

Sounds and Memories of El Salvador's Civil War in the Songs of Los Togoroces de Morazán

Christina Azahar

"I know the civil war was terrible, but just think—you and your sister would never have been born if it weren't for the war. Your father and his family would have gone back to live in El Salvador..." My mother is a white woman born and raised in the southern United States, and her words, though delivered with care and concern, haunt my life more and more each day. The histories of violence and erasure that have resurfaced as I have sought to understand my father's homeland press viscerally against my scattered heritage, and the more I learn about the United States' involvement in the Salvadoran Civil War, the more caught I feel between grief and shame. The more I learn, the more my very existence feels stained by conflict and the more that I seek those voices which fight for peace and reconciliation.¹

The soundings of Los Torogoces de Morazán, an ensemble whose members market their performances as "the musical expression of the Salvadoran revolution," constitute one such a voice (Chica Argueta). Formed in 1981 in conjunction with the FMLN's Radio Venceremos, these guerrilla musicians were using their artistic work as a weapon of war by serving as a voice of truth during the worst years of the conflict when mainstream media obscured the facts about the United States' and the Salvadoran governments' involvement in mass killings and other gross human rights violations. Today, they continue to perform in honor of those who have fallen fighting for their country, and to shed light on histories that some have sought to erase from national memory, such as the massacre of over 600 civilians that occurred in the small village of El Mozote in December of 1981 (Chica Argueta). This performance of state killing as a ritual enacting justice and executive supremacy is not unlike the "lethal theater" described by Dwight Conquergood in his writings on capital punishment in the United States (352). In fact, the Salvadoran military's tactic of demonizing the guerrilla forces and their supporters in order to gain popular legitimacy seems to epitomize Conquergood's interpretation of the "effigy" as a dehumanized subject composed of an individual's worst parts who serves as a linchpin for

CHRISTINA AZAHAR is a doctoral student in ethnomusicology at the University of California, Berkeley.

contemporary execution rituals (353).² Against the enormity and barbarity of these state-sanctioned killings, Los Torogoces de Morazán continue to perform their own rituals of struggle and remembrance using what authors Jason Stanyek and Benjamin Piekut call “intermundane collaborations,” or a form of co-labor with the “deadness” of technology as well as with that of the human dead in sonic realms (19-20). Here, the authors frame these sonic “intermundane collaborations” as processes that rearrange linear temporal conceptions of agency by connecting distended pasts to multiple presents and futures, and through their use of radio, recording technology, and more recently the internet, Los Torogoces have brought and continue to bring the distended voices of those fallen in the war to bear on the evolution of cultural memory (Stanyek and Piekut 18).

In order to begin exploring the specific processes through which Los Torogoces de Morazán have given voice to the hopes and struggles of many Salvadoran people, this paper will focus especially on two particular types of intermundane collaboration outlined by Stanyek and Piekut: “corpaurality” or “the imbrication of sound with fleshly bodies” and “the leakage effect” or that which happens when, “a [sonic] activity in one area expands unexpectedly into another area, setting in motion a second process, project or concern” (19-20). It is through these processes of corpaurality and leakage that I have come to hear the work of Los Torogoces as a resonant sounding of the need to reconcile my past with the critical and ethical responsibilities I have taken on in entering the field of music scholarship. My paper therefore uses several personal interjections marked in italics which are intended to sustain my argument that, through the leakage of sound and images from their original sources during the civil war, collective memories of death and violence can be experienced in a multi-

sensory or embodied manner. After putting together a brief history of the region and ensemble traditions from which Los Torogoces de Morazán emerged, I will utilize the aforementioned theories of intermundane collaborations in conjunction with Richard Schechner’s conceptualizations of ritual performance to discuss the circulation of their music through the work of Radio Venceremos. To conclude, I will incorporate Diana Taylor’s work on memory and transmission in her book *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* to elaborate on theories of intermundane collaboration in Los Torogoces de Morazan’s song “*El corrido de El Mozote*.”

Setting the Stage: Rituals of State Killing and the Suture of *Chanchona*

Los Torogoces de Morazán is part of an ensemble tradition called *chanchona* which has existed in the eastern departments of El Salvador since the turn of the twentieth century. This rural area, in which the population is heavily indigenous or ladino, has long been marginalized by the elite who live in the urban areas of the central and western parts of the country; as early as 1814 the Spanish Crown’s representative in San Salvador reported that the natives of the rural regions “had no culture nor religious or social knowledge” (Todd 15). In 1854, even Salvadoran government publications concluded that “they [the natives] remain as always, rude and superstitious [...] without social needs, without a wish to improve their condition [...] they do not pursue progress nor do they seem to consider the wellbeing of their descendants” (Todd 15). Sentiments did not change much during the twentieth century, causing many officials to see the land and its people as superfluous. Some even called the region *la tierra olvidada* (the forgotten land) (Todd 16). It is due to this long history of marginalization and

oppression that eastern El Salvador, especially the department of Morazán, served as the stronghold of the FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) guerrilla forces during the civil war that lasted from 1980 to 1992, thereby becoming the site of some of the most inexcusable acts of violence perpetrated against rebel forces and civilians by the Salvadoran military during this time period (Ching xvii, xx-xxi).³ However, despite the hardships of poverty and war, *chanchona* music has emerged as one of the greatest sources of joy and local cultural life in eastern El Salvador. Now considered part of the area's folklore, its rise in popularity has contributed to the growth and fortification of regional sentiment, and at times it has even helped to soothe the sting of ongoing social and political conflict (Sheehy, "Salvadoran Chanchona").

According to Francisco Membreño Granado, an elder musician born in 1930 in the hills of Morazán, *chanchona* ensembles in the early to mid-twentieth century typically consisted of two violins, two guitars, and an upright bass locally named the *chanchona* (meaning sow, or big female pig), from which the ensembles took their name. To this arrangement was added a *caña*, a cylinder made from tin cans and filled with pebbles or seeds to be shaken as a rattle (Sheehy, "Liner notes" 3). Due to the immense influence of the Mexican recording industry throughout the early twentieth century, these ensembles generally played popular genres like *corrido*, waltz, and *bolero*, but after 1950 Colombian *cumbia* began to spread throughout Latin America and now constitutes a significant portion of *chanchona* repertoire ("Liner notes" 4).

In 1970 *chanchona* was transformed yet again. After noticing its significant popularity in their annual competition of 1969, the announcers and managers of Radio Chaparrastique in the city of San Miguel decided to launch a festival and competition exclusively for *chanchona* the

following year. Thirty-six ensembles competed, and the event was such a success that it became an annual carnival called the Radio Chaparrastique Festival Campirano, which has continued for the past four decades ("Liner notes" 4). Because of its pivotal role in the cultural life of the eastern region, the Festival Campirano was even able to bridge differences during the most intense years of the civil war, between 1986 and 1990, when *chanchona* ensembles supporting the armed forces and the guerrillas gathered together to sing and dance in the competition ("Liner notes" 8).⁴ As Radio Chaparrastique announcer Jorge 'Foxy' Gómez elaborates,

In the time of war, [it was] incredible that in a Festival Campirano when things were hot we could bring the guerrillas and the armed forces together in a festival of brothers. Truly incredible! The guerrilla leaders as well as the army had come. They got together, everyone dancing at the Festival Campirano, and neither realized that both the guerrillas and the army were there. (qtd "Liner notes" 7)

Gómez also mentions that during this time, Los Torogoces de Morazán, who had been traveling and performing with the FMLN guerrilla forces since 1981, emerged as one of the best ensembles of the area ("Liner notes" 7).

However, these moments of blissful unawareness between the military and guerrillas were, sadly, not at all the norm; it is due partly to the presence of Los Torogoces de Morazán, and especially of their counterpart Radio Venceremos, that eastern El Salvador became a prime target for military strikes (Ching xviv). Colonel Domingo Monterrosa, leader of the lethal U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion, stated that "the guerrilla always carries his *masas* (masses) into battle with him," thereby acknowledging that in the eyes of the Salvadoran government and military, there was no such a thing as a civilian during

wartime (Danner 41). As such, widespread scare tactics and mass killings of men, women, and children became common practice by the Salvadoran forces who, under direction of the United States, sought to destabilize the leftist guerrilla forces by eliminating their bases of civilian support (López Vigil 80).

Especially during President Ronald Reagan's administration, these policies were allowed to continue despite the protests of many U.S. Democrats and human rights organizations around the world, primarily because both the Salvadoran and United States governments had deemed the FMLN guerrilla forces to be communists. As Reagan declared in a 1984 address to the nation, "El Salvador [has] become the stage for a bold attempt by the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Nicaragua to install communism by force throughout the hemisphere" (qtd Ching xvii). Erik Ching elaborates on this statement: "He [Reagan] said the United States would do everything in its power to stop the spread of communism in Central America and therein defend the United States" (xvii). As is evident from his speech, Reagan believed, or at least wanted his listeners to believe, that El Salvador was the new front line in the Cold War. While it is true that a small number of highly-educated members of the guerrilla forces clung desperately to Marxist-Leninist ideology, most cared little for communism and were instead inspired to action by an emerging radicalized Christian liberation theology. However, because of its staunch anticommunist position, for eleven years the United States sent El Salvador over one million dollars per day in military aid. With this money, the Salvadoran armed forces were able to sustain a war in support of the elite landowners' attempt to defend their property, while claiming to the rest of the world that they were championing the causes of capitalism, liberty, and democracy (Ching xvii-xix).

The massacre discussed in the introduction, which took place in the town of El Mozote in the hills of northern Morazán in December 1981, is one of the most gruesome examples of misdirected military targeting to take place during the civil war. Though officially begun as an effort by the Atlacatl Battalion to interrogate citizens about the whereabouts of the guerrilla forces, it became clear after the officers spent less than an hour questioning hundreds of supposed collaborators that their intention was never to gather useful information (Danner 69). At the beginning of the operation, one of the soldiers shouted, "All you sons of bitches are collaborators. [...] You're going to have to pay for those bastards," and by the end of the massacre that followed, over 1000 civilians had been disposed of in El Mozote and the surrounding areas (Danner 63). An overwhelming number were children. According to Dwight Conquergood, at least in relation to the judicial system, it is this kind of killing that "anchor[s] belief in the criminal justice system, dramatizing in an especially vivid way that 'something is being done,' that the system is in control, order has been restored" (352). Though not operating within the same branch of governance, the Salvadoran military clearly felt that they needed to carry out this type of murder of innocent civilians in order to eradicate what, in their eyes, was one of those effigies that "take on manifest powers and becomes not just surrogates for the accused, but stand-ins for crime and all anti-social forces of evil that threaten law and order" (Conquergood 353). It is in response to and collaboration with these dead, martyrs for the FMLN and symbols of unacceptable resistance for the government, that Los Torogoces sounded their cries for justice throughout the war and after the peace accords in 1992. Through their music, they were able to create new rituals of

testimony and remembrance which gave amplitude to the voices that had been erased.

“Los gemelos”: Sounding Deadness through the Airwaves

“En el mes de junio de 1981 en los momentos más difíciles que vivía nuestro país El Salvador. En las montañas de Morazán nacían dos gemelos. Que posteriormente salieron al aire con sus nombres y apellidos. Estamos hablando de LOS TOROGOCES DE MORAZÁN Y RADIO VENCEREMOS” (Chica Argueta). Los Torogoces’ Facebook page, created by manager and original member Benito Chica Argueta (also known as Sebastian Torogoz), introduces the ensemble with all the passion and bravado that the group must have drawn upon to sustain their performances during the years of war. After forming in June 1981, the group was given the tasks of boosting morale among the dispersed guerilla soldiers and militia and generating antagonism towards enemy forces (Chica Argueta). They did this work in conjunction with Radio Venceremos, which formed in early 1981 with the intention of creating an uncensored media outlet to keep combatants and civilians informed about the progress of the war. The guerrillas’ General Command declared later in 1981 that, because of their efforts, Radio Venceremos be recognized as the official voice of the FMLN, thereby making their affiliate ensemble Los Torogoces the official music of the revolutionary front (Chica Argueta). While they often performed at parties, dances, and even masses in order to enliven their fellow soldiers and civilian supporters, it is likely that their music was most often heard in the regular shows broadcasted by Radio Venceremos. For this reason, in their performances the sound was generally dislocated from the artists’ bodies in a manner similar to another process of intermundane collaboration that Stanyek and Piekut call “rhizophonia” (19).⁵ This

dislocation through radio broadcasting, added to Los Torogoces’ evocation of the voices and experiences of war victims through processes of corporeality and leakage, helped to facilitate and expand the reach of their involvement in rituals of remembrance, community-building, and play in response to the state’s rituals of execution.

According to the memoirs of Carlos Henríquez Consalvi (better known as “Santiago”), the lead anchor of Radio Venceremos, Los Torogoces de Morazán emerged from a group of *compañeros* (particularly those associated with the FMLN) who were all *campesinos* and had the intention of forming a singing group to record songs for the radio station. Their first two pieces were quite well-received by the station, and when they decided to solidify themselves and make the ensemble more involved in the cultural work of the guerrilla insurgency, there was much debate surrounding the name they would take on. Some of the initial suggestions were either too comical or too obscene, but after deliberation among the group members and the station’s team, Santiago eventually suggested the name The Torogoces of Morazán in honor of a bird, native to the region, that bores holes into walls and trees to build its nests, and that, for all those gathered, represented the ingenuity and work ethic of the Salvadoran guerrillas (Henríquez Consalvi 51). Besides Benito Chica Argueta, the original members included Andrés Barrera Mejía, Cristóbal Chica Argueta, Andrés Barrera Jr., Ricardo Ventura, Álvaro, and Esteban, but because they were involved with the guerrilla forces in times of combat, the last four musicians lost their lives in battle (Chica Argueta).⁶

One of the first wartime performances that Santiago describes was a mass held by Father Rogelio Poncele in El Mozote on March 24, 1981, to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the assassination of El

Salvador's former archbishop Monsignor Óscar Arnulfo (Henríquez Consalvi 34, 51). Unlike all of their recorded material, which centers on themes of protest, national pride, or solidarity with the FMLN, Los Torogoces sang a hymn, accompanied by children, including the words, "You are the God of the poor, the human and simple God" (Henríquez Consalvi 33-4; Los Torogoces de Morazán, *Por nuestros caídos*). The next performance mentioned was the day they were formed, when the group recorded two songs to be broadcast on Radio Venceremos. The first was "Heróico Morazán," and the second "Radio Venceremos" (Henríquez Consalvi 51). Unlike the humble supplications of their earlier performance, "Heróico Morazán" is a lament for the victims of war and a cry for justice against the violence being carried out by the Salvadoran and United States governments, while "Radio Venceremos" offers heartfelt praise for the work of the guerrilla radio station. The lyrical excerpts below attest to these sentiments:

"Heróico Morazán"

Mes de octubre del 80
nos dan la falsa reforma
Y así invaden nuestras tierras
dirigidos por los yanquis

Nos quemaron nuestros ranchos
Macharon nuestras mujeres
Mataron a nuestros hijos,
levantemos su bandera. (Los Torogoces de Morazán, *Por nuestros caídos*)

"Venceremos"

Se oye el Radio Venceremos
Desde el centro de la montaña
Transmitiendo sus mensajes
después de un pueblo en arma

A las seis de la mañana
se escucha su transmisión
Es la Radio Venceremos,
es la voz de nuestra revolución

Una potente emisora,
todo le escuchan a ti

Es la radio guerrillera
de Farabundo Martí. (Los Torogoces de Morazán, "Venceremos")

Both of these songs, set to longing waltzes rather than upbeat *corridos* or *cumbias* (as is common among other *chanchona* ensembles), rhizophonically create a space—both in the recording studio and across the airwaves among listeners—that allows for reflection and contemplation, rather than the celebratory spaces created by some of their other works, such as "Torogoces de Morazán" (which will be discussed below) (Los Torogoces de Morazán, *Por nuestros caídos*). Through this initial rhizophonic process, their music began to take root among FMLN supporters across the nation and beyond, to the point that they became an inseparable part of Radio Venceremos programming (López Vigil 218). It is especially significant that this process took place despite the fact that the majority of their listeners outside of the FMLN forces would not have encountered the ensemble or their music in a live concert setting or rally, as was the case in other protest music contexts, such as the *nueva canción* artists of Chile during the 1960s and 1970s. This means that their performance of ritual camaraderie, which Richard Schechner calls "communitas," became extended through the technology of the radio station in a way which, although somewhat normative, nevertheless engaged listeners in a process of transformation through which they entered into greater solidarity with the guerrilla forces (Schechner 61-2).⁷ Though not excusing the government forces for their actions toward innocent citizens, community building efforts like this one, combined with the fact that guerrillas were often housed and fed by local families, clearly blurred the line between soldier and civilian, to say the least (Henríquez Consalvi 8-9). However, Los Torogoces de Morazán also played a significant role in solidifying the

camaraderie among the guerrilla forces themselves.

Turning back to Santiago's memoir, his records indicate that on February 26, 1982, the sixth class graduated from the guerrilla military school, and Los Torogoces de Morazán played for the dancing and celebration afterward, rallying the crowd with a lively cumbia called

“Torogoces de Morazán”

(Hablado)

Estos son Los Torogoces de Morazán -
Expresión musical
de la revolución salvadoreña
Claro que si, compa!⁸

(Cantado)

Vengan compañeros todos a gozar
Con este conjunto que es muy popular
Vengan a gozar, vengan a bailar
con Los Torogoces de Morazán.

Allá por los montes se escucha una voz
Es el canto alegre del torogoz [...]

(Hablado)

Claro que si, compa!
Este es el ritmo con (sabor a) pólvora
Color del pueblo [...]
A cargo de los Torogoces de Morazán
Acompañando al pueblo salvadoreño
y demás pueblos del mundo
En su lucha contra la opresión
y el imperialismo. (Los Torogoces de
Morazán, *Por nuestros caídos*)

The initial performance of this song, though lyrically still a pointed anthem of protest, also allowed for a time of freedom and play during which the participants in the celebration could dance and be joyful. In this liminal space of relative peace in the midst of ongoing war, there may also have been room for the formation of a different type of communitas, which Schechner says can erupt more spontaneously as a sincere outpouring of warmth and solidarity among participants in a ritual, and which transports or transforms those gathered into another, more connected way of being (57, 62).

Although the ritual presented in this last performance gravitates more heavily toward the function of entertainment, it is clear that on a broader level the performances of Los Torogoces had a particular ability to boost morale among FMLN supporters, to spark motivation for the guerrilla forces, and to serve as a “balm for the soul at every dance” (Schechner 71, Henríquez Consalvi).⁹

Though their performance here did not pass through the same rhizophonic process as the previous one, perhaps it was at events like these that the corpaurality of their music became more clearly solidified.

Pictures of the group from during the war reveal how closely entwined their dual roles as musicians and soldiers were (López Vigil, Henríquez Consalvi). With guns draped ready around their backs, food and ammunition fastened to their belts, and instruments held as if being played, they are portrayed as poised and ready at a moment's notice either to fight or to sing, using their voices and instruments with as much intention and precision as their weapons. If the corpaurality and rhizophonia of their recorded songs were attached to images of these particular bodies, it is quite possible that, through the process of leakage, hundreds of listeners present only through the airwaves of Radio Venceremos were also gathered together in liminal spaces or moments of celebratory play, militancy, or community. This work continued unceasingly throughout twelve long years of war, and even after the daily transmissions were discontinued, Los Torogoces have remained constant in their efforts to voice the histories of violence and struggle that they feel should never be forgotten, and that are now emerging as new projects of ritual remembrance and celebration (Chica Argueta).

“El corrido de El Mozote,” Leakage, and Remembrance

The warm, sticky redness seeps down my fingers and onto my palm, gradually staining my wrist and arm as I watch – horrified and perplexed – momentarily frozen. Is it paint, or is it blood? Have I been wounded or did I just do something unthinkable? Where am I? When am I? Is somebody with me or am I alone? Heart pounding, voice and arms shaking, blood running cold, I somehow hear myself reading the words,

“We go house by house, finding in each one cruel, gruesome acts... The cord that was used to hang him remains wrapped around the neck of a child who was barely a few months old.”

Then another voice, distant and uncaring yet somehow, sickeningly, coming from my own mouth answers,

“El Salvador has become the stage for a bold attempt by the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Nicaragua to install communism by force throughout the hemisphere. The United States will do everything in its power to stop the spread of communism in Central America and therein defend the United States.”

And it hits me—the crushing sense of guilt and the full weight of loss and the blood of hundreds of innocents simultaneously incriminating me and pouring through me like an unhealed wound. Remembering that I am only performing does nothing at all to alleviate my panic, and I am left only with an emptied heart and the knowledge that no matter what I do, parts of my broken heritage will never be reconciled. However, this moment is one of both heartbreak and awakening...

After giving this personally harrowing performance in a graduate seminar in the spring of 2014, I struggled to explain to myself why I had reacted so viscerally to

seeing my hands and arms covered in fake blood. Having no one in my family who was directly affected by the massacre, I had no obvious reason to experience the pain and guilt that overwhelmed me in the moment of performance, but in reflecting more closely upon the work of Tomie Hahn, I am beginning to understand more clearly how multiple senses can be tied to transmission. She states:

The senses reside in a unique position as the interface between body, self, and the world. They are beautiful transmission devices, through which we take in information, comprehend the experience, assign meaning, and often react to the stimuli. Not only do the senses orient us in a very real, physical way; they enable us to construct parameters of existence – that which defines the body, self, social group, or world. Simply, we are situated by sensual orientations. (3)

By way of Hahn’s interpretation of the body and senses constructing parameters of existence, I also felt that I was beginning to comprehend more fully the “repertoire” that Diana Taylor describes as the embodied expression and transmission of knowledge, in which memory is processed through mediums such as spoken language, dance, sports, and ritual (16, 19). Since she further points out that the embodied practices of the repertoire can work in tandem with the knowledges and memories contained in the “archive” of physical documents and texts, I have sought to be more aware of the ways in which my physical and emotional senses respond to texts like Los Torogoces de Morazán’s recently released song “El corrido de El Mozote,” which I discovered not long after my performance. The recording, available on YouTube, is performed by a new arrangement of the ensemble that includes several of the earlier generation’s children, including Benito Chica, Francisco Sebastián Chica, Francisco Alexander Amaya, Carlos Jonatán Chica, Diana Chica, Antonio Cabrera, and

Balmoris Gómez (Chica Argueta). Like myself, these younger members had not yet been born at the time of the massacre, but in engaging with the sonic, visual, and literary texts that document the event, they created a music video that collapses time, combines elements of the archive and the repertoire, and brings the listener and the performer into closer contact with the physicality of the massacre. These effects are accomplished through yet more projects of ritual and collaboration with the intermundane through processes of corpaurality and leakage.

The “Corrido de El Mozote” video opens with the emblem of the El Mozote memorial—the black silhouette of a family holding hands—above the words “*Mozote nunca más!*” Following is a long shot of destroyed buildings, abandoned and overcome by plant growth, along with broken items and other ruins from the attack. Meanwhile, Los Torogoces have begun to sing:

En El Mozote, señores, algo malo sucedió.
Nadie se la imaginaba,
nadie de buen corazón,
que Domingo Monterrosa
a la gente asesinó.

Dispararon a los niños,
hombres, mujeres también.
Allí comenzó el sufrimiento
y la masacre también,
disparándole a la gente
por orden del coronel.

Fue en el mes de diciembre,
final del 81,
que en el llano de El Mozote
al norte Morazán,
los autores de este crimen
fue el Batallón Atlacatl.

Cuando los niños lloraban
el coronel se sonrió.
Los soldados disparaban
sin ninguna compasión.
Lo dijo Rufina Amaya,

la que allí sobrevivió.

(Hablado por Rufina:

“Que los niños los quitaron de las madres
y los dejaban en el piso de la casa.

Allí dejaban los niños que no habían
nacido.”)

El hecho fue denunciado
por la Radio Venceremos
pero el gobierno y los yanquis
siempre al mundo le mintieron.
que los que allá habían muerto,
todos serán guerrilleros.

Fue en el mes de diciembre,
final del 81,
que en el llano de El Mozote
al norte Morazán,
los autores de este crimen
fue el Batallón Atlacatl.

Con el permiso de ustedes
terminamos el corrido.

Que no se olvide de El Mozote,
ni aquellos que han caído
por defender los derechos
de este pueblo tan sufrido. (Corrido de El
Mozote)

Rather than the gruesome acts of violence that the government used to enact justice and state supremacy, these lyrics perform justice through acts of testimony, or invitations for witnessing, in a similar manner to the Peruvian theater troupe Yuyachkani. Diana Taylor describes the troupe as an artist collective intervening in embodied memories of collective trauma by engaging their audiences in a function of witnessing that puts their storytelling in dialogue with the past in order to give viewers the chance to accept unacknowledged histories and recognize their connection to ongoing processes of oppression (209-11). The *corrido* accomplishes this intervention by naming the perpetrators of the attack, by describing the horrors of the scene using the first-hand account of a survivor, by explaining the work that Radio Venceremos did to

denounce the massacre despite denial from the U.S. and Salvadoran governments, and by calling on listeners at the end to use the song as a way to remember the lives and political work of those who were lost.

These truth-bearing lyrics intervene even more in memories of trauma when the music video enmeshes sound visually and corpaurally with particularly significant bodies, such as Colonel Domingo Monterrosa, the leader of the battalion that led the attack, and Rufina Amaya, a survivor of the massacre (Taylor 191).¹⁰ While in the colonel's case, only the text makes reference to his body and actions, a taped interview using Rufina's actual voice connected to an image of her body is recorded into the track with the rest of the song and video (Henríquez Consalvi 84). However, throughout the music video sound is mapped onto charred and bloodied corpses, skeletons, women and children witnessing the exhumations of the deceased from mass graves, and finally the bodies of Los Torogoces' younger performers giving a concert at what appears to be a relatively recent event ("El corrido de El Mozote"). The intersection of these multiple bodies through the dead technology of sonic and visual text fixes them into a type of performance spanning the historical and the contemporary in a way that complicates the lives of the living with the (non)presence of the dead.

That these corpaural connections are accomplished through the rhizophonic process of recording the song in a studio and releasing the video on the internet further detaches the sound from its original source, but through this detachment an immense body of listeners can be reached. In this way, the sound, along with its bodily entanglements, leaks from performer to studio to internet to completely new bodies, to whom the piece's sonic and visual elements transmit new knowledges and new histories. Perhaps, in this space, leakage

from the intermundane elements of the performance sparks new actions in unexpected receivers of sound, thus giving agency to the humanly and technologically dead. In Diana Taylor's writings on cultural memory and transmission, it is clear that oral and embodied ways of knowing such as the music, dance, and images combined in the music video, though they by no means replace written text, are nevertheless part and parcel with political acts of transmitting knowledge and memory. As she explains, "the telling is as important as the writing, the doing as central as the recording, the memory passed down through bodies and mnemonic practices. Memory paths and documented records might retain what the other 'forgot.' These systems sustain and mutually produce each other; neither is outside or antithetical to the logic of the other" (35-6). Through the ongoing acts of telling, writing, doing, and recording in which Los Torogoces de Morazán have now been involved for over thirty years, it is apparent that, regardless of changes in personnel and representation, their work of political activism and community-building is sustained by reciprocal responses of solidarity out of which new processes of remembrance and reconciliation did and (hopefully) will continue to unfold.

Postlude: Old Themes, New Beginnings

Without significant documentation of their performances or descriptions and responses to their music from their audiences, it is impossible to say to what degree Los Torogoces de Morazán truly affected the solidification of FMLN support among listeners during the years of the civil war. It is also unclear to what degree their music circulated beyond their occasional live performances and the transmissions of Radio Venceremos. Nevertheless, the reception and likely censorship of their music by pro-government or even neutral media outlets and listeners, who might have

perceived their work and relationship to the FMLN forces as too aggressive or combative to voice genuine messages of truth and reconciliation, remains an important area for future study. Based on the information available, it seems that the Radio Chaparrastique *chanchona* festival may have been (and perhaps may still be) a major site in which their music circulated, but, again, it is unclear exactly how Los Torogoces de Morazán were received there except as good musicians, and there is no indication as to how their audiences responded to the fact that they were part of the FMLN.

In regards to their work with Radio Venceremos, more time must be spent in the radio archives at the *Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen* (Museum of the Word and Image) in San Salvador, El Salvador, to determine the specific manner in which Los Torogoces performed over the airwaves and thereby to understand better the types of rituals and intermundane collaborations which may have been occurring in their broadcasts. Santiago, the station's lead anchor and the director of the aforementioned museum, also mentioned in his memoirs that Los Torogoces participated in a movement called The Creative Powers of the People, which was in charge of the cultural work of the FMLN, but he gives little explanation of what that movement specifically involved (Henríquez Consalvi 51). The most substantial and reliable sources of information about Los Torogoces de Morazán besides Santiago's book are Henríquez Consalvi's *Broadcasting the Civil War in El Salvador*, José Ignacio López Vigil's *Rebel Radio*, and the ensemble's Facebook page. Gathering the information described above will involve fieldwork and interviews with current members of the ensemble. It is my hope that this paper has laid the foundation for that fieldwork by establishing research questions and theoretical perspectives for studying music

related to the Salvadoran Civil War. I also hope that, in conducting such a study, I can eventually give order to the conflicting voices of my background, which, being so deeply bound up in the history of U.S.-Salvadoran relations, would offer a space for legacies of domination to be confronted, critiqued, and overcome.

Notes

1. Italicized text indicates personal commentary by the author.
2. "An effigy is the fusion of image and body, symbol and source, the figurative and the physical. Because a jury will never vote to kill a human being, the fundamental task of the prosecutor is to turn the accused into an effigy composed of his or her worst parts and bad deeds" (Conquergood 352).
3. The Salvadoran Civil War was a twelve-year rebellion of peasant guerrilla forces organized under the FMLN, which was formed in 1980 with the intention of overthrowing the U.S.-backed Salvadoran State. Though the guerrilla forces were severely outmanned, they managed to fight the Salvadoran Army to a draw in 1992, after which they achieved democratic reforms and an overhaul of the Salvadoran security forces.
4. Unsurprisingly, not all *chanchona* musicians were able to stay during this period. Many ensembles, like the younger members of Los Hermanos Lovo, were forced to flee the country during the civil war and brought their music to the United States. In Washington, D.C., where Los Hermanos Lovo now live, *chanchona* has become an outlet for many Salvadoran refugees to cope with the sadness and constant nostalgia of leaving one's home country behind.
5. "Rhizophonia describes the fundamentally fragmented yet proliferative condition of sound reproduction and recording, where sounds and bodies are constantly dislocated, relocated, and co-located in temporary aural configurations. [...] Indeed, schizophonia describes sound itself. All sounds are severed from their sources – that's what makes sound sound. Rhizophonia is our term for taking account both of sounds

extensity and the impossibility of a perfect identity between sound and source” (Stanyek and Piekut 19).

6. The website only provides these last two members’ given names.

7. Schechner argues that *communitas* can be enacted either normatively or spontaneously, and it is generally the spontaneous form that generates the greatest sense of community and collective belonging.

8. According to a translator’s note in López Vigil’s *Rebel Radio*, “*compa* (also the diminutive *compita*) short for *compañero* or comrade [...] refers to a member or sympathizer of the FMLN, and also to a lover or spouse” (ix). *Compa* can also serve as an abbreviated version of *compadre* or partner, but since the translation “comrade” has been used commonly in literature on Radio Venceremos and Los Torogoces de Morazán, this paper is written in accordance with that interpretation.

9. “Efficacy and entertainment are not binary opposites. Rather, they form the poles of a continuum [...]. The fact is that no performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment” (Schechner 71).

10. “Trauma” here refers specifically to acts of physical and emotional violence carried out in the midst of social or political upheaval. In the Peruvian context, Taylor is referring to trauma experienced in the Ayacucho region during the Shining Path conflict in the 1980s, and in this paper trauma is referring to experiences of state brutality during El Salvador’s Civil War.

Works Cited

- Chica Argueta, Benito. “Los Torogoces de Morazan Facebook Biography.” Facebook. Web. 5 May 2014.
- Ching, Erik. “Introduction: Peasant Insurgency and Guerrilla Radio in Northern Morazán, El Salvador.” *Broadcasting the Civil War in El Salvador: A Memoir of Guerrilla Radio*. Austin: U of Texas Press, 2010. xvii-xlvi. Print.
- Conquergood, Dwight. “Lethal Theater: Performance, Punishment, and the Death Penalty.” *Theater Journal* 54 (2002): 339-67. Print.
- Danner, Mark. *The Massacre at El Mozote*. New York: Vintage, 1993. Print.
- Hahn, Tomie. *Sensational Knowledge: Embodying Culture through Japanese Dance*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2007. Print.
- Henríquez Consalvi, Carlos. *Broadcasting the Civil War in El Salvador: A Memoir of Guerrilla Radio*. Trans. Charles Leo Nagle V with A.L. (Bill) Prince. Austin: U of Texas Press, 2010. Print.
- López Vigil, José Ignacio. *Rebel Radio: The Story of El Salvador’s Radio Venceremos*. Trans. Mark Fried. Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1994. Print.
- Los Torogoces de Morazán. *Por nuestros caídos y nuestra historia debemos continuar*. Music Art Productions, Inc., 2004.
- . “Venceremos.” 2008. YouTube. Web. 6 May 2014.
- . “Corrido de El Mozote.” YouTube. Web. 6 May 2014.
- Schechner, Richard. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Sheehy, Daniel. Liner notes to album *¡Soy Salvadoreño! Chanchona Music from Eastern El Salvador*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Folkways, 2011.
- . “What Makes a Good Smithsonian Folkways Recording? The Sound and Story of the Salvadoran Chanchona.” *Smithsonian Folkways Magazine* (2011). Web. 26 Oct 2013.
- Smithsonian Folkways Video. “Los Hermanos Lovo.” 2011. Web. 8 Dec 2013.
- Stanyek, Jason and Benjamin Piekut. “Deadness: Technologies of the Intermundane.” *The Drama Review* 54.1 (2010): 14-38. Print.
- Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003. Print.
- Todd, Molly. *Beyond Displacement: Campesinos, Refugees, and Collective Action in the Salvadoran Civil War*. Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin Press, 2010. Print.