Geo_Poetic_Systems (GPS): Fragments, Fractals, Forms and Functions Against Invisibility*/**

Electronic Disturbance Theater 2.0 and b.a.n.g. lab: 
Ricardo Dominguez, Amy Sara Carroll, Brett Stalbaum, Micha Cárdenas, and Elle Mehrmand***

The map is open, connectable in all its dimensions, and capable of being dismantled; it is reversible, and susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to montages of every kind, taken in hand by an individual, a group or a social formation... Contrary to a tracing, which always returns to the 'same', a map has multiple entrances.


“I guess you could say it started on the first of May 2000,” Alberto said. “What did?” “Geohacking. Or the potential thereof. The government announced then that Selective Availability would be turned off, on what had been, until then, strictly a military system. Civilians could access the GPS geocoordinates for the first time.”


A poetic gesture from its inception, the Transborder Immigrant Tool functions, via the aspirations of such a dislocative medium, as dislocative media, seeking to realize the possibilities of G.P.S. as both a “global positioning system” and, what, in another context, Laura Borràs Castanyer and Juan B. Gutiérrez have termed, a “global poetic system.”

– Amy Sara Carroll, *Transborder Immigrant Tool (TBT)*

* All of the text has been plagiarized in an anti-anti utopian form. As Amy Sara Carroll likes to shout: “Plagiarize utopia!”

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*** The Electronic Disturbance Theater (EDT) 1.0 is a group that developed Virtual-Sit-In technologies in 1998 in solidarity with the Zapatista communities in Chiapas, Mexico. EDT 2.0’s most recent project (with Brett Stalbaum, Micha Cardenas, Amy Sara Carroll and Elle Mehrmand) is the Transborder Immigrant Tool: a GPS cellphone safety net tool for crossing the Mexico/U.S. border. The Transborder Immigrant Tool has received notable international acclaim, including an award from Cultural Contact, Endowment for Culture Mexico-U.S.’s “Transnational Communities Award” in 2007, and two Transborder Awards from the University of California, San Diego's Center for the Humanities (in 2007 and 2008, respectively).
Fragments: Transborder Immigrant Tool (TBT), a code-switch project by Electronic Disturbance Theater and b.a.n.g. lab at CALIT2 at the University of California, San Diego, and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, enables cast-away, disposable mobile phones to function as personal safety navigation systems in the Mexican-U.S. borderlands. An artivist gesture, TBT is powered by both software that leads desert-walkers to water caches and by poetry that performatively poses the question, “What constitutes sustenance?” A return to the utopian impulses of hospitality, freedom, justice, –and the aesthetic (“Poetry is not a luxury!”), TBT kinship-diagrams make real Luis Alberto Urrea’s maxim of the “untimely present”: “In the desert, we are all illegal aliens.”

TBT as geo_poetic_system (gps) is machinic art that takes back the question of aesthetics that has been driven out by network/software resisters to art since 1994. From tactical media to hacktivism network/software, art has hidden behind the slogan “More Than Just Art!” TBT is a fractal gesture that is no longer part of the histories of network art’s attachment to “imperceptible” code, with its systems of camouflage ecologies, or what Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker in their book The Exploit: A Theory of Networks (2007) have named as network art’s allegiance to “non-existence”, to the “imperceptible” – to a type of art that seeks to create secret tunnels into the electronic market as something other than art. For EDT 1.0/2.0 and b.a.n.g. lab, the post-contemporary moment calls for artworks that can construct gestures of visibility that haunt the fictions of market and of the state – art that can spook the formation of globalization as mobile borders, that can connect real bodies to data-bodies as trans_bodies that disturb the post-post-9/11 (in)security condition. TBT is a gesture of radical presence that ruptures network art’s need to hide behind the “imperceptible” and angers the market-state machine(s) need to keep the dead bodies hidden in the desert(s) of the real.

TBT is dedicated to a translucent poetics that refuses artistic anonymity and performs with vagrancies of mixed realities. Electronic Disturbance Theater (EDT) and b.a.n.g. lab (b.a.n.g. = bits.atoms.neurons.genes) envisioned TBT as having an infinitely translucent geo-poetic system (gps) capable of navigating the following coordinates: the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts; viral media antagonisms (TBT has been called a “traitorous app!” or “explicit poetry” to “dissolve the nation!”, as reported in American rightwing media); the multi-national debates on global immigration; and the questions, What is new media art now?, and, What is the nature of code performance now? TBT wanders the post-contemporary moment between the new assemblages of trans_bodies; it is a gps that enables cellphones, and the ecstasies and influences of art practices that came before EDT and have survived long after ETD, to redraw the boundaries between the real, the symbolic, and the imaginary. Its efforts have been galvanized by artists such as those in the Critical Art Ensemble; performance artists like Orlan and Stelarc; Guillermo Gomez Pena and the Border Art Workshop at the Tijuana/San Diego frontera; new media artists at the Institute of Applied Autonomy; Latin American conceptualists like CADA of Chile and Los Grupos of Mexico; and the Tijuana/San Diego border hacking festival developed by Fran Illich and his collaborators in 2000.
Electronic Disturbance Theater 2.0 and b.a.n.g. lab

Fractals: TBT is still a gesture in the process of becoming – it is still shape shifting and performing itself into potential spaces of use and poetics. TBT is border disturbance art that constitutes a visible geo-aesthetic/geo-ethics gesture against the boundaries and borderless borders that are crisscrossing every single body on the planet. We call for a geo-aesthetics that starts at the nanoscale and reaches the GPS (Global Position System) grid system that floats around the planet. We call for a geo-aesthetics that connects both the human and the inhuman, geography and ethics; which is to say, we call for a geo-aesthetics that crosses into and dislocates the smooth space of geo-spatial mobility with ethical objects that can be used for multiple forms of sustenance. We live in a world where only goods and services have rights to cross borders, of things and proto-things that create wireless clouds of data that facilitate access and containment, of tran_border bodies, market bodies, and state bodies – a world that is a chaosmosis of markets that demand global exchange and aggressive state and social filters. We need a geo-aesthetics that can construct ethical and performative complexities for the new earths to come, that will allow us to imagine new geographies for new bodies – trans_bodies with transborder rights – and artwork that can function as a geo-philosophy for bodies that are flowing as transborder bodies across the arcs of the world.

The key practices that fractalize this geo-aesthetic are: artivism, tactical poetries, hacktivism(s), new media theater, border disturbance art/technologies, augmented realities, speculative cartographies, queer technologies, transnational feminisms and code, digital Zapatistismo, dislocative gps, and intergalactic performances.
Electronic Disturbance Theater 2.0 and b.a.n.g. lab

Forms: The channels of neo-modernity and global industrialization are re-designing reality as relational objects, as a network of things: iPad desires, texting transgressions, data-powered clouds, airport scan-bodies, and Facebook economies – what we will call the almost-fully emerged Cloud Empire, whose logistical capture-objects arrive before our optical nerves and fingers. They are designed fragments built in pieces in one place, put together in another, and delivered via multiple routes after repackaging. This same logistics governs the flows and protocols of trans_bodies – their borderscapes, their movement towards an extra-legal formation, their territorial remixing, their counter-computational processing, their new modes of desire, and their methods for crisscrossing (by foot, by boat, by Photoshop document, or by becoming the most wanted/unwanted labor bodies demanded by the global market). These trans_bodies form the largest flowing non-state state on the planet. The flow of 80% of goods for the global market are at any given moment in transit and this massive transit of goods is equal to the flow of the trans_bodies that are crossing borders everywhere, that are coming and have come – who are forced to sacrifice their rights, their bodies, and their kinships to the “just in time” flow of the Cloud Empire. Whether becoming trans_bodies as post-post-citizens or dead bodies in the desert(s) of the real, these bodies are part of the overdetermined assembly line of the world. This reterritorialization of the endless assembly line traces out a map of connections between things and humans as they become border_things. Perhaps these strange encounters between logistical objects, trans_bodies, and the sovereignty of the assembly line over the nation, might also offer clues as to what the future of the trans_bodies might look like: multi-node citizens moving beyond the borders of the Cloud Empire’s objects in flow.
Functions: Network art (net art/net.art)/software art has attempted to become a mode of aesthetic disappearance, to become unstable objects as vacuoles of non-communication – which signaled for net art to “get off the radar!” and stay deep inside networked channels. But another signal was also at play under the sign of the invisible during the 1990’s: the ontologies of being hyper-present, of the being all-too-clear, all-too-visible to the state machine. EDT’s practice of Electronic Civil Disobedience (ECD) needs to be understood as the visible manifestation of the always/already present channels connecting data bodies to real bodies on the streets and online, because the dichotomy of digital/physical is a false one. ECD involves a number of physical components, from the hardware that the webpage is displayed on and the JavaScript it runs on, to the human body that activates that code. The bodies participating in ECD “are on the radar!”, which is to say, the myth of anonymity does not apply to EDT’s aesthetic practices of ECD. The performative matrix of EDT constructs more fluid forms of embodiment – participants in a virtual sit-in are not necessarily restricted to the same rules and protocols of gender, sexuality, race, or religion that they may experience as everyday body – so that the gestures of these trans_bodies (with the use of any of these relational systems of communication, from a webpage to a cellphone) expose these bodies visibility without the baggage of identity. Trans_bodies are the visible moment of virtual potentials, real bodies becoming augmented things with surprising new organs that can circumvent the oppressions of the logistical assembly line called globalization.

Fragments 2: In the last footnote of Felix Guattari: An Aberrant Introduction (2002), author Gary Genosko focuses on the question of potential derelict spaces or hidden gestures that serve as a parasite on the flows of globalization and networked capital:
In an interview with [Antonio] Negri, [Gilles] Deleuze addressed the issue of resistance to such ceaseless control, even though he wasn’t especially hopeful: “Computer piracy and viruses, for example will replace strikes and what the nineteenth century called ‘sabotage’ (‘clogging’ the machinery). You ask whether control or communication societies will lead to forms of resistance that might reopen the way for a communism understood as the ‘traversal organization of free individuals.’ Maybe, I don’t know” (Deleuze 1995: 175). This opens a space for the innovation of the multitude, a concept that marks a passage from group to subject, through assemblage, and beyond in its formation as posse or the figure of the new militant armed with transversal tools (Hardt and Negri 2000: 413). Against the hegemony of communication, Deleuze raised this idea: “The key thing may be to create vacuoles of noncommunication, circuit breakers, so we can elude control.” A kind of creativity that was not linked to communication but broke it at some point by establishing cavities through which its messages could not pass or, to put it in positive terms, passed all to well.1

While these cavities may indeed offer a type of processual aesthetics of new media that can manufacture dynamic practices that are unseen by the forces of assembly line software or code flows (because they mimic those flows), it is equally if not more important to create gestures that rupture the invisibility of the digital assembly line, as EDT and b.a.n.g. lab aim to do. We make visible what is hidden in the code’s own gaps and cracks via 404 files/Files Not Found (which is a core part of EDT’s and ECD’s browser-based tactics); one strategy for example, includes reloading the question, “Is Democracy found on this .gov site?”, which elicits the response, “404_Democracy is not found on this site.” At this point in time the velocities of leaks of information also becomes part of a similar practice. The traversal actions shift the tactics of invisibility to one of direct presence as a core aesthetic of non-communication that becomes all too clear.

Fractals 2: We are walking in data clouds, where everything that is solid melts into the Wi-Fi air. We are all now the locative artifacts that Willam Gibson writes about in his 2007 novel Spook Country, which describes locative art as the aesthetic move to monumentalize the holographic dead. In Gibson’s vision of the Cloud Empire, we are all the augmented realities of the dead River Jude Phoenix or F. Scott Fitzgerald. In Spook

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_Country_, the characters, perhaps like us, now travel between all that is lost to “cartographic attributes of the invisible” and the specific coordinates of our locative realities. Everything is falling between the cracks of hyper-tagging and the wave-point edges of new recombinant realities in the novel, a sentiment that is perhaps best expressed by curator Odile Richard when she notes, “The artist annotating every centimeter of a place, of every physical thing. Visible to all, on devices such as these.” At the same time, Gibson’s locative media’s machines can bring forth the dead and the lost before our eyes and despite the efforts of the spook-state. The state machine is a spook-system that utilizes indeterminacy in its strategies of control and coercion. These strategies move from anticipatory ‘pre-emptive strike’ policies and military action through to ‘softer’ media strategies that utilize the affective politics of fear. In each case, the spook-state attempts to colonize the virtual to get to the real, or, we might say, to harness the strange temporality of the event – an event that fractures the fractality between the virtual and the actual – to manifest the locative perversity of those living and breathing beyond the holographic graveyard. Let us then consider the aesthetic event-based technology of EDT 2.0 and b.a.n.g. lab’s TBT performative matrix as a way to divert the flows of disappearance towards the mythopoetic space of the un/accountable presences of the all-too-human bodies crossing the borders of the world. The mythopoetic is about slowing down hypermedia and the habit of always being switched on, about attuning data bodies to the slow digital Dasein that is always/already linked to locations that cut and paste the borderscapes around us – the deep cuts that move across the event of mutant desires and against the abstract machine towards gestures that have a name: _trans_bodies trans-creating borderless realities now._

In _Spook Country_ one of the characters never sleeps under the same GPS “grid” twice for fear of linking his body to his GPS body. The trans_border body never sleeps under the same border or the same “grid” – but it does need the same sustenance and _trans_rights_ as the _trans_linked_ bodies that TBT imagines as part of its geo-poetic-system: a _gps_ that can dislocate the utopian and dystopian conditions of the GPS locative “grid.” Drew Hemment in 2004 wrote on _nettime_, the online critical media list serve:

> Locative media exults in the pleasure of locating and _being located_, and finds in this the basis for an emergent sociality - driven not by marketing but by networks of reciprocity and trust - as well as new ways of representing, relating to and moving in the world. Just as it contests the top down approach of conventional cartography to open up a manifold of different ways in which geographical space can be encountered and drawn, so in appropriating and refunctioning positioning or tracking technologies, locative media indicates how they may be used not for pinning down but for opening up. In dispersing interventions and applications outside the state-and corporate-led technology push, it transforms a system of domination into a participatory milieu. And in bringing location and the coordinate system into the foreground, by examining location-aware experience or perception and its relationship to the dominant logics of representation, it creates distortions or moments of ambiguity by which mechanisms of domination become both apparent and less certain. This does not yet allow a simple opposition to be made between

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locative media and surveillance or control. Locative media remains upon the same plane as new forms of pervasive surveillance, and this is a plane upon which emancipation and domination intertwine. It is not a simple question of emancipation or domination, but of both at once. In many ways the locative utopia is the dystopia of total control.

The both/and or the either/or of locative grid can escape the code of total control only by dislocating the technological effect with aesthetic affects that become something other than code – a performative matrix that fractalizes and reverses the disorder of things with excessive trans_bodies acting from the in_side_out of that enforced borderless border; that is, a performative matrix that assembles new empirico-tran(s)cendental forms of multi-presence(s) incommensurable with the capitalist socius of the Cloud Empire. As the Zapatistas say, “We do not move at the speed of technology, but at the speed of dreams.”

**Ecstasies 2:** Wikileaks is leaking forth swarms of hacktivist ECD actions in defense of what EDT has named since 1998 as *radical transparency* – an urgent call that has by now become the antagonist of super state machines like Google, Master Card, Visa, and Pay Pal (all of them now part of the emerging Cloud Empire). Radical nodes are attempting to take on and disturb the mega-data centers of the Cloud Empire in the tradition of EDT’s aesthetic call to action for the multitude to become utopias of disturbances, blockage and trespass, by staging ethico-aesthetic virtual sit-ins. Of course the difference between EDT and the current hacktivism is that EDT is and has always been *radically transparent*, always connecting its data-bodies to the location of its real-bodies. Everyone knows who we are, where we are,

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why we are doing the gesture, whereas the Wikileaks backtivists are hidden and do their work in secret, making no attempts to connect data-bodies and real-bodies (at odds with the radical transparency of leaking secrets put forth by Wikileaks activists). But this is a minor issue when compared to the command and control of information that is enabled when the atavistic state machine joins the neoliberal Cloud Empire. What is clear is that a cold civil war is growing between the Cloud Empire and trans_bodies on the borders everywhere. As Patrick Lichty notes in an essay he published online, entitled “Digital Anarchy and Wikileaks”:

With the bleeding of information from the material to the infomatic rhizome through Wikileaks (i.e. the US diplomatic cable leaks), the Infostate has created an asymmetrical insurgency against conventional power. Negri’s conception of cognitive capital as locus of power asymmetrically challenges that of material capital. This is analogous to previous mention of events as told in the movie, The Matrix, and the artificial (informatic) being overriding/supersedes embodied conventional power. As Deleuze, then Agamben assert that power is the separation of the subject from potentiality, and as such mitigates dissent, the nation-state is trying to exert power by separating the means of support and the figurehead from Wikileaks, but distributed, asymmetrical cyberwarfare by the net.community has already disrupted banks, credit, and networked sites. It has even awakened the amorphous hacker subculture of “Anonymous” which was last known for its mass protests against the Church of Scientology to rise against the opponents of Wikileaks. The Net, as child of the military (conventional power) has begun to turn on its masters, with expected reflexive responses.

This knee-jerk reaction of the nation-state to asymmetrical power versus conventional power became evident in the case of 2001, where decentralized “cellular” physical social networks circumvented centralized power. Although the previous statement says decentralized physical power, this is merely an intermediary step to the development of asymmetrical distributed infopower. The centralized, hierarchical nature of the material corporate nation-state has been unable to contain the decentralized flow of cellular power, which has become infopower, created by the emergency of distributed networks. This is seen as we look again at Matrix Reloaded, where in, as in The Matrix Trilogy, the informatic body/state (Agent Smith) reacts to the intervention of conventional human power (Neo, or “The One”) by asymmetry in massively replicating Wikileaks sites (“The Many”). Conventional power now has a cloud of moving, replicating targets rather than one to aim at.4

While it is easy to imagine this as a civil war between clouds, to do so would risk thinking about space without location, reproducing the opaque tactics of invisibility. Once more EDT 1.0/2.0/b.a.n.g lab call for being there as immaterial formations that confront power face to face(lessness) without fear. But, we do understand that in some spaces and times the violences of the Cloud Empire are so imminent that it is foolhardy to expose oneself as a target. In a civil war on a planetary scale, it is (and

will continue to be) important to understand who and when one should be seeing – but if one has a choice, it should be with the aesthetic zeitgeist, we are here, and we are less than the one and more than the many.

**Forms 2:** In *Introduction to Civil War* (2010), the French group Tiqqun articulates the following:

Imperialism and totalitarianism mark the two ways in which the modern State tried to leap beyond its own impossibility, first by slipping forward beyond its borders into colonial expansion, then by an intensive deepening of the penetration inside its own borders. In both cases, these desperate reactions from the State – which claimed to encompass *everything* just as it was becoming *nothing* – came to a head in the very forms of civil war the State claims *preceded it.*

This *nothing* that preceded the *everything* of Cloud Empire is forming in the midst of an ocean of data. In fact, data is floating on and within the ocean (it is also interesting to note that the ocean has historically been a core condition of empire). Google now has oceanic datacenters to support the new Cloud Empire; these datacenters solve the problem of heat build up by exposing millions upon millions of processors to tidal waters. The Cloud Empire is only part of Google’s efforts to off-shore its critical infrastructure. Those old cyberborders are unraveling, as well as the conceptual borders of the super-state machine – against all trans_bodies. The Cloud Empire’s core computing system is absorbing more and more social and economic media on expanding planetary scales. As these scales give data jurisdiction over what can cross the world and how fast things can go, those things like trans_border bodies and old citizen formations lose rights before the power of end-user agreements. The new civil war waged by trans_border bodies against the Cloud Empire is not about supporting the link between territory and state to jurisdiction and law, but about how trans_bodies are moving from illegal bodies to extra-legal post-things, with the full rights of post-human flows and deep locative articulations of place.

**Functions 2:** As Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari state in *What is Philosophy?* (1991), “Art is not a notion but a motion. It’s not important what art is but what it does.” To that end, we might ask, *What does TBT as an ethico-aesthetic software/locative art project do?* It allows trans_bodies to make visible the ways in which they have been abandoned by the state machine as a *civil war,* and to cut across the landscape of globalization with the force of hope – the hope of being-more-than labor and being-more-than human. TBT is also a gesture against the non-place of the supermodernity posited by Marc Augé in his book, *Non-places, Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (2009). TBT dislocates borders as non-places and remakes them as a geo-poetic-system for the invention of new functions for presence and the manifestation of the very visible lives of trans_bodies, even as they “flee” from one place to another. As Paolo Virno notes in an essay entitled, “The Taste of

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6 The first trans_bodies to call for a *planetary civil war* were the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico.

Disobedience and flight are not in any case a negative gesture that exempts one form action and responsibility. To the contrary, to desert means to modify the conditions within which the conflict is played instead of submitting to them. And the positive construction of a favorable scenario demands more initiative than the clash with pre-fixed conditions. An affirmative ‘doing’ qualifies defection, impressing a sensual and operative taste on the present. The conflict is engaged starting from what we have forms of life out of which we are already making experience. To the ancient idea of fleeing in order to better attack in added the certainty that the fight will be all the more effective if one has something else to lose besides one’s own chains.7

TBT dislocates globalized mappings of labor migrations by echo-locating the emergence of a new historical subject(s) that is not the post-Fordist multitude or the illegal immigrant under social arrest, but the trans-border subject(s) in hyper-exodus that crashes the logic of invisibility of network art, networked power, and the networked state by “fleeing” into a visibility beyond the GPS grid and going across the desert(s) of the real in ways that are not yet inscribed in existing political maps – trans-border subjects “flee” into the new earths as geo-poetic-systems.

Fragments 3: The work of EDT 1.0/2.0 and b.a.n.g. lab is to create experimental art that probes the conditions of post-Fordist factories of the “no-place” by making the gaps leak beyond its networked (post/super)modernity, to make them perform their desire to be hidden for all to see, to create art that forces the Cloud Empire to stutter its demands and to measure the glitches in the currents of the Cloud Empire around us, to stage its overwhelming need towards imperceptibility as the secret code behind code, and to capture its ‘majoritarian being’ as the imaginary manifest destiny of this floating interactive-state-machine. The Cloud Empire demands everything participate in software culture in order to organize the infinite databases and to establish a standardized setting or an exact market relation between real bodies and data-bodies. This standardization is the key strategy for a functional production-consumption-subjectivation diagram. What escapes this execution by code? Perhaps a gesture that performs the dislocative poetry of precarious trans_ontologies, as well as a demand for the distributed presence of each unique trans_body without database clouds – against that post-Panoptical data-body without a person as the only identification of singularity. Giorgio Agamben points to this condition his essay, “Identity without the Person” (2011):

The more the citizens of the metropolis have lost intimacy with one another, the more they have become incapable of looking each other in the eye, the more consoling the virtual intimacy with the apparatus becomes (an apparatus that has learned in turn to look deeply into their retinas). The more they have lost all identity

and all real belonging, the more gratifying it has become for them to be recognized by the Great Machine in its infinite and minute variants: form the turnstile of a subway entrance to an ATM machine, from the video camera that benevolently observes them while they enter the bank or walk down the street to the apparatus that opens the garage door for them, all the way to the future obligatory identity card that will recognize them in any time and any place for what the inexorably are. I am here if the Machine recognizes me, or at least, sees me; I am alive if the Machine, which knows neither sleep nor wakefulness, but is eternally alert, guarantees that I am alive; I am not forgotten if the Great Machine has recorded my numerical or digital data.\(^8\)

The Cloud Empire is a neo-futurist syndrome that only targets non-machinic-identity as illegal, non-illegal, or (a)illegal – a syndrome that function as a machinic traversal of the fantasy of a total algorithm of control. Trans_bodies risk exodus by crossing the desert(s) of the real; as well, they risk never arriving because their arrival cannot fully happen under the gaze of the invisible biopolitical zones of the border. The trans_body fractalizes the porous paradoxes of globalized walls-without-laws and confronts the post-Panoptical power that it is itself always/already escaping and slipping beyond; it is violently imperceptible and rejects any sustenance for any body at any level. But the trans_bodies do not give up; they only accelerate the civil war with queer counter-inventions.

**Fractals 3:** TBT echo-locates the immanent creation of new rights beyond the biopolitical zone of the border – a zone that has since the start of Operation Gatekeeper and the 9/11 attacks become more dangerous than ever. The tactical force of the trans_bodies flowing through this space is a “risk” not because these (real) bodies are “illegal” or “unauthorized” but because they are re-making the condition of what citizenship will become beyond the “law of borders” and the “law of free trade.”

The borderless border has not stopped migration to the global North, as noted by Rita Raley in her essay on “Border Hacking”, published in her 2009 book, *Tactical Media*. In Raley’s own words,

> – indeed, by all accounts the numbers appear to be at an historic high – so what other purposes does it serve? Etienne Balibar writes in a different context about the symbolic power of “obsessive and showy security practices” at the border, which are “designed, indeed, as much for shows as for real action.” What would be the socio-cultural function of such “shows”? Peter Andreas’s important study, *Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide*, provides some answers. Noting that “successful” border management depends on successful image management [which] does not necessarily correspond with levels of actual deterrence, Andreas concludes that border control is a “public performance for which the border functions as a kind of political stage”. In other words, the performance of security is more important than actual security and the theatrical serves as a substitute for the real. The miles of razor wire, the ubiquity of ‘boots on the ground,’ the air support – they are all material entities, but they are also crucially part of what Andreas names as a

“symbolic performance.” “Border control efforts,” he explains, “are not only actions (a means to a stated instrumental end) but also gestures that communicate meaning”. If indeed it is the case that border control is an “escalating symbolic performance.”

New forms of visible trans_rights, too, are a performance, in that they are being performed by trans_bodies emerging from the global dynamic of crossing borders on a planetary scale as the largest flow-nation in existence. The sheer number of trans_bodies in circulation will lead to the modification of existing laws and the invention of new rights in response to this performative matrix contra the “escalating symbolic performance” of the growing flow of mobile borders – an aesthetic trans_creation constituted by the flow of new formations of life and rights between all borders. As Deleuze notes in a 1985 conversation with Clarie Parnet,

To act for freedom, becoming revolutionary, is to operate in jurisprudence when one turns to the justice system . . . that’s what the invention of the law is . . . it’s not a question of applying “the rights of man” but rather of inventing new forms of jurisprudence . . . I have always been fascinated by jurisprudence, by law . . . If I hadn’t studied philosophy, I would have studied law, but precisely not “the rights of man,” only rights of life, and so, life unfolds case by case.

TBT is a softwhere artwork that joins trans_bodies in their aesthetic vision of virtual democracie(s), forms of life to come, and trans_rights. Trans_bodies risk walking around with the internal geography of a piece of place (their homes, lands, scents and local imaginaries) even as they travel elsewhere and nowhere; which is to say, trans_bodies carry their particularities with them into the biopolitical zones of the Cloud Empire’s borderless borders. They refuse the invisibility of becoming the footnotes of history – they walk into the nothing as the un/most-wanted engines of our anti-anti utopian futurities.

**Forms 3:** The TBT gesture points to the tensions around defining the term “border” as an aesthetic space built with a fictional line. The “border” is also a performative matrix that is not just a wall, not just a line in the sand, not just political battle space, but an affective social sculpture, a visible object of art between nations, and a conceptual cut that separates the work from the viewer. At the end of his essay “Politics of Aesthetics”, Jacques Ranciere captures this odd aesthetic dialectic of the “border”:

What we must therefore recognize both in the linear scenario of modernity and postmodernity, and the academic opposition between art for art’s sake and engaged art, is an originary and persistent tension between two great politics of aesthetics: the politics of becoming-life of art and the politics of the resistant form. The first

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10 *L’Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze* was a short-lived French T.V. program in the late 1980s (it aired between 1988 and 1989) that consisted of eight hour-long interviews between Deleuze and Parnet.

11 “G as in Gauche”. *L’Abécédaire.*
identifies the forms of aesthetics experience with the forms of another life. The finality it ascribes to art is to construct new forms of life in common, and hence to eliminate itself as a separate reality. The second, by contrast, encloses the political promise of aesthetic experience in art’s very separation, in the resistance of its form to every transformation into a form of life.¹²

TBT and the movements of trans_bodies are located between this aesthetic tension and so are the borderless borders of globalization; they are “art for art sake” as well as works or gestures of resistance and transformation. But TBT (gps) does carry with it the goals of “engaged art” as well: an art that attempts to help in a small way to generate sustenance for the construction of new forms of life and trans_kinships growing beyond, within and between the state art of borderless borders around the planet.

The Transborder Immigrant Tool can be seen as part of a larger shift from tactical media to the “engaged art” of tactical biopolitics. While media artists of the late 1990s and early 2000s were often concerned with the aesthetic and political potentials opened up by cheaper access to media technologies, we are interested in the geo-aesthetics potentials opened up by artworks that can serve trans_bodies

directly, including medical technologies and safety devices such as GPS tools. The post-contemporary artist's desire is to take artwork off of the screen and place it back in the world. Biopolitics can be thought of as resistance to control over our daily lives, and as such we see the shift embodied in the Transborder Immigrant Tool – the shift away from technology, towards public interventions that seek to change the very conditions of life and death that are created by biopower – as a reflection of necropolitics, which Achille Mbembe has defined (in contradistinction to Michel Foucault’s formulation that the biopolitical state is invested in making live) as the state’s promise of insuring death to unwanted groups and its capacity to conjure images of terrorists to justify deadly force. The Transborder Immigrant Tool, as an artwork and as a humanitarian “last mile” safety device, can be seen as engaging bio-tactically in the post-contemporary desert(s) of necropolitics.

**Functions 3:** Jean Genet sought to summon what the vision machine of the state doesn’t see – the blind spots that produce systemic reverse hallucinations. If a hallucination is seeing what is not there, then a reverse hallucination is not seeing what is there. Genet calls on us to conjure spaces for traumatic myths, arguing that these spaces might manifest spontaneous simulations capable of haunting power’s post-spectacles. His text hails us to spook the simulacra of the visual with simulations in the form of small, unseen gestures – gestures being made by those who might unexpectedly receive empathy from people on the other side of the screen. The digital here adds the possibility of a speed of production and distribution almost as fast as that of dreams. An actor/audience network can quickly develop a dialogue, a design, a meme, and an outcome that builds on small waves of visibility to create performances for and about hope – we imagine TBT, and all geo-poetic-systems, as a gesture of inhuman transborder solidarity between borders, machines, interfaces, water caches, trans_bodies, code, poetry, and the aesthetics of visibility – a visceral poetic act that might help prevent the needless deaths of those whose only crime is hope.