In the mid 1990s, the Mexican rock band Café Tacvba was one of the most promising up and coming Latin American acts. The band’s third album, *Avalancha de éxitos* (1996), their first recording to appear on Billboard charts (reaching No. 12 on the Latin Pop count), presented a collection of covers that propelled them into enormous popularity throughout the Americas. The album epitomized the kitschy character of the band’s musical style, which freely mixed ska, bolero, heavy metal, ranchera, hip hop, balada, punk, huapango, and electronic idioms. However, instead of following this production with an album that repeated the formula of their earlier success, Café Tacvba presented their label, Warner Music Mexico, with a record of highly experimental music that defied the conventions of Rock en Español, the transnational marketing strategy that had paved the way for their commercial success. The album, *Revés*, was a collection of instrumental tracks that took familiar sounds from a variety of musical styles, transformed them, and recontextualized them away from their traditional forms. The band avoided identifying these tracks with standard titles, referring to them by numbers, letters, or even grammatical symbols. The result was a highly unconventional album that defied Warner’s marketing channels and Rock en Español. The executives at Warner cut a deal with the members of the band, allowing the recording to be distributed only as part of a double feature that included also, *Yo soy*, a second album conformed by songs similar in style to those from their first three recordings.

Released in 1999, *Revés/Yo soy* did not achieve the level of commercial success of the band’s previous productions. Although not unanimously praised, it quickly became a cult album and its conceptual character allowed Café Tacvba to acquire an artistic aura that transcended their status as Latin pop stars. For some fans of Rock en Español the experimental sounds of *Revés/Yo soy* were revolutionary; they oozed “a mixture of spontaneity and inventiveness that is rarely seen” and “redefined where pop music’s potential really lies.”

In this article, we propose a thick description of the album and the video that accompanied it under the light of critical art theory. Based on Viktor Shklovsky’s notion of *ostranenie* (defamiliarization or estrangement), we explore the ways in which Café Tacvba’s sonic and stylistic experimentation in *Revés/Yo soy* reverses the audiences’ listening experience and forces them to hear familiar sounds from the perspective of the Other. In his seminal article “Art as Technique” (1917), Shklovsky proposes that the goal of art is to turn familiar into unfamiliar objects in order to lengthen aesthetic perception since aesthetic perception is the end of art. Although Shklovsky’s work has been influential in literary studies and science fiction, it has not yet found a place within music or sound studies; engaging it allows us to argue that, by transforming and decontextualizing sounds and musical styles that mainstream audiences connect to specific traditional practices, Café Tacvba allows listeners to hear the fantastic possibilities of everyday sounds, thus lengthening their aesthetic horizon.

The notion of estrangement is also illuminating in exploring the subversive character of *Revés/Yo soy* as an artifact generated within globalized marketing networks.
In order to achieve commercial success, familiarity and the fulfillment of sonic expectations and even stereotypes are essential to neoliberal globalized music market strategies. Café Tacvba’s *Revés/Yo soy* as estrangement can be understood as a direct attack on these notions as it makes something unexpected out of the sounds that neoliberalism requires from a Mexican band in order to succeed in a market that both emphasizes and tames Otherness for the benefit of global audiences. Earlier albums by the band had dealt with these expectations in more ludic ways, making the sounds of expectation into nostalgic or kitsch experiences (“María” from *Café Tacvba* [1992], “La ingrata”, from *Re* [1994], or “Ojalá que llueva café” from *Avalancha de éxitos*). The subversive character of *Revés/Yo soy* lies in its challenge to the levels of expectation that the global entertainment industry placed on a band that was an icon of the Rock en Español marketing strategy.