

Coloniality and Resistance in Latin American Metal Music: Death as Experience and Strategy

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Latin America is vast, varied, and complex. It is composed of multiple countries, with different cultural practices, political experiences, and economic potentialities. These manifestations of diversity in the region are even more complex if we take into account the number of indigenous populations still living in Latin America that are seldom discussed as part of these countries' modern histories. These communities add to the diversity of the region with their own set of cultural practices, languages, histories, and struggles. In summary, Latin America's plurality is always a challenge when writing about the region. It is a constant reminder for researchers and authors that totalizing narratives will inevitably fall short in the effort to describe it. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this paper we will venture to examine one particular experience that is shared throughout many, if not all, of the countries that today compose Latin America. Specifically, the colonial experience in the region that characterized its origin, influences its present, and will inevitably shape its future.

In this paper, we aim to examine how metal music in Latin America has incorporated a critique of colonialism into its sounds, imagery, and lyrics. We will argue that this practice, far from a romantic reconceptualization of the past, serves as a critical assessment on the region's present and positions metal music as a source of critical reflection for musicians and listeners alike. We will do so via examples from Chile, Argentina, Mexico, and Puerto Rico as a way to address the phenomena throughout several of the geographies that compose Latin America: specifically, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. As stated above, this is not a totalizing or comprehensive analysis of how metal has reflected the region's colonial experience, but it is a start in a subject matter that has rarely been addressed in metal scholarship.

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Colonial Connections in Latin America

To examine the manifestations of colonialism in Latin America we must take an ample approach that is not restricted to a specific historical moment in the region's development. Most analyses on the effects of colonialism tend to examine it as a phenomenon of the past and therefore relinquish these efforts to the realm of historical studies. In many cases, particularly for outsiders, a discussion of Latin America's colonial experience may seem limited to the European colonization process that began in the fifteenth century and was later challenged by the emergence of independent nations in the 19th and 20th centuries at the hands of liberation movements. This is an important piece of the colonial puzzle for Latin America, as it marked the imposition of foreign cultures and worldviews on newly reached lands. This initial colonial experience was characterized by the subjugation of indigenous peoples, the pillaging of natural resources for the development of the colonial metropolises, and the imposition of Western world-views (i.e., notions on religion, morality, and progress) on local people. The colonial experience would have been hard enough for the region if it were limited to these axes of action and had culminated with the constitution of new nations as a challenge to the imperial powers of Europe; but it did not end there. Even after independence (for those who achieved it), the symbolic end of political colonialism, the countries in Latin America faced more everlasting consequences of this formative experience.

Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano has aimed to describe the ever-present legacy of colonialism in Latin America, long after the period of traditional colonization of the region (Quijano). He used the term "coloniality" (e.g., coloniality of power) to describe a "form of domination in the world today, once colonialism as an explicit political order was destroyed" (24). Coloniality therefore encompasses a structure of oppression, linked to the colonial experience of the fifteenth century, but one which also surpasses the end of that very same colonial period. The social categories that fostered oppressive experiences (e.g. race, ethnicity, social class, gender, political positioning) may have been created, implemented, and exploited during the colonial period, but they later morphed to sustain the project of modernity characteristic of Europe. Arturo Escobar (Escobar) has described Quijano's coloniality as "a global hegemonic model of power in place since the conquest that articulates race and labor, space and peoples, according to the needs of capital and to the benefit of white European peoples" (39). In this sense, the categories used in colonial times to justify oppression are still present today, and used to explain the project of modernity, which relies heavily on those same categories to systematically exploit the local.

Authors like Walter Mignolo have made extensive contributions to the understanding of coloniality in Latin America and its link to the project of modernity (Mignolo). For Mignolo “there is no modernity without coloniality and that coloniality is constitutive, and not derivative, of modernity” (ix). He describes this experience as the darker side of modernity, in an effort to make explicit that the Western modern project is anchored in the exploitation (geographical, physical, and psychological) of the colonial settings (Mignolo). Therefore, he, along with other scholars, has argued for decolonial projects that challenge the link between modernity and coloniality. For Mignolo, decolonial thinking “goes hand and hand with modernity/coloniality in this way: the rhetoric of modernity is a rhetoric of salvation (by conversion yesterday, and by development today), but in order to implement what rhetoric preaches, it is necessary to marginalize or destroy whatever gets in the way of modernity” (xxiv). This link is important, as interests that stand in the way of the modern project, as conceived from the metropolises, need to be eradicated. This is where the more recent manifestations of the colonial experience in Latin America become important for analysis.

As mentioned above, the social categories that fostered oppressive experiences during the early stages of European colonialism are still present today. The devaluation of indigenous people and local cultures continue in many of the countries that compose the region. This devaluation of the local has been an intrinsically important component in the establishment of other mechanisms of oppression in Latin America. A clear and direct example has been the imposed dictatorships that have plagued the region in countries like Chile and Argentina, just to name two cases. These regimes were established mostly in collaborations between local and international powers, at a detrimental cost for local people, particularly dissenters (Soto Castillo; Robaina; Díaz Vergara; Pizarro and Wittebroodt). Even today, when these dictatorships have been mostly surpassed in most of Latin America, the neoliberal economic practices implemented by local governments and international private companies continue to exploit local people (Campos Medina and Campos Medina; Mojica; Barandiaran). The devaluation of individual lives and groups that characterized the initial colonial experience remains alive and well in more current practices of oppression.

Metal and Coloniality

The arts in Latin America have very effectively engaged in a reflection on the colonial experience in the region and its consequences (Neustadat; Soto). Some examples include plastic artists like Carlos Raquel Rivera in Puerto

Rico, musicians like Silvio Rodríguez in Cuba, and novelists like Gabriel García Márquez in Colombia. These are all examples of how artists have recognized the experience of colonialism in Latin America, while simultaneously looking to develop a critical approach towards its ongoing legacy. This decolonial agenda in the arts brings forth a question pertinent to his essay: what role does metal music have in this decolonial process? This question is simultaneously complex and currently urgent for metal scholarship.

Metal music is, and always has been, a reflection of its context. Therefore, the political context from which metal music emerges throughout regions of the world has unsurprisingly garnered attention. Latin American scholars have addressed this issue in their work (Scaricaciottoli; Sánchez; Varas-Díaz and Mendoza; Varas-Díaz and Rivera). This does not mean that a discussion regarding the link between metal music and its political contexts is an easy one or one the larger international metal scene is willing to engage in. Scholars have documented how discussion over politics within this scene is frequently seen with disapproval as it has the potential to open rifts in the ever-present sense of community that metal tries to foster within its borders (Kahn-Harris; Scott). Other scholars have opened the door to the examination of the interrelation between politics and metal music, positioning its output as a potential critical vehicle of popular culture (Scott). These positions coexist within metal music and its fans, and the discussion over the integration of politics into metal music seems to have no end in sight and continues to push people onto uncomfortable terrain.

Latin American metal music has also faced discussion related to this integrative tension. Still, an examination of its output reflects how the integration of politics into its music has been present since its very origins (Scaricaciottoli; Calvo). More specifically, the incursion via its lyrics and imagery into the region's colonial past has positioned the subject of coloniality front and center, making it almost unavoidable in Latin American metal music (Varas-Díaz, Mendoza, Rivera, and González; Varas-Díaz et al.). It has done so using familiar subject matters to the musical genre, while applying these to local colonial experiences. More specifically, Latin American metal music has integrated its longstanding conversations about death to the local histories of coloniality. Below, we will use examples from four countries to examine how metal has used the idea of death, so frequently addressed in this musical genre, as a mechanism to reflect on coloniality. Specifically, we will examine how it has addressed issues related to nature, indigenous people and political oppression.

Nature and Death - Chile

A first example of how the idea of death has been used in Latin American metal music for decolonial resistance is intimately related to nature. The exploitation of local natural resources, the expropriation of land from indigenous communities, and the overall lack of concern for the protection of the environment have been staples of the colonial experience in Latin America. These practices have been discussed at length using the colonization process that took place during the fifteenth century, but it should be noted that they continued after many of the countries in the region became free and independent states. Therefore, environmental exploitation continued almost unaltered through the colonial process and later by local independent governments.

Chile is an important example of the link between the colonial experience and environmental exploitation. Chile is the longest country in the region. Its access to the Pacific coast, a vast stretch of land, and its varied climates make the country rich in natural resources. Some of these include valued minerals and resources related to its forests. The exploitation of those resources in more recent times is linked to the policies put in place during Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship. After an armed *coup d'état* against Salvador Allende's democratically-elected socialist government, Pinochet ruled Chile from 1973 to 1990 (Manzi et al.). During this period, Chile became an experimental ground for neoliberal policies in Latin America (Barandiaran; Mojica). With the support of foreign entities, including the United States government, the country was to become a model for others in the region of the economic growth that could happen once private entities were set free from the restrictions placed by the State. In fact, under neoliberal policies Chile experienced an economic boom that would keep Pinochet in power, and garnering him supporters even today. Still, these neoliberal policies would be detrimental to the country's environment with dire consequences to its land, water, and air. Most significant would be the accelerated rate of deforestation in Chile, with an estimated half a million acres lost annually since 1970 (Tockman). It is not an exaggeration to state that the death of the environment in Chile is a major concern for the region.

Metal music has reflected this concern over Chile's environmental woes. Specifically, progressive metal band *Crisálida* has vividly reflected on the consequences of the death of the environment in Chile. In their 20 years of existence, the band has released multiple albums, but it was in their 2015 release entitled *Tierra Ancestral* (Ancestral Land) where their concern over environmental exploitation and death came to the forefront of their musical output (Crisálida). In their song *Morir Aquí* (To Die Here) the band reflects on Chile's environmental exploitation in a very direct and critical manner. The chorus

stresses how the protagonist “does not want to die here” as the city’s “cement does not speak to me.” The video for the song is even more compelling as it shows a female protagonist walking through the city, which we could assume is Santiago (Chile’s capital city), but which we could also read as any other in Latin America. The protagonist has a depressed look on her face while she walks through the city; she is crammed along with others inside public transportation, and witnesses how police beat an indigenous woman (See figure 1).



Figure 1. Video for the song “Morir Aquí” by the Chilean band Crisálida.

This last image echoes the violence that these communities have endured for defending their environment. The progress of the city is juxtaposed with the exploitation of the indigenous communities still present today in Chile. When she closes her eyes, memories of her ancestors come to her as a reflection of different times. In the end, she climbs onto the balcony of her high-rise apartment, turns into a bird, and flies away. In this context, the excessive cement of the city equates to death and echoes the exploitation of nature in the Chilean context.

The first author had the opportunity to visit Chile and interact with the band, which led to conversations about their music and worldview. Cinthia Santibañez, the singer, explained the following about the song:

“Morir Aquí” es mi manifiesto de vida. (. . .) Yo soy del Norte del Chile, más tirando hacia Bolivia y Perú. Llegar a la capital, que es donde tienes

que venir para lograr tus objetivos es súper difícil. Yo cambie tener el mar y el cerro al lado . . . la tranquilidad de lo que es vivir en regiones. Algo tan simple como poder ver el horizonte todos los días, cosa que en Santiago en algunas partes es simplemente imposible. Fueron las cosas que viví cuando llegué a Santiago. La cantidad de cemento que no te permite tener una temperatura real. No te permite disfrutar siempre del viento. En algunos casos gente que simplemente no puede ver la cordillera. ¿Qué es eso? Que terrible. Debería haber una ley que prohibiera a las constructoras construir hasta cierta altura. Creo que una de las cosas más terribles que le puede pasar a una persona es no poder ver el horizonte. Entonces, qué triste que las empresas puedan quitarte eso. . . el beneficio de poder ver el sol. Y eso es “Morir Aquí.” Yo no voy a morir acá. No, yo me voy a morir a mi tierra y al desierto.

(“Morir Aquí” is my life manifesto. I am from the north of Chile, closer to Bolivia and Peru. Arriving to the capital where you have to move to achieve your goals is difficult. I exchanged being close to the sea and the mountains . . . the tranquility of living in these regions. Something as simple as seeing the horizon every day, which in some parts of Santiago is impossible. That is what I experienced in Santiago. The amount of cement does not allow you to have a true sense of the temperature. It does not allow you to enjoy the wind. Some people can’t even see the mountain range. What is that? That is terrible. There should be laws to restrict companies to a certain height for their construction. I think one of the most terrible things that can happen to a person is not being able to see the horizon. How sad that companies can take that away from you . . . the benefit of seeing the sun. That is “Morir Aquí.” I will not die here. No, I’ll die in my land and the desert.)

Song: Morir Aquí
Album: Tierra Ancestral
Band: Crisálida (Chile)
Year: 2015

Yo no quiero morir aquí
 El cemento no me habla
 No quiero morir aquí
 Yo no puedo soñar

Aquí el alma no descansa
 mientras la ciudad avanza
 Cada noche enferma
 se vuelve más eterna y caigo

Yo no quiero morir aquí
 El cemento no me habla
 No quiero morir aquí

Pensamiento vuela
 Que el desierto me espera
 Y voy

(I don't want to die here
 The cement does not speak to me
 I don't want to die here
 I can't dream

The soul does not rest here
 while the city moves
 Each sick night
 becomes eternal, and I fall

I don't want to die here
 The cement does not speak to me
 I don't want to die here
 Thoughts fly
 The desert awaits
 And I go)

Through their reflection on Chile's dictatorial past, established neoliberal policies and their effects on the environment and indigenous populations, *Crisálida* brings forth a compelling critique of coloniality. What is most salient about their proposal is its ability to link past forms of oppression with present consequences, thus highlighting how coloniality continues to be an ever-present dilemma in Chile.

Politics and Death - Mexico

A second example of how the idea of death has been used in Latin American metal music for decolonial resistance can be found in music addressing the uprising of indigenous populations against the State. One of the most salient examples is the internal conflict between the state of Chiapas and the Mexican government during the 1990s.

Chiapas is one of the 32 states that compose modern Mexico. It stands as a reminder of Central America's indigenous population with ruins that evidence the presence of the ancient Mayan civilization that populated the region before the colonization. Today, more than 60 indigenous groups comprise approximately 12 million people of the total population in Mexico (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía). Many became mainly visible to the world outside Mexico during the local indigenous rebellions centered on the protection of the land from the State and multinational companies (Stahler-Sholk).

The Chiapas region has historically been a site of tension within Mexico for multiple reasons, including migration from neighboring countries (particularly Guatemala) and conflicts over the use of land by the local people. The adoption of neoliberal policies towards the land management and farming practices (e.g. North America Free Trade Agreement) would provide the breeding ground for the emergence of the Zapatista movement during the 1990s. The Zapatistas, with masked "Subcomandante Marcos" as their leader, would be critical of the exploitation of the local indigenous population, which lacked the most basic of services from the Mexican government, including sewage, electricity, and education (Couch). The Zapatistas would become a movement to echo these concerns via military action, garnering international press coverage for years (Martínez Espinoza). The Mexican government could do little to stem the tide of support for the Zapatistas, mainly by indigenous populations in Mexico, with Chiapas being a central scenario of support. The Zapatistas, and Chiapas, remain today as important icons in a critical reflection on neoliberalism and the exploitation of indigenous populations.

Probably the most salient example of metal music addressing the subjects of politics in Mexico, and Chiapas in particular, is *Leprosy's* album "*Llora Chiapas*" (Chiapas Cries) (Leprosy). The album is driven by a need to describe the Chiapas experiences from the perspective of the indigenous groups that inhabit the area (See figure 2)

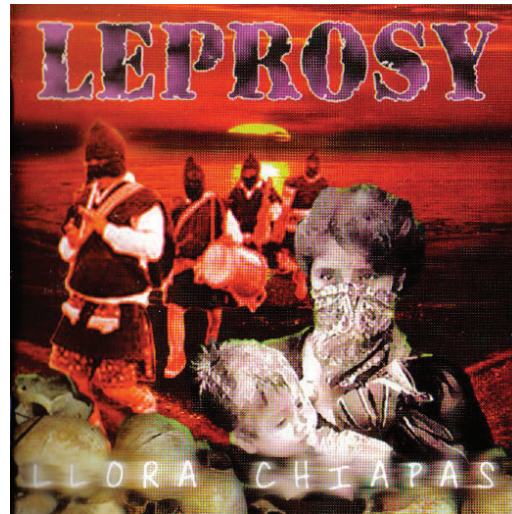


Figure 2. Cover artwork for the album *Llora Chiapas* by the Mexican band *Leprosy*.

Songs like “*Residentes Olvidados*” (Forgotten Residents) and “*A Tomar las Armas*” (Take up Arms) make the album one of the most politically-charged in Mexican metal history. The lyrics position the listener as a witness to the Chiapas conflict, and proceed to inform him/her about the origins of the situation, explain the logic behind the armed movement, and situate it as a reaction to the oppression on the part of the Mexican State. Although some listeners may feel the album to be too political, it is not surprising for those who know the history of the band’s leader, Alberto Pimentel. He had previously addressed Mexico’s politics via the historically important band *Transmetal* with albums like “*México Bárbaro*” (Barbaric México) (*Transmetal*). *Leprosy*’s contribution to Mexican metal stands as vitally important in bridging reflections on neoliberal politics, indigenous oppression, and armed resistance. In this context, the band uses the death of a community as a reflexive strategy on neoliberal politics. It also highlights death (of the oppressors) as a strategy of resistance.

Song: Llora Chiapas
Album: Llora Chiapas
Band: Leprosy (México)
Year: 1998

Llora Chiapas
 Llave sangre

Llora Chiapas
Llueve sangre

Campesinos huyendo,
niños hambrientos.
Una madre sufriendo
se siembra el desconcierto.
Zapatistas vivos,
fundidos en sombras.
Luchan por la causa
de un pueblo olvidado.

La Iglesia media
la paz entre hermanos
ni el obispado para el tornado.

Un hombre aferrado
su nombre es Marcos.
Lucha por los hijos
que dios ha olvidado.

Pedazo de patria
te están pisoteando.
Un pueblo olvidado
es Chiapas llorando.

Llora Chiapas
Llueve sangre
Llora Chiapas
Llueve sangre

Nuestros indios
han sido olvidados.
Levanta la siembra
que se ha cosechado.
El odio y la muerte
es el resultado
de un pueblo que sufre,
de un pueblo olvidado.

Llueve sangre en Chiapas.
Llueve sangre en Chiapas.

Llueve sangre en Chiapas.
Llueve sangre en Chiapas.

(Chiapas cries
It rains blood
Chiapas cries
It rains blood

Peasants fleeing,
children starving.
A mother suffering
bewilderment is sown.

Living Zapatists
cast in shadows.
They fight for the cause
of a forgotten people.

The Church negotiates
peace amongst brothers
but not even they can stop this tornado.

A man stands strong
his name is Marcos.
He fights for the children
that god has forgotten.

Piece of homeland
you are being stepped on.
A forgotten people
is Chiapas crying.

Chiapas cries
It rains blood
Chiapas cries
It rains blood

Our Indians
have been forgotten.
Harvest the land
that has been sown.

Hate and death
are the result
of a people that suffer,
of a forgotten people.

Chiapas cries
It rains blood
Chiapas cries
It rains blood)

Leprosy is an important example through which we can understand how the colonial categorization and devaluation of indigenous populations in Mexico remain alive today. Most importantly, they chose to evidence the negative implications of coloniality from a different perspective by highlighting strategies of resistance that garnered international attention. *Leprosy* is one of the many instances in Latin American metal in which those under the effects of coloniality are presented, not merely as victims, but as actors capable of offering resistance.

Indigenous Groups and Death – Puerto Rico

A third example of how metal music in Latin America has challenged coloniality can be found in the Caribbean, specifically on the island of Puerto Rico. The Island has been a colony for more than 500 years, first under Spain and then under the United States of America. In 1898, the United States took control of the Island as part of the spoils of the Spanish American War. Even today, Puerto Rico is a non-incorporated territory of the United States, and Congress holds complete power over the Island and its people (Meléndez and Meléndez). Resistance to the colonial experience in Puerto Rico can be found in many instances of its cultural life, even if that resistance does not necessarily translate to political activism.

In this setting, metal music has placed attention on the effects of colonialism on the indigenous populations of the Americas. Specifically, the Puerto Rican band *Dantesco* made a lyrical and visual contribution to the reflection on the extermination of these indigenous populations in their 2013 full-length album entitled “We Don’t Fear your God” (Dantesco). The album’s titular song (see excerpt below) is sung from the perspective of an indigenous group that is describing its battles with the invading Spanish conquistadors. The song stresses the indigenous groups’ links to the land and their banding together to fight the incoming invaders. The song positions the indigenous groups as victors in this

endeavor, having won every battle against the conquistadors. Although we are aware that this is historically inaccurate, the song places the listener in an interesting position as it highlights the indigenous perspective in this plight. This is important for decolonial reflections, as most historical accounts of what happened in the Americas have been told from the perspective of the colonizers., thus, neglecting to understand how the local people may have felt upon winning battles against them. The lyrics of the song are important as they outright challenge coloniality while positioning the audience in the mind of the resisting colonized subject.

The album's artwork is equally telling as it shows an indigenous warrior cutting the head off a Spanish colonizer (See figure 3).



Figure 3. Cover artwork for the album *We Don't Fear Your God* by the Puerto Rican band *Dantesco*.

The use of death as a visual strategy is key here as it positions the relation between the colonized and the colonizer as a non-negotiable space. The former must die violently in order for justice to prevail. Death as a strategy for critical reflection towards colonization has been previously used in Puerto Rico's folklore. For example, a conversation with locals will easily reveal their knowledge about Salcedo's legend in which natives drown a Spanish colonizer in a river to prove he was not a god. They wait for three days next to his dead body to make sure he does not come back to life, echoing the Christian belief that their messiah resuscitated three days

after his death. Death once again is positioned as a strategy to challenge the colonizer.

The album's artwork is also telling in that it used the death of the colonizer as a visual strategy, but does so in a way that distances the reflection from the Caribbean context. The protagonist's dress code and location are closer to a representation of the Incas, who lived in what we now know as Peru, rather than the Taínos in the Caribbean. This is an important feature of the album as it links decolonial reflection in the Caribbean to a wider debate that incorporates Latin America as a region. In this sense *Dantesco*, while creating metal from the Caribbean setting, successfully mirror their critique of the colonial experience on a larger region of Latin America. It seems like the band is telling its audience that the colonial experience is common in Latin America, echoing the calls for unity of the tribes in the songs lyrics.

Song: We don't Fear your God

Album: We don't Fear your God

Band: Dantesco (Puerto Rico)

Year: 2013

From the beginning when the serpent was young
we raised and fed this land.
Tribes from the east and clans from the north
emerged from nations collide.
Sent by our gods, followed by the light
born the children of the sun.
Centuries passed, conquerors came
and every battle we won.

Sunrise
Our eyes
Our hearts - We don't fear your god
We came
From far
Up high - We don't fear your god
With blood
With fire
Sacrifice - We don't fear your god

You came
You'll die
By our hand - We don't fear your god

Just like our previous example in Mexico (*Leprosy*), Puerto Rico's *Dantesco* proposes an important reflection on resistance to coloniality, albeit one based on distant historical events. Although seemingly unconnected to current events on the Island, the murder of a Spanish conquistador at the hands of a local indigenous figure is not only used to elicit a reflection about the past, but rather to evince the continuity between that oppressive history and today's lived events. Puerto Rico, as a current colonial setting, will need many such reflections in order to challenge its current political status.

The Death of Trust / Moving Forward - Argentina

We would like to highlight a fourth and final way in which metal in Latin America has used the concept of death to challenge coloniality. This example is not related to the physical death of individuals, governments, or nature. It encompasses the death of an idea; specifically, the death of trust among individuals which is so very common as a consequence of the colonial experience.

Argentinian folk metal band *Arraigó* addresses this subject matter in their full-length album *Fronteras y Horizontes* (Arraigó). In their output, there is a clear integration of local traditional folklore music and metal arrangements, thus linking Argentinian sounds to more global metal aesthetics. The concept album deals loosely with the tension between the local and the foreign, and the latter's usually exploitative relation (See figure 4).

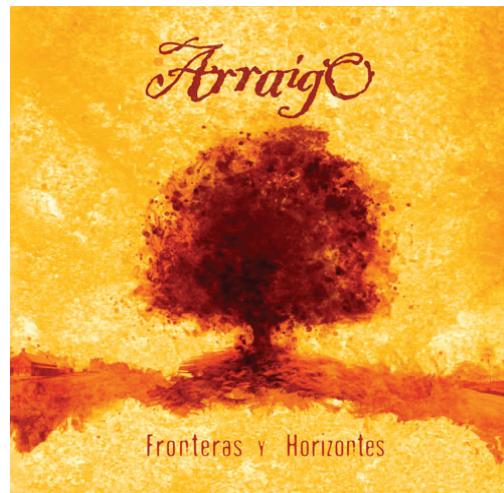


Figure 4. Cover artwork for the album *Fronteras y Horizontes* by the Argentinian band *Arraigó*.

The band concentrates much of their lyrical content on the need to develop new forms of being within Argentina to provide a better future for the new generation of children. It is no coincidence then that the album continually uses the tree as a metaphor for having deep roots but simultaneously branching out to the new.

The song *Vidala para que Sigas* is particularly poignant and addresses one of the many challenges of the colonial experience: particularly, the collaboration of other local people in the exploitation of the colonized. The song starts with the singer stating, “there is a gringo that buys us, and a local that sells us.” The message is particularly strong as it echoes colonial literature that captures how some sectors of the local population will end up accepting colonization as a positive experience and collaborate with the colonial entity to continue the existing patterns of oppression. This concern over the lack of trust towards other local people needs to be understood in light of Argentina’s political history.

The lack of trust between locals echoes the harsh experiences of people during the dictatorship (1976–1983). The Argentinian experience with dictatorship is closely linked to the United States’ involvement throughout Latin America during the same period. Leaders of the military dictatorship wiped out many left-oriented protestors that were perceived as a threat. Their small children were given to military leaders to raise as their own (Cepeda). The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo movement would bring international attention to the disappearance of their children (Borland; Egan). Later, the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo movement would make great efforts to find their grandsons and granddaughters, an effort that is still active today in Argentina. These experiences of disappearance and treason carried out by other Argentinians is a strong source of the mistrust that still exists today among many in the country. Even today, issues of impunity are widely discussed, as some of the responsible parties were never brought to justice (Pizarro and Wittebroodt).

The fracturing of trust among those embedded within such power dynamics is an important driving force of the idea of death in *Arraigo*’s work; but it is not the last word the band has for its audience. The song continues to highlight the importance of not fearing death in order to pave new ways for the younger generation to follow. “I have no fear of death and cling to life” rings through the song as an enthusiastic cry for hope. Ending, thus, in a more optimistic note regarding the future of the country’s youth after having surpassed the lack of trust between local people, and therefore having challenged the colonial agenda.

Pablo Trangone, *Arraigo's* singer and main lyricist, explained the role of metal in challenging the historical mechanism of oppression in Argentina and Latin America. Addressing subject matters which have been neglected within the genre is an important part of this agenda. In an interview, he mentioned the following:

Cantamos sobre las clases sociales que hacen preguntas a las cuales nadie quiere responder . . . En nuestra opinión, nuestro género (el metal) debe examinar esas preguntas. Debería buscar conexiones con sus orígenes, al menos a sus orígenes latinoamericanos. No se trata de entretener a un público. Eso lo hacemos claro en nuestros conciertos. ‘No estamos aquí para entretener’. Estamos aquí para proponer nuevas preguntas; para sanarnos mutuamente en este encuentro. (. . .) Necesitamos preguntas y expresiones latinoamericanas que ayuden a abordar problemas latinoamericanos. El metal mayormente reside en la sombra de lo que alguna vez fue. Nosotros lo traemos aquí tanto geográfica como históricamente. Como practicantes de este género musical debemos plantear nuevas preguntas que cuestionen las respuestas que siempre se nos han dado.

(We sing about social classes that ask questions that no one wants to answer . . . We believe that our genre (metal) should address those questions. It should connect its origins, at least its Latin American origins. It's not about entertaining people. We state that in our concerts. ‘We are not here to entertain’. We are here to propose new questions; to heal each other in this encounter. (. . .) We need Latin American expressions and questions for Latin American problems. Metal usually lives in the shadow of what it was. We bring it here both geographically and historically. As a musical genre, we need to have new questions for the usual answers).

Song: Vidala para que Sigas

Album: Fronteras y Horizontes

Band: Arraigo (Argentina)

Year: 2012

Hay un gringo que nos compra,
hay un criollo que nos vende.

Piedra libre pa' mis cumpas,
detrás la sombra, la muerte.

Tengo un árbol de esperanzas,
que no me suelta la mano.
Yo voy sembrando un camino,
pa' que florezcan los changos.

Pena que sin saber donde,
viaja con el hombre que solía ser.
Porque la muerte es mentira,
y es la vida misma mi herida.

Noches y noches los caminos,
y en tu mirada tristemente,
siempre los mismos caminos,
ante la mirada de nadie.

No tengo miedo a morir y me planto a la vida.
Las heridas no se curan con tanto vino encima.
Voy contagiando esta pena que causa alegría.
Héroes fueron paridos en mi juventud suicida,
para estar despierto.

Noches y noches los caminos,
y en tu mirada tristemente,
siempre los mismos caminos,
ante la mirada de nadie.

No tengo miedo a morir y me planto a la vida.
Las heridas no se curan con tanto vino encima.
Darse cuenta cuando algo es mas que todo.
Sigo y sigo empujando.
Vidaleando pa' que sigas.

Hay un gringo que nos compra,
hay un criollo que nos vende,
Piedra libre pa' mis cumpas,
detrás la sombra la muerte.

Un corazón de tacuara,
 espera no nos cansemos.
 Quien no se aferra a la vida,
 no sabe lo que es el miedo.

Tengo un árbol de esperanza,
 que no me suelta la mano.
 Yo voy sembrando un camino,
 pa' que florezcan los changos.

(There's a gringo who buys us,
 there's a local who sells us.
 I absolve my friends from the death
 that lies behind the shadows in this game of life.

I have a tree full of hope,
 which won't let go of me.
 I sow a path as I go,
 so that the young may bloom.

What sorrows grow
 from accompanying the man I used to be.
 Because death is a lie,
 and life itself is my wound.

Night after night, new roads,
 but before your eyes, sadly,
 always the same ones,
 lost before empty stares.

I meet life head on because
 I don't fear dying.
 Wounds can never heal if we're drunk on too much wine.
 I spread a sorrow that gives rise
 to contentment.
 Heroes spawned from
 my reckless youth,
 so that I could remain awake.

Night after night, new roads,
 but before your eyes, sadly,

always the same ones,
lost before empty stares.

I meet life head on because
I don't fear dying.
Wounds can never heal if we're drunk on
too much wine.
Recognize when something is greater than everything.
I forge ahead,
singing my folk song so you can carry on.

There's a gringo who buys us,
there's a creole who sells us.
I absolve my friends from the death
that lies behind the shadows in this game of life.

Bend, but never break.
Hold on, let's not give in.
Those that don't cling on to life,
never know fear.

I have a tree full of hope,
which won't let go of me.
I sow a path as I go,
so that the young may bloom.)

Arraigo's reflection on the death of trust is probably one of the most significant interventions in trying to understand coloniality in current Latin America. Previous experiences of oppression and violence, linked to the region's colonial past and present, need to be understood as events that surpass the traditional colonized/colonizer divide. Coloniality is strategically advantageous for those that have historically oppressed. But these strategic advantages have similarly backfired when local entities reproduce them, resulting in similar disastrous consequences for the oppressed. In this sense coloniality is internalized by the local and used as another mechanism of oppression, rather than as a motivator for critical questioning and implementation of decolonial strategies. Even though that reflection can seem nihilistic, *Arraigo* concentrates on issues of hope for the next generation, with the confidence that future Argentinians and Latin Americans will understand and challenge the effects of coloniality.

Conclusion

In this contribution to this special edition focusing on the “Apocalyptic Imagination in the Hispanic World,” we have aimed to examine how metal in Latin America has incorporated a critique of coloniality into its music, imagery, and lyrics. We have meant to do so via an examination of the lyrical content of specific metal albums and interviews with the musicians that gestated them in four countries of the region. An examination of the examples provided should clarify for readers three main issues, which we wish to highlight.

First, although metal fans and academics usually strive to avoid discussion of politics within metal music (with clear exceptions, of course), it is simply impossible to reflect on Latin American metal and isolate it from the political background in which it emerged. We would argue that any discussion about metal in the region that neglects to incorporate the political context that influenced the music, and which later the music criticized, will fall short in providing a truly comprehensive picture of metal in Latin America. Silencing a discussion about politics in Latin American metal is equivalent to having local fans and musicians sanitize their historical background. Scholars engaged in metal music studies should avoid doing so at all costs.

Second, metal music’s thematic interest in the darker side of the human experience has allowed Latin American metal fans to both reflect on their countries’ political histories and simultaneously position themselves as a reflexive and critical force within their respective contexts. The metaphorical use of death as a thematic pattern in lyrics and images allows metal fans to scrutinize their context, which has been riddled with experiences of coloniality, and continues to be today. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to newer bands that continue to reflect on such matters as important evidence of how coloniality has morphed through time and remains an oppressive force in the region.

Third, and probably most important, scholarly activity on the relation between metal and coloniality in Latin America should be aware that some literature addressing the matter of music and locality has characterized this relation as an idealization of these scenarios. Specifically, literature exploring the link between music and the local (nations in particular) has described this process as a “romanticization of the local as inherently ‘subversive,’ ‘oppositional,’ and ‘authentic’” (Biddle and Knights 3). Although this may ring true for some musical productions, it should not serve to deny that metal music in the context of Latin America has served as a dialogue between communities that have faced colonial oppression (in its many forms). Far from romanticism, this dialogue has fostered a profound understanding of their context,

history, and mechanisms of oppression; thus, it has echoed Paulo Freire's call for dialogue as a strategy of resistance (Freire).

Although scholarly work on popular music has previously addressed the subject of coloniality (Lovesey), rarely has metal music been included in such reflections. This absence of scholarly work on metal's role in describing and challenging coloniality needs to be addressed, as this musical genre has many contributions to make to a critical assessment of coloniality throughout the world. Work towards this direction has begun to emerge and will surely continue to do so as metal scholars describe their contexts in detail (Thibodeau; Varas and Mendoza). Emerging scholarly work on the link between coloniality and metal music would be wise in examining how researchers in other fields are richly describing things like dress (Negrón-Muntaner) and art (Negrón-Muntaner and Ramirez) as forms of resistance to oppression. Just as important, metal music in the region has a role to play beyond entertainment. It has been used as a powerful tool in meditations on coloniality and has the potential to serve as an effective tool in any future decolonial dialogue for those who have had access to this musical output or those willing to put in the work and have a look.

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