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SIXTEEN

## Crossfader Playlist

### Living (through) Tijuana

It happens again. I see it live and direct from the scene. Like all of Tijuana were a theme park and there were nothing else to do but sit back in the taxi and enjoy the ride, just stare through the window at our disaster of a city, this perfect example of no-holds-barred postmodernity.

Feeling (un)safe, check. The patrol cars massing in another commercial-school zone, the insistent ambulance sirens, dozens of armed, restless agents, nosy people making comments without knowing what's really going on. Seeing everything as some kind of blood-and-bullet show, without imagining that the illusion of it being them vs. them is rapidly disintegrating, the lie that the conflict doesn't affect us yet and won't invade our own comfort zones.

No one wants to even imagine that what we are living through (badly) is a gore movie, one of the ones they show on the weekend at 3 A.M., that it will shake much more than some middle-class fears and the social conformity that has been our companion for the last twenty years.

"The situation is completely intolerable now," we hear the host of a popular local radio show say. It's the same thing that a housewife is thinking, the dismayed housewife who, like the wife of Reverend Lovejoy on the Simpsons, asks someone to think about the children as she gets out of a taxi in one of the many fortified parts of the city. God help them, she manages to say to us.

Days later, on the way to a Thanksgiving dinner, a friend points at an empty corner around the corner from his parents' house, reporting like a TV correspondent: "That's where the narcos left three dead bodies wrapped in blankets."

Yeah, it's hard to accept: la city is a violent playground (Nitzer Ebb dixit).

This year I've seen the most unimaginable things in the media: obscene close-ups of a series of disgusting murders meant to satiate our morbid curiosity and leave us gasping for air, the sadism and cruelty of the posthuman tragedy, the unrelenting update of lives converted into mere statistics. A torrent of blood.

The press drops any pretense of ethics in pursuit of that segment of the market that devours crime news with savage nervousness. The way the media wallows in the violence and the spectacularization of civic fear seems to be covering up both a moralistic stench and a chart of economic salvation. Some day we, the people of Tijuana, we'll make them pay for their despicable contribution to the present psychosis.

Because of all this, blogs are a better option for finding out what places to avoid, tips for noticing the behavioral tics of the invisible enemy now lurking all over the place, the judicial system's anomalies, details the press covers up, the hidden realities of the impoverished masses whose ranks we've let swell. And then the blogs of the people who think "it's hard to stay quiet when it hits so close to you. Hard when it become a *modus vivendi*." *The ones who write for the people who aren't here anymore, for the ones who've disappeared.*

Tijuana isn't Gotham City. There aren't any superheroes to respond to our calls or competent authorities to attend to our appeals. What can be done in a city that's devouring itself? Write a post-everything *j'accuse* fingering the criminal impunity, the police corruption, and a state overwhelmed by its inefficiency and the lack of strategies for attacking the first problem and controlling the second? Analyze our debilitated value system and its impact on social breakdown, the ideals of the drug-dealing youths and their connection to consumerism and generalized disillusionment? Entrust Tijuana over to some supreme power (whichever one it might be)?

Will it help anything to walk through the various theories dealing with fear as a means of control, prayer chains, the importance of a life and honest work, political participation, solidarity marches, and occasional, well-directed protests? Or will we turn people from Sinaloa into the perfect target for attacks, letting them stand in for the misnamed narcoculture in the border imaginary? Tijuana wasn't like that before.

Two thousand eight will go down in history as a terrible year: the more than seven hundred dead and a series of excessively dramatic images (those kindergarten kids and the shootout that were transmitted around the world,

Aiko Enriquez Nishikawa's sad farewell letter to Tijuana, the stories heard during the marches for peace and safety, the riots in the Penitenciaría). Too many things, too many.

Terrible? Yes, but as our neighbors on the other side of the border say: *Life goes on.*

I'm part of a generation that grew up with the privileges of progress and that carefree feeling that the city has stood for since its beginnings. A generation that defends Tijuana nightlife tooth and nail as a way to escape-valve the implosion of violence that used to be selective but now is a kind of lottery of death.

Tijuana is our home, our border roots, our web of friends, our work, and our dreams. Like so many who head out every morning to face the uncertainty and turmoil of capitalism gone wild, I can say this: I'm not afraid, I don't want to be afraid, I refuse to be afraid.

One more thing: if we lose Tijuana, Mexico has no future.

### The Tijuana We've Got Coming

Thursdays are like my Sundays. The days I don't go to work, when I can wake up as late as I want. I work twelve hours on Wednesdays. The only thing I want to do when I get home is tumble into bed and kick back. I've done just that the last two weeks. Rest is good for me.

Today was no exception. The sound of the phone woke me up. It was noon. My sister, telling me to turn on the tv, a shootout. I turned it on and, starting with that moment, that Thursday will forever be marked in my memory.

The images I see are like out of a movie. I remember on a local news show I heard a businessman famous for his cultural and media missteps say that Tijuana looked a lot like Pakistan. I remember a statement, from only a few days ago, by a police chief saying we were living through a war in Tijuana. I remember this entire week there hasn't been one day I've woken up without reading news of some murder, kidnapping, drive-by, etc.

I followed the news on three different channels. I turned on the computer to check the Web sites of the national newspapers to see if there were updates. Information wasn't flowing. I kept watching the same images on an endless

loop. Zooms, pans, close-ups. There was something obscene in these images that, at that moment, I couldn't quite identify but I knew something about them bothered me.

I work close to where the shootout took place. A few blocks away. Sometimes I hail a taxi on the Boulevard. Several of my friends and students live over there. I talked to a few of them on the phone. They're fine . . . nervous, upset, worried, but fine. They can't leave their work / their house / their school.

I realize this is a new kind of experience when I see no one knows how to act, how to behave, how to react. On the TV News, the reporters look for the best image, the most dramatic one, the one that might work for I don't know what purpose. They've lost their way and aren't providing information, balance, control. And so I watch images on the tv that far from providing information, just strike the short match of our social psychosis, injecting fear, uncertainty, rage.

The media boasted about presenting the most complete information, the reporters said they felt like they were in a war zone, shamelessly interviewing kids and people on the edge of a breakdown, enthusiastically showing the same images over and over again. Qué vergüenza.

One of the local news shows comes on at 3 P.M. I sat down in front of the tv and watched the images again. I changed the channel and they had the same images (different shots, different angles, but still the same). Soundbites, threats transmitted on the radio dial, silence. Gunshots.

I went back to the news. In the overwhelming number of violent images, I made out the familiar faces of two much-loved friends of mine. Two girls sitting on the patio of their house, with the channel's microphone in one hand, both of them waiting perhaps for some question. Yeah, it's them: the byline identifies them by their first and last names. Their image was on the screen for a few, three, five seconds? I reacted when I saw the same images from the last few hours come back on. I decided to call them, several of their friends and family members were thinking the same thing and decided to contact them. At the end of the call, one of the girls said to me: *We lost her, R. No, I answered. Not yet.*

I know what she's talking about: *mi city, nuestra city.*

I had a few things I had to do today. The people in my house asked if I was going out. Yeah, I'm not going to be held hostage. If fear wins, we'll end up barricading ourselves in our homes like they did in Medellín. Our fight is for our freedom, for the power to move around this city, nuestra Tijuana, to not let them defeat us. Despite the fact criminals face no punishment and have no fear, we have to keep on doing even the smallest and most insignificant of our daily activities.

I went out.

I went to visit a friend. I walked a few blocks listening to *Cielo* on my headphones. When I got there, he had coffee and pizza waiting. He's upset, sad, all messed up by what happened. No one with a sensitive bone in their body or a little solidarity could feel removed from the tragedy of the situation. We know the fight is not between good guys and bad guys. We all participate in this. We're implicated by our silence, our indifference, our typical attitude of "I don't care as long as it doesn't affect me."

It's barely 6 PM and we can't take our eyes off the TV news. Once again the same images. Those images now starting to circulate around the world. We see them on the Internet. We'll see them tomorrow in the papers. We see them. Yes, they're obscene, terribly obscene. Will we remember them like the pictures from March 23rd? Will it be a defining moment for TJ? With these questions and a lot of other ones banging around in my head, I said goodbye to my friend.

Even though the media was telling everyone not to leave the house, I went to el Centro. It's calm. I passed by a few businesses with the TV on. News, of course. In the taxi, the people, none of whom knew each other, talked about what had happened. There are several versions out there. I've never believed rumors. The worst thing was seeing proof that scare tactics work.

When I got to the CECUT, I asked to be let off. It's an old refrain that culture is our only possible way out. What happened today is still the main topic. Everyone has something to say, something to express, something to feel. We all saw those images. We all reject them.

Just like me, there were several others who didn't pay any mind to the official recommendation. We go out that night to feel alive, to prove we're alive, to feel like our city's alive. Directors of cultural institutions, university professors, journalists that are sick of so much shooting, housewives, teenagers who kill time waiting to see Taurus do Brasil, people who put together university cultural programs, people who had the idea to visit the CECUT on a

day like today. A lot of people, strange for January, surprising for this Thursday in particular.

Before heading home, I went with Boo, a very close friend, to the Starbucks at the beach. This might seem like an empty and ridiculous thing to do, in view of what had gone down. Even so, it was the best way to end a horrible day. We had a good time talking about the books friends have recommended we read, the little things that come up in the process of getting a master's, joking about future trips and group therapy techniques. There, sitting down, drinking a latté, watching a ton of people laughing and chatting with their friends, I understood that everything had not been lost.

Back to la realidad. I made it in time to see the national TV news. *Hechos* plays the same images again, the extended version. Like three or four minutes. I don't understand. Or I do understand: they're into anything morbid, into emotional blackmail, they're shameless and completely insensitive. Change the channel. Another news show, this time with their logo superimposed on the exclusive images. Sick to my stomach.

On the Internet, I found out more things, more reactions. I read about it in a few blog posts. All of them talk, locate the place where it happened, know people who live nearby, are indignant or moved by the images. Some of them say—openly or between the lines—what we all know and don't want to recognize: we are also guilty. The city's open, receptive nature makes it progressive and paradoxically makes its own survival all the more difficult.

It's almost twelve. I know that, despite not wanting to, these images will invade my dreams. Despite it all, have a good night, Tijuana.

Ps: Yeah, I know. I'm a goddamn optimist.

### Tijuana Makes Me Happy

The adjective good is used / to describe people / and things that in principle I dislike. /

The adjective bad is used / to describe people / and things that in principle I like.

—JOSÉ MARÍA FONOLLOSA (*City of Man: New York*)

I have always said Tijuana is the center of the universe. —LUIS HUMBERTO CROSTHWAITE at the presentation of his book *Instructions for Crossing the Border*

Tijuana is not Tijuana. —FIAMMA MONTEZEMOLO

## I Love Tijuana

La city is a virus, a meme that circulates with no restrictions, altering a reality that is more and more delocalized in particular ways. Tijuana is anywhere. Allá y aquí, pixilated in the unconscious collective of the new global dream. Primera advertencia: Don't be fooled by the myth and the legend (it's not Sin City and not the happiest place on Earth). We've left behind that rough-and-tumble city perpetuated in movies for overgrown adolescents or that illusion called the American Way of Life. Tijuana is much more than the clichés repeated by the people who come to try to decipher it, loaded down with all their prejudices. Just glancing briefly at these oft-recycled images is enough—the enormous naked lady, the industrial parks, la línea fronteriza, la calle principal—to understand they're tiny pieces of a minor simulacrum based on a charismatic reality in full-blown restructuring.

Romanticizing the border does no good (sorry, nothing's the same as it used to be). Some people decide to live it with all its dynamics, processes, and problems. Others don't; they invent different ways to live through it. Both are there, moving through the same urban space but in almost parallel worlds. That's why, if what we live are, as one of the new physics theories posits, multiple "nows" that proceed at the same time, this is something we can discover: the Tijuana that still believes in the miracles of Juan Soldado and that doesn't recognize the culture jamming of the story of Santa Olguita (the girl raped and killed in 1938 is promoted to the public in her recent adaptation into a holy saint card); Tijuana as a perpetual escape route, as a place without laws; the Tijuana of land invasions on the extreme edges of la city and their violent evictions later on; the welcoming Tijuana of the Argentinian pop singer Ricardo Ceratto; the Tijuana riled up by the latest designer drug; the Tijuana where los bachilleres with no future wait after school for the camioncito that'll take them straight to the night shift in the maquiladora; the Tijuana considered a new cultural mecca; the conservative Tijuana that doesn't know how to deal with the concept of alterity; the Tijuana of Avenida Revolución, calmly receiving the contingent of patriotic jarheads with their eyes popping out of their heads fighting for the attention of big-busted, steely-assed nymphs; the Tijuana of impunity and corruption at all levels; the Tijuana in the national press iotra vez!; the Tijuana of electronic and avant indie pop; the Tijuana that isn't known and that hides when they come to try to find it on a weekend; the Tijuana that laughs because it knows that, in the end, nothing/everything is the truth. Fission Tijuana, not fusion Tijuana.

Tijuana doesn't keep still, she moves, she's moving, that's why it's so hard to get a handle on her and why it's so easy to put labels on her post-Cancelini

that all end up saying the same thing, cracking a fascist morality that condemns what it doesn't comprehend and providing an undercover preview in real time of what's to come. That's why trying to define what is always mutating, besides being unproductive, is quite pretentious. You choose: Tijuana as a rollercoaster in free fall or the übertrip de tu vida. O las dos cosas at the same time. No big deal, really.

I love TJ, for thousands of reasons, for its crystal-iced vibe and the faribol-esque spirit of its streets, for being creative in spite of its precariousness and for pushing on despite tremendous neglect, for its multifaceted character, polychromatic and metathematic, for its bar-hopping nights and its obvious social contradictions, for its incredible audacity and its obvious ingenuity dealing with everything foreign, for transcending a *leyenda negra* that is only brought up by those seeking to benefit from it, for being something more than that, because my home and a huge network of coconspirators are here, because I do and because why not and because who cares what they're talking (shit) about anyway.

## Just Say Tijuana

As a border space where the reality of the developed world coexists with the reality of underdevelopment in Mexico, Tijuana attracts the gaze of people living through, observing, or following at a distance what happens in la city. This is why, for some years, the main concern of the authorities and business groups has been improving the city's image in the interior of the country and also abroad which helps, in some ways, to recover the competitive advantage of yesteryear, as far as it relates to cheap labor and foreign investment so essential to confronting the ferocious onslaught of the Chinese maquiladora industry.

Nevertheless, there's an awful lot going against the city. For example, on MTV Latino's program *Urban Myths*—in which they cleared up whether different rumors people spread were true or false—they asked the specific question: Are there problems south of the border? The response was an unconditional True. There are complaints that some police demand up to \$100 to let go of partying tourists visiting the city. And although you might not believe it, a representative from the City Police shows up, saying "Some of our officers do it. Puede ser, puede ser." The corruption is like that, high-profile and brazen.

That's why it's not surprising a quick Google search turns up 441,000 links in response to the query "Tijuana's bad image." It's also no shocker that an endless stream of groups have appeared (Tijuana Renacimiento, Tijuana Trabaja, Tijuana Opina, Imagen Tijuana) whose goal is to expressly counteract that representation with another image more in line with what they think

life is like here. This effort brings to light three very different visions of the local reality: one that pines for the past (reflected in the Agua Caliente Minaret), blaming all the bad things in the city on "those immigrants" who brought disorder with them, destroying the postprovincial calm, and dreaming of attaining San Diego's order and aseptic cleanliness; another vision held by those born in the late 1960s, the 1970s, and the beginning of the 1980s, brought up on Saturday cartoon shows, who had American alternative rock as their generation's soundtrack and who, when they were in elementary and middle school, celebrated both Halloween and Día de los Muertos like it was no big deal, who see San Diego as a natural extension of TJ; and the new Tijuana that since 1985 has received a growing number of people from all different parts of Mexico (according to data from INEGI, in 2000, only 39.73 percent of the people living in the city were born in Baja California), which is growing out east and whose residents have a different accent, almost never go to el Centro, don't have visas, and aren't interested in going to San Diego.

These three visions diverge in their view of the desired identity and image of la city, although the extremes have certain things in common: the new Tijuana looks more and more like the Tijuana yearned for by many with their moralistic views of its problems, while still reflecting huge differences in terms of strategies for survival. Among them, there is a metageneration of tijuanaenses (made up of writers, musicians, academics, politicians, multidisciplinary artists, among others) who don't really care a lot about the whole leyenda negra issue; they know about it and they study it to use it in their artistic, academic, or media work. Nada más. Tijuana doesn't make them defend everyday events and realities that would be present in any city with similar characteristics. So sorry, Tijuana just isn't that unique.

#### Tijuana Kills Me!

At a stop sign, at the entrances to working-class colonias or to suburban developments advertising themselves as the perfect oasis, dodging the ever-present danger of being in the middle of a dirty boulevard, you can see the newspaper vendors hard at work selling the afternoon edition of *El Mexicano*, a sensationalist paper that, with headlines almost always in red, almost unintentionally maps out a bloody guidebook to the goings-on of Tijuana profunda. What they do best is spiraling violence: *encabijados*, *levantones*, clandestine graves, knife victims, a shootout at the door of a stylish club, rapes, of the increasingly easy turf killing. Life is hard and life is cheap, or, at least, that's what they tell us. How many more people have to die before we flee

from la city? How many articles and news stories will we have to read before we really feel like we're living the catastrophe we see on TV?

My friend Sergio Brown, communicologist and visualist, tells me that when people ask me what life is like in Tijuana, I should answer by saying there's a lot of fear, that murders and violent acts are happening everywhere all the time. That I should tremble as I list everything that has happened recently, that my voice should be sad and upset, that I should ironically transmit the media's oft-repeated refrains. He says we should reclaim that image of a ciudad killer as our own, we should sell it, that we should give those morbid journalists the tour of their lives. Let them discover, shall we say, the savage side of la city at its worst possible moment (at its most real and unadulterated). Drop them off at three in the morning in the most hard-core parts of La Morita or El Grupo México. We should consider leaving them to their own devices in a brown-neck bar like El As Negro (now fallen out of favor since it's Manu Chao's favorite place in Tijuana) or El Grullense. We should take them to one of those seafood restaurants where just one look could alter their fate forever. Organize it so they run into a gangbanger from Calle XV3 in the middle of Avenida Revolución, one of those tattooed ones ready for anything so they can write "We can report that Barrio XV3 run deep in Baja" on their Web site. In the end, we want them to remember that ex-presidential candidate Colosio visited one day and he didn't make it out alive. That Tijuana, La Tijuana Killer, unfortunately is also mi city.

According to data from the PGJE, in 2003 there were 295 recorded homicides. By the first week of September 2004, that number had reached 214 (including a set of fourteen committed in the span of a week). In all media outlets, not just local ones, there are reports about a fight to the death between the Arellano Félix Cartel and "El Mayo" Zambada's group, ruthless rivals fighting to maintain and control the smuggling routes through the city. At the beginning of 2004, Víctor Clark Alfaro, director of the Binational Committee for Human Rights, told the Los Angeles paper *La Opinión* that "the violence has become something mundane. A daily pattern of deaths has been established that is related to the presence of organized crime." Nevertheless, in the majority of cases, said acts of violence do not claim the lives of innocent people, except in a few, unfortunate incidents.

Much has been said of the narcojunior connection, about how these young children of Tijuana's elite involved in the drug trade have gone from being a mere anecdote to permeating all strata of Tijuana society. The causes are multiple and varied: some say it's due to a lack of real opportunities or society and its consumerist imperative, family breakdown, the lack of values, or the

fact it is an easy way to get hold of money and a relative positive of power. One of my classmates from middle school was one of the first to be executed in a cruel and exacting way. Other friends quickly tired of scrawling a cross in the yearbooks on the photos of their class members who had been killed or sought out by the DEA or other legal authorities. Despite all this, there are those in la city who bet, without even the slightest doubt, that the narcojuniors will make the comeback of the year in 2005, but remade into what's already being called "the new freak scene" (successful professionals living the good design life, elegant junkies, and super cuckoos).

Jesús Blancornelas, codirector of the Tijuana newspaper Zeta and an expert on the subject, exposed the city's clubs in his opinion column in the newspaper *Frontera*—he didn't say which ones—as hotbeds of de luxe coke-heads (well, he calls them *enviciados encumbrados* or "pompous miscreants" in his *arancherado* style). Anyway, he makes the statement there that the middle class and *los humildes* don't have the money to buy cocaine. Yeah, one of his young associates should bring him up to speed. The middle class prefers ecstasy or acid. Cocaine is out; *los humildes* (which sounds like a seventies group popular with the maquila crowd) prefer crystal and ice.

If one pays attention to what's happening on the street, it doesn't come as a surprise to find out that Tijuana still takes first place in drug consumption in the country, according to the statistics of the Subsecretaria del Sistema Estatal de Seguridad Publica. People take drugs (the cost of a dose can run from one to five dollars). Whatever drug and wherever (in El Bordo, in La Revu, in Plaza Fiesta, in Pueblo Amigo, in Zona Río, in La Coahuila and nearby areas, in the alto-standing developments and in the rough *barrios de la periferia*, at raves and concerts, everywhere). In Tijuana, you just have to go to a corner store, a *tiendita* (one selling food, not the other kind) and read the little sign that's always there "Focos Cinco Pesos" to know what's really going on or go to any weekend party to see the staff in a synthetic trance. The use of marihuana is so common that a lot of people don't even consider it an illegal drug anymore. As has been seen in other places, prohibition has never been a viable solution; neither has the so-called fly swatter approach. With all that in mind, Tijuana could be, this is true, the social laboratory of postmodernity that sociologists and communicologists talk about so much, as it seems to put into practice the words of the political analyst Federico Reyes Heróles, who made clear, on his last visit, that the only possible way to control the drug industry and its social impact was legalization. Tijuana experimental zone.

Furthermore, since 2002, the problems brought by alcohol consumption to the city have returned to the headlines (needless to say we have the highest consumption of beer per person in the country and one of the bars—Las Pulgas, *sí señor*—sells the most beer in all Latin America). Recently, an initiative by the PAN has sought to abolish, for purely economic reasons, the so-called Ley Seca, or Dry Law, in Baja California (which was implemented in 1915 and specifically prohibits the sale and consumption of alcohol on the day before and after an election) and in another instance, there is a bizarre proposal to eliminate the words "Lady's Night" on signs, neon and otherwise, in the bars. But this isn't all; in his zeal to end *barras libres*, a PRI party leader once said that the only thing these businesses accomplish with those kinds of promotions is to incite young people to drink alcohol endlessly for hardly any money and he added, "It's enough for a young person to have fun until one or two in the morning, and I don't see the need for extra or additional hours." None of them see alcoholism as a serious health problem in la city; rather all of them see it as a form of moral collapse that has to be ended. What they don't know is *barras libres* are out of style with the people who go out to have fun in the city. The bars with beer for a dollar rule.

#### Tijuana Dream

Callejeando. Everytime I walk these street something unique happens. There's always something different. A business that's closed, new cafés and drugstores offering the ultimate pill for losing weight, some homeless who took over the most weirdo nooks and crannies, tons of freaks, loads of lost tourists and cops hard at work. I walk and watch, listen and spy, sit down and then wander one more time down streets that, by force of habit, end up being just as familiar as the people we call family. For the last few years, I've gotten into the habit of carrying my digital camera to take pictures of what I see in my daily travels. I have a collection of photos of my favorite urban characters in their natural state (the Bob Marley clone cleaning car windows at the intersection of Calle Segunda, the Siete Culos hyper-drunkie poet in El Turístico, the scabby superstar Maguana hanging around the *mercados populares*, the karaoke family at the door of my favorite ATM, Señora Cajas and her cardboard house right in front of the entrance to the ex-Palacio Municipal). A few weeks back, one of my projects was to take pictures of the backs of people walking around el Centro. After the loud cries made public in the peace and safety marches held a few months back that you couldn't walk peacefully around la city anymore, my idea was to prove that this wasn't so true. I took

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almost a hundred photos in different places, high and low, safe and really scary. I figured out that none of the people I took pictures of were watching their backs. Each one of them was walking at their particular rhythm, flowing with a relative freedom around Tijuana.

In la city, that made-in-the-media fear that would keep us from going out and wandering around Tijuana hasn't won quite yet. Apparently, public spaces are under control, vice and pleasure locked away at home and, despite it all, you can wander around God's streets protected by police officers and video cameras with high-powered zoom, with the possibility that any night at the usual checkpoints they could surprise us with Breathalyzer tests. The American "No Loitering" made into rule of law. Everyone happy and safe at home. A return to decency, it seems. Sorry, Tijuana still has the party deep inside.

¡Donde hay PAN se vive mejor! This slogan is still plastered in practically all the places I walk through to get to work, to go to school, or to head back home. Whether on a banner or a sign, it's the same message. Leaving aside the obvious religious connotation, we still have to notice the reductionist vision of whoever invented or recycled or appropriated it: our well-being is reduced to a matter of food (*pan* of course means bread in Spanish, as well as being the acronym for the Partido de Acción Nacional). And the circus? What happened to the circus? The recent PRI victory in the race for mayor in Tijuana is a sign: the circus has now come to town, with its exotic animals and everything else. No importa, I was part of the 60 percent of people who didn't vote, but I don't feel guilty, since I know I've got a front-row ticket to this surreality show. The businessman Hank Rhon promised in a meeting with college students that Tijuana was going to be *bien curada* (super cool) beginning in December. Or at the very least, there will be a lot to comment on and analyze.

El weekly viaje a San Diego is one of our most deeply rooted border customs, one that just won't die despite the peso-dollar fluctuations. It's said that San Diego is the pretty side of Tijuana. A cliché about to go into bankruptcy, under stress from the misuse of pensions, corruption, and the baggage of being "The Finest City in America." My friends use the Sentri lane to cross the border quickly. And they smile as they say, "No more long line or bikes or domineering Immigration agents." I know, in ten or fifteen minutes, you're across and in the old empire. When I don't have time, I get on a \$1.50 bus and in less than an hour, which I almost always spend reading a Baudrillard book or correcting my texts, it drops me off right in front of the Immigration agent. If I'm feeling really confident, I have an adventure and get in line Saturday morning right at the time when there's the most traffic. Since 9/11, crossing la

línea has changed so much. There's more and more surveillance on the trip over and it's always congested. Crossing la línea is unpredictable. I can take a few minutes or hours to do it. At the front of the line, I hand over my visa and answer the agent's routine question with a moment's hesitation: *I don't bring nada de México*. I amble over to the trolley and buy an All Day Pass for five dollars first, making a mental plan of the spots I'll hit that day. Yeah, amo a San Diego as much as I love Tijuana. Like Richard Hell, that New York punk poet, my love comes in spurts.

It was the early eighties, I was headed over on a family trip to San Diego. I still remember it like it was a slow-motion video: the *pollos'* crazy break-for-it—*ilegales*, *compas* looking for better opportunities or however you want to call them—through the slew of cars in line and how we shouted euphorically when one of them was able to dodge the soldiers there to stop them from getting on the freeway. Or even more sad, from a window of the restaurant Coco's, when we saw them come out of some nearby storm drains scared, dirty, and wet. Things change in a decade, now it's normal to see, all of sudden, right before getting to the review checkpoint, a guy opens the door to his car and runs toward Mexico, leaving it behind in the middle of the line to cross. Everyone knows that, after they inspect the car, you'll see one, two, three, or even five people get out of the trunk. And even though you can't do anything about it, it's rough to see them emerge confused and all sweaty with their shoes, sneakers, or boots in their hands.

In Tijuana, there's another border too: the language one. Phrases, slang, inflections, tones, and accents. There they are, we hear them when we change the dial on the radio to listen to the morning shows with their *sonidito sinaloense*, when we cross la línea, in the cultural programs on the university stations, as we hang out talking at a café or in the typical weekend drunkfests, while we're chatting online or in normal coming and goings. The ones of us who live here, the ones who just got here and the ones on their way, we construct la city and la city constructs us as we get to know her. Every day, language is resemanticized, recontextualized; as the communicologist Ricardo Morales has explained it, it's reconstructed by all of us, artists, the public, advocates for *fronterizo* ways of communicating and *fronterizo* culture. In Tijuana, language has moved past the narrow alley of Spanglish, *lo pocho*, or *chicanismos* (too seventies, too radical, too religious). The Tijuana writer Heriberto Yépez has mentioned on his blog that one of the reasons behind the use of English on the border is what he calls "emotional detachment" and he argues everything is *más light* in English, full of overused clichés. He equates the use of English to

an escape (from reality, from Mexicanness). I think English provides the simple gift of economy; when dealing with a more complex idea—Yépez is right about this—it moves the idea, and only the idea, to another context and although its usage often is reduced to media-friendly sound bites already charged with meanings, that doesn't mean the use of Tijuano Spanglish is a condescending way of looking down on someone else or a submissive nod to the gringos. As an epilogue, it's worth adding an anecdote that Yépez has told about being at a literary *encuentro* in Guadalajara and receiving a compliment for speaking Spanish so well despite being from Tijuana. Yeah, we can speak Español too.

#### Culturosa City

In a recent talk at the CECUT, as part of a series of events bringing together the artistic community in the Tijuana–San Diego area, Norma Iglesias, a former researcher at the Colef, said, *en inglés*, that Tijuana was moving quicker than any of its artists. True. Despite that, its artists recognize its movement. La city, we already said it, is moving.

If its artists go slow, the media in general is even further behind. I can tell more than a hundred stories about all the people who've come in the last ten years to cover the Tijuana experience. Big names and unknown names, indies and official operators, with agendas and without them. I've talked with a huge number of journalists, writers, musicians, academics, and video and film makers trying to discover and then take away their own Personal TJ that boils down to what others have already said. That's why it's not strange they still haven't registered or understood a couple of phenomena on the wild *periferia* of la city or the anomalous Tijuana that is coming out of a permissive Centro. On the other hand, they've provided a sneak peek of what's to come. The ones who defend the *periferia* of la city point to hip-hop, a return to the cholo aesthetic, and wager their lives for the barrio; through break beats and hard rhymes they show what's going on: violence, police harassment, the influence of drugs, the legacy of neoliberal catastrophe, the poverty of la city. It's the seventies *otra vez*, graffiti without a critique, monosyllabic Spanglish de El Ei, poverty all riled up and concentrated in isolated groups of young folks who'll die young. That's why the old guard is scared that soon they'll see them blossoming in DVDs.

On the other side, el Centro and its allies. The Tijuana Bloguita Front (TJ.BF) is/was a swarm of more than a hundred bloggers (writers, musicians, designers, architects, fanzineros, academics, videographers, radio programmers, journalists, and more) who live in Tijuana, bringing together the experimental and the academic, the superficial with a hint of prediction (*sic*),

avant-preppies and the coolturoso, el underground and the mass media in a postreality show that spans la city. They take the party with them, they walk the talk and document it all in an infinite number of Weblogs. It's today's Tijuana, half space invaders (clubs, galleries, schools, institutions), half disaster waiting to happen; an open viral web that has no morals and is hard to satiate, with different information hubs and varied communication platforms. There is an attempt to recreate la city, mix possible realities together, ironically comment on the construction of "lo tijuanoense," shake up antiquated structures, and, in the process, make the most impossible places fashionable as objects of study for academics from various parts of the world. The TJ.BF is ON, close by here, dancing to a DJ spinning mixes semiotically, on the edge of la nada, with the tedium of everyday life in their faces, immersed in something that is barely known: postborder life, the joy of living en la city, the challenge of what seems impossible to interpret.

#### The War Is Over! TJ Won

In the words of Marc Auge, though he was referring to Paris: "As long as Tijuana keeps resisting Tijuana, Tijuana me gusta." Tijuana is un teenager who always wants to be up on the latest trend, be buten cool and megadiver; however, it needs no alibis: la city is rebellious and transgressive *per se*. Tijuana is a mix of styles and epochs; it's not static, it does a 360 on the establishment's rules and loses itself in the most devastating euphoria. Tijuana scratches, caresses, stimulates.

This is what there is: a future of great challenges and opportunities, with a 1950s main avenue under surveillance with technology from the twenty-first century, an economy based more and more on the dichotomy of cartels and police corruption, made of bleeps and scratch in lost bars, of flirting glances at the old new empire always on the lookout, the language play that will replace the Spanglish that so deeply bothers the defenders of a model that was never ours, a new morality that greatly resembles the old morality, glancing at brochures with detailed instructions on how to leave the border. Whatever, this is the way it is: today everything is border, fissure, the largest chunk of what previously was an idea of nation. In Tijuana, people stick around, euphoric or resigned, because, paraphrasing Fromm, in the end, they weren't headed anywhere anyway.

Or not. If you notice, there's a riot going on. Remember one thing: la city is NOT a utopia or a dystopia, it's the afterparty where you hear the last call. We'll keep on having fun while the next thing starts. ¿Qué? We don't know and don't care, here we're enjoying the time we have left to live. A few years



back, the Borderhacker activists used the catchphrase “Delete the Border” in their v.3. We, all ironic, are still pushing a different version: “Delight the border.” And come as you are (Nirvana dixit). All welcome, no problema. Come before it’s gone and the party’s moved on to someplace else. Come to witness the moment when TJ reinvents itself on pay per view.

Tijuana has no fear. Tijuana is (a) heroic (drug). Everything here happens at the same time, but we don’t realize it; it’s a white label for a beyonddead generation that rebels with electrobeats of a radiant future, right on the line dividing this from that, calculating the moment that’ll decide the fate of all the parties in the future and of the other extraordinary actions or even the social uprising expected one of these days.

Second warning: Just like Juan Luis Curiel suggested at the end of the show he had in the seventies on the local channel 12, if you didn’t like Tijuana, don’t tell anyone.

BTW, Tijuana makes me happy, so happy.

#### in/out lines

En la línea fronteriza. A blazing sun and a line at least an hour and a half long. Whatever, it’s what you have to go through to satiate the ridiculous desire to get the last copy of *Dazed and Confused* and flip through the used bins at a couple select music stores. As always, the time passes slowly, but, to my pleasant surprise, the line is moving pretty fast considering the hour and it being the weekend.

The conversations make the wait easier. Up ahead, Mexican Americans taking their weekly supply of Gamesa cookies to some San Diego suburb; further back, a group of Europeans switch between a heavily accented English and their native French. I inadvertently eavesdrop on some of the conversations. It’s either that or make do with watching the cars go by, because this Saturday I decided to cross by myself.

We get to the point where the first American officer is standing. Instinctively, I check my wallet: I want to make sure I’ve got my passport. Yeah, I’ve got my visa, enclosed in the same protective envelope they gave me years ago. My breathing relaxes a little and I walk forward.

We’re already in the installations of the USA. At least, the signs prohibiting loitering are better translated now (though they still translate violators as “violadores”—rapists). It’s funny to see how people lower their voices, barely speaking, and move super slow like they’re not trying to draw attention. Somehow, the line has a pacifying effect. No Cameras. No Photos. Every act, every

movement, every conversation is being recorded. We know it. We’re used to that invisible Big Brother, the one we know is always there. In this line under constant surveillance, we’re all suspect. Standing in line, waiting, walking, crossing over isn’t just a formality, wasting time in a kind of limbo/gray zone/dead space/a no place that still modifies the way we act before entering what they advertise as paradise.

Others don’t make it. They’re caught with fake passports, expired permits, mistakes on their papers, stolen identities. Sometimes, like today, we see them lined up in a different line, in the same space but in the opposite direction. They barely talk, walk slowly, as if they were trying not to draw our attention, those of us practically in front of them. A family with their hands secured behind their backs, one after the other. The parents at the head of the line, their teenage kids in the middle, and at the back, the littlest ones. All of them with their heads down, trying to hide their faces in the collar of their Nike jacket or their Gap sweatshirt, staring down (like a shoegazer from ’85) at the laces on the sneakers they bought in some *mercadillo* in Tijuana.

At the front of the line, we all keep our mouths shut because we know we could be one of them. With my incredible ear, I make out one of the French guys tell another in his weird English: *The official gives back them to where they belong.*

Five minutes later, I’m buying a Trolley ticket, downtown San Diego awaits.

#### Tijuana Youth: Entre la Cultura y la Fiesta

Sometimes, the glare of the hype can be so deceptive. You can’t live in the past and try to maintain long-lost glories or fight endlessly against *leyendas negras* there’s really no purpose to revisit. You can’t believe everything you see, hear, or feel (so sorry, more than skepticism, it’s common sense). That’s why, if a few years ago the well-known magazine *Newsweek* declared la city as one of the new centers of culture and vitality, it was, let’s say, a tardy recognition of what’s going on, a move to bestow validity in a market that insists on declaring new attractions and expanding the possibilities of business as usual. It’s already been said that Tijuana moves faster than its artists and critics.

Nevertheless, contrary to that exoticizing, reductionist logic, Tijuana has never stopped being fashionable, in vogue, discovering trends, providing a preview of the immediate future just at the moment when it’s about to happen. The people writing the recent history of la city are part of a metageneration of Tijuana artists, all of whom live life without hiding the truth, without holding back, without taking themselves all that seriously; they do all this as they watch the myths getting weaker and weaker (The main myth? The one that

implied you had to leave Tijuana to be able to get any recognition or relative success), that are familiar with and circulate around the whole city, that flow through job networks and collaborate with anyone or any group, whether institutions, private initiatives, or following the Do-It-Yourself punk maxim. Tijuana open source.

Youth is just a word, as Bourdieu said, another category to contain a segment of the population, or as Rossana Reguilla notes, "a social agreement and a productive agent in the world." In la city, these youthful agents, whether incorporated or dissident (in regard to cultural consumption or the structures of the predominant culture), have shown their capacity for change and their brazen disregard for official discourse when they enter its traditional environs. Otherness is put on the table for discussion and the contradiction of meanings—results becomes part of the creative environment (a faribolesque postmodernism, the art of recycling, urban loops, porous borders, the feeling of always being in a self-representative vortex, the aesthetics of the ugly, the street). A new batch of young people who, faced with the contemporary situation in Tijuana, proposes culture as the antidote to barbarism (Sergio González dixit).

What moves them? What do they propose? Among their interests are the recuperation of the city, the rescue and mobility of spaces, the promise of the party and the pleasure that comes from living in a city as bizarre as ours, confronting a social reality that allows almost everything. Yes, but they go further than that, joining that lovey-dovey feeling with post-PC irony, academic criticism with the posture of a person who lives the street with an everyday naturalness, the search for new languages through appropriation and resemanticization of what's considered ordinary (what the majority sees as something unnecessary, superficial, and even vulgar). That's why, among many other reasons, their cultural products (books, music, design, installation art, video and visual art, among others) find homes in such diverse sites as international exhibitions or marginal supplements. Of course, they're all totally media savvy.

In her excellent book *The Reality Overload*, Annie Le Brun said that "if, despite the degrading adulation of it, youth can still possess some sort of beauty, then that beauty is that of despair, for it is youthful despair that is sometimes capable of rekindling those vital questions that the culture strives to reduce to ashes." I am thinking about the instrumental work of the Nortec Collective and their post-fronterizo, audiovisual hybrid; in the visual art exhibitions *Urban Diagnostics* and *Larva* (which provoked so many debates and diatribes because of the unevenness/ambiguity of their curatorial criteria); in the emergence of a new exciting pop scene that can be located—after the Nortec phenomenon—at the crest of the musical wave (the promise is to be

found in groups like Shantelle, Ibi ego!, The Polardroids, Aeroplanos, Niña Cámara, among others); in the candid image of the city and its characters that appears on national channels via Bulbo's documentaries; in the B-side present in the audiovisual imaginary of Art Core; in the music and video workshops for teenagers organized by a group of collectives (Nortec, Bulbo, Yonke Art, Pragma) all setting out to build a new generation of artists; in those cult authors, the newest ones who just showed up or those who fill the pages of fanzines and books of poetry (Heriberto Yépez, Omar Pimienta, Paty Blake); visual artists who are starting to sell in regional markets (Julio Orzoco, Tania Candiani, Jaime Otis); the generation of punk DJs bringing life to the Tijuana night; the neo-graffiti crews that insist on seeing la city as a huge canvas; the influential presence of theatre artists and independent dance groups in national shows and conferences; the explosion of street hip-hop, converted into cronistas of the periferia (Sociedad Anónima, Tijuas Steelo, Legión Marvel); the other record labels (Static, At-At, Discos Invisibles, Eklegein) that represent a more experimental and risk-taking underground; in the collision of design, music, and Internet that global radio was given rise to; in the new interactive media represented by the now almost five hundred active blogs documenting life in Tijuana from every possible angle. Perhaps some of those I've mentioned don't propose the vision that the mainstream and its acolytes would like, but (always the but) you have to recognize that, as Los Fresones Rebeldes would say, algo hay.

Those and other up-and-coming artists are looking to reflect, as the researcher Fiamma Montezemolo mentions in her text *Tijuana Isn't Tijuana*, not just one Tijuana, but rather thousands of Tijuanas, because they know la city is that "on-going game of diversities, of simulated truths" and in the end artists decide "not to lie about themselves, even though that doesn't mean they have to tell The Truth." Without a doubt, they know they are part of something that needs no leaders, that the real enemy is monolithic thinking and that, as the old bolero says, sólo se vive una vez. You only live once. BTW, we still think the fiesta tijuana will keep on raging at full blast.

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 posted by rafa # July 10, 2005

#### The Counterculture in Mexico: Ese pedazo de onda

You never know who you're working for. We imagine other possible worlds for ourselves and they end up being the sets for the last Coke commercial.

Phrases become advertising slogans, clichés of the younger generation blasted into the void in a script by marketing experts and images by an avant-garde video artist. A bet lost (or won, depending on the particular case).

I was there—like James Murphy in that first Can concert in Cologne—witnessing our little big revolution, flipping the coin in the air, waiting for a change in our favor from that damned bitch named luck that betrayed us and ended up biting us. It still hurts.

I'm that guy who marched in that seminal protest, squaring off with a hegemonic position, the one who yelled louder than everyone else, shouting slogans for the change that—what an irony—came late and only partially, the one who never ran away. I am the one who translated the lyrics of the songs they liked so much and then helped them build a scene we thought was progressive and liberatory; the one who wrote in magazines that did away with outdated patterns of language and information, which would open the door to so many debates in our huge (hypocritical) Mexican family. I'm the guy who sent out the invitation to trip and experiment with psychedelic substances and with a passion free of that Catholic guilt that prevented us for so long from connecting with our "inner deep." I'm the one who invented—by transgressing—a new language that was a starting point for new alliances and a more believable and intimate picture of what was to come. *Do you remember me?*

How to talk about a situation that develops in a concrete context and historical moment but which has real effects on our present? By making a summary judgment like Heath and Potter? Sublimating the idealist content and disregarding the naïveté? Pointing out the catastrophe hiding behind that deeply rooted positivism? Taking sides even after the defeat? Perpretrated under a new system of analysis that allows one to judge without a romanticism that spoils all critical positions? A hard choice.

Authenticity is, by definition, a threat to what is pompously called "the other," which is, of course, not our equal. The need to create a new culture (Gramsci dixit), an outburst of enthusiasm debated—individually and in groups—before the model of a gray existence, minimized and mimetic, with no opportunities, organized by the great invisible hand of the market and its speculators. The lack of authenticity is what, supposedly, has been imposed upon us. I'm not so sure about that.

Anticonformity is the typical rebuke of the system (the much-feared error in the matrix).

In his book on the counterculture in Mexico, José Agustín draws a line which unites and interrelates different youth tribes with diverse behaviors and activities—*pachucos*, rebels with a cause, *jipitecas*, punks—through specific moments in the second half of the twentieth century. The popular author is correct when he asserts that the history of the counterculture is a history of incomprehension and repression. What's even better is he narrates how and why this has happened in an informed, detailed way with a great sense of humor. José Agustín has given us the gift of an ideal book for all kinds of deep discussions: complicated, intellectual, heated, light, and generational, among many other types. He does this because he takes us to the heart of the matter, he shoots from the hip and polarizes: them or us. There is no middle ground. Some were/are based in that categorization, some are strong and idealist, and the others yuppies and conformists. And you, *¿de qué signo eres?*

In Mexico, the counterculture—this magic little word that could be stretched by followers and detractors to include everything unsaid—was/has always been taken as a protest and a reaction to a dominant culture, without ever establishing itself as a real productive counterweight. The result? A dialogue between people who don't listen to each other, a struggle between opposing forces with (almost always) flawed arguments on both sides, since they don't understand the actors and factors involved, a generalization that leads us—like everything—to a disastrous end, which, in this case, was still a bit positive.

What is our position on cultural expression—film, music, literature—in the face of the dominant system about drug consumption, the influence of religion, the sexual revolution, the right to pleasure or language itself? In his book, José Agustín throws out ideas about collective karmas, a boundless camaraderie, some likeable characters in a nonstop party deliriously chatting about mysticism and social struggle. The (temporary) triumph of the Dionysian.

How and how much has it changed? The answer can be found right now on thousands of Internet pages, in new fanzines, in no-longer-young groups that construct their lives outside of the traditional circuit and the market speculation on what's cool, alternative, authentic. Or maybe not, and maybe

it's time we find out that, confirming what that Sonny Curtis song says, the system won despite armed uprisings, a fractured multiculturalism, global-phobic contingents on endless tour, separatist and isolationist postures, and vain attempts to give it the royal finger. Failure is unavoidable, but, *caray*, we sure did have fun.

Something to point out: if the jipitecas emerged in the sixties as a reaction to a system as repressive as the one in Mexico—which it was and still is—and faced with a reduction in the possibility for ensuring equity and justice in all arenas of daily life, it must not be forgotten that these serve as a bizarre counterpoint for the arrival of a new brood of reactive and meticulous young people (the Yunque Youth, for example) on the social scene. Honestly, a psychotic reaction.

In his book *The Elemental Particles*, the French writer Michel Houellebecq—who was abandoned by his hippie mother—wrote a frontal attack on the May 1968 generation in France in which he questions its liberatory meaning in order to, as the Americans say, *Take No Prisoners*. With a disillusioned nihilism typical of a good punk song, Houellebecq excoriates this, the epitome of a youth movement.

Does the issue of the counterculture in Mexico matter right now? Of course the answer is yes and no. The contemporary situation is impossible to decipher if one doesn't understand—and transcend, you could add—this particular juncture. Suspiciousness—this very Mexican trait—suggests to us an overbearing assimilation by a system which Greil Marcus, that great American critic, spoke to us about when he condemned the fact that there isn't a hint of rebelliousness that survives in the individual after the normalizing instinct of the great social machinery. In the end, we are all everything (Marcos, Atenco, Walmart, Sabritas, El Chavo del Ocho, a duopoly on the same).

Flipping a double-sided coin.

Nevertheless, something's left, something will remain.

### Crazy Crazy Night

Yes, these have been extremely important days for la city. Tons of violence caused by the impunity of a few, the complicity of many, and years and years of corruption. Lots of sensationalist media commotion, never-ending loops of lifeless bodies are a clear sign of the violent times we're facing. Headlines

betting on huge profits gained from the public's morbid fascination and leading straight to collective psychosis. Fear, *todos saben*, as a tactic for control.

Despite all this, la city is alive. It feels alive. It knows it's alive. A bunch of festivals happening at the same time, events all over the place, Tijuana overflowing in its euphoria to reclaim the street, asking for moments of fun and pleasure in the face of so much tragedy. Tragedy that's become normalcy.

The night is transformed. We get together despite everything we see on the TV news: the overflowing euphoria of engaging conversations and shared complicity makes us sweat in (almost) never-ending mornings. The rhythms, the overwhelming feeling of No Fear, the last call for la juventud bulletproof. Dance, dance, dance . . .

Waiting for friends who're at other bars, who send texts saying, "ya vamos, wait us" (*sic*). We wait, the party gets bigger, it grows like the wild Tijuana night (that cliché exploited so much in the *crónicas* that come out in the Sunday supplements). *Abrazos* and celebration, there's always someone here who's having a birthday, someone who's coming back or someone leaving (they're all reasons to go out and celebrate in a city that wants to see us locked away in our homes: they won't get their way). The next stop, a concert.

The place is completely full. I make it to the bar (and I don't leave). Interesting conversations with the artsy crew, then laughing and laughing like crazy with some amigas and their amigas. The girls are fighters, they don't let anyone off the hook for anything. (I'm happy listening to them, watching them laugh, trying to seduce one of them, knowing beforehand that nothing's going to happen that hasn't already happened . . .)

At four or five in the morning, I don't know what time it is anymore, we end up at Las Tortas Cubanas. The road to the Tijuana West Coast is just a few feet away, the day is ending without even noticing. We survived in the city of fear and impunity: Mission accomplished.

.....>  
posted by rafa # September 27, 2008

### A Party for Democracy

Today I was walking around near Calle Segunda and Constitución.

Closed to traffic.

A lot of people waiting for something, blue, white and orange balloons.

A girl alone on a platform sings *cumbias* (the second song was by Selena).

A group of women dance up front.

Someone passes by me holding up a P.A.N. flag.  
 The kids are having fun on a couple inflatable moonwalks.  
 Officers from a bunch of different police agencies monitor the scene.  
 I can't tell the difference between the police cadets and the thugs wandering  
 around downtown.  
 They look almost exactly the same: same haircuts, same attitudes.  
 I walk around the street, recognize some prominent politicians.  
 Of course, local politicians.  
 Ex-classmate from school or ex-regulars of la noche TJ.  
 Extremely fat.  
 They say politics makes people fat.  
 They announce over the sound system that a caravan of more than 500 cars is  
 about to get there.  
 "Viva la democracia," shouts the cumbia-singing girl.  
 Everything is so mixed up, everything is so absurd.  
 Democracy is just another buzzword, a cliché, a ruse, the voice of an ignorant  
 majority.  
 The whole sad show is boring to me, and I decide to head home.

.....>  
 posted by rafa # Saturday, July 2, 2005

usei (rough mix)

YOU SAY

. . . I'm the next big thing to happen, a character lost in a bad sitcom, the  
 spirit of California.  
 . . . Someone wants to change the dialect to say new things, misses the goal,  
 supports the death penalty, always comes late, stirs up those núcleos de so-  
 cial instability, has un apetito por la destruction.  
 . . . I'm a retard, a misogynist, un Televisa Kid, a member of el Yunque Youth,  
 a dummy when it comes to important things, a blind date fetishist, a dry style  
 wanker, lo más.  
 . . . I'm a molesting child, the jail bait, a wife beater, a rapist, a non-English  
 speaker, un extranwero, a little liar, ese pobre bastardo who fucked up his life  
 one more time.  
 . . . Que Ron Jeremy, Charlie Rose, Joey Greco, Nick Kent, Seymour Stein,  
 Todashi Yanai, or the goalie of el club de la esquina are all more important  
 than I am.

YOU SAY

. . . She's a prime choice filete, a strangely geometric blindness, a pretty  
 pub(l)ic disorder, something that only by being lazy finds serenity, a weird  
 combination of apathy and complacency, an enigma whose solution is lim-  
 ited by a court decision.  
 . . . She's the girl who pops out of the cake, a victim of postpartum depres-  
 sion, the heart of the deal, someone who has to soak themselves in promises  
 from God.  
 . . . She sabotages her own audition, swears time destroys (almost) every-  
 thing, an imposition that declares herself our enemy, a home run or the  
 threat of a fight hanging in the air.  
 . . . She's the picture of beauty, a street empty after the latest riots, the ob-  
 stacle to our turn to the impossible, the possibility of a ménage à trois.  
 . . . She's a bitch, the love of our entire life, una saladera, someone that goes  
 after a dream without thinking about collateral damage, the melody of those  
 songs that have an implicit charge of sadness to them.

YOU SAY

. . . He's a gameboy, a Farfisa sound, a professional poser who'll end up a  
 human ashtray, someone who'll have to beg for forgiveness for putting na-  
 tional security at risk.  
 . . . He's the guy that thinks about what his life has become as he sits on the  
 corner of the bed, the memory of things past, a yoke to break, dead desire in  
 some old boxers.  
 . . . He's the one who answers those questions asked by an absurd and bored  
 old man. (What is freedom? Have you ever felt disappointed? When will all  
 this end?)

#### About la Fama de la City

How many more dead bodies you think we need before la city shoots us out  
 like bullets? (Pardon the expression.) How many more articles and reports do  
 we have to read before we feel like we live in a permanent state of anxiety?

We're not leaving.

La city is ours, we're not going to leave it.

The street is ours, we're not going to stop going out.

And yeah, they can say we're the most violent place ever (we're not).

And yeah, they can say it's impossible to live here (the living is good, fuck  
 you).

Y sí, la city es nuestra.

## I Love Tijuana

I LOVE TIJUANA for being anarchic, resourceful, fun loving, bent on freedom, and nocturnal.

I LOVE TIJUANA because I've never cared about fighting against what's left of the leyendas negras a go-go or against the media's sensationalist opportunism, not even against the cold distance of those who see la city as San Diego's backyard. Tijuana just is.

I LOVE TIJUANA because I live it to the extreme, because you can't buy my tijuinidad on an estampita and it's not a product of ready-made poser (re) structuring, because it's inside of me and it's obvious every second. As I travel around la city every day, I (re)meet her in her constant state of change, catching the details and feeling the energy that lives in cities that one day will be sacred.

I LOVE TIJUANA, mi city.

July 11, 2009

October 20, 2006

the statement  
the sentence

"Everything they tell me about Tijuana, I believe it all."

\*Heard in Hermosillo, Sonora

January 20, 2006

the question  
the question

Protests, checkpoints, curfews . . . aren't the solution to la city's problem of violence and impunity. Or are they? And when will the authorities press the "panic button"?

April 27, 2008

from twitter  
rhetorical question

What's more important? Fifteen hired killers dead or 3000+ people fired from the maquila this week adding to the % of unemployed in TJ?

September 28, 2008

phrases for days like this

About the violence in TJ

"I demand that if this isn't going to stop, it should at least be more interesting."

—Abraham

October 20, 2008

la city in blue

Out the window of a bus heading who-knows-where, I watch the city disappear, the reality of the violence and the forgotten campaign promises blurring it into oblivion.

Vaya prisa.

This is how we live.

Poetics of . . .

Poetics of forgetting and imperfect questions thought up on a Wednesday afternoon.

Poetics of breaking away from the Judeo-Christian monopoly on feelings of guilt.

Poetics of passwords and usernames.

Poetics of post-traumatic experience and shopping spree vertigo.

Poetics of intelligence brought on by the effectiveness of social networks and the absence of real dialogue.

Poetics of street protests and productive value in free fall.

Poetics of the death of government bureaucrats and neoliberal bulletproofing.

Poetics of what happens once in a lifetime and the stuff none of us can recognize as their own.

Poetics of dyslexia and disappointment with the end of a surprisingly good show on TV.

Poetics of 14 × 1.

Poetics of trips abroad and good wishes.

Poetics of people nominated and executed in a kind of ominous lottery.

Poetics to warm up and blow party streamers.

Poetics of unacceptable failures and those budgets focused on rebuilding a country.

Poetics of teenage anthems and the unbearable days of that blind summer.  
 Poetics of the unilateral and the false celebrity honesty.  
 Poetics of pretty people and their favorite commercials.  
 Poetics of American school shootings and their repercussions in the suburbs.  
 Poetics of oversaturation and the loss of the unstoppable road to ruin.  
 Poetics of grammar and its actions.  
 Poetics of shame and the Puritan look of a teenager without MySpace.  
 Poetics of a noontime reading, of the loneliness of middle-aged people and the sales of shares in times of crisis.  
 Poetics of the uselessness of Twitter rank, of Firefox bugs and euphoria about Google video chat.  
 Poetics of the towns near Morelia and soulless karma.  
 Poetics of troubled retailers and crosses that crowd the frontline of the people's defiance.  
 Poetics of millionaires' fear and their significant losses.  
 Poetics of big mistakes and savagery.

Poetics of sadness as an everyday presence.

Ejival

SEVENTEEN

## Counterculture, Rockers, Punks, New Romantics, and Mods in Tijuana

Beyond the common stereotypes associated with the city, beyond the logical reasoning of everyday life (the people who traverse, live in, and die in this city), at this point in time in the history of contemporary Mexican music, Tijuana represents a missing link between failure and genuine opportunity for transcendence. The city also represents dozens of stories that, over and over again, tell of the eccentric quest for an original musical voice in a region that was completely isolated from the rest of Mexico. This musical history is not easy to explain, and those who have been a part of the city's music "scene" at any point in its history probably have the ephemeral feeling that the concepts and the processes behind the music were more interesting than the end result. Rock 'n' roll never dies, but the spirits of its players—from generation to generation—these do.

We speak of rock 'n' roll as the most inadequate term to attempt to describe what has been brewing in Tijuana for more than four decades, at the national level, as an alternative metareality, as fantasy and omnipresence. We speak of "Rock Made in Tijuana" as an issue in itself and as a practical, immediate matter, due to the geographic location of the city, the bad habits of the Mexican record industry, and above all its immediate proximity to the first world via the United States.

This essay does not seek to be a recounting or a complete compendium of Tijuana's players and interpreters, but rather a brief biographical sketch in profile: the factors that underlie their achievements and failures, their principal motives the city's underrecognized contribution to the world of art, and its present context. One thing must be made clear: Mexico is a country of scarcities (that, we already know); and most of the population has basic needs to meet before "rocking."

Moreover, people generally prefer other styles of popular music. Nonetheless, beyond any doubt, thanks to those scarcities, Tijuana