexican fly no antidote for your fear of otherness" (Border, 90), we can see our Self in the Other.

Figures 7-21 Still frame captures from *Border Brujo*, perf. Guillermo Gómez-Peña, dir. Isaac Artensein, prod. Lynn Schuette, (Cinewest Productions: San Diego, 1990).



(Figure 7) Votive candles, Clairol Herbal Essence, and Radio on Border Brujo's altar.



(Figure 8) Votive candles, bananas, playing cards, and dice.



(Figure 9) Border Brujo begins to drink from Clairol Herbal essence bottle drunken voice: "you're just a border-cross a 'wetback' with amnesia."



(Figure 10) Border Brujo drinks from Clairol Herbal essence bottle before switching into after epiphanic: "I cam following your dream & your dream became my nightmare."



(Figure 11) Tijuana Barker, Section V: "Welcome to the Casa de Cambio...the place where Tijuana y San Diego se entepiernan."



(Figure 12) Norteño Voice, Section VI: "We hold the tiny artery which links you to the past, the umbilical cord that goes back to the origins."



(Figure 13) Smooth-Talker Voice, Section X: “so let’s pull down the zipper of our fears & being the...but remember, I’m not your tourist guide across the undetermined otherness this ain’t no tropical safari...much less a private seminar on interracial relations”



(Figure 14) Merolico Voice, Section XX: “you can’t even understand the guy ‘cause he speaks in a foreign tongue seems real angrey & ungrateful & you being to wonder”



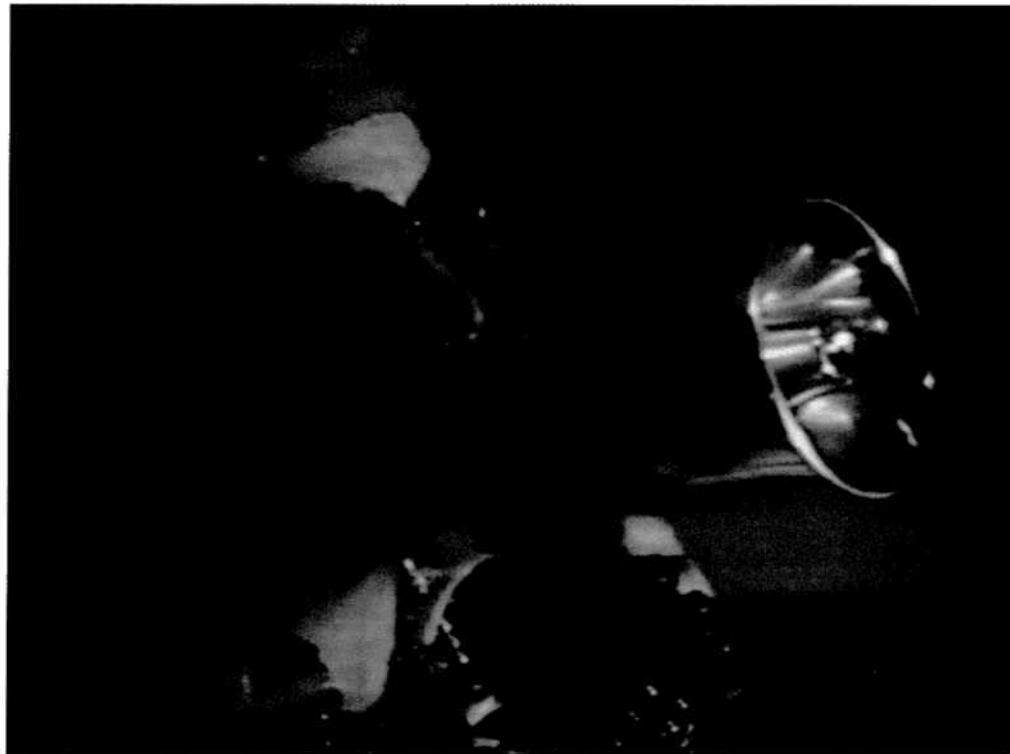
(Figure 15) Pachuco Dandy Voice, Section XXI: "please don't touch me I've got typhoid & malaria don't you dare touch me I haven't been documented yet."



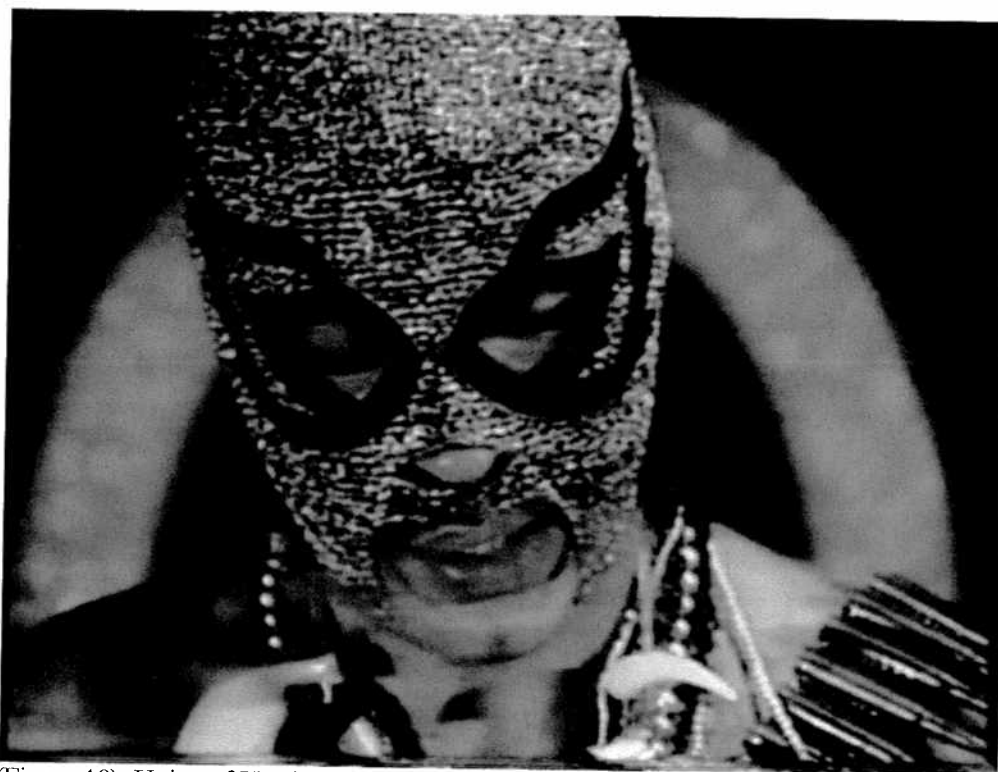
(Figure 16) Macuarro Voice, Section XXII: "I was literally born in the middle of a battle I'm almost an aborigine you know a Hollywood Indian."



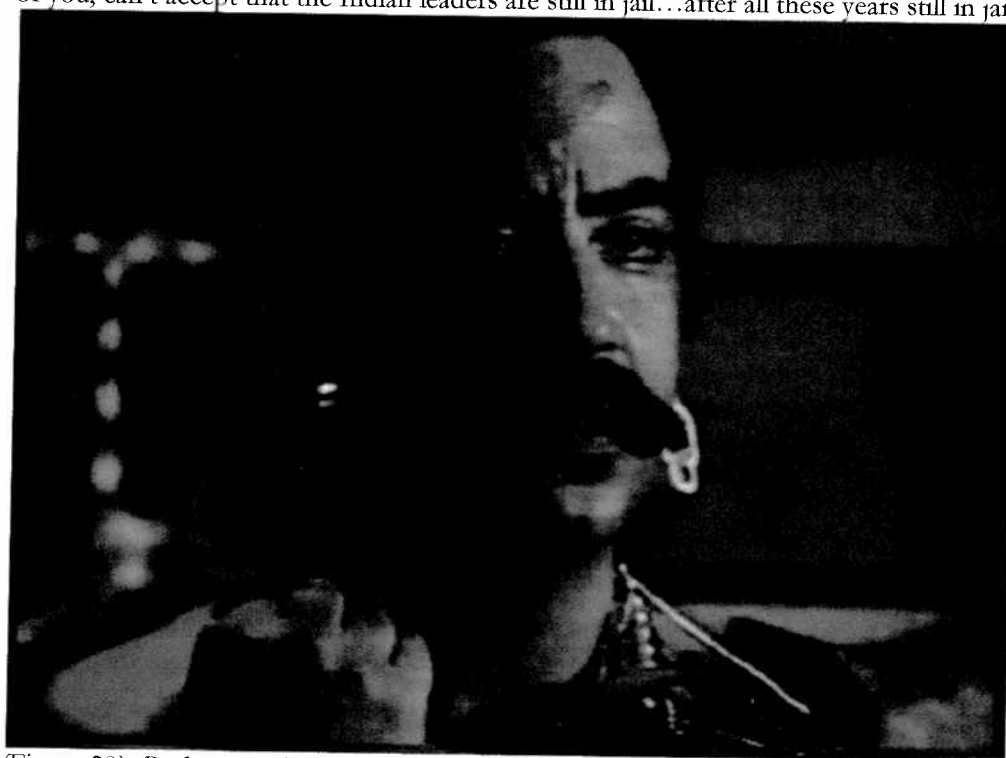
(Figure 17) TV Evangelist Voice, Section XV: "We are running out of time, pesos & faith."



(Figure 18) Authoritative Voice, Section XXXI: "Come on, be honest. This is just a performance, no big deal. I've been asked myself each of these questions at least a couple 100 times & I've been violently frisked at least 20 times for not having answered them."



(Figure 19) Voice of Hard-Core Political Activist, Section XXXIII: "Where are all my Chicano compadres? I can't accept that they all went crazy like me or yuppie like some of you, can't accept that the Indian leaders are still in jail...after all these years still in jail."



(Figure 20) Pachuco Voice, Section XXXVII: "Gimme those besitos across the border fence...let me know if you are coming back soon for I'm tired of fighting la migra by myself. Ay, my little brown self is almost non-existent tonight."



(Figure 21) Official Portrait of Border Brujo, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *Warrior for Gringostroika*, p79

SECTION 2: THE BORDER IS

Chapter Three **The Border Is**

“Papá, what are we? *Mexicans, son.*
 Mexicans and we don’t live in Mexico. Are we Americans then?
Yes, my son, we are also Americans.
 Then why do the Mexicans call us Pochos and [Americans] call us Mexican greasers?”
 —Miguel Méndez¹³

“We need you to say... to say that you are afraid of us, that to put distance between us, you wear the mask of contempt. Admit that Mexico is your double, that she exists in the shadow of this country, that we are irrevocably tied to her. Gringo, accept the doppelganger in your psyche. And finally, tell us what you need from us... By taking back your collective shadow the intracultural split will heal.”
 —Gloria Anzaldúa¹⁴

The U.S.-Mexico border areas have always been contested spaces of territory and cultural traditions. The present day Southwest of the United States was part of the United States of Mexico until the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, which ceded California, Nevada, Utah, most of Arizona, and some of Colorado, Wyoming and New Mexico to the United States, ending the Mexico American War¹⁵. However, even before that, Mexico was having trouble populating this land and the majority of squatters were Anglo Americans. At the same time, both the United States and Mexican governments were relocating Native Americans into this area. In a dialogue between Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Coco Fusco said, “A significant way for immigrant cultures to deal with the new reality is through reterritorialization— rejection of the new reality and construction of a fictitious past” (“Bilingualism,” 153). Guillermo Gómez-Peña sites the process of reterritorialization

¹³ Miguel Méndez, *Pereregrinos de Aztlán (Pilgrims in Aztlán)*. Trans. David Foster. (Reprint, Tempe: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe, 1992), 170.

¹⁴ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, (Aunt Lute Books: San Francisco, 1987), 108.

¹⁵ Refer to Figure 1 in *Introduction: Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Latin American Multiculturalism*.

for Chicanos in the Southwest as the Chicano movement in the 1960s and 1970s. The fictitious past created by the reterritorialization of the Mexican immigrant culture was the myth of Aztlán.

The manifesto, *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*, adopted by the Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver, March 1969, declares “the independence of our mestizo nation. We are a bronze people with a bronze culture. Before the world, before all of North America, before all our brothers in the bronze continent, we are a nation, we are a union of free pueblos, we are Aztlán” (Qtd in Salazar, 265). According to myth, the Aztecs emerged from the center of the earth through seven caves. They first settled in Aztlán¹⁶ and then migrated southward in search of a sign to settle one last time. Indeed, the Aztecs did migrate from the present-day Southwestern United States to Central America at the end of the first millennium A.D. before settling in the Toltec city of Tollan, present day Mexico City (Anzaldúa, 27). According to the Chicano folklore, Aztlán is the portion of Mexico that was ceded to the United States in the Mexican-American War of 1846, meaning Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

The Chicano narrative of Aztlán accounts for racial mixing and different definitions of race. It empowers the Mestizo—the bronze people—and at the same time eliminates White privilege. This takes into account the border violence and trauma of the interracial history of America that resulted in a population of multiracial people. While there are many Chicanos who are multiracial, the racial aspect of the Chicano identity assumes a mixture of Spanish and Native American peoples. The relationship between the Spanish people and the native peoples of the Americas as well as the introduction of African people through the

¹⁶ The word *Aztlán* is a combination of Nahuatl words, a language native to the peoples of Southern Mexico and Central America, meaning Place of Herons or Whiteness, the place of origin. United States archeologist have found 20,000-year-old campsites of the Indians who migrated through the Southwest, Aztlán, the Edenic place of origin of the Azteca (Anzaldúa, 27).

Slave trade racially produced the Mestizo.¹⁷ Further interracial relationships between Anglo Americans and Mexican Americans have created a group that is racially indefinable by current Anglo American racial systems (White, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, Other). The U.S. Census has had to create a separate question to record Hispanic demographics. While many today advocate for the term *Hispanic* to be made into a racial category, the Chicano movement transcended the five category perspective of race¹⁸ in the 1970's when it declared itself a movement of "bronze people." Chicanos already conceived of themselves in multiracial terms.

Gloria Anzaldúa's poem, "Borderlands/La Fronteras," describes the internal conflict of the self and other that is common for multiracial people:

To live in the borderlands means you
are neither *hispana india negra española*
ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulatta, half-breed
caught in the crossfire between camps
while carrying all five races on your back
not knowing which side to turn to, run from

"Mestizo" is the Hispanic equivalent of Anglo-America's "mulatto." A mestizo is a person of mixed racial ancestry of Europe and Native America. It is related to the Late Latin *mixticius*, the past participle of *miscere*, to mix ("Mestizo," OED, def. 1a). *Mulatto* refers to a person of mixed white and Black ancestry. It is etymologically related to the Old Spanish word *mulo* and Latin *mulus* for mule ("Mulatto," OED, def. 1a). Although not inherently derogatory or offensive, and originally as colloquial as present use of the term "mixed,"

¹⁷ A mestizo is a person of mixed European and non-European parentage, particularly Spanish and Native American. Its root word *mixtus* is Latin for mixed. Furthermore, *mestizaje* refers to more than racial miscegenation but also cultural intermixing ("Mestizo," OED, def. 1a).

¹⁸ The Chicano movement took an essentialist approach to race, which is not unexpected considering the racial composition of the Hispanic population in the United States and Mexico. However, the Chicano movement predates the multiracial movement by at least a decade. This will be elaborated upon in the Conclusion, *Check All That Apply: A Multiracial Nation*.

“mestizo” and “mulatto” are not politically correct terms for multiracial and biracial individuals today.¹⁹ It is not possible to construct identity along terms of either/or as Anzaldúa writes:

To live in the Borderlands means knowing
that the *India* in you, betrayed for 500 years,
is no longer speaking to you,
that *mexicanas* call you *rajetas*,
that denying the Anglo inside you
is as bad as having denied the Indian or Black;

Cuando vives en la frontera [when you live on the border]
people walk through you, wind steals your voice,
you're a *burra*, scapegoat forerunner of a new race

The border is what turns the family or the body into a battleground:

In the Borderlands
you are the battleground
where enemies are kin to each other;
you are at home, a stranger
the border disputes have been settled
you are wounded, lost in action
dead, fighting back;

To neglect or deny any one of multiple identities is a lie that does violence to the body. As the only possible solution, Anzaldúa ends the poem:

To survive in the Borderlands
you must live *sin fronteras* [without borders]
be a crossroads.

The creation and maintenance of racial borders sacrifices the mestizo/a (Anzaldúa, 216-217, italics original, brackets are author's translation).

Like the border that can be redrawn and recontextualized, race is a social construction as well as a social reality. Race is the outer shell of culture and ethnicity. Like family, race is something into which we are born. There is something biological about race

¹⁹ The name of Dairy Queen's newest cappuccino milkshake, the moolatte, is currently being protested by several multiracial advocacy groups ("Stranger than Fiction: On the Lookout for Multiracial Munchies," Mavin, 80).

and there is something social about it. We can see it in language, food and the body. Abby L. Ferber describes the social construction of race, in relationship to interracial relationships, in terms of boundaries: "The boundaries, however, are never 'natural' boundaries, lying outside discrete subjects. Because race is not given, by nature, it must be constructed and reconstructed, again and again, always a redrawing of the boundaries.... The actual maintenance of the boundaries creates, reproduces, and consolidates racialized identities" (Ferber, 166). Racial constructions are something we impose on each other but they are not something we have created. However, racial boundaries are not natural either; they will not remain separate within the multiracial individual. Though we consolidate racialized identities by maintaining racial distinctions, the boundaries must constantly be redrawn.

El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán solidified a cultural identity of Hispanics in the United States, colloquially known as Chicano, in 1969. The following year, the census specifically included a separate question concerning Hispanic origin, although this question was only asked of 5% of surveyed households. Previously, Hispanic origin had only been indirectly determined by Spanish surnames. Census 2000 included the term *Latino* for the first time in the question: "Is this person Spanish/Hispanic/Latino?," with *Chicano* as a possible answer: "No," "Yes, Puerto Rican," "Yes, Cuban," "Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano," and "Yes, other" ("Hispanic Population," Census 2000). According to Census 2000 information, the U.S. – Mexico border is literally more than 50% Hispanic and half of all Hispanics live in just two states, California and Texas. The largest Chicano populations are located in Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, San Antonio and Phoenix. Of particular interest, Census 2000 was the first time individuals were allowed to check two or more races on the Census. Previous to this individuals could only identify as one of five races: White, Black, American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, or Other. A large majority of Hispanic and

Multiracial individuals fell into the category of Other. Because the Census still records race and Hispanic background separately, the consideration of Two or More Races and Hispanic demographics provides an interesting insight into the racial essentialism of the Chicano, Latino and Hispanic identity. Half the Hispanic population answered the race question as white, while the other half reported Other. Three times as many Hispanic people also reported two or more races: 6% of Hispanics and 2% of non-Hispanics (“Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin,” Census 2000). Lastly, the top six cities with the largest populations of Two or More Races were New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, San Diego and Honolulu (Census 2000, The Two or More Races Population). While San Diego and Honolulu have large concentrations of mixed race Asian populations, Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston match up with cities of large Hispanic populations as well.

The border is paradoxically “a barrier generating cultural conflict” and a “bridge promoting respect” (King, 125). It is, as Gloria Anzaldúa says, a festering wound. As U.S. Census information indicates, there is a multiracial border population that prior to Census 2000 was officially the “Other.” Although the border is a space of multilingual dialogue, the border “mestizo” is precariously positioned as scapegoat and multicultural savior. The U.S. and Mexico are divided by a geopolitical border but united by a shared ethnic group created by this very border. The U.S. – Mexico border is literally and figuratively a river, the Rio Grande, which can be crossed. Because the borderland is a social milieu of hybrid aesthetics and identities, we must be able to cross multiple cultural barriers and live without borders—sin fronteras. Intercultural marriage, and the resulting mixed race children of such marriages, often becomes perceived as both the solution and reconciliation of the border schism and border conflict. However, even as the Latino nation becomes a nation of “bronze people,” these people become physical embodiments of the border wound.

Chapter Four
A Chicano Community of Aztlán

“Community really isn’t about finding people just like you. It’s about finding a place where you can feel comfortable about yourself and not have to justify your existence.”

—Justin Massoud Leroy²⁰

“Before the Conquest, there were twenty-five million Indian people in Mexico and the Yucatán. Immediately after the Conquest, the Indian population had been reduced to seven million. By 1650, only one-and-a-half-million pure-blooded Indians remained. The *mestizos* who were genetically equipped to survive small pox, measles, and typhus (Old World disease to which the natives had no immunity), founded a new hybrid race and inherited Central and South America.”

—Gloria Anzaldúa²¹

At the age of 23, Guillermo Gómez-Peña came to the United States from Mexico City in 1978, just missing the major events that marked the beginning of the Chicano Movement. He is torn not only between America and Mexico but also between Chicanos and Mexicans. Gómez-Peña, in an interview with Coco Fusco, discusses the “multileveled” state of border identity and how it applies to himself:

The state of identity is multileveled in the Southwest and in the border region. There is no such thing as a permanent, static, homogeneous sense of identity for Chicanos or for Mexican immigrants. In many ways, I can say that I am a Mexican in the process of Chicanization and that I am developing a multiple identity. I am Mexican, but I am also Chicano, and I am also Latin American. When I am in Mexico, Mexicans often note the figures of speech of mine that are *pocho*. When I am in the United States, some Chicano nationalists object to the fact that I wasn’t born in a Chicano barrio, and that I don’t speak Chicano slang. . . . There is a point at which

²⁰ “Unlikely Intersections: The [IM]possibility of [MULTI]racial + [HOMO]sexual border crossing” Mavin Magazine, Issue 8, p13.

²¹ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, (Aunt Lute Books: Sanfrancisco, 1987), 27.

you realize that to defend this monolithic concept of identity—*la Mexicanidad*—in a process of ongoing border crossings and reterritorialization and deterritorialization is absurd. (“Bilingualism”, 153)

Guillermo Gómez-Peña articulates a particularly poignant border identity, where identity becomes a matter of degrees of separation. How far removed is he from Mexico? Is he far enough removed to be considered Chicano? No, he was born in Mexico. However, he immigrated to the United States as a young adult, when national identity is still plastic and cultural. He’s a 1.5 generation immigrant. He left Mexico and is looked upon by Mexicans as an inauthentic “pocho,” which is a Mexican Spanish derogatory word for Mexican Americans. At the same time, though, Chicanos question Gómez-Peña’s position in and representation of the Chicano community because he was raised in Mexico. Furthermore, he was not even born in a border city; he is from Mexico City, the capital of Mexico. Several times over, Gómez-Peña says that he is a Mexican in “the process of Chicanization.” He sees his “de-Mexicanization” as a means to “Mexi-understand” himself:

Many ‘deterritorialized’ Latin American artists in Europe and the United States have opted for ‘internationalism’ . . . I, on the other hand, opt for ‘borderness’ and assume my role: my generation, the *chilango* (slang term for a Mexico City native), who came to ‘El Norte’ . . . gradually integrated itself into otherness, in search of that other Mexico grafted onto the entrails of the et cetera . . . became Chicano-ized.

(“Documented,” 37)

The phrases *Chicano-ized* and *de-Mexicanization* describe Gómez-Peña’s response to deterritorialization, which though similar to the process of the Chicano movement’s appropriation and fictionalization of Aztlán focuses more on multiple liminal border cultures rather than one consolidated history. However, because he rejects “internationalism” in

favor of “borderness,” his artwork fits in well with the Chicano movement which has created a history and sense of identity that cross the border from both directions, thus turning the border into an interactive space that spans nations.

Gomez-Peña’s experience with ethnic identification is not new to the Chicano experience. Sense of identity and self-affirmation can be no clearer than in our descriptive labels and words used to identify our environment. Ruben Salazar, *L.A. Times* reporter and martyr of the Chicano movement,²² described the emerging Chicano movement as people claiming to be “indigenous to Aztlan [who] do not relate, at least intellectually, and emotionally, to the Anglo United States” (Salazar, 264). His article²³ entitled “Why Does Standard July Fourth Oratory Bug Most Chicanos?” explores how the American system insists on Anglicization. The interchangeable use of the phrase *American* with *The United States* is an example of this exclusive and dominating tendency, “as if that name belonged exclusively to the Anglo United States” (Salazar, 264). *American* refers to all the people of the American continents, both North and South, including Canada, the United States, Mexico, and the countries of Central and South America. However, the United States, and only the U.S., exclusively claims *America* within the country’s name: *The United States of America*. Central America isn’t the name of one country; it refers to a collection of countries located within the same general location. The name *Central America*, like *North America* and *South America* in general, refers to a location. While Canadians, Mexicans and Europeans

²² Ruben Salazar was the first Mexican American in “mainstream English-language journalism” as the first Mexican American journalist to work as a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* with his own column. He was the first Chicano foreign correspondent and news director of KMEX, L.A. Spanish language television station. He was killed covering the Chicano antiwar demonstration in East L.A., August 29, 1970. Salazar was killed, at age 42, by a 10 inch tear gas projectile to his head fired directly into the café by one of the deputies. Despite photographic evidence, District Attorney Evelle Younger concluded that the facts from the inquiry did not justify criminal charges, and the Department of Justice refused to investigate Salazar’s death despite the requests of 22 California state legislators.

²³ Published July 10, 1970 in the *L.A. Times*.

insist on referring to the United States of America as “The States,” many United States citizens nationally, culturally, and sometimes racially conceive of themselves as “American.” Only The United States of America claims exclusive rights to a national identity as American which is then often equated with “white.” Mexicans aren’t referred to as American, even though they are residents of North America. Therefore, the Chicano movement has attempted to find a more precise label that affords an empowered sense of identity: Latino. *Latino* claims a connection to a land that geographically spans the border—Latin America. It is a name that is not divided by the border and so does not perpetuate the violence drawing a line or border through identity. The name *Latino* may be the self affirmative identity that the invisible hyphen in Mexican American does not quite provide.

Identity is interrelated to geopolitical space; consequently the Chicano identity is fragmented and generated by the U.S. – Mexico border. Aztlán gives the Chicano identity not only a history but a direct connection to the land. The identity then has a legitimate place and is no longer rootless. With the appropriation of the mythic history of Aztlán, the Chicano movement can make a claim on the North American continent that precedes claims on the land by both the United States and Mexico: “With our heart in our hands and our hands in the soil, we declare our independence as a Mestizo nation” (Qtd in Salazar, 265). Thus, the Chicano movement reclaims its native and multiracial heritage. Thus, Latin Americans have a history, a land, and a name that predates Spanish colonization in the mythic land of Aztlán.²⁴ While it is not a physical place, it makes an original claim on the American land and American identity.

²⁴ After 2000 years of migration, the Aztecs completely left the Southwest in 1168 A.D. and conquered and settled what is now Mexico City. Gloria Anzaldúa reasons that the “Spanish, Indian, and *mestizo*” exploration and settlement of “parts of the U.S. Southwest as early as the sixteenth century” constitutes “a return to the place of origin, Aztlán, thus making Chicanos originally and secondarily indigenous to the Southwest” (Anzaldúa, 27).

Chapter Five
A NAFTA Site of Exchange

"I'd like to exercise my political imagination for a moment and try to imagine the place of the artist in a post-Gringostroika society....Perhaps there will be a Free Art Agreement between the United States, Mexico, and Canada, and we will be able to exchange ideas and artistic products, not just consumer goods and hollow dreams. Perhaps the Spanglish Only Initiative will replace English Only. Perhaps the border with Latin America, the Great Tortilla Curtain, will finally collapse....Perhaps we will no longer need to imagine."

—Guillermo Gómez-Peña²⁵

The U.S. – Mexico border is also an artificial construct that cannot withstand the stronger push and pull dynamics of market forces. Early in *Border Brujo*, Gómez-Peña switches into a fast Tijuana barker voice calling out in English with some Spanish words:

welcome to the Casa de Cambio
foreign currency exchange
the Temple of Instant Transformation
the place where Tijuana y San Diego se entrecruzan
...
here we produce every imaginable change
...
cambio de dólar y de nombre
[change of dollar and of name]
...
anything can change into something else
Mexicanos can become Chicanos
overnite
Chicanos become Hispanics
(*Border*, 80, author's translation in brackets)

Tijuana is the Casa de Cambio, House of Change, of money, culture and people. The border can never be a completely solidified barrier because of the pressures of transnational companies and the Free Trade Agreement. Money permeates the border, and then culture and people follow:

²⁵ Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "From Art-mageddon to Gringostroika", *Warrior for Gringostroika*, (Graywolf Press: Minnesota, 1993), 63.

and life becomes art with the same speed
 that mambo becomes jazz
 tostados become pizza
 machos become transvestites
 & brujos become performance artists
 it's fun, it's fast
 it's easy, it's worthwhile
 you just gotta cross the border. (*Border*, 80)

The commercial exchange consequently, perhaps unintentionally, endows the border with the potential and the power to change the border crosser. In Tijuana “societal ethics give way to selfish gratification,” commercial marketing of sex, drugs and alcohol, and commodification of cultural identity. It is “a city that speaks the language of commercial exploitation...if you have money and guts, Tijuana appears to be a tough but enticing city” (King, 101). The border delineates more than just food, music and other cultural products; an individual’s social and political identity changes. The character Border Brujo changes from a poet-prophet wizard into a performance artist, Mexicanos become Chicanos going South to North, and Chicanos become Hispanics going North to South. This transformation occurs amidst the exchange and mixture of currency and culture.

Just across the U.S. – Mexico border from San Diego, Tijuana, a gaudy border resort, boasts racetracks, bullfights, and booming tourism. Like many Mexican border towns, Tijuana thrives on a carnie-barker, street vendor economy of cheap counterfeit designer merchandise, craft and faux Americana art including velvet paintings of celebrities like Bob Marley and Elvis Presley, hand-painted tin Christmas tree ornaments, bobble-head Chihuahuas, and caballitos hand-blown tequila shot glasses. The city also supports hundreds of maquiladoras, transnational corporations that finish goods for U.S. export. Uk Heon Hong’s analysis of Korean transnational companies finds that at the turn of the 20th Century, Tijuana was producing more than 7 million television sets a year from three production plants in the city (Hong, 15).

Guillermo Gómez-Peña concludes a 1991 Manifesto against Censorship by saying: “Perhaps there will be a Free Art Agreement between the United States, Mexico, and Canada, and we will be able to exchange ideas and artistic products, not just consumer goods and hollow dreams” (“Art-mageddon,” 63). This manifesto envisions an America whose unifying characteristic is no longer the consumption, material and cultural, facilitated by the North American Free Trade Agreement. Rather, the artistic exchange of ideas replaces the material consumption of goods and objects.

Posted on Border Brujo’s altar is a sign that reads: *1889-1989 Tijuana Centenaria* (see Figure 21). In the background other signs read: *SPONSORED BY TURISMO FRONTERIZO* and *Border Brujo (2000 BC- 1988)*. Amidst the votive candles are such “sacred” objects as plastic Dia de los Muertos skeletons and plastic busts of Native American and Mexican dolls.²⁶ The character Border Brujo wears an altar jacket covered in several different buttons, much like the all-American restaurant, TGI Friday’s, waiters and waitresses. He also wears a large necklace of plastic bananas and several different hats including Pachuco (gangster) hats (see Figure 4), wrestling masks (see Figure 20),²⁷ and mariachi hats (see Figure 21). He drinks some kind of supposedly alcoholic concoction from a Clairol Herbal Essence shampoo bottle, or perhaps it is the Brujo’s (wizard’s) magic elixir (see Figure 9 and Figure 10). The buttons recall the whole array of Americana, and the bananas recall Anglo American stereotypes of Latin America—jungles, monkeys and coffee—as well as the neo-colonial marketing exploitation of “Banana Republics” and Chiquita Banana (Neustadt, 3). Moreover, the knife prop combined with the Pachuco hat recalls the dangerous druglord

²⁶ Guillermo Gómez-Peña designed Border Brujo’s altar with the help of Chicano artist Felipe Almada both to create a visual vertigo and replicate “the (con)fusion of urban signs that characterizes a *barrio*” where traditional iconography and signs of mass culture clutters all available space with the bold display of *rasquachismo* (Neustadt, 4).

²⁷ Mexican wrestlers wear their masks, even outside the rink.

fiction. Border Brujo is the Self and Other at the same time. He is exotic, dangerously attractive and menacing.

Along with the Chicano movement's appropriation of the Aztec history came a return to indigenous spiritual practices: "The adoption of indigenous Mesoamerican imagery allowed Chicanos to assert an indigenous identity and, more importantly, helped to build a communal sensibility based on spiritual and cultural concepts" (Mesa-Bains, 332). Gómez-Peña delineates commercial Americana objects of the Border culture as sacred objects on the altar of the Border Brujo. Gloria Anzaldúa explains that this mixing of secular and religious activity (the desk serves as both a Radio DJ's desk and an Altar) as well as Catholicism and Shamanism (he is speaking in tongues in front of traditionally lit votive candles) is in the tradition of the ethno-poetics and performance of the shaman:

My people, the Indians, did not split the artistic from the functional, the sacred from the secular, art from everyday life....The ability of story (prose and poetry) to transform the storyteller and the listener into something or someone else is shamanistic. The writer, as shape-changer, is a *nahual*, a shaman. (Anzaldúa, 88)

This shrine of Tijuana memorabilia continues an artistic practice common in the beginnings of the Movimiento when "a number of artists created installation works in the form of altars and offerings to the dead" (Mesa-Bains, 337). These altars affirmed a Chicano identity that was distinct from American modernity, nostalgic for a pre-Columbian history. These altars and offerings to the dead "associated with the dead are a reflection of the ephemeral [flower and food offerings] and as such stand in contrast to the consumer culture of the United States" (Mesa-Bains, 337). However, since Border Brujo's altar enshrines Chicano border culture with objects of Tijuana *tourismo*, this altar, unlike that of previous artists, combines consumerism with indigenous spirituality.

The objects on the altar represent the cultural commodification that consumes and displaces the collective Chicano identity. Gómez-Peña pushes this Chicano altar art form to articulate a Chicano identity that is neither pre-Columbian nor international. His ironic use of Americana as sacred objects recontextualizes and redefines border culture. Although Gómez-Peña does not refer to Aztlán for the same purposes as previous Chicano artists, Aztlán supports the notion of a spiritual and cultural people that transcends borders. The spiritual aspect of Aztlán, through the “power of remembrance and social critique,” transcends “the arbitrary boundaries of geography” (Mesa-Bains, 340). Thus, *curanderismo*, indigenous healing methods that emphasize the inseparability of the mind and body, heals the border wound, as discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Six
A Wound: Pain and Regeneration

“Chicarrican, not Hispanic; mestizaje, not miscegenation; social thinker, not bohemian; accionista, not performer; intercultural, not postmodern” —Guillermo Gómez-Peña²⁸

“I’m a child of border crisis a product of cultural cesarean I was born between epochs & cultures born from an infected wound a howling wound” —Guillermo Gómez-Peña²⁹

Any kind of border crossing, whether literal or metaphorical, is a transgression of established boundaries of nation and cultural norms. The character Border Brujo calls this Casa de Cambio “the place where Tijuana y San Diego se entrepierman” (*Border*, 80). *Entrepierman* is not an actual word but a mix of the similar sounding verb, *entrepierarse*, which means to show through, and the noun *entrepierna*, which refers to the crotch or groin area. Both meanings apply. The seams of the myth of national identity show through at the border city. The border is also the groin of the two border cities—simply a place that connects two separate limbs as well as a sexual place of conception and miscegenation. The reproduction of the border in the birth of the “Mestizo” is fraught with the pains of conception and birth. It is both painful and regenerative.

In an interview with Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Coco Fusco asks Gómez-Peña if Mexico views Tijuana as a Mexican bastard of the United States. Gómez-Peña describes a double function of Tijuana—as “a place where so-called Mexican identity breaks down” and “as a strange mirror of the new culture that is emerging in Mexico” (“Bilingualism,” 156). By homogenizing Mexican identity as “univocal, monolithic and static...the Mexican state

²⁸ Guillermo Gómez-Peña, “The Border Is,” *Warrior for Gringrostoika*, (Graywolf Press: Minnesota, 1993), 43.

²⁹ Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *Border Brujo*, *Warrior for Gringrostoika*, (Graywolf Press: Minnesota, 1993), 78.

can offer itself as a redeemer of Mexicans, as the one who is going to guide them by the hand into modernity” (“Bilingualism,” 156). Both the United States and Mexico have as much at stake in the U.S. – Mexico border. The porous nature of the border, as evident in paired border cities like Tijuana and San Diego, El Paso and Juarez, poses a danger to the solidarity of separate and distinct national identities. Tijuana’s heterogeneity challenges the myth of mono-dimensional national identity. As Gómez-Peña insists, “what actually exists is a pluralistic sense of self—multiple repertoires of identity” (“Bilingualism,” 156). Tijuana and San Diego—se entrepiernan—give birth to this Border Brujo who embraces a plurality of identities.

Guillermo Gómez-Peña specifically says that he lives in an infected wound: “I live smack in the fissure between two worlds, in the infected wound: half a block from the end of Western civilization and four miles from the beginning of the Mexican/American border” (“Documented,” 37). In this fractured reality of a wound festers “two histories, languages, cosmologies, artistic traditions, and political systems which are drastically counterposed” (“Documented,” 37). Gloria Anzaldúa³⁰, self described as a “Chicana *tejana*-lesbian-feminist poet,” expresses a similar feeling of physically embodying the border wound:

1,950 mile-long open wound
dividing a *pueblo*, a culture,
running down the length of my body
staking fence rods in my flesh (Anzaldúa, 24)

The border can bring two parts together but only as a suture; the border is a wound that divides a single whole like a fissure that even though once mended leaves a scar. For Anzaldúa, this border experience is an open wound, a fence that mutilates and imposes

³⁰ Gloria Anzaldúa, culturalist theorist, “examined how mixed heritage overlapped with sexuality and gender. One of the earliest openly lesbian Chicana authors, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, examined the division between physical, spiritual, sexual, and psychological borders” (“News,” Mavin Magazine, Issue 8, p11).

violence on her person and who she is. In other words, the punishment of a border experience and language is imposed on the body as a wound.

Despite his similar description of his experience of the border as a wound, Guillermo Gómez-Peña in *Border Brujo* performs a more optimistic multi-centric notion of identity. The Self and the Other and the Other Self—because there is more than duality to the border—are co-existing, non-exclusive and not always equally visible, but they are also not competing with each other for dominance. Gómez-Peña elaborates on this new definition of “Two or More” otherness:

In the 1980s, an increased awareness of the existence and importance of multicentric perspectives and hybrid cultures within the United States made us rethink the implications of ‘otherness’...we can speak two or more languages, have two or more identities and/or nationalities, perform different roles in multiple contexts, and not necessarily be in conflict with ourselves and others. (“Art-mageddon,” 56)

Gómez-Peña continues discussing the increased visibility of “the ‘hybrids’ of this and other continents (whether mulattos, mestizos, Chicanos, Nuyorricans, French Algerians, German Turks, British Pakistanis, or other more eccentric children of the First and Third worlds).” These hybrids rearrange the parameters of culture so that the center becomes the periphery and the border experience becomes central (“Art-mageddon,” 56). Words like *mestizo*, *mulatto*, and *bronze* (or *tan*) have all historically been used to refer to multiracial people. It is not a coincidence that the Chicano movement and border language use terms common to the recent multiracial movement in the United States. Both the multiracial individual and the Chicano encompass a kind of border experience in racial or cultural identity formation.

Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s performance communicates a powerful sense of outrage, pain and anger. In the last gesture of this performance, Gómez-Peña smears red paint

across his face, tracing sweat and tears. Then he raises both of his fists to his chin, thus ending the performance sternly and demandingly (see Figure 20). Guillermo Gómez-Peña offers a multicentric dialogue with great dignity and authenticity. This offer is not soft and generous or grateful and hopeful; it is confrontational and demanding, but it is very real (William Alexander, *Personal Conversation*). The multiracial person is torn between families and caught in the crossfire. The border conflict is real; it is a howling wound. And so, the possibility for dialogue—respectful and dignified—is powerful and great.

SECTION 3: SPEAKING IN TONGUES

*Chapter Seven***Border Languages: "I Speak Spanglish therefore she speaks Inglés!"**

"Who is to say that robbing a people of its language is less violent than war?"

—Ray Gwyn Smith³¹

"where is the borderline
Between my Spanish & your English?"

ce n'est pas ici [it's not here]"

—Guillermo Gómez-Peña³²

When asked about his experience writing in English, Guillermo Gómez-Peña focuses on the border experience of language. He says, "To cross the linguistic border implies that you decenter your voice. The border crosser develops two or more voices.... We develop different speaking selves that speak for different aspects of identity" ("Bilingualism," 156). Guillermo Gómez-Peña admits that his Spanish would have been more sophisticated had he stayed to write in Mexico, but "what it has lost in possibility of vocabulary and syntax, it has gained in conceptual strength" ("Bilingualism," 157). Through subverting, infecting, and reinventing the possibility of the structures and expressions in English, *Border Brujo* exposes the assumptions of prescriptivism in monolingualism, monoculturalism and non-multicentric notions of identity—the assumption that the paradigm of one set language for communication and thought is the best and only option.

The border is any fractured reality where multiple histories, languages, traditions, politics and narratives come into contact. The most apt verbal description of the border is a non-linear narrative—a barrage of words, phrases and voices. *Border Brujo* speaks in all of

³¹ Quoted in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Gloria Anzaldúa, (Aunt Lute Books, San Francisco, 1987), 75.

³² Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "Border Brujo," *Warrior for Gringostroika*, (Graywolf Press: Saint Paul, MN, 1993), 86. Author's translation in brackets.

the de-centered voices that speak both for the actual border experience as well as the linguistic border experience. The character Border Brujo comes from a tradition in Latin America of the poet not only as an integral part of the community but also as the prophetic as well as poetic voice of the community. Yet, when this poet-priest literally crosses the border, he becomes a performance artist: “&brujos become performance artists” (*Border*, 80). Guillermo Gomez-Peña’s Performance Notes indicate that Border Brujo performs 15 different personas with 15 different border languages which are symbolic of relationships between north and south, Anglo and Latin America, myth and social reality, performance art and life (*Border*, 75).

In Gómez-Peña’s performances, he tries to maintain the balance and sense of linguistic otherness and alienation. When performed in Mexico, in order to “help Mexicans understand that the Chicano experience is valid and important and necessary,” the performance is interspersed with English words and Anglicisms so much so that a quarter of the sum of the words in the performance is English (“Bilingualism,” 151). Gómez-Peña believes that this element of linguistic otherness is essential to the performance because “half the audience will understand, more or less, and the other half won’t” (“Bilingualism,” 152). The process is reversed in an English-speaking context, and 25% of the performance text is in Spanish, which is “enough to make them uncomfortable, to feel threatened, and to make them feel that they are not receiving the entire experience” (“Bilingualism,” 152). Gómez-Peña also recognizes how much more complex this process becomes in a Chicano context, when many Chicanos don’t speak Spanish and many first generation Mexicans speak very little English. In these situations, the audience will glean the crux of Gómez-Peña’s portrayal of the border experience; they will see only the textual fiber that transitions and holds the performance together. Gómez-Peña is speaking to several different groups of people at the

same time as alienating his audiences. He wants to make the audience feel uncomfortable and threatened as if they will be “stabbed in the back with an invisible knife [only they don’t] find out [until] the next day when they wake up and find blood in their sheets” (Qtd in Wolford, 277). The alienation comes naturally in the performance because Guillermo Gomez-Peña himself feels alienated, uncomfortable and threatened (William Alexander, Personal Conversation). In *Border Brujo*, Gomez-Peña is identifying language as a key moment of the border crisis. The program notes for *Border Brujo* say that Border Brujo “speaks in Spanish to Mexicans, in Spanglish to Chicanos, in English to Anglo-Americans and in tongues to other brujos, locos, and border crossers” (*Border*, 75). Through the use of English, Spanish, and a combination of both, Gomez-Peña means to communicate the political and revolutionary nature of language to the audience, whether the listener speaks the language he is speaking.

In an article entitled “A Mexican-American Hyphen,” published on February 13, 1970, Ruben Salazar³³ compares the U.S. borders between Canada and Mexico. While the histories of these borders both include the dispute over territory in the 17th century, Canadian-American relations are far better than Mexican-American relations:

Mexicans like to argue that if the United States had not ‘stolen’ half of Mexico’s territory, Mexico would be as rich as the United States is now. This historical controversy, now for the most part taken lightly, might have disappeared altogether by now, it is said, if Mexicans and Americans spoke the same language on both sides of the border and so understood each other better. (Salazar, 238)

³³ Ruben Salazar was born in 1928 in Juárez, the Mexican border city opposite El Paso, Texas. He was a reporter for the *L.A. Times* covering mostly Mexican American issues in the 1960’s—“the most significant Mexican American journalist of his time” (García, 36).

However, speaking the same language does not after all resolve everything: “Yet, many Mexican-Americans in the Southwest, who speak both languages and admire both countries, feel strangely foreign in their own land” (Salazar, 238). Salazar recognizes that the ill feelings across the U.S. – Mexico border could also be the same across the U.S. – Canadian border. The British Empire lost the 13 colonials, yet Canada does not begrudge the United States for lost territory, because the border was fairly negotiated with compromises made on each side. For example, Canada got Toronto and the United States got the upper peninsula of Michigan. Salazar adds that U.S. -Canadian relations are “tempered by knowing that, after all, Canadians and Americans communicate easily and enjoy more or less the same material goods” (Salazar, 238). By contrast, Salazar identifies language as the real problem between the United States and Mexico. Chicanos may speak English but still feel alienated by the mainstream that illegitimizes their other Spanish heritage. The Chicano, theoretically, could serve as a cultural translator and ambassador to resolve past injustices now that they speak the languages of both sides of the border. However, although they speak both languages, they also speak a new language—a border language. Moreover, the possibility of dialogue does not erase past injustices or feelings of alienation. The lack of communication across the border is what creates the border conflict and aggravates socioeconomic discrepancies.

Effective communication is the key to successful and productive foreign policy and practice in general, and border languages have great potential to aid such communication. Guillermo Gómez-Peña meditates on Border Brujo’s hybridization of language: “The only way to regenerate identity and culture is through ongoing dialogue with the other. . . . In order to articulate our present crisis as cross-cultural artists, we need to invent and reinvent languages constantly. These languages have to be as syncretic, diverse, and complex as the fractal realities we are trying to define” (“Multicultural,” 49). If we can use language

purposefully to recreate the border experience, then we can more fully articulate and understand the experience. Language is a reflection of the environment, yet it is also a tool. When language is only a passive action, its revolutionary potential is lost. Since dialogue can heal the border wound between Anglo America and Latin America, Border Brujo's modular use of language is a natural consequence of the constant process of transformation and redefinition of culture and identity. Spanglish and Ingleñol are such products of border dialogue.

Thomas Stevens defines Spanglish, first, as "characterized by free Anglicisms and often an exceeding amount of Spanish/English code-switching," and second, as a language distinct from English (Stephens, 2). He more precisely explains Spanglish as "the variety of Spanish spoken and often written in the U.S., issuing from continued contact between Anglo and Hispanic cultures – an interlanguage resulting from daily contact between two powerful languages, Spanish and English" (Stephens, 3). Spanglish is more than just a border language; it is the product of Anglo and Hispanic cultural fusion where people do not only speak English or Spanish on opposite sides of a political border. Stevens continues by saying that "much like any other geolect or sociolect, Spanglish varies based on place of use and socioeconomic factors. And like any other variety of language, it has its own 'coterie' of varying lexical items that partially mark it as different from other varieties of the same language" (Stephens, 3). In other words, Chicanos speak Spanglish first, while the common expectation is that Mexicans speak Mexican Spanish and Americans speak English.

Chicanos are marked by their use of Spanglish as "wetbacks" in the United States and in Mexico "as gringos or agringados who speak Spanish *como si fueran de po' allá* [as if they came from over there], that is to say, with a non-native accent, who dress and act 'different,' and who generally stand out as 'odd' in a society that, in other contexts, they may

claim as ‘home’” (Stephens, 1). They are twice outsiders, the Other in either context, in fact “always the other.” Ruben Salazar provides a similar description of the Mexican-American experience. In “A Mexican-American Hyphen,” Salazar clearly articulates that the U.S. – Mexico border creates the Mexican hyphenated American identity: “Being a Mexican-American, a wag once said, can leave you with only the hyphen” (Salazar, 237). The word Mexican-American is a linguistic microcosm of the border experience. The Chicano is neither Mexican nor American, and therefore is only the hyphen, which is the linguistic border that is no word.

Early on in *Border Brujo*, Section IV, right before the Tijuana barker monologue and following an entire section in Spanish, Border Brujo says in a thick Mexican accent:

I speak Spanish therefore you hate me
 I speak English therefore they hate me
 I speak in Spanglish therefore she speaks Ingleñol
 I speak in tongues therefore you desire me
 I speak to you therefore you kill me
 I speak therefore you change
 I speak in English therefore you listen
 I speak in English therefore you hate me
 pero cuando hablo en español te adoro
 but when I speak Spanish I adore you
 (*Border*, 78-79).

Spanglish, espanglés, ingleñol, Espanglish, and angliparla all refer to Chicano Spanish.

However, Gomez-Peña specifically positions Spanglish and Ingleñol as different languages.

Though both are border languages and a combination of Spanish and English, the word Spanglish combines English words for the languages while Ingleñol combines the Spanish words for the languages. These linguistic constructions envision a border language as multifaceted. Either there is one border language that is divided upon itself, or there are several border languages.

If Gomez-Peña's character, Border Brujo, speaks in Spanish, then he is the Other and "you hate me." Because this version of the performance is mostly in English, this means that the "you" that Border Brujo is most likely addressing a native speaker of English, a non-Hispanic American. This also means that the "they" in the next line refers to the Mexicans who hate Border Brujo because he has crossed the border and consequently betrayed Mexico and his Mexican identity. Gómez-Peña also gives each side of the border language a gender. He speaks Spanglish and the (female) gendered Other speaks Inglenol. However, Gomez-Peña uses the prepositional phrase "therefore" implying a causal relationship between language and identity. She speaks Inglenol because he speaks Spanglish. "She" puts an emphasis on Spanish in response to "his" assumptions which are English.

The section then quickly derails from any obvious logical progression, circling back and forth between attraction and repulsion from all sides. However, the *I, you, they* and *she* remain consistent. Moreover, the passage contains no Spanglish, only English interspersed with one Spanish line. The Spanish language is alienated in the English context without any room for Spanglish. The cogito spirals out of control when "you" (Anglo America) hate Border Brujo whether he speaks Spanish or English. "You" kill him just for speaking, and "you" also change just because he speaks. The languages are also complicated by desire. He says: "I speak in English therefore you hate me/ pero cuando hable en español te adore/ but when I speak Spanish I adore you." There are two different possible reactions to either language: hate or adoration, murder or change. Border Brujo is difficult to understand; he might as well be speaking in tongues, and metaphorically he is therefore "you adore me." Perhaps the seductive and poetic quality of this passage is desire and fear of the Other verbalized in Border Brujo's language.

I speak Spanish therefore you hate me appropriates the Cartesian cogito *I think, therefore, I am*. Gómez-Peña has turned the separation between the mind and body to the alienation of the Self from the Other, Us and Them. This cogito is echoed half way through the performance very authoritatively: “I speak therefore you misinterpret me...I exist therefore you misunderstand me” (*Border*, 86). The last Cartesian echo, near the end, is delivered in Broken-English: “I’m scared therefore you exist” (*Border*, 91). It is fear that distinguishes the Other from the Self; it is only because of fear that the Other is recognized as something that is separate enough to be marginalized and suppressed. More than that, Gómez-Peña speaks this last clinching cogito with an accent. Gloria Anzaldúa comments on the Cartesian split:

Let’s all stop importing Greek myths and the Western Cartesian split point of view and root ourselves in the mythological soil and soul of this continent.... Instead of surreptitiously ripping off the vital energy of people of color and putting it to commercial use, whites could allow themselves to share and exchange and learn from us in a respectful way. (Anzaldúa, 90)

The irony of appropriating and endowing the Western Cartesian cogito with the mythological power and energy of Latin America blurs the cogito’s split point of view. *I think, therefore I am* draws a border between the mind and the brain, but *I’m scared therefore you exist* blurs that border between the Self and the Other. Language itself is conceived of as speech acts with the creative power to control and define thought, crossing borders creates dialogue. Spanglish (Spanish + English) and Ingleñol (Ingles + Español) should be the same language, but these are not the same language. Perhaps, the only a priori language common to all is the border language in general.

At times, Border Brujo literally speaks in tongues. In an interview with Coco Fusco, Gómez-Peña discusses his use of a third language—metalanguage. By speaking in tongues,

“playing with dialectical forms, playing with sounds from Nahuatl, experimenting with the phonetic structures of indigenous languages,” Gómez-Peña attempts to achieve a new “level of absolute Otherness, the ultimate margin” (“Bilingualism,” 151). Nahuatl is the language of several native peoples in Central America connected with a former group of people—the Aztecs.³⁴ Nahuatl interests Guillermo Gomez-Peña in two ways. First, it accesses the creation of a Chicano history that is separate from both a Mexican and an American history. However, it is also an actual language still spoken in various dialects by at least 1.5 million people in Central America. Gomez-Peña is particularly attracted to Nahuatl because it is an etymological language where words are created by combining a prefix with a series of monosyllabic root words and a suffix. Some Nahuatl words can be very long, but they can also be created spontaneously. Avocado, chocolate, coyote, peyote and tomato are all words borrowed into English from Nahuatl. Similarly, there are many Nahuatl words that Mexican Spanish adopted. When Gomez-Peña speaks in tongues, he is returning to a linguistic tradition of Nahuatl of combining sounds to create new meaning. However, Gomez-Peña may or may not use Nahuatl root words. He could just be combining sounds that have no prescribed meaning, consequently creating meaning out of no meaning. The moments where he speaks in tongues are the moments when we reach the ultimate border where language becomes gestures and nonsense; the Nahuatl is not even transcribed in the performance text. Speaking in tongues connotes a moment of spiritual ecstasy, enlightenment and communication with God. The meaning transcends language. The

³⁴ The linguistic relation between Nahuatl and the native languages of the U.S. Pacific Intermountain and Southwest and Northern Mexican regions, spoken by the Paiute, Shoshoni, Hopi, Pima, Yaqui, Kiowas and Mayas, indicate that the Nahuatl-speaking peoples passed through the Southwest area of the United States, however long before they migrated from their first settlement on the Mexican Northwest coast.

Human Spirit is a Universal translator. The audience is meant to understand without translation.

The relationship between the Mexican American and the Spanish and English languages becomes quite complicated in the bicultural context. Depending on your relation to the border, either English or Spanish can be the language of the Other. Spanish becomes the language of translation and interpretation, the language of the private, domestic space, the language of a nostalgic connection with Mexico. English then is the language of the public, confrontation and assimilation. However, Spanglish and Ingleñol are languages that introduce the invading, threatening language of the Other, Spanish into English or English into Spanish, as if it were natural (perhaps because it is natural). Linguistically the border conflict is the same from both sides. For Gómez-Peña, Spanglish isn't a bastardization of Spanish. Despite the erosion of the Spanish grammatical structure, Spanglish retains individual, isolated lexicon and rhythm. It is both Spanish and English at the same time and the physical symbol of dialogue. It has achieved more meaning and communication through dialogue than possible through prescriptive lingual traditions. The use of Spanglish represents the cessation of conflict between the languages within the speaker's thoughts.

Conclusion: Multiracial and Multilingual Border Crossing

“Biracial people are liminal people, betwixt and between customary racial categories. In their liminality they find their greatest source of strength and their greatest liability.”
—Marion Kilson³⁵

“Because I, a *mestiza*,
continually walk out of one culture
and into another,
because I am in all cultures at the same time”
—Gloria Anzaldúa³⁶

How does the multiracial individual represent the dialogue between the racial or cultural Other? Being physically and culturally ambiguous, a multiracial person has interesting facial features, hair and food preferences. Perhaps, that is all there is to it. They just have two parents who do not look the same. If race is merely a social construction and therefore not “real,” we may be tempted to say that the multiracial individual is proof of racelessness and therefore does not merit a discussion around “race.” Formerly, the multiracial individual was pressured to “choose only one” race. Now, the mixed race person is conceived of as the rainbow baby of a new raceless utopia. Unfortunately, there is still the urge to pick one—checking the “multiracial” box might as well be the same as checking “other.”

When standardized forms still asked participants to “choose only one” race for the demographic question, my sister identified as Asian American, not realizing that the term only applied to individuals who were racially Asian even though they are citizens of the United States and even culturally American. She said that she thought it meant you were

³⁵ Marion Kilson, “Biracial American Life Themes,” From *Claiming Place: Biracial Young Adults of the Post-Civil Rights Era*, Marion Kilson, (Bergin & Garvey: Westport, 2001), 81.

³⁶ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, (Aunt Lute Books: San Francisco, 1987), 99.

Asian and American, and though the term Asian American does mean this for my sister, American is equated racially as White. My mother identified my race on school forms as "Eurasian," however when she told me this I heard "Your Asian." When I was younger and still had to "choose only one," I made a conscious decision to identify as Asian American based on the logic that I was not being counted when I identified as "Other." One day, when I was much older, I walked into the kitchen and told my mom, "I just realized I can't ever be Asian." And, she looked back at me and said, "I just realized I can't be White." I am the Other.

I was telling my friend about a fieldwork assignment for a multiracial intragroup dialogue class, which was to ask different people to identify my race and to express their opinion on interracial relationships. My friend adamantly suggested that "ethnicity" would be a more appropriate word. I had to insist that "race" was indeed the word more suited to explore the particular issue at hand. Often times, race is insisted upon as "an imperturbable fact and synonymous with ethnicity" (Multiracial Experience, 11). The general tendency to claim that race is a social construction and therefore equal to ethnicity does not adequately account for Latin America³⁷ or the population of "Two or More Races" in the United States.

Ethnicity is often equated with race, or at the very least, with an objective and static social identity. However, This (mono)equation of race and ethnicity is nearly impossible for racially mixed people; rather, they enjoy multiple options of identification, although this is not without hazard. Maria P.P. Root, who has been on the forefront of multiracial

³⁷ Ann Morning interprets the Census 2000 information on the U.S. Hispanic population as indicative of an alternative social construction of race other than as equivalent to ethnicity: "Of persons indicating they were of Hispanic origin, a question placed before the race question in this census, only 6.3% indicated they were of two races. More telling about a different model of race already evident among Hispanics is that 42.2% said they were of some other race. This is no surprise to cultural interpreters of race from a Latin or Hispanic or multiracial experience" (Morning, 47).

psychology, has said that for mixed-race persons “congruence in identity is extremely variable between the self and the other.” Furthermore, multiracial individuals claim “simultaneous identities, situationally specific identities, and different identities over a lifetime” and that they “are able to establish integrated identities that are different from either group of their heritage.” Her findings suggest that “the dichotomous way in which identity traditionally is approached (i.e., Asian/ not Asian) is a flawed approach to identity research with this population” (“Changing the Face,” 274). This, of course, is not a new idea. I am a student and a woman at the same time. I identify as Mormon in Utah and Liberal in Ann Arbor; I give advice to a friend and look to my mother for guidance. My racial concept has even changed over the course of my lifetime. I was Chinese American, then I became “multiracial”, and now I am Asian American *and* Hapa³⁸ at the same time.

The terms, *multiracial*, *mixed*, *half*, *hapa* and *mestiza*, although reclaimed and self-chosen and perhaps more satisfactory than *half blood*, *quadroon*, *octoroon*³⁹ and *mulatto*,⁴⁰ effectively render the multiracial person placeless and illegitimate their cultural claims and group identities. Whereas racial terms like *Asian American*, *African American*, and *European American* relate race to something genetic or geographic, other terms like *Hispanic*, *mestiza*, and *hapa* look at race from a new cultural and social perspective. *Hispanic* is not a racial term, but it so

³⁸ Originally *hapa haole*, the Hawaiian term for a multiracial Hawaiian, now commonly used to refer to any multiracial Asian American.

³⁹ The 1890 census defined the following “drawing on notions of blood proportions, or quanta that had already been widely applied to American Indian mixed bloods: The word “black” should be used to describe those person who have three-fourths or more black blood; “mulatto,” those person who have from three-eighths to five-eighths black blood; “quadroon,” those persons who have one-fourth black blood; and “octoroons,” those person who have one-eight or any trace of black blood” (Qtd in Morning, 47).

⁴⁰ A mulatto is specifically a mixed race African American or in general a multiracial individual. The word was used as early as 1515 in Portuguese, which derives from *mulo*, a sterile crossbreed between a horse and a donkey, and *ato*, the Spanish and Portuguese suffix related to post-classical Latin *-attus* denoting the offspring of animals (“Mulatto,” OED, def. 1a).

conspicuously comprises a distinct group that the Census has been gathering demographic information for Hispanics since 1990. Could *Latin American* be the racial equivalent for *Hispanic*? Possibly, however, the *Mexican American* is left only with the hyphen or a new, more ethnically relevant word, *Chicano*. Why is there no such word as *United States American*? The United States has so successfully equated itself with *American* and *White* that should Canadians move to the United States they would simply become American not Canadian American. Just as the Mexican American is deterritorialized by the border where the descriptive identifying noun leaves the person placeless and with only a placeless alternative, any identifying term of the multiracial individual also dislocates the person from a place.

Gloria Anzaldúa describes the *mestizaje* as having both a negative and possibly positive aspect. First, the *mestizaje* creates chaotic violence within the *mestiza's* psyche:

The clash of voices results in mental and emotional states of perplexity. Internal strife results in insecurity and indecisiveness. The *mestiza's*...multiple personality is plagued by psychic restlessness. In a constant state of mental nepantlism, an Aztec word meaning torn between ways, *la mestiza* is a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another. (Anzaldúa, 100)

However, the *mestiza* copes by “developing a tolerance of contradiction, a tolerance for ambiguity,” she “turns the ambivalence into something else” (Anzaldúa, 101).

Marginalization can in fact lead to cognitive flexibility. It is clear that Mexico has always been a multiracial nation, but just as Mexico is the Shadow of the United States, Mexico is also a reflection of the United States. The United States isn't just becoming a multiracial nation; it has always been so.

Being multiracial, every relationship is interracial and every interaction is a moment of border crossing. At times, I feel that I fit the stereotypes: multiracial people are so

beautiful; they get the best of both worlds; they are the future and end to racism. In the end, though, I don't believe it. The negotiation of multiple cultures and identities is difficult and precarious. Gloria Anzaldúa and Guillermo Gómez-Peña see the border as a wound.

Maybe this multiracial heritage is a wound, an infected wound, and the person who trumpets the rainbow baby as the symbol of a utopian future only aggravates the infection. Perhaps racism will give way to colorism and featurism. And, perhaps social injustice will be based, if not on race, then on something else. Or, "perhaps we will no longer have to imagine" ("Art-mageddon," 63). The position of the multiracial individual has been manipulated to such a point, that I don't trust the new popularity and optimistic hopes placed in the multiracial person.

What is the benefit of checking all that apply, identifying and claiming all racial and ethnic heritages? Gloria Anzaldúa writes in her prose-poem "Borderlands/La Frontera" that "denying the Anglo inside you is as bad as having denied the Indian or Black" (Anzaldúa, 216). Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Gloria Anzaldúa offer dialogue only upon the condition that the wound be recognized. There is more benefit for a new multicultural, diverse United States in accepting and embracing this nation's multiracial history and multiple cultural identities (including amalgamations of cultures). Such has been the experience for me. It is detrimental simply to say that race is a social construction and that the multiracial individual proves that race is not real. That attitude only perpetuates social injustice and racial stereotypes. All borders are social constructions, but they were constructed for reasons inherent to humans. The desire to create a border between the Self and the Other is what must be addressed, not the social construction itself.



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