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Abstract
This article argues that conviviality (*convivencia*) is an alternative, performance-based epistemology that is enacted in the music and dance of the son jarocho from southern Veracruz, Mexico. In its traditional settings, son jarocho is played in a participatory musical celebration called a fandango. This article provides an ethnographic perspective of how marginalized musical communities of Veracruz enact an subaltern cosmopolitanism from below through an affective sociality encapsulated in of the fandango that has direct ramifications for how daily life is constructed in the region.

Keywords: conviviality, convivencia, fandango, son jarocho, Veracruz, Mexico.

Introduction

In the Casa de Cultura of San Andrés Tuxtla, Veracruz, a group of Mexican and foreign musicians and dancers assembled together in a week-long event called the Talleres Vivenciales (Living Workshops) in order to learn traditional forms of *son* (a type of string music) from this region. Participants were taught to play instruments like the *jarana*, the *guitarra de son* and the violin and *zapateado*, a dance following the standards and conventions of elder campesino musicians from the countryside. Known internationally as *son jarocho*, this music enjoys an explosion of interest throughout Mexico and the world, though locals refer to this genre as string music (*música de cuerdas)*, jarana music (*música de jarana*), and *son abajeño*, (not to be confused with a genre of music from western Mexico). As could be expected, this has resulted in the standardization and imposition of certain styles over others. The *campesino* musicians of the municipality of San Andrés Tuxtla have sought to impart not just the way to play music from the communities of the region, but also how to think about music and dance in/from these same communities.

As night fell on the countryside, bringing with it a slight relief from the heat as well as an atmosphere of intense anticipation, we rode in the back of pick-up trucks from the center of San Andrés to a rural ejido called El Nopal to participate in a *fandango* (also referred to as *huapango* or *baile de tarima*), a participatory celebration where singers and string musicians perform around a raised wooden platform (*tarima*) upon which participant spectators ascend

in order to dance. Before leaving for the fandango, Don Andrés Moreno Nájera, director of the Casa de Cultura, himself a renowned dancer and musician, explained the unwritten code of aesthetic and ethical conduct one needs to effectively participate in another community's fandango. As part of this logic, Don Andrés transmitted to us the need to respect the elder musicians and the particular musical styles of the community in which the fandango was held. As we arrived a couple of kilometers away from the fandango, we could hear a slight hum of jaranas resound across the darkness. Don Andrés explained that respect begins before a musician arrives at the scene of the fandango, as the artist must always begin with an exercise of active listening. Within earshot, the musician must take note of how the instruments are "tuned," along with the stylistic choices being made (*pausado* or *llano*, for example)—all of this without the aid of mechanical tuners or even formal musical training.

As we walked toward the fandango, the buzz of the jaranas grew louder, the rhythmic steps of the zapateado reverberated in the surrounding hills, and the melodies of guitarras de son and violins of different sizes and textures sweetened the intense darkness of night. With our instruments now tuned, Don Andrés asked us to attentively listen for a while before participating, as this is a necessary to adapt our singing, playing, and dancing to the local norms and whatever was collectively constructed at that moment in the fandango. Inasmuch as musicians may not be from the same community as that hosting the fandango, it is required that they accept the other as other, and for a short time experience this otherness in a respectful relation. Such otherness does not deny the uniqueness of the individual musician; rather, it gives birth to new potentialities in relation to otherness. Don Andrés exclaimed, "You have to adapt. If you are invited to play, you have to play their music. It is looked down upon to impose your own style of playing" (Moreno Nájera interview). If we could successfully accomplish this, he argued, we would understand the conviviality that is lived in the fandango.

Historically and culturally, Veracruz (a state on the gulf coast of Mexico) was inscribed within what Antonio García de León (*El mar* 25) titled the Afro-Andalucian Caribbean. Indeed, the conformation of the region was produced in the first baroque phase of modernity and was a space of transculturation from its inception, uniting the Americas with Iberia, Moorish Arabia and continental Africa, through the processes of colonialism, slavery and capitalism. García de León described how,

> In the longest sense of duration, the Caribbean was and continues to be a crucible of cultures, races, and customs, an intricate space that prefigured in

> those first colonial centuries much of contemporary cosmopolitanism, as well as the first univeral advances that we know today as "modernity." (21)

This region points to a long historical construction of a *convivencia* (convivality) of a multitude of identities, races, ethnicities and, in a sense, of multiple worlds. It is in the Caribbean, Ottmar Ette argues, "there has been operating for more than four centuries a knowledge of life [*saber vivir*] and a knowledge of living-with [*saber convivir*]" ("Áreas de tránsito" 45).

Many years of observation, participation in fandangos, and formal study of son jarocho in both Veracruz and the United States have revealed a local epistemology endemic to southern Veracruz known as *convivencia,* or conviviality. I propose the conviviality of the fandango as an alternative (Mignolo 2007), subaltern (Grosfóguel 2005), or southern (Santos 2014) epistemology similar to ideas of the "good life" or "good living" of the indigenous and Afro-descendent communities of South America (Lajo 2010; Quijano 2013; Walsh 2009; Zapata Olivilla 1997). Convivencia as an alternative, participatory, (Turino 2008) and fiesta (Marino and Cuéllar 2015) epistemology derives from a non-Occidentalist West (Santos 2014) rooted in an alter-native modernity (Trouillot 2002) based on a popular baroque ethos (Echevarría 1998) of the mestizo, Afro-descendent and indigenous peoples of southern Veracruz. *Convivencia* offers an alternative understanding of the relationship between the individual and the collectivity in the construction of human interrelatedness. Unique to this case is that affective sociality is encapsulated in the aesthetic form of a participatory spectacle (the fandango) combining music, dance and poetry. Convivencia in this case is literally to live convivially with/in difference. Thus, the ethico-aesthetic model of conviviality promoted by marginalized musical communities of Veracruz enacts an alternative, subaltern cosmopolitanism from below that may teach us supposed cosmopolitans just how to live with difference in an increasingly connected, hybrid and diverse world.

Fandango and son jarocho

The fandango "complex" (Manuel) or "cultural matrix" (Flórez Forero) is an extended transatlantic family of musical genres spanning Spain, the Caribbean, and continental Latin America. With its origins in seventeenth-century forms like *zarabanda* and *chacona*, the fandango complex was product of an intense and unequal intercultural exchange between peoples from Africa, the Americas and Europe, particularly the Mediterranean and Arab influenced region of Andalucía (García de León 2002, 2006). In the Americas, the fandango denoted a

participatory, almost ritual-like festivity uniting music, dance and verse. Wherever it took root, the fandango was a particularly *popular* festivity that created a space of permissiveness, creativity, spontaneity and mixing across rigid hierarchies of race, class and gender (Flórez Forero 2015). The fandango was the preeminent example of a *baile*—a festivity of peasants and commoners—as opposed to a *danza*—a festivity of the royalty or nobility (Russel 2015). Because of this, the fandango was not viewed favorably by religious or political authorities, and was suppressed for most of its existence (Pérez Montfort 2015). However, the fandango represented the festive expression of the new egalitarian philosophy sweeping Europe and the Americas during the Enlightenment (Russell 2015).

The fandango was appropriated by the *jarocho*—the mixed indigenous, African, and European peoples of southern Veracruz—and gave rise to a form of music and dance from this region known as son jarocho (Barahona Londoño 2013). Despite a long historical record that is testament to the performance of the fandango, the cultural complex was not immune to periods of rapid historical, cultural and technological change (Corona Alcalde 1995; García de León 2006; Pérez Montfort 2008). After the Mexican Revolution, the postrevolutionary state undertook a project of development and modernization that undermined the rural, campesino economy that was the basis of jarocho culture (Pérez Montfort 2002). At the same time, the musical culture suffered a process of "folklorization" by state administrators and commercial interests. Indeed, the stereotypical image of the jarocho musician dressed in white, became a regional symbol of national pride alongside mariachi, and provided the musical background to canonized folk dances in Ballet Folklórico. With the standardization and the dramatization of son jarocho for nationalistic and commercial purposes, regional traditions of much larger historical precedence—like the fandango—subsided and almost completely disappeared (Cardona 2006; Hutchinson 2009; Nájera-Ramírez 2009; Pérez Montfort 2003).

In the 1970s, a generation of musicians from Veracruz questioned the vision of son jarocho imposed by state and commercial forces. These musicians argued for the necessity of "rescuing" traditional forms of musical practice—especially the fandango. The music group Mono Blanco (White Monkey) proved monumental to the birth of what was subsequently labeled the *movimiento jaranero* (jarana player movement), and aided the resurgence of son jarocho through the promotion and revitalization (or reinvention) of the fandango in communities where it had languished or disappeared (Pascoe 2003; Pérez Montfort 2003). While the jaranero movement is a testament to the ongoing process of the rescuing and

reinvention of traditional forms of how son jarocho is played, sung, and danced in fandangos, it has also produced its own forms of standardization and commercial exploitation (Pérez Montfort 2002). It has produced a significant cultural revitalization movement that consciously sought to forefront musical practice as convivencia in order to reweave the social fabric of communities in Veracruz confronted by the upheavals of modernization.

Son jarocho emerged in the US, in the Chicano movement through stylistic expressions for the stage in the 1970s (the group Los Lobos, for example), and the fandango was appropriated by 1980s Chicano and Mexican immigrant musicians who were dissatisfied with what they saw as shallow expressions of Mexican nationalism in mariachi music and ballet folklórico (Gonzalez 2020, Loza 1992, Rodríguez 2009). By the 1990s, a burgeoning jaranero movement developed in the United States centered around the fandango's participatory nature (Gonzalez 2011) and its multi-ethnic legacy—with particular interest in its African elements (Cardona and Rinaudo 2017, Díaz-Sánchez and Hernández 2013). It was interpreted as a subversion of nationalist tropes, proposing an alternative vision for imagining both Mexican musical practice and Mexican identity in the diaspora (Cardona 2006), and central to this expansion and adoption was the conviviality lived through the fandango.

Convivencia and Conviviality

The term *convivencia* is usually translated in English as conviviality thanks to Ivan Illich's work *Tools for Conviviality* (1983), in which he reimagined collective social relations outside of the instrumental rationality imposed by industrial capitalist modernity. As Joanna Overing and Alan Passes (xiii) note, conviviality in its usage here transcends the common meanings associated with its English definition: that of being friendly or lively, festive or jovial. Although certainly a part of every fandango, here conviviality is closest in meaning to its Spanish language counterpart and Latinate origin: *convivir*.[1] As part of this compound verb, *vivir* means "to live" or "to exist" and can refer to the existential qualities of life. The prefix *con* means "with" and proposes the relationship between objects that are inherently different, thus evoking a plurality that is united and not divided (Batubenge Omer et. al. 2015). Overing and Passes define the term *convivir* as "to live together/to share the same life" and *convivencia* as "a joint/shared life" (xiii).

South American anthropologists understand convivencia as a form of relationality that can be contrasted ontologically from that of classic Western concepts of the individual and

society. Catherine Walsh defines convivencia as "life with others in harmony, respect, dignity and continual relation" (2167). For Alejandro Moreno Olmedo, convivencia is "the act and the process of sharing in life, by two or various persons, the same world-of-life through time" (XX). Anthropologists in Venezuela analyzed the lives of the popular classes in their national context, and their research concluded that the life-world of the popular mestizo classes is a "life-in-relation" (Moreno Olmedo 2002, 2007; León Rúgeles 2013). For Franklin León Rúgeles, the meaning of life is convivencia; one lives (*vivir*) in order to live with (*convivir*) (243-44). Moreno Olmedo and León Rúgeles call the analysis of this being-in-relation the popular anthropology of *homo convivalis*. León Rúgeles argues, "The popular man is relation not given but continually happening, is happening from its origin that is life itself and how it is lived in families and in the popular community," and goes on to argue that, "In Venezuela, real life is not a life of individuals, but life lived together (*vida convivida*)" (255).

Building on these notions of conviviality, I argue that the conviviality of the fandango in southern Veracruz can be understood in three different but interconnected ways. First, conviviality in its most simplistic form is an ethic of hospitality in which the other is welcomed and offered food, drink and entertainment. Second, the conviviality of the fandango is an ethico-aesthetic model of human sociality that transcends its particular performative event and inflects the daily life of the rural populations. Lastly, conviviality in southern Veracruz is a way of cohabitation with difference outside of state-imposed hegemonic norms of multiculturalism. What follows is an analysis of this conviviality framework that has and thrived among highly diverse communities of southern Veracruz.

Convivencia **as Hospitality**

In December of 2013, I was invited to a fandango in the small town of El Salto in the municipality of San Andrés Tuxtla. The community, overshadowed by the Eyipantla falls portrayed in the Mel Gibson movie *Apocalypto*, is a very humble town whose inhabitants earn their living through agriculture, tourism, and other services. A family offered the fandango as part of a *velorio*, a popular Catholic religious celebration organized at a familial or community level, to honor the anniversary of the death of a relative. In a velorio the sacred and the secular exist side by side. For this velorio, the living-room of the family's simple cinderblock house was converted into a ritual space to congregate (some men but mostly women and children) by sitting around a makeshift altar decorated with flowers, candles, and devotional images.

The atmosphere was somber and serious as the attendees sang religious hymns throughout the night. A few feet away, outside the home and under a few trees decorated with lights and ribbons, rested the large, rustic tarima surrounding the space where the the fandango was to be performed. Sacred sounds of prayer and the profane sounds of the fandango melded at intermittent points in baroque fashion without tension or conflict throughout the night.

The majority of the participants in the fandango were elderly men and women with rough instruments, not always finely tuned, accompanied by their harsh voices, hard to hear over the drone of the jaranas. The elderly male musicians with more talent and prestige grouped themselves at the foot of the tarima in the position of honor and conducted the sequence of the fandango. At their feet rested a large bottle of *aguardiente* (cane alcohol) that was freely served to participants in plastic cups between sones. Few women in this community played instruments, but both men and women sang and danced. Given the discontinuity of tradition and the disinterest that plagued the fandango for a number of years, the repository of sones was limited to a few of the most important, popular and easy-to-dance numbers. Sones like "La Bamba," "El Colás" and "El Ahualulco" were played two or three times for extended periods.

At a certain point in the evening, the family hosting the velorio called the music and praying to a temporary halt and invited everyone present to eat. Out of respect, priority was given to the musicians (even the beginning fandango artists outside the community, like myself), receiving royal treatment and allowed to sit down and eat before others. This humble family offered an exquisite meal of mole, rice, beans and tamales to more than a hundred people. As attendees finished their meal, they arose from the table while others sat down to take their turn until everyone was fed. The host family was obligated to see to the needs of the attendees and offer their utmost hospitality within their means. The food, drink and hospitality animated the participants, and the music and praying continued late into night, and a small bag of candy was offered as one last gift of appreciation upon leaving the velorio. Although the music was not executed to perfection, the instruments never precisely tuned, and the repertoire of sones rather limited, the spirit of conviviality created by the hospitality of the hosts and the affective reciprocity emanated by the participants culminated in one of the most beautiful fandangos many of us had ever experienced.

On the surface, the conviviality of the fandango is linked to common notions of festivity. Veteran musician, instrument maker and teacher Don Pablo Campechano from

Santiago Tuxtla describes the fandango as a fiesta where you eat, drink, sing, play music and dance (Campechano Gorgonio 2015). Upon closer analysis, however, the nature of this festivity is rooted in a certain ethical or moral understanding of hospitality. Don Andrés Moreno, the director of the Casa de Cultura of San Andrés Tuxtla, understands conviviality as a fundamental aspect of life in rural communities. Although conviviality crystalizes in fandangos, velorios, funerals, weddings, etc., in which music is an essential aspect, it has its origin in the generosity of the rural poor. It involves cooperation, support, reciprocity and solidarity in which food and drink are offered by the hosts. According to Don Andrés,

> Convivencia are the moments that allow us to arrive, to find ourselves once again with our neighbors, with our friends, musicians, dancers, singers [and] with the community. It means to share. We don't just share the joy of playing music; as well there are sad things that are sometimes shared, such as pain. It is not just material things [that are shared], but the pleasure of shaking hands with someone you never met, to understand that you are well received, that you are in the heart and mind of this family, and that when you go to that community you find open doors. In the same way, when they go to your house you are going to receive them in the same manner. I think this is the most important aspect of convivencia. (Moreno Nájera)

The idea of an ethical responsibility to the other that is expressed through hospitality is an essential aspect of the philosophies of Emmanuel Levinas (1979; 2003) and Jacques Derrida (1999; 2001). Levinas sought to overturn much of western philosophy, as it is grounded in totalization and sameness where ethics is secondary to ontology. Instead, Levinas proposed a metaphysic of ethical response in which human subjectivity is grounded in alterity and the other is welcomed through the ethic of hospitality. In *Totality and Infinity,* Levinas argued that "To recognize the Other is to recognize a hunger. To recognize the Other is to give" (75). Hospitality, constitutes human nature for Levinas, "Metaphysics, or the relation with the other," he argued, "is accomplished as service and as hospitality" (300).

Jacques Derrida (Derrida 1999, 2001; Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000) further developed the idea of hospitality in dialogue with the work of Levinas. Derrida also views western philosophy as inhospitable to difference, to the other, and posits in the vein of Levinas for hospitality as ethics. "For hospitality is not simply some region of ethics," Derrida argued, "it is ethicity itself, the whole and the principle of ethics" (*Adieu* 50). Derrida further explains:

> Hospitality is culture itself and not simply one ethic amongst others. Insofar as it has to do with the *ethos,* that is, the residence, one's home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is a manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners, *ethics is hospitality*; ethics is so thoroughly coextensive with the experience of hospitality. (*On Cosmpolitan* 16-17)

Indeed, it is through this ethic of hospitality that a fandango takes place. Although the main effort of hospitality is placed on the family holding the event, it is conceptualized as a common trait expressed by all those attended in order to participate convivially.

Convivencia **as an Ethico-aesthetic Model of Human Sociality**

Martha Gonzalez, Chicana musician and exponent of son jarocho in the United States, argues in "Sonic (Trans)Migration" that, "As a participatory music and dance practice *fandango* conceptualizes community as a central aesthetic principle. Veracruzian communities utilize *convivencia* as a collective production of auditory identity: a culmination of memory through sound" (59). From this lens, conviviality will be understood as an aesthetic and ethical principle rooted in rural life that is constructed, experienced and embodied in community life through music, dance and poetry.

In their work on Amazonian conviviality, Overing and Passes (2000) analyze how communal life is constructed, lived, and experienced in embodied forms of affectivity through aesthetic mediums such as poetics, laughter, work, play and festivity. Their research suggests an intimate relationship between aesthetics and virtue in indigenous Amazonian understandings of community, and argue that ethical and aesthetic understanding of community was once a fundamental part of Western thought. A classic example is that of Aristotle in his Nichomachean Ethics, which describes the qualities of good living in accordance to virtue. Moreover, Overing argues that in Western philosophy the notion of community and aesthetics of sociality were once fundamental. Vico saw the Roman notion of *sensus communis* as a sense of community that included "the right and the general good" ("The Aesthetics of Production" 159). At this time, the moral, political, aesthetic and metaphysical all interact in the notion of living together. With the Enlightenment, however, aesthetics became an autonomous realm alongside politics, ethics and economics.

For Juan Manuel Campechano Yan, the son of Don Pablo Campechano and currently a member of the group Mono Blanco, the convivencia of the fandango is a social, cultural, and historical practice rooted in a specific place and time that facilitates the intergenerational and intercultural transmission of collective knowledge (*conocimientos*) and wisdom (*saberes*) (Personal Interview). Expressed in particular worldviews, practices, and values once central to the traditional world of the rural peasant farmer (*campesino*), this knowledge and wisdom goes beyond questions of musical style. This worldview is impregnated into the fandango by a set of unwritten rules, what Campechano Yan calls communitarian logics of participation, (*La oralidad* 129) that provide ground rules for the ethico-aesthetic model of conviviality. These logics include elements of musical style, verse forms, whether women and men dance certain sones and the order the sones are played throughout a fandango. As opposed to set of strict rules, these logics vary from one community to the next, and are often agreed upon prior to the musical act.

As the goal of each and every fandango is convivencia, the event is not deemed as a success unless this is achieved. Though one or more traditional elements of the festive ritual may be lacking, the end result must be that of convivencia. In *Anthropology of Love and Anger*, Overing takes up Illich's concept of *tools* of conviviality and offers the idea of *skills* for conviviality. In many ways the fandango is a ludic tool that enables collectivity, a tool for social living. However, achieving a successful convivencia is a task that necessitates performative skills that not all possess. Don Pablo Campechano argues that the fandango is a space for awareness (*sensibilización*). "Music is able to produce greater sensitivity. Music is able to produce change. Music is able to heal" (Personal Interview) he argued. Thus musical performance is not relegated to its sporadic occurrence but takes on an aesthetic and ethic of everyday life. Convivencia is a goal for family life, politics and religiosity.

On the level of musical structure, a son (as opposed to a song) is similar to a piece of jazz, (although somewhat more rigid and defined) in that each son has a particular rhythm, various melodies, and a common core of poetic forms for singing (Palafox Méndez 2003). During the performance, however, each son is transformed into something particular and unique, as improvisation is the basic structure of musical practice. Depending on the musicians, dancers, and singers, each son can be played in unlimited forms for an unlimited amount of time. Thus, the individual discourses woven by the *figuras* (melodic patterns) of the

guitarra de son, the *vueltas* (hemiola) of the jarana, the percussive steps of the zapateado, and the poetry of the singer, must find a harmonious balance in conversation with each other.

In the performance of a fandango, leaders emerge from the mass of participants based on the efficacy of their conviviality skills. This is where we must conceptuatlize a different notion of the relationship between self and collectivity. The guitarra de son is the principle melodic instrument of the genre. Its goal is to clearly "declare" (*declarar*) the melodic line to lead the jarana players, dancers, and singers in a particular son. A conversation develops between the various instruments and the dancers in accordance to the improvisatory nature of the instrument. The skill of a *guitarrero* (guitarra de son player) is to improvise in such a way as to demonstrate technical mastery and provide an enjoyable aesthetic experience. There is thus tension between individual performative skill and the ability to guide or direct the collective expression of a fandango and achieve a high level of conviviality. This is most easily witnessed when talking to older musicians who lament the influence of newer groups who record compact discs highlighting high levels of musicianship and improvisatory skills outside the traditional context of the fandango. According to these elders, when younger musicians try to emulate such forms of individual showmanship within the fandango, an intelligible dialogue is not constructed, dancers and musicians get lost and the son breaks down ("se descompone la música"). While this in part demonstrates some of the intergenerational tensions surrounding musical practice, it also relates to the multiple lenses from which the lived conviviality of the fandango is perceived. Despite generational, regional and stylistic differences, the form of individuality expressed in the fandango is always one of individuality-in-relation. As a rule, an excess of egoism breaks the communal dynamic of participation and the sense of conviviality created.[2]

In many ways, the fandango is a total social fact that embodies the life of the Sotavento. Musician and poet Ana Zarina Palafox Méndez notes the fundamental difference between the stage and the tarima as they relate to musical and social praxis. Palafox writes,

> Although varying from region to region, this circular complex functions as a microcosm of the social relations of the communities where it is practiced; in other words, it is a model that represents the social order within which it unfolds and which gives it meaning. ("Fandando en oposición 288)

Referring to the unwritten rules, she argues that "The protocols to take turns in the dance, the hierarchy among musicians, singers, and dancers, the relationship among them and the

elements of the external circle, tell us a lot about the local and regional social fabric" (288). In summarizing her thoughts on the difference between fandango and the stage, Palafox argues:

> the stage divides people and generates a unilateral communication where one group emits and the other receives passively; the fandango collectivizes and generates a two-way flow of communication around something superior to everyone. The fandango is a sacred space of learning that recreates the social fabric and the network of relations. (293-94)

Thus, the fandango's participatory nature and its ethic of conviviality necessitate a delicate balance between individual liberty and creativity, on the one hand, and a respectful relation to the larger orchestra of members, on the other.

Cosmopolitan Conviviality

Fandangos in southern Veracruz are spaces where different social groups converge in musical and festive enjoyment. The participatory spectacle of the fandango, including its largely democratic and horizontal nature, creates a festive, carnivalesque space that temporarily blurs social boundaries. One chronicler of the fandango, Fernando Bustamante Rábago of Santiago Tuxtla, even noted that "The fandangos achieved what neither Marx, nor Lenin, nor their followers could: equality of classes" (qtd. in Pérez Montfort, "Desde Santiago 221). He went on to argue that, "If a barefoot, old or drunk peasant farmer prudently invites whichever of the ladies present to dance, she will dance with him" (221). Although much has been written about the fandango as a *popular* celebration uniting people of various classes in participatory musical encounters, little has been written about the ways ethnic, racial, religious and gender relations are mediated through the fandango.

Surely, the ethnic and racial diversity of the region is very much reflected in its musical culture. As Gonzalez notes, "Spanish, African, Arab and Indigenous legacies are present in the multiple dialogues and musical inflections" (59-60). Despite the multicultural nature of the music, the corpus of sones in the jarocho repertoire is replete with personages of colonial racial and gender categories—*la indita, los negritos, la morena, la bruja*, etc.—that allude as much to tension, conflict and hierarchy between and among inhabitants of southern Veracruz as coexistence and cohabitation. A model of living convivially with/in difference in a cosmopolitan conviviality, through the ethico-aesthetic nature of the fandango, offers new

ways of envisioning life lived together outside of the hegemonic projects of multiculturalism imposed by colonial legacies and current practices of the Mexican state.

Railing against the abuses of multiculturalism and the reification of identities in identity politics in the global north, Paul Gilroy (2004; 2006) sought new ways to understand how difference is lived in contemporary urban societies. He opposes multiculturalism, the quest for recognition within a racial or ethnic hierarchy, to multiculture, the everyday interaction and cohabitation of diverse groups in which difference is relatively unremarkable. Gilroy uses the word conviviality to describe how difference is negotiated in multiculture and defines conviviality as "a social pattern in which different metropolitan groups dwell in close proximity, but where their racial, linguistic and religious particularities do not … add up to discontinuities of experience or insuperable problems of communication" ("Multiculture in Times of War" 40). In *After Empire*, Gilroy explained the uniqueness of how he uses the term: "The radical openness that brings conviviality alive makes a nonsense of closed, fixed and reified identity and turns attention towards the always-unpredictable mechanisms of identification" (xiii). That human groups not only can be different yet live interconnected lives and are doing so in contemporary multiculture is Gilroy's (9) hope in a cosmopolitan conviviality. Given different colonial histories, the majority of Latin America's diversity does not lie in urban metropolitan areas, as is the case with Gilroy's Britain, but instead in the countryside. In a Latin American context, this understanding of conviviality may be closest to the understanding of "critical interculturality" (Walsh 15).

Like other Caribbean regions, southern Veracruz is ethnically, racially, linguistically, and musically diverse. Here difference has cohabitated for hundreds of years in a cosmopolitanism that can be described as "vernacular" (Bhabha 1996), "subaltern" (Santos) or "from below" (Mignolo 2000). Notwithstanding this co-existence, María Aldara Engracia Fernández Palomo argues, "the construction of musical identities cannot be found outside of the hegemonic forces of the political, cultural and economic powers, as well as the intracultural struggles for scarce resources, power or prestige" (366). According to Fernández Palomo, the jarocho has always been a marginal and subaltern social group defined in relation to long historical processes of exploitation, like slavery, poverty, migration and precarity (209, 381-82). This not only affects relations between jarochos and other social groups outside their own communities, but also those regional relations within the jarocho cultural that encompasses various racial, ethnic, religious and political identities.

During the colonial period in southern Veracruz, the process of mestizaje incorporated Flamencos, Andalucians, Castellanos, Catalanes and Portugueses from the Iberian Peninsula, as well as other immigrant groups to include a large number of Italians. Furthermore, as part of this mixture, there was a considerable influence from peoples of African descent, mostly from Congo and Angola (Alcántara Henze 271). Through successive modernization projects in the independent and post-revolutionary periods, national ideologies such as mestizaje and indigenismo sought to eradicate much of the country's cultural, linguistic, and ethnic differences in a quest for national cohesion and economic development. As testament to the "success" of these assimilation projects, members of indigenous communities constituted over ninety percent of the state's population in 1800, whereas today, they represent only eleven percent. (García Valencia and Romero Redondo 16) Indigenous populations in the southern region continue to struggle for their collective life-project and include Nahuas, Popolucas, Mixes, Chinantecos and Mazatecos (González Martínez 40-42). Until recently, Afro-mestizo populations lacked official recognition in the Mexican constitution with concrete ramifications as to access to political and economic power (Rinaudo 21).

The Mexican state's management of difference changed in style, if not in substance, in recent years. Two of the most important events marking a rupture with the past include political transition to a multiparty democracy (the electoral defeat of the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party in 2000), and political movements promoting indigenous and human rights (especially the indigenous Zapatista uprising of 1994). During this period, the Mexican state discarded its assimilationist project to champion the nation's ethnic and cultural diversity, but did so while concurrently adopting neoliberal economic policies that undermine the lifeways of rural, ethnic and poor communities. This move from a national project of assimilation to a promotion of the nation's diversity, together with free-market policies and global economic integration, can be understood as neoliberal multiculturalism (Overmyer-Velázquez; Speed).

It is hardly seems a coincidence that the movimiento jaranero emerged during the period of transition from the Mexican state's authoritarian assimilationist policies to neoliberal multiculturalism. Diverse actors in the movement played important roles in regional political democratization and occupied positions within cultural institutions. In general, the jaranero movement seeks to revalorize the region's cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity as a rejection of assimilationist model of the modern period (Ávila Landa 33-34). Given the intrinsic respect

of diversity in the conviviality of the fandango, difference is now not only tolerated but also championed. Current proponents highlight the African elements linked to certain instruments (like the *leona*) in communities such as Chacalapa (Cardona y Rinaudo 30-33; Delgado Calderón 60-61). Numerous Nahuatl and Popoluca communities perform son jarocho, hold fandangos and even sing in their respective languages (Alcántara Henze 283). These communities have adapted jarocho stringed instruments to their indigenous religious rites and festivals (Delgado Calderón 51-52).

Son jarocho is both multivocal and multilocal, as each distinct place is linked to a particular musical voice and identity (Rodman 1992). Until as recent as forty years ago, many communities in southern Veracruz were only tenuously connected by roads and highways creating a situation of relative isolation. This resulted a multiplicity of ways to play music that, while retaining elemental understanding based in a popular baroque technique, created differing musical expressions (Corona Alcalde). Thus, each community has a historically rooted tradition of particular tunings, tonalities, verses, phrasings, instrumentation and styles of dancing. There is no pretension among musicians to adhere to universal standards or uniformity, rather, they promote a reverence for difference through musical practice and the pluriverse of styles. Musical practice in the fandango must mediate these differences in convivial relations for successful fandangos to occur.

Although underdeveloped and incipient, the respect for musical difference within the fandango epistemology of convivencia could guide concrete actions to promote the respect for racial and ethnic difference in a critical interculturality from below, as an alternative to both assimilationist and neoliberal multicultural models imposed from above. Gloria Luz Godínez Rivas argues, "To deconstruct this history we must know it and position ourselves against it . . . we must be a new mestiza, a new morena, just as the verses of young generations of jaraneros and jaraneras do" (24). Whether the conviviality of the fandango can lead to an alternative practice of cosmopolitan conviviality will need to be seen, but the ethical and philosophical framework for such a practice can be found in the fandango epistemology.

When Conviviality is Disrupted

It can be argued that, *à la* Illich, the arts of music, dance and poetry are tools for conviviality. However, conviviality is an ideal that is in constant negotiation, this is why Overing and Passes give special attention to the details of cases where conviviality is disrupted. common affective

states that destroy convivial sociality are individualism, violence and anger. Although the goal of the fandango is always a successful conviviality, this is not always possible.

Elder musicians and traditional *cantadores* (singers) from Santiago Tuxtla, Don Salvador Tome Chacha and Don Raymundo "Medellín" Domínguez Gallardo (who are one-hundred-and-three and ninety-one years old respectively), have related many stories of violence emerging from the fandangos of the past due to jealousy and competition among the musicians. This was especially true among fandango singers, who engaged in improvisatory lyrical battles to see who had the most talent, possessed the most verses, and who could outwit the other. Although less common, fights have also erupted among musicians arguing who was the best performer. Often than not, these contentions often ended with outbreaks of violence using machetes, guns and even instruments as weapons. These stories from Santiago Tuxtla highlight the fact that rural life in Veracruz was often times dangerous and conflictive (Jiménez Marce; Pérez Montfort "Desde Santiago").

Moreno Olmedo describes how convivencia and marginalization, machismo and violence coexist in the lives of the popular classes in mostly positive terms. Although such forms of violence or delinquency are an aberration of an ideal order, they do not preclude the existence of a relationality based on affectivity (*El aro y la trama* 346-47). In fact, convivencia does not negate or ignore negative aspects of life. Jeffrey Browitt posits, "But we might also need to reverse the direction of our thinking and seek instead models in reverse" (368). In his analyses of the cosmopolitanism from below, practiced among the poor of the Caribbean, Browitt urges an examination of "the daily micronegotiations of sociality, the uses of shared space, the management of scarce resources, that is, the intimate protocols of conviviality within socio-economic disadvantage, which are the hallmarks of subalternity, immigration, exile, and so forth" (368).

In 2012, I attended the fandangos celebrating St. James the Moorslayer (Santiago Matamoros), the patron of Santiago Tuxtla. As a fandango is participatory, blurring the divisions between audience, musicians, and singers, practically anyone may sing, play or dance within the communitarian logic of participation. One of the basic "rules" of the genre in this town is that there are sones for women only (*sones de mujer* or *de a montón*) and for male and female partners (*sones de pareja* or *de hombre*). In one particular fandango in which I participated, a drunken male spectator repeatedly chose to climb up on the tarima, providing the rhythmic foundation to a son de mujer, much to the chagrin of the dancing women. At first the drunk

was treated with amusement; he was told to get down off the tarima and obeyed. Initially, the spectacle of the drunkard contributed to the festive atmosphere of onlookers and participants alike. Repeated attempts at dancing when not appropriate, however, threatened the ability of the musicians to play in unison and to create a climate of conviviality sought through musical practice. Don Antonio, an elder and much respected musician from an ejido in the municipality of San Andrés Tuxtla, stopped playing his jarana and physically dragged the drunk off the tarima. An altercation ensued with punches being thrown on both sides and the music stopped. The music and dance that had transpired for various hours was disrupted by an unnatural break, creating a jarring feeling that surprised everyone and disrupted the state of "high conviviality" (*Anthropology of Love and Anger* 70).

A participant quickly mounted the tarima and shouted to the musicians to play the son "El Buscapié," and sing verses *a lo divino* (relating to positive and divine qualities). The guitarreros began the initial melodies of the son and the jaraneros entered behind them. Poems were sung a lo divino and couples began to enter and exit the tarima to pound out steps of positivity. Like magic, the air of the fandango was cleared and this magical son charged the environment with positivity and light. The episode of the drunkard was now relegated to the past and the convivencia was saved by the aesthetic and affective qualities of this particular son with its semantically charged poetry.

"El Buscapié" is a great example of music as a tool for affecting certain ends. According to García de León *(El mar),* this son was condemned in the Holy Inquisition for its connection to indigenous and afromestizo healers and witches. It comprises a corpus of verses related to divinity ("a lo divino") and the devil ("al diablo"), and according to various contemporary musicians, it is still a son used to invite or ward off evil spirits or energies. Don Antonio later confessed to me that he made an error in judgement in forceably removing the drunk, as the dramatic episode of physical violence disrupted the atmosphere of convivencia. To be sure, the moral and aesthetic qualities of the son healed this impromptu fracture of embodied collectivity, and generated a positive and uplifting atmosphere that allowed the conviviality of the fandango to continue.

Conclusion

The Caribbean has always been a place of transculturation, hybridity, and connection. In contrast to regional colonial and postcolonial projects, various subaltern populations have

formulated their own visions of conviviality. What many of these alternative cosmopolitanisms from below offer, is a concrete, historical example of a differing model of the "good life." With respect to difference, alterity is not seen as an impediment to unity, rather, a precondition for the possibility of conviviality. An analysis of the diverse ways that human groups weave interconnected lives with respect to their apparent differences may offer productive visions for planetary conviviality. For Ette, literature that offers such a vision.

> Thanks to its multiformity, unfolded throughout its millenarian history in the most diverse cultures, literature is unique and cannot be substituted by other arts or forms of knowledge, precisely as a generative warehouse of a 'knowledge of conviviality [saber convivir].' ("Memoria, historia, saberes" 567-68)

The communities of southern Veracruz offer a local, alternative epistemology, deeply rooted in cultural practices that nourish divergent identities and creative modes of togetherness. Their "knowledge of conviviality" is not handed down through written literature, but instead through music, dance, and oral poetics. Just as the polyrhythms of the zapateado, the figuras of the guitarra de son and the rhythmic drive of the jaranas mark a cadence, a counterpoint, against the beat of the imposed musical fads and imaginaries of modernity—the fandango offers a prefigurative vision for decolonial musical practice that transcends the boundaries of music itself, and inhabits novel social forms of community that in southern Veracruz is known as convivencia. In many ways the music of southern Veracruz encapsulates a knowledge of life (saber vivir) and a knowledge of living-with (saber convivir) that represents an ethico-aesthetic model of communitarian sociality.

Above all, the convivencia in the fandango begins and ends with an act of listening to the other. "We could say that modernity's monopoly over representation," (246) argues Rolando Vázquez, "is grounded on the negation of listening, that is, the negation of language as relationality." ("Decolonial Critique of Modernity" 246). In this case of convivencia and the fandango, we are dealing with extra-linguistic functions like music and dance, yet the question of listening is paramount. As Vázquez goes on to argue:

> The question of listening, a form of the question of relationality, poses a particular challenge to the epistemic enclosure of modernity. How to listen to conviviality? How to listen to the impoverished, to common people, to

> communities as sites of interpellation? How to listen to the voices, philosophies of the communities that present alternatives to modernity? (247)

Browitt reminds us that this model of conviviality is danceable, democratic and syncopated once we are able to listen (367-68). The conviviality of the fandango is not simply the act of listening to impoverished voices, but singing with them, dancing with them, and, ultimately, living with them—for as we do so, we may find new visions for life lived together.

Notes

[1] See Nowicka and Vertovec (2014) for an expanded range of meanings to the term conviviality.

[2] Contrast this idea with that of Roland Barthes's (2013: 6) concept of idiorrhythmy, where each person lives according to his own rhythm. In this posthumous work, enticingly titled *How to Live Together*, Barthes idealizes periods of solitude and connection as in certain monastic orders that is a very different concept of conviviality here described.

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