

TROUBLING THE BORDER: GLOBAL POETIC TRANS* DISLOCATIONS

BONNIE REID

bonnie.reid1@gmail.com

Bonnie Reid is a poet who lives in Naarm/Melbourne and has recently completed a PhD in Creative Writing at Monash University. Their research focuses on trans poetry and poetics relating to polyvocality, somatic ritual, drone warfare, and bodily and national borders. Their writing has been published in *Women: A Cultural Review*, *Susan/The Journal*, *Verge* and *Cordite*.

KEYWORDS

artivism, geolocate technology, transgender, transborder, transpoetics, code poetry

PUBLICATION DATE

Issue 10, December 18, 2020

HOW TO CITE

Bonnie Reid. "Troubling the Border: Global Poetic Trans* Dislocations."
On_Culture: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture 10 (2020). <<http://geb.uni-giessen.de/geb/volltexte/2020/15789/>>.

Permalink URL: <<http://geb.uni-giessen.de/geb/volltexte/2020/15789/>>

URN: <urn:nbn:de:hebis:26-opus-157890>



Troubling the Border: Global Poetic Trans* Dislocations

Abstract

This essay considers, through analysis of two interrelated art projects, the roles that technology and art play in the metaphors that serve, both imaginatively and literally, to form, maintain, surveil, and dissolve borders. The first, the Transborder Immigrant Tool, is a poetic and geo-locative project by artist collective Electronic Disturbance Theatre 2.0 (EDT 2.0). The Tool was designed to aid migrants crossing the US-Mexico border as a “last mile safety device,” by leading users to water caches in the desert and playing audio files of desert survival poetry. The second is a related poetry series by trans* poet and artist Micha Cárdenas (a member of EDT 2.0), exploring the possible dislocations of “unexecutable code poetry” to unpack the way each of these poetic projects form a figuration of transness as/at a border crossing or, indeed, a border dissolving. Both of these projects subvert the metaphors and applications of global positioning (GPS) technology to question the fixities of national and bodily borders. This essay considers how and to what extent the ‘trans’ of ‘transborder’ might be coterminous or conversant with the ‘trans’ of ‘transgender,’ as well as how ‘trans*’ might be wielded conceptually to unpack the functions and slippages of the metaphors that produce and maintain borders of all kinds.

1 Introduction

This essay was originally conceptualized as a part of a larger PhD project on transpoetics. Therein, I conceived of transpoetics as describing poetry and other forms of creative practice committed to the exploration and critique of the strictures through which bodies, personhood, and animacy¹ (or proximity to the animate) are recognized and organized. In this sense, transpoetics is fundamentally a mode of becoming, and an investment in the processual, not the teleological. Understanding ‘trans*’ as a prefix is fundamental to the unfolding of transpoetics in my doctoral research, as is the function of the asterisk attached to ‘trans.’ This conceptualization of ‘trans*’ as a prefix is indebted to the scholarship of Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah, Lisa Jean Moore, Eva Hayward, Jami Weinstein, and Abraham Weil.² ‘Trans*’ poetry and transpoetics include the poetry and poetics of certain forms of trans* gender expression. The asterisk attached to ‘trans,’ however, performs an important dual task which expands the meaningfulness of ‘trans.’ To those for whom ‘trans’ has some traction in expressing a felt sense of gendered being or becoming, the asterisk indicates the widest possible reaches of this term, not only transgender, transsexual, trans woman, or trans man etc. This sense of trans*, of course, cannot presume to describe non-Western forms of gender variance. But the asterisk attached to trans also foregrounds ‘trans’ as a prefix with imminent and

profuse applications extending beyond expressions of gender. It is with this latter understanding of trans* as a prefix of becomings that I consider how ‘transborder’ might be conversant with ‘transgender.’ This essay can be understood as a suffixial materialization of the prehensions of trans*.³ In particular, through discussion of the Transborder Immigrant Tool, a poetic and geo-locative project by artist collective Electronic Disturbance Theatre 2.0, and a related poetry series by trans* poet and artist Micha Cárdenas (who is also a member of EDT 2.0) I consider the ‘transbordering’ potential that arises at the meeting point of source code and poetry. This takes the forms both of executable code and what Roopika Risam has called “unexecutable code poetry.”⁴ These executable and unexecutable poetic projects function as forms that imagine the concepts of a transborder or a “SoftBody” as possible alternatives to the hard lines of national borders and gender binaries. My discussion first addresses the locative media performance device, Transborder Immigrant Tool, which mobilizes code as poetry and poetry as code as an articulation of transborder/transnational hospitality via practical aid in a life or death scenario and an imaginative reorientation of the US-Mexico Border. Following this, I look at Micha Cárdenas’s unexecutable code poetry from *Transborder Immigrant Tool Series*, 2011, as a response to and biographical extension of her work on the Transborder Immigrant Tool.

2_ The Border

The first and the third world. The border. El bordo. Hell. The other part of the other side. The other side of the other side. The *This* side of the *Other* side. The happy world of disenchantment.

– Sayak Valencia⁵

“The U.S.-Mexico border,” writes Gloria Anzaldúa, “es una herida abierta⁶ where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds.”⁷ Movement of people back and forth across this border has had a bloody and geographically shifting history. Despite its increasingly fixed, strict, and violent policing by the US government, it was not until 1846 that the US claimed the territories now called Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and California after invading and occupying Mexico.⁸ Since then, the US has continued to fortify and re-strategize its border security policies. The signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 followed the implementation under Bill Clinton’s presidency of “Operation Gatekeeper” and “Operation Hold the

Line,” which “profoundly shifted Mexico-to-U.S. migrants’ border crossing patterns.”⁹ These operations inaugurated a startling new era of border-policing strategy which makes use of the harsh natural landscape of “[m]ountains, deserts, lakes, rivers and valleys”¹⁰ along the US-Mexico border. As the “Border Patrol Strategic Plan 1994 and Beyond” states:

The Border Patrol will improve control of the border by implementing a strategy of ‘prevention through deterrence.’ The Border Patrol will achieve the goals of its strategy by bringing a decisive number of enforcement resources to bear in each major entry corridor.¹¹

[...]

The prediction is that with traditional entry and smuggling routes disrupted, illegal traffic will be deterred, or forced over more hostile terrain, less suited for crossing and more suited for enforcement.¹²

The terrain described here as “less suited for crossing” is the same terrain described earlier on page two of the “Strategic Plan” as “natural barriers to passage,” “uninhabited expanses of land and sea” in which “illegal entrants” “can find themselves in mortal danger.”¹³ In other words, Border Patrol knowingly pushes migrants and asylum seekers from major crossing areas such as “Baja California-California to the alternately treacherous, increasingly narco-driven, intemperate zones of Sonora-Arizona’s ‘devil’s highway.’”¹⁴

Elsewhere in the Strategic Plan, Border Patrol describes “The Vision”¹⁵ of border security: “The U.S. Border Patrol will control the borders of the United States between the ports of entry, restoring our Nation’s confidence in the integrity of the border.”¹⁶ For Anzaldúa “[a] borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition.”¹⁷ By contrast, the restoration of US national confidence — central to the vision of border security — relies on the notion of a border’s fixity. This is a confidence founded upon the assumption that with enough force and surveillance the border will remain unchanged like a wall of concrete and steel (though of course, with time, even these disappear). The Border Patrol’s emphasis on restoration of confidence has its own emotional residue, though one that would deny the “unnaturalness” of the boundary it seeks to fortify. The appeal to restoration unwittingly suggests the border’s unnaturalness as a colonizing imposition on the land and people who lived and live there, and simultaneously acknowledges the way in which the border itself is a distinction formed by human affect and sociality, as opposed to the reality of a physical, externally imposed

division of land, a point which I will return to later. The concern with “the integrity of the border” has intensified in the years since 9/11 and under US President Donald Trump’s inflammatory 2016 election rhetoric, in which he cast the movement north of Mexican and South American migrants and asylum seekers as an “invasion.” Analyzing the “dissipated” sense of security regarding US National borders post-9/11, Areilla Azoulay argues for the concept of the “super-cop” as a central metaphor of American exceptionalism, wherein the US sees itself as defender “not only of America and its client states but also the boundaries and lines of separation between the First World and the Second (communist) and Third Worlds.”¹⁸ As Azoulay suggests, the ‘First World’ plays the “enlightened role of reporting and documenting the horrors” of the ‘Third World’ while obfuscating the ‘First World’s’ own economic and identity-forming investment in such horrors, which bolster a sense of security by producing a violent ‘outside.’ With the event of 9/11:

This division of labor between the place of horror, namely the Third World, and the site of its representation, namely the First World [...] dissipated [...] It dissipated not because terrorists succeeded in crossing the border and striking at the heart of New York and Washington, exposing the vulnerability of the boundary, but exactly the other way around: because the attack exposed the fact that there is no boundary, or at the very least that the existing boundary is discontinuous and unstable.¹⁹

Importantly, it was alongside the establishment of NAFTA that “Operation Gatekeeper” and subsequent border security measures were implemented, and while these strategies sought and seek to cease the flow of migrants and asylum seekers, NAFTA itself ensures the steady flow of goods and services north across the border. Analyzing the flow of capital between the US and Mexico, contextualized on a globalized scale as what she calls “Gore Capitalism,”²⁰ Sayak Valencia argues that the flow of products, legal and illegal, from Mexico toward the US market drives the increase of poverty and violence in Mexico. This in turn drives the need for passage north across the border to escape these life-threatening conditions — thus the flow of people ‘legally’ and ‘illegally’ north across the border results directly from agreements like NAFTA, where the US market outsources its goods production without attention to the conditions that this outsourcing produces (or, arguably, very much *with* attention to these conditions). Because the US market wants cheap goods and labor, its approach to the flow across the border of people seeking asylum is one of incarceration, death, and deportation, rather than an effort to stem the demand that goods be produced cheaply, thus fomenting poor

and precarious working conditions within Mexico. As Ricardo Dominguez has pointed out, “[a] Coca Cola can has more rights of protection in the flow across borders than the people who make the can, who fill the can, and pack the cans.”²¹ Dominguez calls for a de/(re)territorialization of the border as “transborder,” a state of rights that sees “an equation wherein the equality of commodities would have a direct impact on the equality of the individuals who are the very flows of production [at/across the border].”²² From this critique of the valuation of commodities over people and their quality of life, the Transborder Immigrant Tool was born. As a tool of electronic civil disobedience, the project turns one of “capitalism’s most widespread tools” — GPS locative media — “against [its] makers,” “expos[ing] the disappearance of the boundary”²³ as it is imagined in the United States.

3_ The Tool

The Transborder Immigrant Tool (TBT) is a project designed by “artist”²⁴ collective Electronic Disturbance Theater 2.0/b.a.n.g. lab (EDT 2.0), headed by Ricardo Dominguez and including Micha Cárdenas, Elle Mehrmand, Brett Stalbaum, and Amy Sara Carroll in response to this historical and ongoing violence inherent to the strict policing of the US-Mexico Border. The tool is a performative and practical form of electronic civil disobedience and “a last mile safety device designed to aid the disoriented of any nationality in a desert environment.”²⁵ Specifically, the project comprises navigational code and poetry, executable in cheap GPS-enabled mobile phones. When the mobile device is initiated, it leads the user to nearby water caches maintained by non-profits Border Angels and Water Station Inc. in the desert space of the US-Mexico Border (predominantly in the Sonora-Arizona desert), via an easy-to-use compass interface as well as haptic prompts (vibration) to warn and motivate the user.

When in use, the Tool’s code, designed by Brett Stalbaum and Jason Najarro, also sporadically initiates audio poetry files to play aloud. There are twenty-four poems — one for each hour of the day²⁶ — called “The Desert Survival Series/ La Serie de Sobrevivencia del Desierto”²⁷ written by Amy Sara Carroll and read by various members of the collective in English and Spanish. The TBT project is built upon “a universal common law of the rights of safe passage.”²⁸ The mobile devices — intended for distribution across the border to assist undocumented migrants, dying of thirst or dangerously disoriented, in their attempts to cross the desert north into the US — function as

a hand extended in hospitality, with direction to water as bodily sustenance, and the auditory poems as “poetic sustenance.”²⁹ As Ricardo Dominguez has explained in interview, though the Tool is designed to provide aid in crisis, the members of the collective are themselves “not activists, we are artists. Our interest is not GPS global positioning systems but global poetic systems.”³⁰ The hybridization of “poetry-becoming-code/code-becoming-poetry”³¹ that occurs in the execution of the device is central to understanding the Tool as a performative work as much as it is an aid in a life or death situation: what Amy Sara Carroll has described as an “aesthetic intervention.”³² It is an artwork of electronic civil disobedience that cites itself in a lineage of hacktivism, eco-poetics, performance art, walking methodologies (“one can see the trip across the border as a durational walking art piece”),³³ and transpoetics.

4_Desert Survival Poetry

Amy Sara Carroll’s “Desert Survival Series” is available to read in *Transborder Immigrant Tool/La herramienta transfronteriza para inmigrantes*,³⁴ a work published by EDT 2.0 in 2014, which compiles the code of TBT with the poetry in a print format. The code and poetry are also accompanied by a statement from Carroll, “Of Eco-poetics and Dislocative Media,”³⁵ which appears in English and is translated into Spanish by Natasha Hakimi Zapata. In it, Carroll foregrounds the formation of her poetry for the Tool as it moved through a central question that she posed to herself: “[w]hat would I want from a poem in the desert? Would I want a poem at all?”³⁶ Initially struggling with the poems she had written for the Tool, sensing they “functioned best in museum, gallery and university contexts”³⁷ — as the Tool itself, programmed into mobile phone devices, was initially displayed in gallery and museum spaces — Carroll “turned to texts about desert survival: handbooks, military manuals, a guide for border-crossers briefly distributed by the Mexican government.”³⁸

In writing the TBT’s survival poetry, Carroll acknowledges the hubris of the moment where art meets the substance of life and death, an acknowledgment which appears in one of the desert survival poems: “In matters of life or death, most would contend, ‘Taste is relative.’ (Such is the fate of poetry as artifice, art, or sustenance — a non-issue if one cannot drink, eat, or breathe, even if ‘poetry is not a luxury.’)”³⁹ Carroll cites Leonard Schwartz’s observations on Chilean writer Raúl Zurita’s “visionary po-

etics” at the beginning of her statement as a way to frame the understanding of ecopoetics from which her poetry proceeds.⁴⁰ Schwartz describes Zurita’s incorporation of the murdered and “Disappeared” into his account of mountain ranges and an ocean as “eco-poetry in which the space between nature and history is closed up.” From this framing, Carroll too acknowledges that the bodies of those who have died in attempting the border crossing are a part of the ecology of the desert, and that these deaths foreground the historical, affective territory of the border and its deadly enforcement by the US government. Carroll is aware that the conditions of the desert necessitate a “survival poetry” over and above poetry that is more at home in a gallery, museum or university space. The hostility of the desert’s conditions limits the range of the TBT’s locative hospitality and foregrounds it as “ideologically neutral”⁴¹ to the presence of all human life.

Nevertheless, the function of these poems as sustenance resounds with the Tool’s foundational principle of hospitality. The cumulative survival advice that fills Carroll’s poems provides “soundscape competence”⁴² in the desert environment through mobile “sensory repertoires”⁴³ that the user carries with them (i.e. the mobile phones are fitted with TBT software which, when executed, plays the audio poetry). I borrow these terms, as one form of performative and critical walking methodology, from Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E. Truman’s research on sound walks, and particularly from their discussion of Ozgun Eylul Iscen’s sound walks, which “examine how immigrants translate sounds in a new environment through the sensory repertoires they have brought with them from other places.”⁴⁴ Soundscape competence reflects the level of clash between “previous sound habits and ways of knowing” and a new environment.⁴⁵ Of course, performance art and installation based on sound walks typically incorporates or reflects upon environmentally diegetic or ambient sounds, whereas Carroll’s “Desert Survival Series” as heard in a desert environment constitutes a non-diegetic intrusion into the soundscape of the desert, thus my use of “soundscape competence” registers a different meaning to the way it is employed by Iscen. In the face of the desert’s ubiquitous inhospitability, the Tool’s navigational and auditory poetic sustenance aims at providing a level of competency in traversing the same zone to which its technology is also a “newcomer.” The poems alert migrants to listen for avoidable dangers with attention to the diegetic sounds of the desert: the rattle of the Western Diamondback’s tail⁴⁶ or the hum of a killer beehive⁴⁷ while also filling the soundscape intermittently

with the sound of hospitality via “ideologically neutral” informational orientation to the space — though Carroll simultaneously complicates her own efforts toward this in her statement, asking rhetorically: “[i]s any writing ‘ideologically neutral?’”⁴⁸ This notion of the poetry’s aiming toward ideological neutrality is central to the Tool’s particular approach to hospitality, which I will elaborate upon later. The poems run through advice about following coyote and fox tracks to fresh water,⁴⁹ waiting out a sandstorm,⁵⁰ what to do if suffering heatstroke,⁵¹ the medicinal uses of the Joshua tree,⁵² walking in safe group formation over unsteady terrain,⁵³ avoiding flash floods,⁵⁴ keeping warm when sleeping in the desert at night⁵⁵ and more. Carroll also employs repetitive imagery of the landscape as a mnemonic-like memory aid for survival. Notice the “J-shape” that appears in these two poems as reminder of how other creatures survive the desert heat and as a means to recognize the safest species of cactus to drink from:

Climb or walk in the morning. Rest midday beneath creosote bush or mesquite, insulating yourself from the superheated ground. Remember — even the sidewinder hovercrafts, the bulk of its body above the scalding sand as it leaves its trademark J-shaped tracks across the desert dunes.⁵⁶

[...] Baseline rule: Only take the risk of eating or drinking cacti if the alternative you face is dying of thirst. Saguaro and organ poison. Punto. And, not all barrel cacti are created equal. To make matters worse, young saguaros easily could be mistaken for barrels. So, don’t just look for squat, rounded cacti; differentiate, think fishhook. J-shaped, outer “fishhook” spines, literally used by the Seri Indians for fishing, mark and distinguish the true rescue cactus from its peers. When you’ve found the right plant, cut off its top with a knife or sharp rock but, don’t expect to find a font of liquid. Center yourself, cut out a chunk of the whitish inner pulp from the cactus’ correspondent center. Chew it. Let the juice run down your throat. Spit out the pulp when you’ve sucked it dry. Don’t swallow the pithy fiber. Rest, digest [...]⁵⁷

By framing her poetry through Zurita’s eco-poetics that accounts for the bodies within a landscape, Carroll also registers the transcorporeality of transbordering such an inhospitable zone as the Sonoran desert. Specifically, how this environment, inflected by its personification as US border agent, affects and effects the material/experiential conditions of those whose bodies are trying to survive it. Noting how “[t]aste is relative” in the “matters of life or death,”⁵⁸ which the desert threatens, Carroll’s poetry calls the poem’s listener to align the body with the desert plant at the point at which consumption of cactus flesh-water for survival is absolutely necessary: “Center yourself, cut out a chunk of the whitish inner pulp from the cactus’ correspondent center.” The desert’s

harshness/inhospitality potentially transfigures the sense of taste as it transforms a person's proximity to death, as though a spatio-temporal transformation of the body at a cellular level takes place. Of course, the fluid may taste no less "vegetal"⁵⁹ and unpalatable, but the environment itself drives the body to act and consume in ways specific to its inhospitality. The TBT's mobile phones, then, are equivalent to "sensory repertoires" "brought [...] from other places," but which orient rather than disorient. This comes with the caveat that the Tool speaks to its user in English and Spanish, whereas not all theoretical users of the Tool would speak either language. Many people crossing and attempting the Mexico-US border are from Indigenous communities with distinct language groups, hence the Tool's navigational interface is designed to operate with an easy-to-use compass rather than via language-based instruction alone.

5_Inoperative Hospitality and the Right to Safe Passage

As stated by Dominguez in interviews and via numerous other EDT 2.0 publications regarding the Transborder Immigrant Tool, the project's ethical foundation developed from an unequivocal assumption of a universal common law of the right of safe passage. Louise Amoore and Alexandra Hall have been critical of this ethical stance. They write:

As critical legal scholar Costas Douzinas has put it, the 'man of the rights of man' appears 'without differentiation or distinction in his nakedness and simplicity, united with all others in an empty nature deprived of substantive characteristics.' Thus, the appearance and disappearance of the person at the border or in border spaces, absolutely critical to the border as theatre, is not thrown into question by such artistic modes. If human rights are conceived, instead, as particular and contingent struggles of recognition, the claim of the border crosser to cite themselves differently, to play themselves differently, becomes at least a possibility. [...]we are interested [...] in instances where the ethical response is not pre-programmed in advance.⁶⁰

Amoore and Hall argue that representation of the border crosser built on having the *right* to cross disallows their ability to "cite themselves differently,"⁶¹ that is, complexly and ambiguously. The critique that the Tool's execution of its ethical stance on human rights effectively strips the border crosser of "substantive characteristics"⁶² is an important and valid question to raise of the Tool's perhaps simplistic take up of human rights ethics. But this critique forgets the fact that the Tool was never distributed for its intended purpose. Glenn Beck's Fox News television program earned TBT the attention it later drew from Brian P. Bilbray, Duncan Hunter, and Durrell Issa, three members of the US Congress.⁶³ In his segment, Beck suggested that members of EDT 2.0 wanted

“the total collapse of the United States,”⁶⁴ and the broadcast directed viewers to an article suggesting the TBT would “Dissolve U.S.” with poetry.⁶⁵ This led to an investigation conducted against Electronic Disturbance Theatre 2.0 by the FBI office of Cybercrimes and the University of California in San Diego (UCSD),⁶⁶ who funded the project, ensuring that the Tool’s use never exceeded the artists’ own test-crossing which went from the US to Mexico in the Anza-Borrego Desert.⁶⁷ The heavy-handedness with which the Tool was legally constricted before it could be put to use is telling of the overwhelming “pre-deciding, pre-empting, and pre-targeting”⁶⁸ of ‘illegal’ border crossers in the name of supposed border ‘security’ and its enforcement. While Amoore and Hall call for border art that challenges this pre-deciding by questioning the “certainty and decidability” of the rights or the character of the border crosser, their critique, which refers to the “appearance and disappearance” of people at the border, fuels a theoretical query which, pressing as it is, nevertheless unburdens itself from the actual life or death scenario into which the Tool was designed to intervene. Arguably, within EDT 2.0’s unplanned and legally constricted withholding of the technology from people in actual need of safe passage across the border, a performative commentary appears — unpredictably — about the limited capacity of US citizens. That is, the Tool’s practical failure performs the lie of the actualization of a universal common law of rights to safe passage and with it the capacity of the citizen under current US State control to uphold or bestow such rights even as it imaginatively opens alternatives to the current s/State which may or may not one day be actualized.

This practical failure has significant ramifications for the meaning of hospitality enacted by the Tool. It unsettles the contradiction which Jacques Derrida found at the heart of the modern understanding of hospitality, which he described as follows:

[T]he formalization of a law of hospitality [...] violently imposes a contradiction on the very concept of hospitality in fixing a limit to it, in determining it: hospitality is certainly, necessarily, a right, a duty, an obligation, the *greeting* of the foreign other [*l’autre étranger*] as a friend but on the condition that the host, the *Wirt*, the one who receives, lodges or *gives asylum* remains the *patron*, the master of the household, on the condition that he maintains his own authority *in his own home* [...]⁶⁹

The fact that the TBT was blocked from distribution by the government of the “host country” is what allows the Tool to perform hospitality from a position other than host. It might be far more accurate to instead call this inoperative or unexecutable hospitality. The transborder conceptually rejects the binary inside/outside of the “threshold,”

which, according to Derrida by way of Kant, is inherent to hospitality as “the law of the household”⁷⁰ and which produces the hierarchical conditions in which host and guest interrelate. TBT’s notional failure at being placed in the hands of people who could make real use of it, coupled with EDT 2.0’s insistence that it is also an artwork, moves its gestural significance closer to non-hierarchical, anti-philanthropic hospitality. Indeed, that the Tool’s material, practical hospitality is itself reliant on a host⁷¹ — an approving US government, which it is refused — is, in part, what categorizes it as an artwork. Perhaps there is room for further distinction between the actualization of hospitality in a material sense versus a textual one, though I do not have the scope to address that here.

6_Transborder as Counter-Narrative

In this performative rejection of the binary of inside/outside and the border’s very fixity, the Transborder Immigrant Tool anchors itself to what Andrea Zeffiro has described as “its second historical coordinate: the future onto which praxis opens and that it will create.”⁷² Zeffiro argues for the TBT’s performative function as a counter-narrative to the US’s hegemonic production of the border as regulatory boundary. Citing Henri Lefebvre, Zeffiro points out that in “the dialectical relationship between spatial practice and representations of space”⁷³ a “differential space emerges”⁷⁴ via the TBT’s interruptive counter-narrative. This counter-narrative allows the givenness of the border to be brought into question. Amoore and Hall have similarly characterized the upkeep of border security as iterative ritual. They write:

Ritual is performed, but it is also performative in Judith Butler’s sense: the secular ritual of the post 9/11 border, with its proliferating security practices, precisely authorizes via repetitive, iterative acts that appear to offer scant possibility of alternative.⁷⁵

The iterative quality of the performative upkeep of the border via ritual is the point at which the rhetoric and processual patterning of gender transition comes into contact with border crossing. Indeed, Amoore and Hall cite Butler’s theory of gender performativity to speak to the border’s iterative quality. Perhaps then, where the “trans*” of transgender studies increasingly denaturalizes the notion of a natural body,⁷⁶ so too does the “trans*” of transborder exert pressure on the naturalness of the US-Mexico Border, or indeed the naturalness of any national border. To note this crossover is not to suggest in any simplified way that the border crossing or its subversion is always

like transition in a gendered, embodied sense, but to register the expansive applications of the transpoetic and the specific relation of the TBT to the writing and artistic practice, as well as the lived experience of, Micha Cárdenas, one of the members of EDT 2.0. This cross-over also attempts to think through the linkages in Cárdenas's poetry from *Transborder Immigrant Tool Series*, composed alongside her experience making the TBT. While being or rather becoming trans* is not an analogy for the experience of living near or 'illegally' crossing the border, there are shared figurative qualities to these variations on "trans*," each of which's theorization could be said to attend to the opening of a future-oriented praxis, in which counter-narratives and lived experiences of the border or of trans* becoming might begin to form, as well as innumerable other spatio-temporal movements of trans*. For Gloria Anzaldúa, for whom Micha Cárdenas has an artistic and personal affinity, the experience of life at/on the border is a feature of, rather than an experience distinct from, her lived identificatory and transitory becomings as a lesbian, a Chicana woman, a "border woman,"⁷⁷ and what she calls "half and half," "*mita 'y mita*'," or "both male and female."⁷⁸ While I attempt in the following to bring Cárdenas's poetry and the TBT into deeper conversation with each other, it should be clear that the theoretical underpinnings of each work and their relationship to each other is in fact immanent to the content and form of each, which I draw out here to think through new applications and instantiations of transpoetics.⁷⁹

7_Unexecutable Code Poetry and Dislocative Self-Narration

"I am the intersection, of too many coordinates to name. We are the intersections, and we exceed the borders placed upon us."⁸⁰

– Micha Cárdenas

Alongside her work on the Transborder Immigrant Tool, Micha Cárdenas developed the *Transborder Immigrant Tool Series*, 2011, a suite of poems interweaving her personal, biographical, and experiential poetic practice as a Colombian-American trans* woman with the locative code poetry of the TBT. I turn my analysis here to two poems, "net.walkingtools.Transformer,"⁸¹ a meditation on the cross-pollination between taxonomies of social subject formation and strictly rule-bound code procedures, and "[w]e are the intersections,"⁸² a free verse poem anchored by GPS coordinates which function

to locate and dislocate significant moments in Cárdenas’s life narrative and trans* becoming within/from the violence of the US-Mexico border.

8_net.walkingtools.Transformer: the Moving SoftBody

Cárdenas’s unexecutable code poem, “net.walkingtools.Transformer,” is a poetic blend of the semi-fragmented code language of Java, a C-derivative language, taken from the “actual source code of the Transborder Immigrant Tool,”⁸³ as well as original text written for the poem. It also uses some function calls or “sets of actions”⁸⁴ from an application programming interface called the “transCoder,” designed by queer artist and Cárdenas’s sometimes collaborator, Zack Blas.⁸⁵ Cárdenas notes that Blas’s function calls “are not named based on common programming metaphors such as ‘string in C’ or ‘moses in Puredata’ but instead on metaphors from queer theory such as ‘fistingAs-Friendship()’ from the Foucault library and ‘qTime()’ from the Halberstam library.”⁸⁶ Blas’s transCoder programming interface articulates the abstracted ideological substrates upon which code can be built — it questions the notion of ordinary, standard or normal code language — and asks “who is the audience for a particular programming language, what are the audience’s assumptions and how do they limit the possible uses of code?”⁸⁷ This extract from “net.walkingtools.Transformer” is a good example of the way code’s sometimes restrictive “variable” formulations limit its possible uses:

```
/*Fields*/
private java.lang.String lifeLine;
private boolean maleOrFemale;
private boolean citizenOrMigrant;
private java.lang.String genderDesired;
private java.lang.String genderGiven;
private java.lang.String oldName;
private java.lang.String newName;
private java.lang.String birthPlace;
private java.lang.String destination;
private java.lang.String attributes;
private java.lang.io.File uploadMyBody;88

private net.walkingtools.j2se.walker.HiperGpsTransfromerShifting nepantla;
private net.walkingtools.j2se.walker.HiperGpsCommunicatorListener listener;
private volatile boolean walking;
```

```
private volatile boolean running;  
private volatile boolean dancing;  
private volatile boolean transforming;  
private volatile boolean danger;  
private byte[] me;89
```

The “/*Fields*/” here are declarations of variables within a class: if the poem can be imagined as converging around Cárdenas as a member of the ‘class,’ then the field of variables represent a set of terms through which she is classified, the code functioning as a microcosm for the daily rituals through which individual subjects are constituted via categorization: gender, name, birthplace, nationality, and so on. The private boolean variables are only ever “true” or “false,” and are applied to each of these categories — “maleOrFemale,” “citizenOrMigrant” — to establish the limiting classificatory binaries through which people are sorted and through which concepts like national borders emerge and are reified. The code signifiers that appear in this poem not only register meaningfully in their code-language context, but also rely on poetic resonances in plain English, especially for readers — myself included — with limited knowledge of code language, expanding the meaningful horizon of the code’s logic. The term “volatile” in Java, for example, refers to a type of memory storage indicating that the value of a variable must not be cached, as this value may change outside of the program itself. But “volatile” here, not unrelatedly, also calls in its other definitions: rapidly changing, unpredictable, explosive, tumultuous, inflammatory, as a rebuttal of the fixed classificatory fields in which gender or citizen status is demarcated. A series of verb-variables — “walking,” “running,” “dancing,” “transforming” — connotes movement that is “dangerous” to the strict taxonomies laid out in the first set of “/*Fields*/” and propels the code, with volatility, to break into a pun: “private byte[] me;” which talks back to its variables in ways that only broken code meaningfully allows.

On the inoperability of her code poems, Cárdenas has stated: “[...] I sought to use the syntax of code to perform the intersections of transgender and immigration that the Transborder Immigrant Tool engages with.”⁹⁰ The inoperability of the code performs these intersections by seeding the code with images of border and boundary crossings oriented towards liberatory movement for queer people of color, and which propels the code into an alternate, imaginative functionality.

```
if(genderGiven != genderDesired || birthPlace != destination)
{
    walking = true;

    /* attempt to enter into a queer time and place via the transcoder library */

    while(theSoftBody.qTime(GogMagog)){“
        dancing = joy;
        transforming = hope && pain && fear && fantasies && uncertainty;

        //is the assignment operator, that of identity, binary in itself?
        //try some other methods like becoming serpent through poetry

        nepantla.open(imaginedWorld);
        nepantla.shift(towardsImaginedBody);
        uploadMyBody &~& resistLogicsOfCapital!”91
```

The construction of the line “if(genderGiven != genderDesired || birthPlace != destination)” is known in Java as a “control flow statement” and translates as follows: “if gender given does not equal gender desired, or birthplace does not equal destination.” The code that follows this line, housed inside the bracket “{,” will be enacted according to the rules of Java when that control flow statement is evaluated as “true.”⁹² Cárdenas shifts the poem’s force from functionality (the code is not runnable) to a non-productive queer time: “attempt to enter into a queer time and place” via Zach Blas’s transCoder function call “qTime.” This function call cites Halberstam’s conception of “queer time” as that which resists — through failure — heteronormative teleological time, marked by growth into perceived adult “womanhood” and “manhood,” career, marriage, child rearing, and so on.⁹³ Zach Blas cites transCoder as extending upon the “limitations of digital computation” and “its reliance on linear models of time.”⁹⁴ If gender given does not equal gender desired, or birthplace does not equal destination, so goes the algorithm, “dancing = joy; / transforming = hope && pain && fear && fantasies && uncertainty;” the destination absent in the control flow statement shifts into a joyous, moving “SoftBody,” a body in software, but untethered from the code’s classifying strictures. Cárdenas also encodes a reference to Anzaldúa in the lines: “//try some other methods like becoming serpent through poetry” and “nepantla.open(imaginedWorld);nepantla.shift(towards-ImaginedBody);” “Nepantla” is a Nahuatl world

which translates with many meanings, including inbetweenness, transformation, liminality, and being in two worlds, sometimes painfully. The serpent is an important symbol in Anzaldúa's transcorporeality, locating her sense of self as a border woman in many registers. She writes, "[f]orty years it's taken me to enter into the Serpent, to acknowledge that I have a body, that I am a body and to assimilate the animal body, the animal soul."⁹⁵ Cárdenas has described this nod to Anzaldúa as a "decolonial usage of code, attempting to stitch together Aztec traditions, Anzaldúa's queer, disabled, trans of color feminist poetry, and contemporary trans experience."⁹⁶ With these code signifiers rendered unexecutable, they register and reregister with contextual plasticity. Cárdenas's function calls may not execute in a computer, but the very denial of this ability to compute moves the calls' significations beyond merely redundant code-language into a critique of the classificatory systems through which subjects are socially included and excluded and the ideological substrates upon which these systems are founded. But "the code won't been enough" the poem warns, "lifeLine *= love [[& care] & community] & solidarity + resistance;"

9_Nearby Coordinates: We are the Intersections

Dominguez' characterization of the TBT's recuperation of GPS, not as a "global positioning system" but a "global poetic system," is a key concept in contending with the transpoetic cross-pollination between Micha Cárdenas's transition and the Transborder Immigrant Tool: these iterations of trans* are not analogous but components of a system of poesis brought to light through poetic practice/praxis. This system of poesis is "g-local," to borrow a term from Sayak Valencia, which refers to the way "the economy and the production of meaning are conceived of globally and implemented locally."⁹⁷ The conditions of Cárdenas's lived poetics and poetry are coterminous with the spatial practice of the US-Mexico border, which she unpacks in another poem from her "Transborder Series," called "We are the intersections." Each stanza of poetry in English is divided by a line of numerical GPS coordinates. As Cárdenas explains, "I mapped a number of significant places in my life and came up with nearby coordinates in different coordinate systems:"⁹⁸

[25.684486, -80.441216]

My father fled the violence of the drug war in colombia, and ended up in miami,
kendall drive and 152nd avenue.

My birth was a result of the neo-colonial policies sending weapons and neoliberalism to colombia,
and a result of the endless hunger of the US for illegal drugs,
the same drug war causing massive non-violent uprisings across Mexico

[32.71215, -117.142478]

Six years ago,
3,000 miles away from miami's anti-castro anti-gay anti-communism
away from my parents' catholicism, both irish and colombian.
I finally found a queer community and an activist life that
supported me in being the trans girl I've wanted to be for so long,
after leaving another activist community that couldn't handle my transition
and wanted me to go to the men's group⁹⁹

Loosely GPS-locating the site of her father's arrival and settling in Miami — "[25.684486, -80.441216]" (these coordinates mark the middle of the intersection of "kendall drive and 152nd avenue") — with the time of her birth, "a result of the neo-colonial policies sending weapons and / neoliberalism to colombia, / and a result of the endless hunger of the US for illegal drugs," Cárdenas narrates the origins of her life as intimately tethered to the flow of legal and illegal capital across the US-Mexico border. Her poetic account follows how the US's market demands produce the conditions of "necroempowerment"¹⁰⁰ in nations like Mexico, and, increasingly, other nations of the global south, which in turn forces people to flee for their lives north across the border. Necroempowerment is Sayak Valencia's term, which she has used to "designate the processes that transform contexts and/or situations of vulnerability and/or subalternity into possibilities for action and self-empowerment, and which reconfigure these situations through dystopian practices and a perverse self-affirmation achieved through violent means."¹⁰¹ Cárdenas then locates the burgeoning of her ties to queer community, "[32.71215, -117.142478]," in the distancing of herself from the location of this birth/violent border flow (the second coordinate is in San Diego, approximately "3,000 miles away from miami"). She then returns her body's transformations via "femme science" and, with it, a newfound precarity, as a re-approximation on a "nanoscale" of the affective experience of migrant people as they cross the border:

Last year,
thanks to the femme wisdom of my lovers and friends,
thanks to the femme science we are developing,
thanks to spironolactone,
prometrium,
estradiol,
I started passing as female, passing enough to get harassed on the street.

[32' 50 26.4402 // -117 15 31.6542]

Walking around as a femme in most places,
feels like walking around being hunted.
[...]
Fearing for our physical safety,
constantly avoiding the men who stare at us, leering,
is perhaps a nanoscale molecule of the feeling of being hunted by the
Border Patrol that migrant people feel when they cross borders.
Hungry eyes like hollow circles of night vision goggles.¹⁰²

Notably, the coordinates that appear in this poem, though accurately transcribed and searchable, are not precise locations for these life events but “nearby coordinates.” Describing these intentionally inaccurate co-ordinates, Cárdenas writes that she “used these as a framework, imagining a person skittering across the earth never quite getting the correct GPS coordinates as my central metaphor, inspired by my time developing the GPS based artwork” (referring to the TBT).¹⁰³ Offering a meta-commentary on the intentionality of these inaccurate co-ordinates, Cárdenas writes the following in her poem:

We are constantly navigating the violence of borders of all kinds,
skittering across earth pinging satellites that never correctly know
our exact locations,
for they never know how many kinds of thirst we feel.

[34.088705, -118.281894]¹⁰⁴

What exactly is involved in the central metaphor of “never quite getting the correct GPS co-ordinates” that Cárdenas refers to? When I typed these coordinates into Google

Maps, I came up with RIMAC Arena on Hopkins Drive, San Diego, the middle of an intersection on “152nd avenue” and “kendall drive” in Miami, a street between Our Lady of Angels Church and a Jack in the Box fast-food restaurant in San Diego, a residential area near La Jolla Natural Park, San Diego, and another residential address on Hyperion Avenue between Silver Lake and East Hollywood, Los Angeles. This locative slippage recalls Zeffiro’s account of the Transborder Immigrant Tool’s performative production of a “differential space,” a “counter narrative.” This is to say that, in a sense, no representation Cárdenas provides of the meaningful locations in her life — be they technically transcribed with longitudinal and latitudinal accuracy or, as is actually the case, as an approximate, nearby location — will account for the personal, experiential significance of her affective associations with them. A map may be collectively constituted on one symbolic level but experienced in infinitely differential ways by those traversing it (literally or imaginatively). Even my description of what I found at these coordinates is likely telling of my unfamiliarity with the local area and the level to which I interpret the map through knowledge local to my own geographical, economic, and social circumstances.

While the obfuscation of personally significant coordinates in this poem borrows from the dislocative practice of the TBT (i.e. dislocating the border’s functionality as border by “misusing” locative media, and by disabling each mobile device’s cellular functionality to render it untrackable by Border Patrol), Cárdenas extends this dislocation into a commentary on the politics of representation that so often accompanies social legitimation of trans* becoming. By intentionally augmenting the locative details of her poem, she pushes back against the pressure readily exerted on trans* and marginalized people to self-narrate “in a ‘factual’ way”¹⁰⁵ — a resistance echoed in poet Trace Peterson’s work, where she has described making fabricated and absurd Facebook posts detailing her “hormone replacement therapy drugs and their side effects”¹⁰⁶ as a way to “disrupt the interpellation process,” “speaking back to an implied cisgender reader’s assumptions”¹⁰⁷ about her and about transition processes. Like Peterson’s fabrications, Cárdenas’s coordinated, biographical poem “work[s] the trap”¹⁰⁸ of recounting the figurative convergences of her life narrative with the violent conditions that produce the US-Mexico border, while dislocating the milestones of her life (from her birth to the first time she passed as female) from the same surveilling technologies that

maintain the hard line of the border and which would claim to know and shape bodies by locating them with spatio-temporal accuracy.

10 Conclusion

In early 2019, four humanitarian aid workers were each sentenced to 15 months' probation and were ordered to pay a fine of \$250 USD. These four workers had been spotted on a hot day in August 2017 leaving jugs of water and tins of beans for migrants in need in a dangerous stretch of desert in the "Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife refuge near Ajo, Arizona."¹⁰⁹ Prosecutors in the case claimed that the aid workers were giving migrants "false hope."¹¹⁰ As US laws tighten around the ways in which activists can aid those imperiled at the border, it remains increasingly important to imagine new applications for the transborder code and other forms of hospitality and/or civil disobedience like it (electronic or otherwise). What else is it that trans* might do to expand the internal horizons of words, or concepts, like the "United States" or a "national border"? The Tool's code is designed and published such that it may be utilized by others at other borders of nation, body and personhood.

In my own geographical context of Australia, there is a similar emotional residue that accompanies the government's vigilant policing of the country's island shores, and which is built on the need to establish "confidence" in the founding lie of "terra nullius" and having violently colonized a place that was already and is still occupied by First Nations people. Here, the policy of off-shore detention — in which asylum seekers are instead detained on the nearby Manus and Nauru islands in inhumane and carceral-like centers — poses another challenge entirely for imagining effective acts of civil disobedience (electronic or otherwise) which could aid the passage of people with no choice but to risk their lives in dangerous vessels, crossing open ocean to Australian shores. Kurdish Iranian writer Behrouz Boochani, who spent six years in Australia's immigration detention center on Manus Island, used his mobile phone and the text messaging service WhatsApp to compose his book, *No Friend But the Mountains*, "one text message at a time."¹¹¹ The book, a mixed-genre account of the harsh conditions of life in detention, effectively circumscribed the media blackout of Manus and Nauru imposed by the Australian government. The texts were sent to interpreter Moones Mansubi, who transcribed and arranged them according to Boochani's instructions. Boochani has said in interview that it was necessary to write the book via text message because guards "at

any time, could attack our room and take our property.”¹¹² This is an example of the way a mobile device aided the transmission of information which counters official narratives of Australia’s border policy and may represent the beginning of further transbordering interventions. In the meeting of code and poetry is one possible place to begin to think and articulate future bodily and national transborders of all kinds.

11_Coda

Much of this essay was written before the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the new era of ‘Covid-normal,’ certain parts of the world have experienced an intensification of ‘hard borders’ under national lockdowns as well as internal state and territory border closures, while others have experienced very little government aid or intervention. A particular kind of doublespeak around the function and the nature of national borders has arisen through tactical discussion of ways to halt the spread of the virus as well as when and how a vaccine will be globally produced and distributed. A new form of nationalism has been allowed to creep into some places where travel bans have been enforced, while the virus meanwhile is referred to as something which “does not respect national borders,”¹¹³ leaving many questions of ‘if,’ ‘when,’ and ‘how’ national borders should be ‘respected.’ When Iran’s Deputy Health Minister Iraj Harirchi contracted coronavirus, he made the following public statement: “This virus is democratic, and it doesn’t distinguish between poor and rich or statesman and an ordinary citizen.”¹¹⁴ Certainly the virus has spread just about everywhere on the globe, but its impact has been far from democratic. The distribution of travel bans was not justified and enforced ‘democratically,’ nor does it seem likely that the vaccine, when it’s ready, will be distributed globally or evenly to all. The virus has exposed national borders as “discontinuous and unstable” on a global scale and entirely subject to politics, ideology, and the hierarchies of personhood therein. Just how borders will function in the aftermath of this pandemic remains to be seen. What also remains unclear is how this double operation of the virus — where borders are understood as hard and fixed, at the same time as ‘democratically disrespected’ — will change the articulation of a transborder.

Endnotes

- 1 Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering and Queer Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).
- 2 See Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah and Lisa Jean Moore, "Introduction: Trans-, Trans, or Transgender?," *Women's Studies Quarterly* vol. 36, no. 3–4 (2008): 11–22; Eva Hayward and Jami Weinstein, "Introduction: Tranimalities in the Age of Trans* Life," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* vol. 2, no. 2 (2015): 195–208; and Abraham Weil, "Trans*versal Animacies and the Mattering of Black Trans* Political Life," *Angelaki* vol. 22, no. 2 (2017): 191–202.
- 3 Hayward and Weinstein describe the asterisk as "prehensile." Hayward and Weinstein, "Introduction: Tranimalities," 196.
- 4 Roopika Risam, "The Poetry of Unexecutable Code," *Jacket 2*, April 12, 2015, accessed July 17, 2019, <<https://jacket2.org/commentary/poetry-unexecutable-code>>.
- 5 Sayak Valencia, *Gore Capitalism*, trans. John Pluecker (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2018), 16.
- 6 English translation: "is an open wound."
- 7 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Book Company, 1987), 3.
- 8 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 7. US-Mexico border territory has an extremely complex history. While I refer throughout to Anzaldúa's conceptualization of the border as it pertains to the poetic practice of Micha Cárdenas I have also recently become aware of critiques of Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* for its erasure of certain acts of anti-US resistance as well as her minimal account of the lives of Black Mexicans living in the Borderlands. I am referring here specifically to Wendy Trevino's critical poetry collection *Cruel Fiction* (Oakland, CA: Commune Editions, 2018). While I don't have the scope to address this here, it's important to bear in mind that accounts of border life, including Anzaldúa's, continue to be highly contested.
- 9 Micha Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool/La herramienta transfronteriza para inmigrantes* (Ann Arbor, MI: The Office of Net Assessment, University of Michigan, 2014), 2.
- 10 U.S. Border Patrol, *Border Patrol Strategic Plan 1994 and Beyond: National Strategy* (Homeland Security Digital Library, 1994), 2. <<https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=721845>>.
- 11 U.S. Border Patrol, *Border Patrol Strategic Plan 1994 and Beyond*, 6.
- 12 U.S. Border Patrol, *Border Patrol Strategic Plan 1994 and Beyond*, 7.
- 13 U.S. Border Patrol, *Border Patrol Strategic Plan 1994 and Beyond*, 2.
- 14 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 2.
- 15 U.S. Border Patrol, *Border Patrol Strategic Plan 1994 and Beyond*, 2.
- 16 U.S. Border Patrol, *Border Patrol Strategic Plan 1994 and Beyond*, 2.
- 17 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 3.

- 18 Ariella Azoulay, “A Moment of Quiet, Please, the Disaster Would Like to Say Something,” *Maarav*, 2016, accessed January 22, 2019, <<http://maarav.org.il/english/2016/05/03/a-moment-of-quiet-please-the-disaster-would-like-to-say-something1-ariella-azoulay/>>.
- 19 Azoulay, “A Moment of Quiet, Please, the Disaster Would Like to Say Something”.
- 20 Valencia, *Gore Capitalism*.
- 21 Louis Warren and Spring Warren, “The Art of Crossing Borders: Migrant Rights and Academic Freedom,” *Boom: A Journal of California* vol. 1, no. 4 (2011): 28.
- 22 Warren and Warren, “The Art of Crossing Borders,” 28.
- 23 Azoulay, “A Moment of Quiet, Please.” To be clear, in Azoulay’s text she is characterizing the way in which an act of terror utilized tools of capitalism. While I find, in her analysis of the co-opting of such commodities and technological feats, a useful way to describe the operation of the TBT, I do not suggest that the TBT is in any way an act of terror, though certainly many mainstream US media outlets have attempted to characterize it as such.
- 24 Ricardo Dominguez, “Border Research and the Transborder Immigrant Tool,” *Media Fields Journal* vol. 12 (2017): 3.
- 25 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*.
- 26 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 4.
- 27 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 44.
- 28 Warren and Warren, “The Art of Crossing Borders,” 28.
- 29 Micha Cárdenas et al., “The Transborder Immigrant Tool: Violence, Solidarity and Hope in Post-NAFTA Circuits of Bodies Electr(on)ic,” 2009, accessed July 29, 2019, <<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/summary?doi=10.1.1.561.1854>>.
- 30 Warren and Warren, “The Art of Crossing Borders,” 30. Dominguez borrows the phrase “global poetic systems” from: Laura Borràs Castanyer and Juan B. Gutiérrez, “The Global Poetic System: A System of Poetic Positioning,” in *Beyond the Screen: Transformations of Literary Structures, Interfaces, and Genres*, ed., Jörgen Schäfer, Peter Gendolla (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2010).
- 31 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 4.
- 32 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 3.
- 33 “Cárdenas et al., “The Transborder Immigrant Tool: Violence, Solidarity and Hope.”
- 34 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*.
- 35 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 1–4.
- 36 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 3.
- 37 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*.
- 38 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 4.
- 39 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 50.
- 40 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 1.
- 41 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 4.
- 42 Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E. Truman, “A Transmaterial Approach to Walking Methodologies: Embodiment, Affect, and Sonic Art Performance,” *Body & Society* vol. 23, no. 4 (2017): 36.
- See also: Ozgun Eylul Iscen, “In-between soundscapes of Vancouver: The newcomer’s acoustic experience of a city with sensory repertoire of another place,” *Organised Sound* vol. 19, no. 2 (2014): 128.
- 43 Springgay and Truman, “A Transmaterial Approach to Walking,” 10.

- 44 Springgay and Truman, “A Transmaterial Approach to Walking,” 10.
- 45 Springgay and Truman, “A Transmaterial Approach to Walking,” 10.
- 46 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 56.
- 47 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 53.
- 48 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 4.
- 49 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 51.
- 50 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 52.
- 51 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 58.
- 52 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 60.
- 53 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 62.
- 54 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 63.
- 55 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 64.
- 56 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 46.
- 57 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 48.
- 58 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 50.
- 59 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*.
- 60 Louise Amoore and Alexandra Hall, “Border theatre: on the arts of security and resistance,” *Cultural Geographies* vol. 17, no. 3 (2010): 313. Amoore and Hall discuss the border as theatre insofar as those who encounter or cross the border (both ‘legally’ and ‘illegally’) are required to “play themselves” and hope to be convincing. See: 303.
- 61 Amoore and Hall, “Border theatre,” 313.
- 62 Amoore and Hall, “Border theatre,” 313.
- 63 Electronic Disturbance Theatre/b.a.n.g. lab, *Sustenance: A Play for All Trans [] Borders* (New York: Printed Matter Inc., 2010), accessed July 22, 2019, <<https://www.thing.net/~rdom/Sustenance.pdf>>.
- 64 Mark Marino, *Fox Beck Indoctrination*, (online video, August 12, 2019). <http://www.criticalcommons.org/Members/markmarino/clips/fox_beck_indoctrination_100902_a.flv>.
- 65 “UCSD Professors: Dissolve U.S. – Give GPS Phones with Explicit Poetry to Illegals for Border Crossing,” *The Blaze*, August 31, 2010. <<https://www.theblaze.com/news/2010/08/31/ucsd-professors-want-to-dissolve-us-give-gps-phones-with-explicit-poetry-to-illegals-for-border-crossing>>. For more on Glenn Beck’s explosive and “pre-targeting” characterization of the Transborder Immigrant Tool, see: Fernanda Duarte, “Rerouting borders: politics of mobility and the Transborder Immigrant Tool” in *Mobility and Locative Media: Mobile Communication in Hybrid Spaces*, ed. Adriana de Souza e Silva and Mimi Sheller (New York: Routledge, 2015), 75–76.
- 66 Dominguez, “Border Research,” 2.
- 67 Cárdenas et al., *The Transborder Immigrant Tool*.
- 68 Amoore and Hall, “Border theatre,” 313.
- 69 Jacques Derrida, “Hospitality,” *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities* vol. 5, no. 3 (2000): 4.
- 70 Derrida, “Hospitality,” 4.

- 71 Thanks to my associate supervisor, Dr Melinda Harvey, for pointing out this particular host-dynamic.
- 72 Andrea Zeffiro, “Locative Praxis: Transborder Poetics and Activist Potentials of Experimental Locative Media,” in *Locative Media*, ed. Rowan Wilken and Gerard Goggin (London: Routledge, 2014), 77.
- 73 Zeffiro, “Locative Praxis,” 76–77. See also Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 38–39.
- 74 Zeffiro, “Locative Praxis,” 77.
- 75 Amooore and Hall, “Border theatre,” 302.
- 76 Myra Hird, “Animal Transex,” *Australian Feminist Studies* vol. 21, no.49 (2006): 35–50.
- 77 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, preface.
- 78 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 19.
- 79 On registering the immanent ideas of these works, as opposed to framing my analysis as imposed from the outside and thus “privileging the researcher’s voice over the artist’s,” I take my cue from Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E. Truman’s research methodology. See Springgay and Truman, “A Transmaterial Approach to Walking,” 13.
- 80 Micha Cárdenas, “We are the intersections,” in *Troubling the Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics*, ed. TC Tolbert and Trace Peterson (Callicoon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2015), 395.
- 81 Micha Cárdenas, “net.walkingtools.Transformer,” in *Troubling the Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics*, ed. TC Tolbert and Trace Peterson (Callicoon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2015), 391–393.
- 82 Cárdenas, “We are the intersections,” 393–395.
- 83 Micha Cárdenas, “Statement on Poetics,” in *Troubling the Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics*, ed. TC Tolbert and Trace Peterson (Callicoon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2015), 398.
- 84 Micha Cárdenas, *The Transreal: Political Aesthetics of Crossing Realities*, ed. Zach Blas and Wolfgang Schirmacher (New York: Atropos Press, 2011), 50.
- 85 Micha Cárdenas, *The Transreal: Political Aesthetics of Crossing Realities*, 50.
- 86 Cárdenas, *The Transreal*, 50–51.
- 87 Cárdenas, *The Transreal*, 50.
- 88 Cárdenas, “net.walkingtools.Transformer,” 391.
- 89 Cárdenas, “net.walkingtools.Transformer,” 391.
- 90 Cárdenas, “Statement on Poetics,” 398.
- 91 Cárdenas, “net.walkingtools.Transformer,” 392.
- 92 Cárdenas has discussed this control flow statement herself in an essay on her poetics, see: Micha Cárdenas, “Trans of Color Poetics: Stitching Bodies, Concepts and Algorithms,” *The Scholar and Feminist Online* vol.13, no. 3 (2016), <http://sfoonline.barnard.edu/traversing-technologies/micha-cardenas-trans-of-color-poetics-stitching-bodies-concepts-and-algorithms/2/#identifier_11_2641>.
- 93 For more on Halberstam’s articulations of queer temporality, see their books: *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York & London: New York University Press, 2005) and *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2011).
- 94 Zach Blas and Micha Cárdenas, “Imaginary Computational Systems: Queer Technologies and Transreal Aesthetics,” *AI & Soc* vol. 28 (2013): 564.

- 95 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 26.
- 96 Micha Cárdenas, “Trans of Color Poetics.”
- 97 Valencia, *Gore Capitalism*, 9, note 1.
- 98 Cárdenas, “Statement on Poetics,” 398.
- 99 Cárdenas, “We are the intersections,” 393–394.
- 100 Valencia, *Gore Capitalism*, 20.
- 101 Valencia, *Gore Capitalism*, 20, note 1.
- 102 Cárdenas, “We are the intersections,” 394.
- 103 Cárdenas, “Statement on Poetics,” 398.
- 104 Cárdenas, “We are the intersections,” 395.
- 105 Trace Peterson, “I’ve Looked at Imagination From Both Sides Now: Sonic Flow, Rhetorical Form, Disruption of Identity,” in *Troubling the Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics*, ed. TC Tolbert and Trace Peterson (Callicoon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2015), 477.
- 106 Peterson, “I’ve Looked at Imagination From Both Sides Now,” 477.
- 107 Peterson, “I’ve Looked at Imagination From Both Sides Now,” 477.
- 108 “The Body You Want: An Interview with Judith butler,” by Liz Kotz, *ArtForum*, 1992, <<https://www.artforum.com/print/previews/199209/the-body-you-want-an-interview-with-judith-butler-33505>>.
- 109 Billy Binion, “Volunteers Sentenced for Leaving Food and Water for Migrants in the Arizona Desert,” *Reason*, March 8, 2019. <<https://reason.com/2019/03/08/volunteers-sentenced-for-leaving-food-an/>>.
- 110 Binion, “Volunteers Sentenced for Leaving Food and Water for Migrants in the Arizona Desert”.
- 111 Helen Davidson, “Behrouz Boochani, Manus Island and the Book Written One Text at a Time,” *The Guardian*, August 3, 2018. <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/aug/02/behrouz-boochani-manus-island-and-the-book-written-one-text-at-a-time>>.
- 112 Davidson, “Behrouz Boochani, Manus Island and the Book Written One Text at a Time”.
- 113 Wendy Chamberlain, “Covid vaccine nationalism must not deny treatment to people in poorest countries,” *The Scotsman*, November 6, 2020. <<https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/covid-vaccine-nationalism-must-not-deny-treatment-people-poorest-countries-wendy-chamberlain-3026969>>.
- 114 Martin Chulov, “Iran’s deputy health minister: I have coronavirus,” *The Guardian*, February 26, 2020. <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/25/irans-deputy-health-minister-i-have-coronavirus>>.