



Border Brujo: A Performance Poem (From the Series "Documented/Undocumented")

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Reviewed work(s):

Source: *TDR (1988-)*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Autumn, 1991), pp. 48-66

Published by: [The MIT Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1146131>

Accessed: 20/10/2012 20:14

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Border Brujo

A Performance Poem
(from the series
“Documented/Undocumented”)*

Guillermo Gómez-Peña

San Diego/Tijuana 1989

I dedicate this piece to my son, Guillermo Emiliano, hoping that when he grows up, most of these words will be outdated and unnecessary.

Preface

Border Brujo is a ritual, linguistic, and performative journey across the U.S.-México border.

Border Brujo first crossed the border in costume in June of 1988.

Border Brujo unfolds into 15 different personas, each speaking a different border language. And the relationship between these personas is symbolic of the one between North and South; Anglo and Latin America; myth and social reality; legality and illegality; performance art and life.

The structure is disnarrative and modular, like the border experience.

It fuses postmodern techniques with popular voices and dialectical forms borrowed from a dozen sources, such as media, tourism, pop culture, Pachuco and pinto slang, and political jargon. These voices are intertwined with meta-commentary and epic poetry. The epic tone reflects the epic experience of contemporary Mexican Americans.

Border Brujo speaks in Spanish to Mexicans, in Spanglish to Chicanos, in English to Anglo-Americans, and in tongues to other brujos and border crossers. Only the perfectly bicultural can be in complicity with him.

Border Brujo exorcises with the word the demons of the dominant cultures of both countries.

Border Brujo articulates fear, desire, trauma, sublimation, anger, and misplacement.

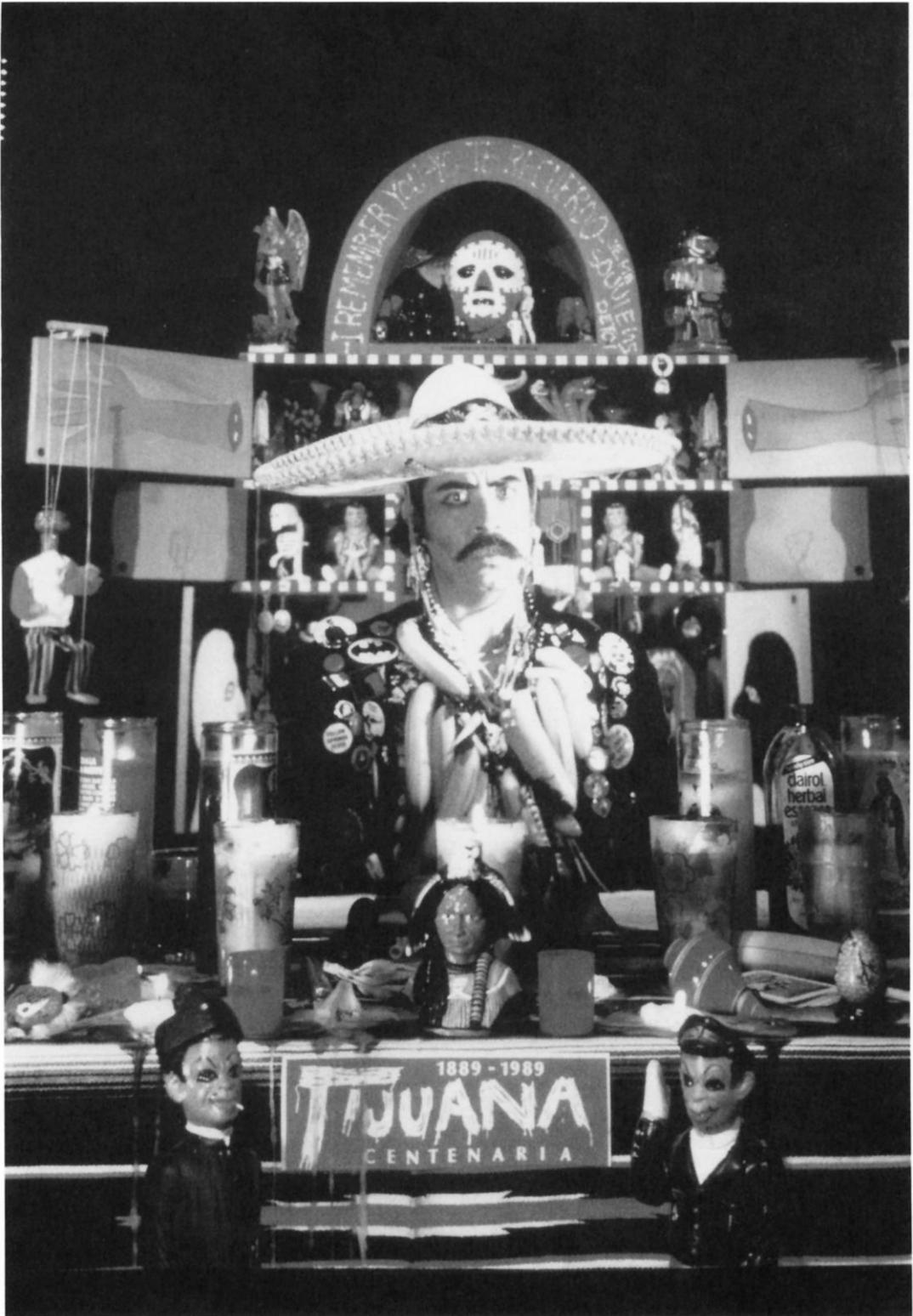
Border Brujo suffers in his own flesh the pain of his ruptured community.

Border Brujo puts a mirror between the two countries then breaks it in front of the audience.

*Work in progress

The Drama Review 35, no. 3 (T131), Fall 1991

Guillermo Gómez-Peña wants everyone to be able to use his work so he places no limitations on its use. As far as Gómez-Peña is concerned, his work is in the public domain.



1. Still from the film, *Border Brujo*, by Isaac Arstein and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, 1990. (Photo by Max Aguilera Hellweg)

Border Brujo loves and hates his audience; loves and hates himself.

Border Brujo creates a sacred space to reflect on the painful relationship between self and other. He dances between self and other. He becomes self and other, with himself.

Border Brujo negotiates several artistic traditions, including performance art, Chicano theatre, ritual theatre, and Latin American literature.

Border Brujo is a character, but he is also an alternative chronicler of life in a community.

Border Brujo is a performance artist, but he is also a cultural prisoner, a refugee, a migrant poet, a homeless shaman, and the village fool.

His performance language has no artifice whatsoever. His sole instruments consist of an altar jacket, a hat, a wig, a table, a ghetto blaster, and a megaphone. There's no backstage magic.

Border Brujo practices the aesthetics of poverty and the culture of recycling so characteristic of Latin America.

Border Brujo performs distinctly inside and outside the art world. He has appeared in galleries and theatre festivals, and also at youth centers, migrant worker centers, high schools, community events, political rallies, and performance pilgrimages.

Border Brujo is another strategy to let you know we are here to stay, and we'd better begin developing a pact of mutual cultural understanding.

Gómez-Peña
desde la herida infectada
toward 1992.

COSTUMES: altar jacket, Pachuco hat, wig, dark glasses, banana necklace.

PROPS: portable altar, megaphone, cassette recorder, tequila bottle, toy violin, knife, syringe, shampoo bottle, etc. The props lie on a table. A digital billboard announces, "SPONSORED BY TURISMO FRONTERIZO." On the back wall a *pinta* reads, "Border Brujo (2000 BC–1989)."

Music plays as audience enters space. A collage of tambora, German punk, bilingual songs from Los Tigres del Norte, and rap opera.

Introduction

[Soundtrack: Tarahumara violins. Border Brujo organizes his altar table, while speaking in an Indian dialect. When he is done fixing the altar he grabs megaphone and switches to English.]

dear audience
feel at home
this continent is your home
grab a cigarette
this is a smoking world
kick back
grab the crotch of your neighbor
& allow me the privilege
of reorganizing your thoughts
dear foreign audience
it's January 1st, 1847
& the U.S. hasn't invaded Mexico yet
this is Mexico carnales!
there is no border
we are merely divided
by the imprecision of your memory
[He enters into a trance & begins speaking in tongues. Then he switches to the voice of a drunk.]
hey, would you just leave me alone?
just leave me alone . . .
you're just a border-crosser
a "wetback" with amnesia
who the hell invited your ancestors
to this country by the way?

I

[With eyes closed & in an epiphanic voice.]

I came following your dream
your dream became my nightmare
once here,
I dreamt you didn't exist
I dreamt a map without borders
where the Latin American archipelago
reached all the way
to the *nuyorrican* barrios of Boston and Manhattan
all the way to the pockets
of Central American refugees
in Alberta & British Columbia
[He opens his eyes.]
& when I dream like this
you suffer
my dream becomes your nightmare
& pot, your only consolation

II

**[Sounds of rooster, the soundtrack: danzon
“Impossible” by Los Xochimilcas. Voice of
a Mexican soap opera actor; parts in Spanish
are mispronounced.]**

today, the sun came out in English
the world spins around *en inglés*
& life is just a melancholic tune
in a foreign tongue . . .
like this one

[He shows his tongue to the audience.]

ay México

Rrrrrroommantic México

“Amigou Country”

para el gringo desvelado

Tijuana Caliente, la “O”

Mexicali Rose

para el gabacho deshauciado

El Pasou y Juarrézz

ciudades para encontrar el amor

amor que nunca existió

ay México

rrrrroommantic México

paraíso en fragmentación

mariachis desempleados

concheros desnutridos

banditous alegris

beautiful señoritas

mafioso politicians

federalis que bailan el mambou

el rónchero, la cumbía, la zambía

en-tropical skyline sprayed on the wall

“dare to cross the Tequila border”

dare to cross “the line” without your Cop-
pertone

transcorporate breeze sponsored by Turismo

maquiladora power for the business macho

crunchy nachous to appease the hunger

[He turns into a transvestite.]

Tostadas Supreme para aliviar las penas

enchiladas y MacFa-ji-tas

mmmmn . . . peso little-eat so grand!

where else but in México

III

**[He manipulates objects from the altar ta-
ble, speaks in a normal voice.]**

vivir y crear en California

es un tormento privilegiado

vivir en los '80s

esperar a la muerte total

ser bilingüe, bihemisférico
macizo, sereno, proto-histórico
ininteligible luego expedi-mental
e incompatible con usted
sr. Monochromatic

víctima del melting plot

**[He turns into a México City ñero (deroga-
tive for urban mestizo).]**

pinto mi raya

salto la tuya

me dicen el Borges de Caléxico

el Octavio Pus de San Isidro

hablo en español, dígolo intento

& los gabachos me escuchan con recelo

(unos me interrogan con las uñas

otros me filman en Super-8)

soy posmoderno . . . ¿pos qué?

conceptual . . . ¿con qué?

experimental . . . pos qué experi-mentira

mentírame sobre tu pin-che-es-pa-ci-o-cu-pa-do

**[He does sound poem based on Mexican
street voices.]**

IV

**[He begins walking in circles and howling
like a wolf, keeping a rhythm with his feet.]**

crisis

craises

the biting crises

the barking crises

[He barks.]

la crisis es un perro

que nos ladra desde el norte

la crisis es un Chrysler le Baron con 4 puertas

[He barks more.]

soy hijo de la crisis fronteriza

soy hijo de la bruja hermafrodita

producto de una cultural cesarean

punkraca heavy-mierda all the way

el chuco funkahuátl desertor de 2 países

rayo tardío de la corriente democratik

vengo del sur

el único de 10 que se pintó

**[He turns into a merolico (Mexico City street
performer).]**

nací entre épocas y culturas y viceversa

nací de una herida infectada

herida en llamas

herida que auuuuuuulla

[He howls.]

I'm a child of border crisis

a product of a cultural cesarean
 I was born between epochs & cultures
 born from an infected wound
 a howling wound
 a flaming wound
 for I am part of a new mankind
 the 4th World, the migrant kind
los transterrados y descoyuntados
los que partimos y nunca llegamos
y aquí estamos aún
desempleados e incontenibles
en proceso, en ascenso, en transición
per omnia saecula saeculorum
 “INVIERTA EN MEXICO”
bienes y raíces
vienes y te vas
púdrete a gusto en los United
 estate still *si no te chingan*
[He continues with a sound poem.]

V

[With thick Mexican accent, pointing at specific audience members.]

I speak Spanish therefore you hate me
 I speak in English therefore they hate me
 I speak 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 I hate you
pero cuando hablo en español te adoro
 but when I speak Spanish I adore you
ahora, why *carajos* do I speak Spanish?
 political praxis *craneal*
 I mean . . .
 I mean . . .

VI

[Soundtrack: Supercombo. He delivers text in the fast style of a Tijuana barker.]

welcome to the *Casa de Cambio*
 foreign currency exchange
 the Temple of Instant Transformation
 the place where *Tijuana y San Diego se entre-*
piernan
 where the Third becomes the First
 and the fist becomes the sphincter
 here, we produce every imaginable change
 money exchange *kasse*
cambio genético verbal

cambio de dólar y de nombre
cambio de esposa y oficio
de poeta a profeta
de actor a pelotari
de narco a funcionario
de mal en peor
sin cover charge
 here, everything can take place
 for a very reasonable fee
 anything can change into something else
 Mexicanos can become Chicanos
 overnite
 Chicanos become Hispanics
 Anglosaxons become Sandinistas
 & surfers turn into soldiers of fortune
 here, fanatic Catholics become swingers
 & evangelists go zen
 at the clap of my fingers
 for a very modest amount

I can turn your *pesos* into dollars
 your “coke” into flour
 your dreams into nightmares
 your penis into a clitoris
 you name it *Califa*
 if your name is Guillermo Gómez-Peña
 I can turn it into Guermo Comes Penis
 or Bill “the multi-media beaner”
 or even better, *Indocumentado #00281431*
 because here Spanish becomes English *ipso facto*
 & life becomes art with the same speed
 that *mambo* becomes jazz
tostadas 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
[He stands up & performs a biblical gesture.]
Lázaro gabacho wake up and cross!!
crosssss/cruzzzzzz/crasssss

VII

[He begins the following text with a psalm in Latin. He delivers text like a Catholic chant.]

Cyber-Bwana
Tezcatlipoca Electronic
Fabricante de la Imagen Internacional
Padraastro de la Incertidumbre Mundial
Legislador de la Tercera y Ultima Realidad
Gran Mano que todo lo acorralla
 you ordered us to come
 via TV via rock & roll

Imevisión here we are
SPANISH INTERNATIONAL NETWORK
& we are here . . .

to stay

[He continues with *norteño* (Northern Mexican) accent.]

Cyber-Bwana

we are your product in a way
we are what you can only dream about
we hold the tiny artery
which links you to the past
the umbilical cord that goes back to the origins
from Homo Punk to Homo Pre-Hispanic
from high-tech to Aztec without missing a beat
without us you would go mad
without us you would forget who you really are
without us you are just another tourist lost in
Puerto Vallarta

[He grabs megaphone.]

we perform, we scold you, we remind you
'cause we are so little
so fuckin' minute
what else can we do?

VIII

[Soundtrack: *Tambora Sinaloense*. He speaks like a drunk.]

. . . & you think we have nothing in common?
well, well

you are a victim of your government

& so am I . . . of yours

I am here 'cause your government

went down there

to my country

without a formal invitation

& took all our resources

so I came to look for them

just to look for them

nothing else

[He drinks from a bottle of shampoo.]

if you see a refugee tonight

treat him well

he's just seeking his stolen resources

if you happen to meet a migrant worker

treat him well

he's merely picking the food

that was stolen from his garden

[He begins to scream.]

has anyone seen my stolen resources?

has anyone seen my coffee,

my copper, my banana, my gas,

my cocaine, my wrestling mask?

my my ma-ma, *ma-ma-cita* . . . *mamita!*

[He cries.]

IX

[He speaks through the megaphone.]

dear Californian

we harvest your food

we cook it

& serve it to you

we sing for you

we fix your car

we paint your house

we trim your garden

we babysit your children

& now

we even tell you what to do:

go South *Califa*

abandon your dream

& join the continental project

dear Californian

your hours are counted

by the fingers of your unwillingness

to become part of the world

you must be scared shitless of the future

[He speaks in tongues.]

I've got the future in my throat

[He speaks in tongues.]

take me or kill me *Pochtlani*

look South or go mad

I mean it *vato*

[He speaks in tongues.]

. . . & you dare to ask me

where have I been

all these years?

X

[He continues to speak through the megaphone.]

estimado compañero

del otro lado del espejo

there's really no danger tonight

estoy completamente desarmado

the only real danger lies

in your inability to understand me

in your unwillingness to trust

the only real danger is in your fingers

your thumb lies on the button

your index finger on the trigger

you have the weapons *maestro*

I merely have the word

my tongue is licking your wounds

it hurts but it makes sense
it's up to you to dialog
it's up to you to dialog

XI

[Soundtrack: Ry Cooder. He speaks like a smooth-talker, kisses audience with a smooth-talker style.]

smack! smack!

hey, baby . . . baby, *güerita*

duraznito en almíbar, nalguita descolorida . . .

It's me, the Mexican beast

we are here to talk, to change, to ex-change

to ex-change images and fluids

to look at each other's eyes

to look at each other's mmmhhj

so let's pull down the zipper of our fears

& begin the . . . Binational Summit *mi vida*

but remember,

I'm not your tourist guide across the undetermined otherness

this ain't no tropical safari to *Palenke* or

Martinique

much less a private seminar on interracial

relations

[He changes to normal voice.]

this is a basic survival proposal

from a fellow Mex-american

in the debris of continental culture

& all this blood is real

the hoopla is false but the blood is real

come taste it *mi amor*

[He grabs the megaphone.]

subtext:

dear border lover

Eurídice Anglosajona

the state of interracial communication

has been seriously damaged by the AIDS crisis

we are no longer fucking our brains out

no longer masturbating across the fence

no longer exchanging binational fluids

we are merely stalking & waiting

waiting for better times

& more efficient medication

we are horny & scared

very horny & very scared

tonight we must look for other strategies

& place additional importance on the word

I love you *querida amante extranjera*

but this time you have to be content with my words

la palabra alivia las heridas de la historia

XII

[He speaks in broken English.]

no, I did not qualify

my ex-landlord didn't recognize me when I called

my employers said they'd never seen me before

those art lords didn't want to sign the form

"there's no recognizable form in your art"—they said

"there's no recognizable form for your fear"—I told them

"your aggressivity is an expression of cultural weakness"—they replied

"but which is the form of my dignity?"—I asked rhetorically

[Pause.]

they were shocked by how articulate I was

[Voice becomes softer.]

form, form

form without content

love without saliva

art without ideas

tacos without *salsa*

life without redemption

form, form, form

[Voice changes to stylized Pachuco.]

form a coalition *carнали*

no te duermas Samurái

get a computer *pirataí*

but *buzo*

if your umbilical cord breaks

there's nothing we can do

you're gone

lost in the all-encompassing fog

of the United States of America

& then,

you *es-tass jou-didou*

com-pre-hen-di?

[He continues in a normal voice.]

the day I was born

September 23 of 1955

eternity died

& the border wound became infected

the day my father died

February 17 of 1989

my last tentacle with México broke

& I finally became a Chicano

XIII

[He holds bottle & delivers commercial as Latino transvestite.]

Tequila Guero . . . with menthol

the new breath of old México
for the contemporary warrior
who doesn't
want to give up
his language, his identity, or his . . . mmhhjj
**[He then proceeds to announce a shampoo
bottle in an Indian dialect.]**

XIV

**[Soundtrack: "La Negra" fading in & out.
He speaks like a transvestite and clearly ex-
periences a lot of pain.]**

ay!

ayyy!!

aayyyy!!!

las leyes que emasculan

la orden mortal en forma de cupón

de imagen televisiva

. . . trémula voz eléctrica

al otro lado del teléfono

0095-619

al otro lado del other side

**[He grabs the megaphone, speaks with
overdone Mexican accent.]**

hellou, hellou

alo Jack

can you hearr me?

can you rreally hear me?

I am finally speakin' English

. . . no, no, you are not blame for the invasion
of Grenada . . .

the air-raid to Libya wasn't your fault . . .

the Iran-Contra aid wasn't really your initiative
nor were the last economic sanctions to México

[Pause.]

Jack, you have delusions of grandeur

you were merely receiving instructions

. . . & please forgive my bad English

I came too old to this country

& I haven't been domesticated yet

**[He puts down the megaphone & addresses
the audience with real voice.]**

the marine stood up

kicked the table

spit at my face

"you goddamn terrorist wetback!!"

& began to cry like a *chihuahua*

[Pause.]

. . . but the *mariachis* never stopped playing

they are still playing right now

what beautiful paradox

California sinks

& the *mariachis* keep playing

can you hear them?

can you really hear them?

XV

[He speaks through the megaphone.]

hello, this is authentic Latino performance art
zero bullshit/lots of style

**[He puts on shaman wig, delivers text with
a breathy drunken voice.]**

I am 33, the age of Christ

& this is the year of Armageddon

the "Year of the Yellow Spider"

according to the Tasadays

& the Chinese "Year of the Snake"

di go la neta es que

your president & bunch have brought

sadness, radioactivity, & death

to the whole damn world

[He burps & coughs.]

they've killed thousands of people

down south & overseas

& you are also responsible

como dice Chomsky

"we are all responsible

for the crimes of our governments . . ."

but . . .

you are particularly responsible

for the crimes of the CIA, the FBI,

the Border Patrol, the *Contras* . . .

you are responsible for all civilian mercenaries

engaged in foreign causes

both military & artistic

you are also responsible for . . .

[Pause.]

why are you responsible?

**[He answers in an Indian dialect, then con-
tinues as hipster.]**

hey, I grow the pot . . . & you smoke it

I need dollars, you need magic

a perfect transaction I'd say

we both need to overcome

our particular devaluations, *que no?*

XVI

**[Soundtrack: Gregorian chants. He delivers
text as a TV evangelist.]**

you can leave this space if you wish

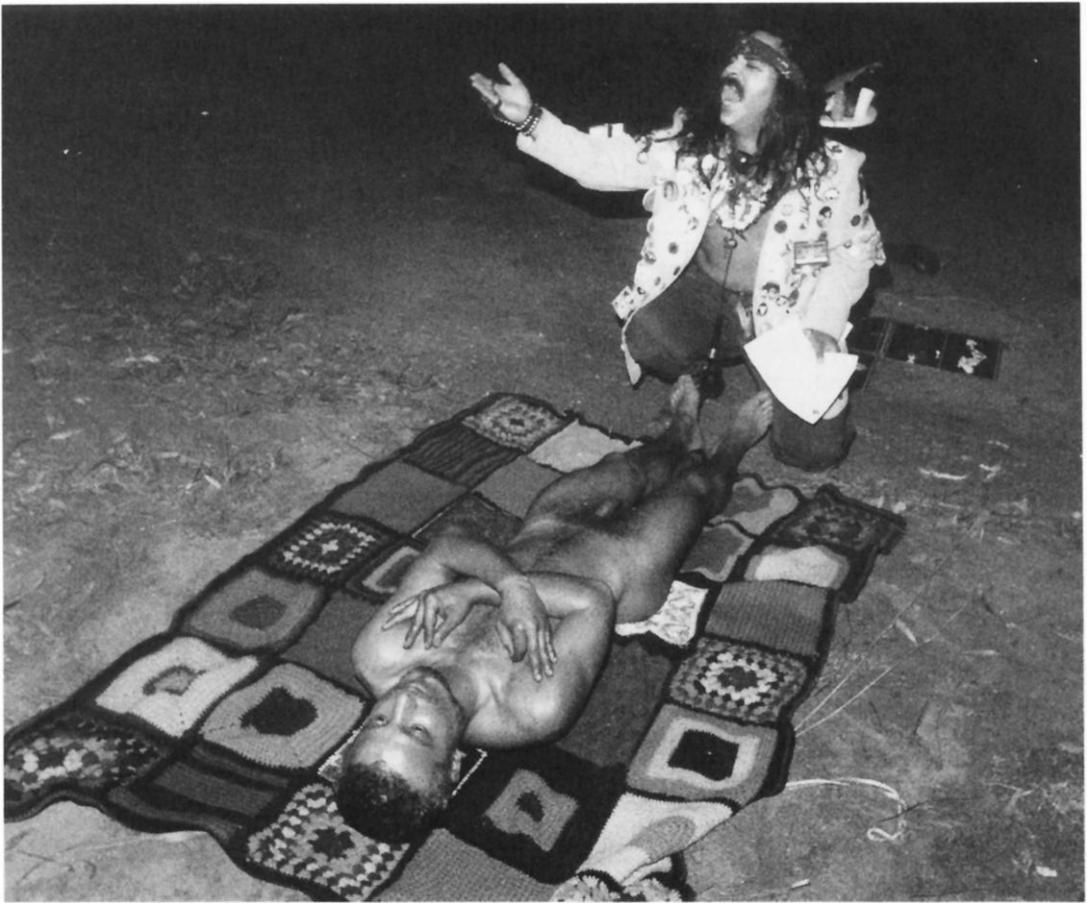
there's really nowhere else to go

your house has been culturally occupied

your mind is already invaded

trust me

let's begin to talk



2. "The birth of Border Brujo." Balboa Park, San Diego, 1988. A collaboration by Guillermo Gómez-Peña (kneeling) and Hugo Sanchez. (Photo by Isaac Arstein)

let's stop performing
 this is an art of emergency
 there's nowhere else to go
 the South is in flames
 the border is canceled
 & the North is occupied
 by Reagan's conceptual battalion
 I'm sorry for being so direct
 but we are running out of time, pesos, & faith
 but we are running out of time, pesos, & faith

XVII

[Very fast Cantinflas-like voice.]

they say I talk to gringos
 they say I wasn't born in East L.A.
 they say I left the Committee by choice
 they say I promote the "negative stereotypes"
 of my people

they say I sound like Pablo Neruda gone punk
 they say my art is a declaration against the Holy
 Virgin of
 Mexican aesthetics
 they say my politics are endangering the party
 they say I'm sleeping with a poststructuralist
 feminist troublemaker
 they say I have to stop riding my experimental
 donkey
 & put my feet on the ground
 once & 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
 & the past tense
 of Mexico
[He speaks in tongues.]

XVIII

[He speaks in a normal voice.]

. . . *porque sufro la gran ruptura
fractura parietal en 5° grado
estar does unidos es pura ilusión
. . . porque sufro el gran destierro
la vida es un lento destierro
good-bye compadre transhumante
Ulises ranchero
te apañó la migra por 9a ocasión
te quedaste sin cruzar
sin cruisin' no hay redemption
somos nadie en el éter desunidos
en USA desunidos
mita y mito
partidos por la mitad*

[He grabs knife, gestures as though wanting to commit hara-kiri. Speaks like a macuarro (Racist depiction of a Mexico City urban mestizo).]

*soy carne de cañón
papel de hoguera
ardo en las llamas del arte contemporáneo
arde el inglés en mi garganta
arde el D.F. en mi memoria
arde la llama del movimiento
apenas
apenas
apenitas*

[He stabs himself.]

aaaaaagggggghhhhhhhh

[He continues with normal voice.]

& as I was crossing the border check point
this somewhat intelligent *migra*
confiscated a copy of this text
he read a few pages
& asked if I was a member
of the *Partido Chicano-Cardenista*
“no, señor,” I replied
“I am a member of the Tribe of the Inflamed
Eyelids”
he tore my passport in half
& I proceeded to kick him in the balls
for the sake of experimentation

XIX

[Soundtrack: cumbia. He speaks like a Tijuana street hustler.]

hey mister . . . mixer
& you thought Mexico was South America?
you thought Castillian Spanish was better than
Mexican
you thought salsa was Mexican music

you thought all Mexicans were dark-skinned &
short & talkative like me
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
& 3rd world
& now you're realizing you're part of the 3rd
world
& your children are hanging out with us
& your children & us are plotting against you
hey mister, eeh mister . . . mister
& suddenly you woke up
& it was too late to call the priest, the cops, or
the psychiatrist
*a qué pinche sustote te pegaste
y en español*

XX

[He grabs the megaphone.]

hello, this is the uncensored voice of the “Latino
boom”:

I mean to ask you some questions
dear editor
dear curator
dear collector
dear candidate
dear anthropologist
where can we draw the line between curiosity &
exploitation?
between dialog & entertainment?
between democratic participation & tokenism?
where is the borderline
between my Spanish & your English?
ce n'est pas ici
between my sperm & your mouth
there is a cultural void
between my wings & your knife
there's uncontrollable panic
between my words & your ears
there are 33 years of rain
& between my art & yours
there's 10,000 miles of misunderstanding
**[He subvocalizes, then speaks in an Indian
dialect, then continues text with a nonchalant
attitude.]**
what I think is avant-garde, you think is passé
what I think is cool, you think is corny
what I think is funny, you think is cruel
what I think is fascism, you think is just life
what I think is life, you think is romantic
what I think is true, you think is literature
what I think is art, you just have no time for it

what I think is West, you think is South
 what I think is America, you think is your
 country

[He stands up & screams.]

we are so far away from one another
 we are so far away from one another!!

**[He mouths as if screaming, then continues
 text in cool style.]**

I speak therefore you misinterpret me
 I am in Tijuana, you are in
 I exist therefore you misunderstand me
 I walk back into Spanish
 for there are many concepts to protect
 good-bye *compita*
extranjero en tu propio país
chao, chaocito, adieu
auf Wiedersehen, caput, puut' . íssimus

**[He performs "offensive" sign language
 from México. Lights fade out.]**

—TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION—

Part Two

XXI

**[He chants text in the style of a merolico.
 Soundtrack: bullfight music.]**

so, ¿a qué vienes extranjero?
¿a experimentar "peligro cultural?"
¿a tocarle los pies al brujo?
¿a pedirle perdón?
¿a ver si te reorienta hacia el poniente?
pero sus palabras te confunden aún más
te hieren, te desconsuelan
 you can't even understand the guy
 'cause he speaks in a foreign tongue
 seems real angry & ungrateful
 & you begin to wonder
**[He begins to mumble like a "redneck,"
 mispronounces Spanish.]**
 whatever happened to the sleepy Mexican
 the smiley guy you met last summer
 on the "Amigou Country" cruise, remember?
 whatever happened to the great host
 the helpful *kimozabe*
 the sexy *mariachi* with pencil *mostachio*
 the chubby cartoon character
 you enjoyed so much in last Sunday's paper?
 whatever happened to Speedy González
Fritou Banditou, Johnny McTaco, Pancho de
Nacho,

los tres caballeros, Ricardou Mont'lban
 the *Baja Marimba Band y sus cantina* girls?
 when did they disappear?
 were they deported back to Mexicorama?
 how? through Mexicannabis Airlines
 & who let these troublemakers in?
 are they for real? 'cause
 I want to witness a real representation . . .
[His voice goes back to normal.]
 hmmm, how ironic
 I represent you
 yet, you don't represent me
 & you think you still have the power to define?
 please . . .
 please . . .
 please . . .

XXII

**[He speaks in a very elegant & soft-spoken
 manner.]**

please don't touch me
 I've got typhoid & *malaria*
 don't dare touch me
 I haven't been documented yet
 I'm still an illegal alien
 my back is wet
 my nipples are hard
 I'm ready to fight
 I'm ready to rape
 don't like me too much
 'cause I'm a drug smuggling
 welfare recipient-to-be
 sexist communist car thief
 fanatically devoted to the overthrow
 of the U.S. government & the art world

[Pause.]

no, just kiddin'
 don't listen to me
 I'm just a deterritorialized "*chilango*"
 who claims to be a Chicano
 & I'm not even eligible for amnesty
 'cause I never documented my work
 the only photos of my performances
 are in the archives of the FBI
 & I'm a bit too shy to ask them for copies
 can anyone document me please?

[Pause.]

can anyone take a photo of this memorable
 occasion?

[Pause.]

come on, for the archives of border culture
 for the history of performance art

can anyone be so kind as to authenticate my
existence?

[He freezes for 20 seconds.]

XXIII

[Soundtrack: old instrumental blues. He speaks like a “macuarro.”]

cameras 1 & 2 rolling

música maestro!

[Music doesn't start.]

*¡música!! pss, que pasó? . . . pos nos la echamos sin
música*

[Music finally begins.]

I 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
I'm almost an aborigine you know

a Hollywood Indian, *ajjuua!*

me dicen el Papantla Flyer

de la Broadway, bien tumbado

'cause I love to show my balls to strangers

& to talk dirty to *gringás feministas*

& if it wasn't for the fact that I've read

too much Foucault & Baudrillard

& Fuentes & Subirats & Roger Bartra

& other writers you haven't even heard of

I could fulfill your expectations much better

if it wasn't for the fact that I wrote

this text on a Macintosh

& I couldn't even memorize it all

& I shot my rehearsals with a Sony-8

I would really fulfill your expectations

le bon sauvage du Mexique

l'enfant terrible de la frontière

XXIV

[Soundtrack: Ry Cooder's “Canción Mixteca.” He speaks with an unbearably snobbish accent.]

oui, oui, oui

Mexique ooh la la

Chingada da-da

les enfants de la chingada

México rromantic México

paraíso para tizos

para todos tifoidea

Chili Ortega pa'la güera

muchiou machou el muchiachou

ay, que rrico gaspachou

oh, pardon

don Giovanni tampocou Mexicani?

from where?

São Paolo, Manila, or Cuernavaca?

[He changes voice to that of a drunk tourist.]

well, I don't care

it's all the same

the world is filled with colorful creatures

like me, like them

I simply adore Mexico

its fleshy *señoritas*

with humongous black eyes

walking down *Revolución*

like hundreds of thousands of *Carmen Mirandas*

with *sombrero grandi* & Coppertone

& man, they sure don't complain about *machismo*

they love it!!

porqui let's face it,

el machou Méxicanou no ser tan machou como el

texanou

XXV

[Super-flamboyant Latino accent & exaggerated gestures.]

please, check my pronunciation

I'm a child of the fallen Latin American
oligarchy

I dream of a beautiful beautiful condo

in Coronado or Key West

away from my homeland in turmoil

I dream of a disinfected environment

one that only my memory can inhabit

& only the memories I want

she dreams of a beautiful suburb

somewhere in the periphery of her fears

she's tired of suffering

she lost her man in Santiago

her son in Guatemala

her daughter raped by a U.S. marine

she walked all the way from Tegucigalpa

she came to ask for an explanation

can anyone explain to her why?

[A pre-recorded text in an Indian language will continue throughout the next text.]

XXVI

[He switches to a “redneck” accent, speaks through megaphone.]

“no, no, too didactic” . . .

too romantic, too, too . . .

[He barks.]

not experimental enough
 not inter-dizzy enough
[He barks again.]
 looks like . . .
[He barks.]
 old-fashioned Anglo stuff
 I mean not enough . . . *picante*
 not enough *bravadou & passionadou*
 I want *mucho* more
 I want to see García Márquez in 3-D
 a post posty rendition of *Castañeda*
 holographic shamans flying onstage
 political massacres on multiple screens
[He gets progressively crazier.]
 what's wrong with you pre-technological
 creatures?!

a-ffir-ma-ti-ve-ac-tion-pimps!
 you can't even put together a good fuckin'
 video!!

[He breathes heavily & rests his head on the table.]

XXVII

[He delivers the text in broken English with an artificial smile.]
 please check my pronunciation

this is the year of the Hispanic
 Hispanics on MTV
 Hispanics on Broadway
 Hispanics in Hollywood
 Hispanics in the Museum of Modern Art
 Hispanics in
 Hispanics in the Calendar Section
 Hispanics in Ripley's Believe It or Not
 Hispanics in Congress
 Hispanics in General Dynamics
 Hispanics in the Border Patrol
 Hispanics in the Federal Jail
 Hispanics in Skid Row
 Hispanics in AIDS clinics
 Hispanics in the cemetery
 Hispanics in different sizes
 buy one/get one for free
 it's in, it's hot, it's cheap, it's durable
 & like the bumper sticker says,
 "A TRUE HISPANIC IS NOT JUST YOUR
 PANIC
 BUT EVERYONE'S PANIC"
[Pause.]
 as I was saying
 thanks to marketing
 & not to civil rights

we are the new generation
[Pause.]
 of laboratory rats & experimental patients.
[He begins to cut coke/speak like a druggie.]
 . . . at night
 alone in my condo
 when I pray to my 3-D virgin
 it's strange you know
 I'm happy yet I feel like killing myself
 so I take more pills to fall asleep
 the pills you sent me last month are terrific
 they make me forget all the pain
 & alienation I thought I used to feel
 they make me feel part of it all
 with them I feel one with California
 one with the art world
 & a thousand within myself
justo a tu imagen y semejanza
 so I turn on the radio . . .

XXVIII

[He grabs megaphone/speaks like a barker.]
 alien-ation
 alien action
 alienated
alguien ate it
 alien hatred
 aliens out there
hay alguien out there
 "Aliens" the movie
 "Aliens" the album
 "Cowboys vs. Aliens"
 "Bikers vs. Aliens"
 "The Wet Back from Mars"
 "The Mexican Transformer & his Radio-active
Torta"
 "The Conquest of *Tenochtitlan*" by Spielberg
 "The Reconquest of *Aztlán*" by Monty Python
 "The Brown Wave vs. the Micro Wave"
 "Invaders from the South vs. the San Diego
Padres
 reinforced by the San Diego Police
 reinforced by your ignorance dear San
 Diegan . . ."
 good morning
 this is Radio Latino FM
 spoiling your breakfast as always
[The remainder of this text is prerecorded. He sub-vocalizes.]
*efectivamente, anoche asesinaron
 a un niño mexicano de escasos 8 años*

*la patrulla fronteriza asegura
que se trata de "peligroso asaltante"
a continuación, más noticias en inglés:*

the Mexican fly is heading North
the Mexican fly is coming to destroy your crops
the Mexican fly is now in Chihuahua
there's no insecticide for the Mexican fly
no antidote for your fear of otherness
the Simpson-Rodino bill is an emergency plan
to regulate your fears
some call it an act of political fumigation
the Amnesty Program has been designed to le-
galize otherness
for otherness keeps leaking into the country into
your psyche

dear listener/dear audience
your country is no longer yours
your relationship with otherness has reached a
point of crisis
you love me/you hate me
you are in good company
but you don't know it yet
the Mexican fly will be coming soon to a garden
near you

good evening
this is Radio Latino FM
interrupting your coitus as always
**[He sings an Indian song & covers his face
with the hair of the wig.]**

XXIX

**[Soundtrack: New Age percussion. He en-
ters into a trance.]**

I see Tenochtitlan Island
resting peacefully on the surface of a daiquiri
I see the Aztec warrior in a straitjacket
facing a 100-year sentence in Chino
I see the Spanish landowner & the American
tourist
getting wasted at *Margarita's Village*
I see the border guards masturbating & vomiting
under the border fog
under the very fog that covers us right now
I see the first sparks of the 2nd Mexican
Independence
& the final kicks of a drowning saurus
I see other more personal things
like friendly women & friendly men
really trying to understand
but despite all of these visions
estoy triste en país ajeno

*estoy muy triste en país ajeno
estamos tristes en país ajeno
país de todos/país de nadie
& there's nothing you can do to ease my pain
nothing sadder than a Mexican artist in Southern
California*

under the present Administration
nothing is really administered but death

[He speaks in tongues.]

I mean, death as a "lifestyle"
death as a media celebrity
death as a mandatory practice
la gran calaca güera que todo lo gobierna

[He speaks in tongues.]

in order to operate without physical
repercussions

I chose the temporary safety of the art world

[He continues to speak in tongues.]

XXX

**[He screams over the heads of the audience,
as if wanting to reach someone far away.]**

*hermano de allá
de hasta allá abajo
si tan sólo supieras lo que es
pasarse una noche solitario
en un motel de Alabama
en una cantina de Oxnard o Detroit
caminar por las calles desiertas y peligrosas
de Marin County o Pasadena
amar en Nueva York
con el temor de un contagio mortal
y por si fuera poco
sentir la luz del helicóptero en Imperial Beach
la voz forastera por la espalda . . .*

[He freezes for 20 seconds.]

XXXI

[He speaks in very broken English.]

no, I have no green card
I was illegally hired by this gallery
the director might receive employer's sanctions
the INS might raid my audience
one of these nights
one of them might even shoot me
from the audience
perhaps tonight
one never knows nowadays
anything can happen in America
we are so fuckin' vulnerable in America
I'm scared therefore you exist
so look out for me



3. Guillermo Gómez-Peña as Border Brujo at Sushi Gallery, San Diego, 1988. (Photo courtesy of Sushi Gallery)

I'm going through the Big Smoke
I'm going through the Big Smoke
& so are you

[He walks around the audience speaking in tongues. He suddenly stops, and seems very irritated.]

there is a Border Patrol agent in the audience
can he please identify himself?

can you please identify yourself?

[Long pause.]

!cobarde!!

XXXII

[He uses the megaphone & points a hand flashlight at the faces of the audience.]

dear friends
 let me ask you a few questions
 has anyone ever crossed a border illegally?
 has anyone ever smuggled any “illegal sub-
 stances” or radical literature?
 have you ever harbored or hired an “illegal
 alien”?
 have you ever worked illegally yourself?
 have you ever visited a “communist country”
 or a transvestite cantina?
 have you ever joined an anti-American organiza-
 tion named (the name of the place he is
 performing)?
 have you ever engaged in sexually illicit
 practices?
 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 hundred times
 & I’ve been violently frisked at least 20 times
 for not having answered them
**[He puts down the megaphone, raises his
 hands & freezes.]**
 & you ask me
 “are you implying that the U.S. is a police
 state?”

but I can only answer in *náhuatl*
[He answers in an Indian dialect.]
 but you insist
 isn’t California the ultimate utopia for Latinos?”
 & this time I answer with a violent question
 “isn’t Disneyland the capital of California?”
 & you interrupt me with a knife
 “. . . but Guillermo, you’re cheating
 you’re exercising your political freedom”
 & I think for a second, “hmmm”
 & reply “sure . . .
 but how many people are here tonight
 to listen to my political freedom?”
 & we begin to count them
 & as we count them in Spanish
 we begin to wonder about freedom in America
 & the show goes on
 & the critic over there is falling asleep
 wondering why Latinos are so bloody dramatic

XXXIII

**[He lights a joint and speaks as though he
 were “high.”]**
 our moment arrived
 we did have a chance to speak out
 but we hesitated
 & someone up there

unplugged the lights . . . & the camera
 before we even realized it
**[He smokes more pot. His voice becomes
 muddy.]**
 the “quebequization” of the Southwest
 was effectively co-opted by the NSA
 & our communities were fragmented
 by the asymmetrical distribution of funding &
 space
 we all know it . . . & suffer it
**[He snorts fictional drugs. Speaks like a
 junkie, moving his head like a pendulum.]**
 today, once again
 we are alone
 like in the early days
 alone like children in the forest
 like Chicano performance artists
 in Anglo alternative spaces
 we are alone & waiting
 like the popular *corrido* says
 “some are waiting for Amnesty
 & others for the guillotine blade”
**[He repeats this phrase several times as if
 totally drugged out. Then he puts on a
 wrestler’s mask & stands up.]**

XXXIV

**[He speaks like a hard-core political ac-
 tivist.]**
 “whatever happened to the leaders?” you ask me
 some died of a heart attack
 with a little help from the CIA
 some are mortally wounded by the media
 & others paralyzed by chemical nostalgia
 a few created an impenetrable bureaucracy
 emulating their enemies
 or found refuge & comfort in the university spa
 today (date)
 standing on the edge
 of the 20th century cliff
 I finally dare to ask you
 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 the Indian leaders are still in jail
 can’t believe the Puerto Rican *independentistas* are
 still in jail
 after all these years
 still in jail in America
 & you worry about Nelson Mandela?
[Long pause.]
 & you worry about Lech Walesa?
[Long pause.]

& you worry about cigarette smoking?

[He cries for a few seconds & covers his face.]

XXXV

[He continues like a hard-core political activist.]

last night at the “Main Intersection”
 someone told me
 that all we want is
 access to the suburbs
 access to the museums
 to the City Council
 to the media
 to your girlfriend
 that all-we-want-is-access
 access! access! access!!
 well, I’m sorry to disappoint you “someone”
 all we want is to go back
 but for the moment
 there’s nowhere to go back to

[Pause. He changes to normal voice.]

our past was destroyed by your government
 therefore dear “someone”
 this is our land for the moment
 & you gotta share the pie
 to regain your peace of mind

[He speaks in tongues, then switches to normal voice.]

& you insist on asking me
 what am I doing here?
*como podré explicártelo
 sin ofenderte . . .*
 if Spalding Gray can go to Cambodia
 why can’t I come to (the city where he is
 performing)?

XXXVI

[Soundtrack: Rossini or Beethoven. He speaks through megaphone.]

tonight, I am the one who determines
 the exact nature of our relation
 even if only for one night
 I SAY:

you are no longer my spectator
 you are my object of adoration
 your country is losing weight & size
 your skin is losing its privilege
 your crisis is graver than mine

I SAY:

ciudadano del mentado primer mundo

you have a friend in me
 a solid but critical friend
 a friend who will never betray you
 but never again will accept
 your asymmetrical conditions
 I SAY:

generic citizenship
Norteamérica has grown
 back to its original size
 from *Yucatán* to Greenland
 from Michigan to *Michoacán*
 I toast to *Nuestra América*
 from the *Papago* to the punk
 I toast to the beginning of an era
 a true multicultural society
 from ritual art to “neo-geo”
 I toast in equal terms with you
 my dear *Anglosaxican* partner
waspano de 2nda o 3a generación
 in my performance country
República de Arteamérica
 you’re just a minority
 but you have some rights
 like the right to listen respectfully
 & as long as you continue
 to fear *moi* or desire me
 without proportion to my dignity
 then, my dear involuntary neighbor
 entropy will keep creeping
 like magma into your tract home
 into your troubled spirit
 & I won’t be there to rescue you
 from the flood of your guilt
[He puts down the megaphone.]

& you, my dear *negro, latino, indígena, asiático*
 or hybrid in between
 you’re next
 like it or not
 you have till January 1st of ’92
 to incorporate this country into the world
 to turn the continent upside down
 & infect English with Spanish & Japanese
 and many other *verbotten imbricalingüis*
 remember
 you have 3 years to get your shit together

XXXVII

[Soundtrack: “Ojos Españoles” by Los Xochimilcas. He speaks like a smooth-talker, while applying orange or red makeup.]

so, my dear audience
 we are finally in the same room
 even if only for an evening

we are truly conversing right now
 in your language, but conversing after all . . .
 so I mean to ask you
 where is the threshold of your desire?
 Baghdad, São Paulo, Berlin, Tangier,
 Calcutta, Tijuana, Ibiza, La Chingada
 where are your memories running loose?
 in which bed
 in whose arms
 on which stage
 in which language are you dreaming?
 in Spanish, Jamaican English, or Persian?
 where will your permanent home be erected?
 in Jakarta, Managua, or Oro Preto
 perhaps somewhere on the shores of Cataluña
 beyond the borders of panic & boredom?
 I envy your capability to desire
 I really do

[His voice changes to that of a drunk.]

I'm here in prison
 right in the center of the wound
 right in the crack of the 2 countries
 I am a prisoner of thought
 a prisoner of art
 a prisoner of a media war
 I'm each & every bad guy in the film
 a one-man film so to speak

they call me El Corny, El Slickoid
El Nahuál Conceptual, El Suddenly Violento
El Channy Fumigamitos
 I'm getting tired *corazón*
 where *demonios* are you?
 I want to read you something from my heartii
 are you coming to visit me tonight?ii
 are they going to let you in?ii

XXXVIII

[Music continues. He speaks like a stylized Pachuco.]

hey!
 my Spider Babe
 my Surfin' *Loca*
 my Mambo Jane
 my Bless Me *Ultima*
la Jazzercise
házmela buena
la Nena Radioactiva
la Biker Lacandona
la Corporate Chingona
la "búscame a horcajadas en noches de neón"
 la gimme those *besitos* across the border fence
ay, ay, Pantera Feminista
la gran Bruja Marxista



4. Guillermo Gómez-Peña as Border Brujo at Centro Cultural de la Raza, San Diego, 1989. (Photo by Isaac Arntenstein)

abráxame retuérxeme
soy tu loco encaramado al muslo izquierdo
y no me suelto por nada
soy el pendejo permanente
que llevas tatuado en una chichi
la izquierda, la grandota
y no me borro
ay, Batichica de Mexicali
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 nonexistent tonight
ay, *la pinche velita se me apaga*

XXXIX

[He drinks from the shampoo bottle. Speaks like a drunk, covering his face with his hands.]

I hate to say it but we failed

[Pause.]

we are still alive but . . . we failed
still awake, sort of
but kind'a clumsy & fuzzy
the food tastes like shit
the music is awful
it's all been done before
one artist replaces the other
one minority replaces the other
& the other, other, other, others

next year Latinos are "out"
& albino Romanians are "in"
therefore my dear audience
I'm going back to Hell
en camión de tres estrellas
como vine
back to the origins *maestro*

XL

[He begins to walk into the audience, while delivering final text as a *merolico*. He holds two baskets; one is empty & the other is filled with food & ritual objects.]

but before I go back
ladies & gentlemen
I'm going to ask you to give me
whatever you no longer need
please feel free to get rid of everything
you wish you didn't have:
money, IDs, ideas, your keys, your sins
your telephone number, your credit card
your leather jacket, your contact lenses, etc.
please make sure that whatever you give me
you're prepared never to see again.
Some objects I will bury right on the
U.S.-México border ditch.
& others will become part of my traveling altar
damas y caballeros . . . aflogen!!

Guillermo Gómez-Peña is a writer, interdisciplinary artist, and journalist. He is coeditor of The Broken Line and a founding member of Border Arts Workshop.

FIN

TDReading

For an earlier view of intercultural performance see the special issue on it: 1982 vol. 26, no. 2 (T94).