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CAUTION: on the many, unpredictable iterations of a yellow border sign ideograph and migrant/queer world-making

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ABSTRACT

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, artist John Hood collaborated with California's Department of Transportation to erect yellow "CAUTION" signs to warn drivers against migrants running across the San Diego freeways. This essay marries migrant/queer world-making theories and ideographic analysis to describe how artists imagined new, often contradictory, worlds to resist modernist notions of citizenship, gender, sex, family, and humanity through (re)drawn iterations of the sign. I show an overlapping and reflexive interplay between what the iterations visually represent and the ways that migrants/queers, including my familia, perform what the images mean in the realm of the material, everyday.

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Growing up, I knew the city of San Diego was a bad place. When we first migrated to the U.S. from Mexico, my familia[1] *quickly came to the understanding – an intense awareness about spatial surroundings – that San Diego was where many undocumented migrants like them were continuously rounded up by "la migra," or immigration authorities, and deported back to their native countries. We stayed away from San Diego because it was open hunting range against brown and black migrant bodies. We were aware of many danger zones – streets, cities, and states – in the U.S., so we stayed at home as a matter of survival. Till this day, I shiver when I travel near or through San Diego and my familia never steps foot in that city.*

San Diego, the city near the border between the U.S. and Mexico, saw a rise in undocumented immigration in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Because of increased immigration, artist John Hood collaborated with California's Department of Transportation to erect yellow "CAUTION" signs to warn drivers against migrants running across the San Diego freeways (see Figure 1). Hood's original border sign design was simple. The sign contained a silhouette of three figures in the center that represented a family – a father, a mother, and a small girl. The figures appeared to be running toward the left side of the sign because the bodies were shown with postures moving forward, holding hands, and the pigtails of the little girl dangled in the air as if wind was rushing through them. The background was entirely in yellow while the human figures were starkly black. Above the figures was a capitalized "CAUTION" label (Carcamo, "With Only One Left"). Over the years, the border sign appeared frequently as a visual in

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Figure 1. San Diego Border Sign. Photo: Gastaldo, John. 2018. The San Diego Union-Tribune. San Diego.

immigration-related news in print or other media, became "a Rorschach test for how people feel about illegal [*sic*] immigration and immigrants in general" (Berestein), and is "one of the most iconic and enduring images associated with the nation's war over illegal [*sic*] immigration," (Gold). The last standing border sign "quietly disappeared" in 2018 (K. Morrissey).

In this essay, I argue that the border sign represents a visual and embodied ideograph that is rooted in negative ideological underpinnings, though migrants/queers have (re)drawn the sign endlessly (what I will call iterations) in such a way that reflects productive migrant/queer world-making. Although advocates have (re)drawn the sign to convey anti-immigration sentiments (Buchanan; Unsavoryagents), I focus on the migrants'/queers' iterations that (re)imagine new, deterritorialized worlds, identities, and resistances. Fuentes views border sign iterations as "tactical media" that disrupt "dominant semiotic regimes" and create "situations in which signs, messages and narratives are set into play, and critical thinking becomes possible" (33). Similarly, Raley adds that the signs become "interruptive and resignifying art performance" (31). I view new migrant/queer iterations as more than productive tactical media. Migrant/queer iterations enact performative world-making tactics that are complex and show an interplay between what the silhouettes visually represent and the ways that migrants/queers perform what the images mean in the realm of the material, everyday (Cheney and Cloud 505; Cloud, "Materiality"; Enck-Wanzer 346). As examples, I share fragments of my familia's historias[2] to show that the iterations reflect a material creation of new citizenships and identities that resist oppressive national imaginaries of citizenship, family, and what it means to be human (Cisneros, *The Border Crossed Us* 13; Cisneros, "Reclaiming the Rhetoric of Reies Lopez Tijerina" 582; DeChaine 43; Enck-Wanzer 346; Flores,

"Creating discursive space" 142). Although my familia's experiences may be altogether different intentionally and phenomenally than the artists' rhetorical purposes for their iterations, my purpose is to show a likeness between my familia's historias and/or performances and the (re)drawn silhouettes. My familia's experiences echo and bring to life what is signified by the border sign not coincidentally, but because, as Conquergood notes, cultural artifacts, including signs, often reflect meaningful "issues and attitudes" that emerge from the living environments around them (Conquergood 95). Lastly, I show that new iterations represent newly imagined worlds that may be empowering, but may also contradict and/or perpetuate negative ideologies if the images are uncritically examined. In light of potentially negative ideological connotations, migrants'/queers' unflinching and intersectional reflexivity promises to resist the perpetuation of exclusionary logics (Gutierrez; Gutierrez-Perez and Andrade 14).

In the following sections, I provide a review of literature about world-making, including migrant and queer world-making as two predominant scholarly trends, a discussion about the utility of ideographic analysis as a methodology in performance studies, and delve into an investigation of differing and often contradictory border sign iterations. The stylistic rupture between personal narrative and academic writing is intentional; I ask the reader to pause and delve into my familia's experiences because they reflect living during the most intense anti-immigration policies in California during the 1990s, when the border sign appeared, and as I (re)wrote this piece. They live and die as I write. Writing about migrant/queer world-making includes ruptures against Western and Eurocentric modes of grammar and syntax (Alexander; Anzaldúa, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*; Calafell and Moreman) and embracing performative writing that reveals new aesthetic, emotive, and embodied epistemologies (Pollock).

World-Making: migrant and queer

When I was an undocumented escuincle[3] *in the 1990s, I feared the night. During the day, I played with toy Power Rangers and carritos,*[4] *watched novelas, and ate delicious Mexican food with my hermanito and my mamita.*[5] *But when the sun went away, my body became anxious because night was the time when my alcoholic father came home, screaming and yelling at my mamita to feed him, and always finding a way to punish my hermanito and me. My mamita tried very hard to shield us from his screams, but my father's voice shook even the leaves from the trees in the front yard. When he finally fell asleep, partly from fatigue, but mostly because of alcoholic stupor, my mamita crawled under the blankets with my hermanito and we would pray for a better world, life, and future. In the cozy little room that the four of us shared, we prayed that La Virgencita Santa*[6] *would save us from the horror that was my father. Prayer helped us envision a world where my father was non-existent.*

Pierre Bourdieu characterizes world-making as an active symbolic and material process whereby agents imagine new, possible realities in modern systems and structures. Worlds are made through the use of new languages, words, and social space to transform surroundings. Bourdieu argues, "To change the world, one has to change the ways of world-making, that is, the vision of the world and the practical operations by which groups are produced and reproduced" (23). Bourdieu views world-making as a performative endeavor because actors often physically mobilize, including en masse, to create new

power networks (23). Unfortunately, sometimes agents in power transform institutions into oppressive institutions through language and symbols; as an example, market capitalism and the state use discursive logics to maintain their supremacy (Bourdieu 21). Good Gingrich stipulates that modern capitalism and factories oppress migrants, including women migrants, because they construct and view them as exploitable (167). Fortunately, world-making can be a liberatory process because persons have "the power to conserve or to transform current classifications in matters of gender, nation, region, age, and social status" (Bourdieu 23). In other words, oppressed communities engage in world-making by building social and political capital to transform their communities, surroundings, and structures (Bourdieu 17). For example, Tsing describes migrant world-making as river flows that happen as "contestants form themselves in shifting alliances, mobilized for reasons of power, passion, discipline, or dis-ease and mounting campaigns for particular configurations of scale" (327).

One scholarship trend focuses on the ways that migrants enact diverse world-making tactics[7] to challenge oppressive anti-immigration systems and ideologies. Researchers, such as Garelli and Tazzioli, identify different variables that are part and parcel of the system of immigration, including biopolitical censuses that trace migration trends to perpetuate a modern colonial and Eurocentric national imaginary against migrants; Biopolitical systems map, capture, and exterminate migrants (245). In the face of oppression, Salazar spotlights migrant media, dreams, and art as new imaginaries in which migrants use their bodies, creativity, and language to create new militancies and, consequently, new spatio-temporal worlds (Salazar 576). Moreover, according to Papadopoulos and Tsianos, migration itself constitutes productive world-making possibilities because it is a nomadic existence where actors undergo endless processes of becoming, transcending fixed geographies, and mutating their identities (223–224). In essence, migration is a "world-making phenomenon" that contains previously unimaginable transformative possibilities (Walters).

Another scholarship trend focuses on the ways that queers, including queers of color, enact diverse world-making tactics to challenge modern/colonial gender systems. Yep defines queer world-making as

> the opening and creation of spaces without a map, the invention and proliferation of ideas without an unchanging and predetermined goal, and the expansion of individual freedom and collective possibilities without the constraints of suffocating identities and restrictive membership. (35)

Queer world-making tactics destabilize notions of identity, the nation, and normativity, and queer of color world-making attends to the cultural heteronormativity and violence that occurs in communities of color. These tactics help agents overcome the stress and trauma from heteronormative society (Yep). One mechanism by which queers of color create new worlds is through a process that Muñoz refers to as disidentification. Queers of color disidentify with mainstream representations of queers in the media or institutions, normative gender norms, and prescribed behaviors in film, theater, and society to create and perform new worlds (*Disidentifications).* Disidentifications allow queers of color to "envision and activate new social relations" in "subcultural circuits" to resist the "logics of heteronormativity, white supremacy, and misogyny" (5). Queer world-making is intersectional, complex, and is intricately bound to performances that shape the present and

future (Berlant and Warner; Gutierrez-Perez and Andrade; Moreman and McIntosh; M. E. Morrissey; Shah; Yep).

Although scholars write about migrant and queer world-making processes separately, others illustrate the intersection between being queer *and* migrant (Chávez, "Pushing Boundaries"; Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics*; De Genova, Gopinath). For example, Chávez and DeGenova offer extensive historical analyses of structural barriers, policies, and ideologies that target or seek to exterminate queer migrants. In other research, Chávez provides an analysis of national policies that have tried to establish rights for queers, such as gay marriage, but failed to address ongoing homonormative violence against queer migrants ("Homonormativity"). Chávez' and DeGenova's analyses are macro/historical analyses of policies and ideologies that are violently effective at targeting queer migrant populations. Other scholars, such as Gopinath, offer a more personal and affective perspective of migrant queers' experiences. Gopinath, for instance, showcases the "materiality of the everyday," as well as the affective dimensions of living as queer migrants in strange, new worlds (166). Gopinath urges scholars to dig deep into the histories, memories, and archives of queer migrants to locate "ordinary affects," or the "anti-monumental, the small, the inconsequential" daily experiences of queer diasporic subjects (166). The present essay provides historical and personal accounts to understand the ideological landscape of the border sign ideograph, as well as migrants'/queers' (re)drawn iterations that constitute new, oft contradictory, world-making tactics.

Ideographs: visual and embodied

The early study of ideographs focuses extensively on specific words or phrases, such as <liberty> or <equality>, that carry complex, positive and/or negative meanings (Boyd 144). Michael C. McGee introduces the concept of ideographs into the field of rhetorical studies as an analytical method to investigate how political actors and groups use "political language, preserved in rhetorical documents, with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief and behavior" (5). Ideographs arise in socio-political conversations, over long or short periods of time, and may be "taken-for-granted," but often invoke specific ideologies or mindsets that reflect public consensus, dogmas, or beliefs (Boyd 144). Researchers argue that although the meanings and interpretations of ideographs shift and mutate, publics often view or interpret their meanings in "relatively stable" ways (Johnson 34). Ideographs, such as <liberty> and <democracy>, become saturated with meaning(s) that often perpetuate dangerous ideologies that favor dominant groups and they may also arise to target specific groups (Boyd 144).[8]

Scholars typically study ideographs by tracing their ideological underpinnings and/or meanings in diachronic or synchronic ways (Condit and Lucaites xiii; Boyd 144). McGee explains,

> An analysis of ideographic usages in political rhetoric … reveals interpenetrating systems or "structures" of public motives. Such structures appear to be "diachronic" and "synchronic" patterns of political consciousness which have the capacity both to control "power" and to influence (if not determine) the shape and texture of each individual's "reality". (5)

Put simply, Boyd views diachronic analyses as explanations of the historical evolution(s) of ideographs and synchronic moments as episodes where the meanings of ideographs are

used to effectuate changes or actions in contextual surroundings. As an example, Gutierrez-Perez and Andrade provide a diachronic, queer of color critique of <marriage> starting with Hawaii's legalization of gay marriage in the early 1990s, to the sociopolitical upheaval that resulted, and ending with the Supreme Court's legalization of gay marriage in 2013. Simultaneously, the authors show that queers of color engaged in synchronic episodes of activism, cultural transformations, and resistance to show the evolution of new worlds that challenge modern/colonial gender ideologies in <marriage>. Gutierrez-Perez and Andrade's analysis of queer of color's synchronic activism closely resembles the processes of *détournement*, which, according to performance scholars, such as Gray, are effective appropriations of signs or images to create new forms of contestation and resistance. In all, studying the diachronic and synchronic dimensions of ideographs uncovers the interplay between ideology, discursive constructions, and groups' resistance tactics (Delgado, "Chicano"; Lucaites and Condit).

Although ideographic analyses are frequently couched in rhetorical studies, scholars defend the utility of such methodological investigations in performance studies. There are two main reasons why ideographic analysis informs the study of performance. First, scholars view certain ideographs as visual, which expands the repertoire of analysis from text to images with the end goal of uncovering the precise and nuanced ways that ideology is found in the visual sensory realm. For example, Pineda and Sowards describe "flag waving" during the 2006 immigrant rallies and protests as "visual ideographs" because the act constitutes meaningful resistance against dangerous assimilation ideologies, the nation-state, and law enforcement. Flag waving, especially the waving of the Mexican flag, represents a refutation of the American flag and, by extension, the cultural uniformity of mainstream America. Importantly, the performance gave way to the visual that challenged American culture and assimilation (Pineda and Sowards). Pineda and Sowards draw from Cloud, Demo, Edwards and Winkler, and Palczewski to ultimately explain that images, cartoons, and flags are visual ideographs that reveal cultural constructions, ideologies, and imaginaries about different groups of people, including migrants, and effectuate or inspire performances to refute dominant ideology (Cloud, "To Veil"; Edwards and Winkler, "Representative Form"; Palczewski, "Male Madonna"; Pineda and Sowards 166–167). Secondly, ideographs contain embodied elements that are found in performances. For example, Gutierrez-Perez and Andrade spotlight the ways that queers of color construct new worlds by performing <marriage> in ways that challenge legalist or culturally conservative renditions of the institution. Similarly, Johnson suggests that ideographs, such as memes, often reflect public performances that are meaningful precisely because they are acted out in localized and geographically situated ways. This piece marries traditionally rhetorical ideographic analysis and the study of performance (s) to enable what Pezzullo refers to as a deterritorialization of our fields by showing consistencies in our concurrent investigations of people's experiences.

The remaining sections in this essay offer an analysis of the border sign ideograph's historical and ideological landscape and specific migrant/queer iterations of the sign, including glimpses of my family's lives, to showcase world-making potentials. What we learn is that, despite the fact that the border sign has disappeared from the San Diego roadways, new, unpredictable world-making iterations are alive and forthcoming as artists seek to challenge traditional notions of space, family, amnesty, assimilation, education, and what it means to be human. It is important to note that new iterations incite other creative

and often oppositional iterations in an endless cycle of reflectivity that complicates migrant identity, including heteronormative and colonial traces of identity (Enck-Wanzer).

The historical landscape of the border sign

John Hood collaborated with California's Department of Transportation to erect the border sign at a time when anti-immigration ideology was rampant in the U.S. and California. As Purcell and Nevins argue,

> The 1990s saw the emergence of historically unprecedented levels of concern about "illegal" immigration and, associated with that, an "out of control" U.S.–Mexico boundary. This concern was generated discursively–that is through narratives, representations and symbols through which the world is made meaningful and which both reflect and shape social practice. (221)

The authors add that Americans became fascinated with a "'real' southern boundary" and, consequently, migrants were "perceived as threatening the socio-economic, ethno-cultural, and bio-physical security of the nation" (221–222). Around the same time, Bill Clinton's Operation Gatekeeper intended to stop immigration into California and the U.S. and resulted in thousands of migrant deaths due to border enforcement that drove migrants to desolate and dangerous desert areas (Stagliano). Moreover, anti-immigration ideology was reflected in the support for and extremism of California's Proposition 187, a bill that sought to halt educational, social, and medical support for undocumented migrants in the early 1990s (Diamond; Ono and Sloop, *Shifting Borders*). California's Governor Wilson and anti-immigration advocates created the Proposition to prevent the invasion of Mexicans and to motivate migrants to return to their native countries (Santa Ana xvi). Proposition 187 validated "public discourse [that] reaffirmed historic dominance relations at a time when the largely Anglo-American electorate felt threatened" (Santa Ana xvi). Other states tried to enact similar legislation, including English-only restrictions to prevent migrants from receiving social services (Diamond).

Although transportation authorities claimed to be worried about migrants' livelihoods while crossing the roads (Gold; Mydans), the sign revealed socio-cultural fascination with and a cautionary symbol against invasive migration from Latin America (Leimer 84). In fact, Pro-immigration advocates argued that the border sign was a physical representation of anti-immigration ideology and was founded on a stereotype of immigrants as invasive, rushing, and criminal (Berestein; Freitas; Gold) and many iterations emerged that painted migrants as invasive, pollutant, and threatening to California and the nation (Buchanan; Unsavoryagents). According to Feagin, anti-immigration advocates in the 1990s disseminated messages that demonized migrants, including "Representations [that] portray[ed] the process of immigration as dangerous or threatening – as a burden, dirt, a disease, and invasion, or waves flooding the nation" (Feagin xii). Cisneros traces a long history of negative metaphorical depictions of immigrants as invasive, disease-ridden, and pollutant that tapped into Americans' fears of immigrant others and became foundational justifications for strict law enforcement anti-immigration measures, such as Proposition 187 ("Contaminated communities"). Pro-immigration advocates became a threat, as well, because anyone that tried to defend the "semiotic territory of the brown body" was

automatically deemed as unpatriotic and threatening to the nationalist social order (Gomez-Peña 196–203). Consequently, anti-immigration ideology manifested in an increase in surveillance and militarization of the border in the 1990s and the 2000s. For example, Cisneros and DeChaine explain that ordinary, predominantly White Americans saw the government as inadequate and, hence, armed themselves and acted as immigration enforcement to halt and injure migrants along the border (Cisneros, "Contaminated Communities"). Countless reports identify an increase in violence against migrants who were perceived as undocumented or "border-crossing" across the nation (Santa Ana 3).

Anti-immigration ideology has a long historical record. In their seminal work, *Shifting Borders: Rhetoric, is Immigration, and California's Proposition 187*, Ono and Sloop illustrate how racist and xenophobic immigration laws, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act, the internment of Japanese Americans, Operation Wetback, and the systematic deportation of migrants, repeatedly resulted in real, negative, material exploitation of minoritized groups (Ono and Sloop 3). Flores notes that policies were often motivated by anti-immigration ideology and specific discursive tropes that made migrants, especially undocumented migrants, subhuman and exploitable throughout the history of immigration in the U.S. ("Constructing rhetorical borders" 380). Ono and Sloop and Flores similarly identify that discourse played an important role in the emergence of anti-immigration ideologies and representations of migrants as abject and criminal. Interestingly, one iteration from 2005 by the artist Camilo Ontivares replaces the "CAUTION" label with "WANTED" over the silhouettes of the running family to capture the recurrent ideology of

Figure 2. Caution Project: Wanted. Photo: Ontiveros, Camilo. 2005. LatinArt. http://www.latinart.com/artdetail.cfm?img=mx_ontiv_01_th.jpg

criminalization (see Figure 2). Ontiveros' image resembles a mug shot or wanted sign. In *Queer Migration Politics,* Chávez provides a history of immigration policies, including those that excluded queers with HIV/AIDS from entering the U.S., which targeted specific groups based on their race, ethnicities, gender, and sexualities at the end of the twentieth century (1).

Although the border sign disappeared in California recently and migration has shifted to other areas of the border between the U.S. and Mexico, the sign remains in our memory, which is why new iterations frequently emerge in the media and in protests, especially when new anti-immigration policies, such as those in the Bush and Trump eras, are announced. Anti-immigration tropes are alive and rampant and, since the strategic use of discourse is at the root of anti-immigration ideology and practices (Flores, "Constructing rhetorical borders" 380), it is important to identify how migrants/queers can use new discursive tropes, language, and visuals to enact new worlds in the present and future. Migrants/queers (re)create new iterations of the border sign to represent themselves as non-criminal, fundamentally human, and to challenge the mainstream fascination with demonizing migrants/queers. Historically, migrants have repeatedly found ways to resist dominant discourses via the use of stories, newspaper campaigns, and signs to create new worlds in their local communities (Santa Ana, *Brown Tide Rising*; Ono and Sloop, *Shifting Borders*).

(Re)Making space

My tía es una chingona.[9] *For years, she has worked in restorative justice groups in Orange County, California, and is often invited as a consultant to inform the Santa Ana Unified School District on how to best improve student lives and our local communities. She draws from the Chicanx philosophies and lessons in history when she gives her platicas. One of her purposes of life is to end the school-to-prison pipeline because she saw the ways my cousins were mercilessly pushed into the prisons countless times. She has traveled to Sacramento and other school districts to inform others about the need for brown and black liberation. She wants a new world. All the while, she is an undocumented migrant that gets pennies as retribution for her work. She risks deportation and losing her family porque la migra is in these spaces sometimes, but her goal is to create a safe home in this nation for her and her familia. She walks into spaces that don't want her. But she wants change and puts her body on the line daily.*

In a 2005 museum exhibition in San Diego, California, Camilo Ontiveros, enlarges the black silhouettes from the original border sign and displays them as if they were running through the wall and into a museum (see Figure 3). The silhouettes appear to seep into the museum and through the walls; the yellow background from the original border sign is left out to make the silhouettes appear as stand-alone cartoonish figures. The artist's intention is to "emphasize on the inequalities faced by undocumented immigrants who come to the United States to work and earn money at unfairly low wages" (Ontiveros).

Ontiveros' art represents a world-making tactic of transforming the museum, a historically elitist and colonialist space, into a migrants' space. The silhouettes denote invasion of the privileged museum and challenge museum goers' leisurely enjoyment and pleasure by forcing them to face the abject migrant figures. The iteration is an in-your-face, disruptive tactic because the migrant figures transcend the porous walls to ideally force museum

Figure 3. Untitled. Photo: Ontiveros, Camilo. 2005. *San Diego New Contemporaries Art Prize*, Simayspace Art Academy, San Diego. http://highlike.org/camilo-ontiveros-2/

goers to bear witness to the reality that is migration. Such border art disrupts the safety of the museum's walls and "resist[s] corporate culture" because it positively reclaims elitist spaces that were created to disallow people of color from entering (Anzaldúa, "Border arte" 182). Haraway describes the power of bringing the standpoints of the subjugated into techno-political spaces to dispel exclusionary ideologies (191). Such standpoints enact "contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections, and hope for transformation of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing" (192). This tactic enhances the ability for migrants to deny the power of the master ideology because they dictate how they want to be represented (Sandoval 109). The art demonstrates that migrants cannot be contained despite intensive border violence and militarization; whereas the initial border sign was a cautionary tale against migrants, it now becomes a positive world-making invasion.

The disruptive tactic is a form of deterritorialization, a world-making process of suspending neatly constructed territorial borders, as well as reassembling spaces to better suit new meanings an identities (Enck-Wanzer 353). Drawing from Deleuze and Guattari, Papastergiadis explains deterritorialization in the context of migration as "the ways that a national or even a regional culture can no longer be conceived as reflecting a coherent and distinct identity" (115). According to the author, migrants suspend static notions of territory by crossing borders and disrupting the predominant cultures of host nations by bringing in new languages, traditions, and beliefs; this migrant deterritorialization "[rejects] the centre-periphery model which concentrates power and resources in one location" (Papastergiadis 116). In addition, according to the author, migrants deterritorialize because they quickly feel "the need for re-imagining the possibilities of belonging" when they are situated in new communities, spaces, and locations (117). Deterritorialization is powerful process that transforms spaces into potentially fruitful sites for world-making. Enck-Wanzer, for example, found that Nuyoricans shifted culture and space, or "Tropicalized," El Barrio/East Harlem, New York, by constructing casitas, gardens, and other cultural artifacts that radically contrasted their shifting identities to White,

colonialist, mainstream society (346). Enck-Wanzer's work is important because it reveals that migrants perform new cultural rituals and citizenships by making identity fluid and wavering, contra what the author views as identitarian politics that construct identity as natural, static, and, consequently, exclusionary (355). In a similar way, Ontiveros' artwork begins a process of invading a museum space to command presence through momentary and ephemeral art. The art ultimately brings the migrant silhouettes into a museum to show that migration is limitless and uncontrollable, as well as deterritorial.

Unfortunately, Ontiveros' art risks dangerous reterritorialization, which accompanies deterritorialization when new borders, identities, or cultures become fixed or static. As Woodward and Jones III suggest, "Deterritorialized bodies are always (at risk of) falling back under the influence of organization, falling from the continual present, actualized through continuous becomings, into an elsewhere of transcendent identity structures" (240). In their description of deterritorialization, Deleuze and Guattari warn that structures, including nations, the Church, or even families, reterritorialize, often violently, to "[absorb] in the process a larger and larger share of surplus value" (33). Similarly, Papastergiadis suggests that "When identity is at the cusp of transformation there is also a tendency to retreat into, or even to fabricate, hostile narratives which bolster boundaries and exclude any identification with the other" (116). The first reason why Ontiveros' work is reterritorializing is because it leaves intact the walls of a museum and, due to the nature of museums' profit-making essence, it is subsumed into the colonialist space. According to Anzaldúa, the museum is a risky site that maintains coloniality because it was created by White colonizers that periodically brought indigenous art for their consumption and fetishization. It is bittersweet to showcase indigenous artwork in museums because it may not propel colonizers to change their underlying ideologies. In contemporary times, Anzaldúa explains that "Border art is becoming trendy in these neo-colonial times that encourage art tourism and pop culture rip-offs" ("Border arte" 180–181). In addition, the artwork in the museum produces a defacement of migrants because the silhouettes remain abstracted figures. According to Butler, defacement occurs when the physical faces or corpses of others are rendered unintelligible, emotionless, and unmournable (Butler 133–134). Political institutions and the media deface others when they do not show physical faces or choose not to fully report or disclose the experiences of foreign others. Cisneros argued that the continued defacement of migrants is a problem because we are left seeing empty figures without facial dimension and emotion. Defacement is a form of dehumanization and motivates ordinary people to cause violence against migrants, such as the hate crimes that arose against migrants at the border in the late 1990s and 2000s (Cisneros, "Contaminated communities"). Countless human rights abuses, including torture, forced starvation, detention, and deportation often occur because migrants are viewed as objects without human emotion, pain, or face (Butler; Cisneros, "Contaminated communities"). Defacement undermines the deterritorializing power of the tactic at work in Ontiveros's art.

One world-making possibility is to re-face migrants by actively looking beyond the artwork to affectively comprehend the bodily experiences of migrants and to understand their realities outside of the colonialist museum space. As I wrote this piece, I sprinkled moments from my familia's lives throughout my writing to achieve the purpose of giving a face to the faceless silhouettes. My tía, for example, physically seeps into the walls of spaces that were not meant to include her in Orange County, California, and

other sites and she labors daily to fight for a new world for her disabled son, restorative justice, and an increased conocimiento[10] in her neighborhood. She works with other parents, legislators, and school districts to increase financial aid for underrepresented Latinxs, former imprisoned youth, and migrants. But my tía is tired. One look at my tía's face is sufficient to see the emerging wrinkles and scars that show her pain and struggle. Her trenza, a thick, Indigenous, and beautiful hairstyle is turning white because she is withering, though I also blame the profound stress and anxiety from being undocumented for her whitening hair. I talk about her because I want you to seek my tía's face, reader. Anzaldúa asks us to see their caras, or faces, and the material struggles that migrants undergo to survive in the neocolonial present (Anzaldúa, "Haciendo caras"). We begin to see the chameleonic tactics of survival that help them regain their humanity, sociality, and energy to transform themselves and their surrounding communities (Anzaldúa, "Haciendo caras"; Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics*). They seek recognition and make specific demands, such as amnesty. When we move behind the sign, we can begin to see the interplay between the visual and the material. In the interplay, we witness realities beyond the iterations to give credence to my tía and migrants that physically inhabit and move beyond the walls that try to, but fail to keep them out and to affirm and appreciate the material, rhetorical, and performative agencies of migrants in the realm of the everyday (Cheney and Cloud 505; Cloud, "Materiality"; Enck-Wanzer 346).

(Re)Making family

My abuelito first visited the U.S. from Mexico in the 1980s when, he claimed, you could walk across the border without a passport or visa and border patrol did not care. He was a mariachi, so he came to America to play music, earned money, returned to Mexico, and came back. His entry to the US was easy and he never ran through "el cerro," or the rugged, barren desert terrains. Unfortunately, he rarely gave some of his money to his starving family in Mexico. My familia knew that he cheated on his wife, mi abuelita,[11] *and that coming to the U.S. served as escape from having to raise his 9 children who lived in poverty. The starving children often dug out the rotten tortillas from neighbors' trash cans. Inevitably, my abuelita grew tired of my abuelito's absence, so she forced him pay los coyotes (smugglers) to bring them all safely to the U.S. She envisioned a new world for her kids. My dad, mamita, and I followed right behind them. Unfortunately, while my abuelito opened the doors for a whole new world, he was a strict patriarch that commanded order in our tiny apartment. We feared him and his tormenting ways. He was an alcoholic and avid smoker all his life. My abuelito died from complications due to throat and lung cancer on September 15, 2012 in a hospital in Orange County, California.*

In a photograph from a March, 2006, protest or rally, by Bob Morris, an unknown person holds a poster amongst a crowd that shows a new iteration of the original border sign ideograph (Figure 4). The layout within the poster contains the silhouettes of the original family with a label, "THE WRONG WAY," on the top half of a poster while the bottom half contains a new silhouette of the walking family and the label, "THE RIGHT WAY!" The (re)imagined figures on the bottom half of the poster appear to be holding hands and walking with their legs in front and straighter posture. The pigtails of the girl do not dangle in the air. The background of the poster is entirely white, as opposed to yellow.

Figure 4. The Right Way. Photo: Morris, Bob. 2006. Flickr. https://www.flickr.com/photos/polizeros/117832436/in/album-72057594090508178/

The "RIGHT WAY!" iteration presents a world-making opportunity to (re)imagine how we represent migrant families. This iteration gets to the heart of Flores' and Ono and Sloop's analyses about discourse and its central role in shaping predominant imaginaries about immigrants (Flores, "Constructing rhetorical borders" 380). On one hand, the iteration identifies the way that predominant narratives wrongfully depict migrants as dashing and perpetuate the invasive, running migrant stereotype. On the other hand, the iteration seeks to create a new language and discursive representation that demystifies migration to paint it as a familiar image – an altogether human family unit. The walking family silhouettes seem familiar because they resemble figures in other signs, including school crossing signs with figures of walking children. This familiarity challenges what Dean describes as a strangeness that is scripted onto migrant bodies. In familiarity, migrants begin to look more like ordinary citizens, which, ideally, alters ideological preconceptions of migrants as strange, outer-worldly, or invasive. Moreover, the background in the photograph – a protest or rally – establishes an opportunity to re-face migrants because we are drawn to see the artist's face and the faces of other persons, rallying together. Unlike Ontiveros' museum art, the family poster is in an environmental context and occasion that visually depicts actual living people that stand under and behind the poster. Another poster in the background of the same photograph contains a statement calling for "Amnistia: Full Rights for All Immigrants," which floats over at least a dozen faces of people making the demands of inclusion and recognition in the U.S.. These migrants are carnal stand-ins for what the walking family signifies.

Unquestioned in the new iteration is the perpetuation of the nuclear family triad, which often represents an oppressive and hierarchical world structure. The original figures

representing the father, mother, and child remain the same in the "RIGHT WAY!" iteration. The father leads while the mother and daughter follow. When I see these silhouettes of the family, I cannot help but think about the oppressive behaviors of my grandfather and father that frequently transformed my home into a violent place. Fists, brooms, and leather belts were the weapons of choice when my aunts defied them or when my queer uncle dressed as a woman. My father learned from his father to command respect and, hence, he beat his siblings, especially his sisters, if they ever challenged their rules. The women were the maids, according to their eyes. The patriarchs' authoritative and gendered rules augmented our anxiety from living as undocumented persons in the U.S. They violently reterritorialized our home in a new territory. Only when my aunts married did they escape the violence of our home and only in death did my grandfather stop hating my queer uncle. The works of queer and jotería scholars have long shed light on the heteronormativity ingrained in the nuclear family, especially in Latinx homes (Gutierrez-Perez and Andrade) and the negative psychic toll heteronormative models have on queers (Yep). The nuclear family structure, according to Edelman, is used to signify the queer as abject, threatening to normative morals, conventions, and futurity (1–4). The family, including the values associated with the preservation, continuation, and protection of children, perpetuate a social order that demonizes queerness because queers are believed to be degenerates or incapable of having children (Edelman). The nuclear family unit intersects with logics of anti-immigration ideology to demonize and persecute queers; consequently, queers are seen as threats to the familial moral order and anti-immigration policies intersectionally target their migrant status, sex, gender race, class and queer identities (*Queer Migration Politics)*.

Halberstam asks us to affirm the radical nature of queerness as a world-making tactic to challenge heteronormative ideology and structures, such as family. The author states, "Queer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction. They also develop according to other logics of location, movement, and identification" (310). Queerness is in constant flux and, as such, "an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices" that is transformative and life-affirming (310). To suspend the normativity of the original family in the border sign, we can begin to (re)imagine the figures as non-normative identities, so as to imagine new worlds and to queer the sign and figures themselves. As an example, when I look at the figure of the father, mother, or daughter, I choose to (re)imagine the figures as my queer tío,[12] my dead mamita, or me. Instead of thinking of the first figure as my abuelito or my father, the hypermasculine machistas, perhaps it could be my queer primas or my dead abuelita. The possibilities are endless. The figures can be remade to signify who we want them to be, including, but not limited to, many potentialities:

A group of amigxs[13]
Trans drag queens
Jotxs[14]
Mariconxs[15]
(Non)migrants
Fantasmas, ghosts

The end goal is to (re)imagine and, consequently, perform new worlds that are not tied to colonialist, gendered notions of family and relationships (Alcoff, "Mignolo's epistemology

of coloniality"; Lugones). The iterations in the following sections further alter the images to shift from a focus on heteronormative familia to silhouettes of empowered world-makers.

(Re)Making amnesty, education, and queer migration

When my father came to the U.S. the first time in the late 1980s, he came with the illusion that he would receive amnesty. Unfortunately, he realized amnesty was reserved for those that lived here before the 1986 amnesty policy and the wealthy. He returned to Mexico. Later when he returned with me and my mom in the early 1990s following his father, he worked hard to "fix his papers," but he still never obtained citizenship. An eternal cycle. A Mexican Sisyphus. In one attempt, he hired a lawyer that turned out to be a fraud; the lawyer preyed on migrants and ran away with their money. My father tiene muchas ganas[16] *of becoming a citizen, but he is growing older and giving up, so he hinges his hopes on my brother and me to create a new world for him. Amnistia has failed him.*

When my queer tío migrated to the U.S., he went to middle school and high school. He was proud to finish his high school degree because he struggled with English and never received support from his hypermasculine, homophobic father. Despite my abuelito's hypermasculinity, my queer tío would dress as a woman at night and on the weekends because he felt hermosa.[17] *Unfortunately, he was never granted a path to citizenship, despite being a high school graduate. Now in his late 30s, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy and the Dream Act are inapplicable to him because he graduated from high school long ago. He is a forgotten Dreamer, excluded by the requirements of the student policies that were supposed to make his dreams a reality. However, we go to Vegas often because this is a fantastical place for him to dance, gamble, and catwalk all along the Las Vegas Strip. The Strip becomes his catwalk and we imagine new worlds even if short lived during weekends.*

In an online article from 2007, Alex Franco displays an image that alters the original image to show migrants rushing forward with their fists in the air and the word "AMNISTIA" over the figures, as well as the phrase "Full rights for all Immigrants" under the silhouettes (see Figure 5; Franco). It is unclear whether the image was used in protests, though the new iteration is the visual headline for an article announcing a march and rally by the Movement for an Unconditional Amnesty (Franco). The background of the iteration is entirely black and the figures and letters are shown in red. This iteration combined with the text in the article are a demand for immigration amnesty. Ronald Reagan was the last president to create an immigration amnesty in 1986, so, in the decades after, undocumented migrants and movements created large protests and demands to reform a broken immigration system (Cisneros, "(Re) bordering the civic imaginary").

In two other iterations from 2010 and 2011, the Orange County Dream Team (OCDT), now known as the Orange County Immigrant Youth Coalition (OCIYC), change the figures of the original family to a triad of graduating students with graduation regalia (Arellano; Carcamo and Terrell). Their first iteration is similar to the original ideograph because it has a yellow background, though it shows a large CAUTION sign above three silhouettes of students with graduation caps and tassels on their heads and diplomas in their hands; the figures appear to walk toward the right of the sign. One reason why the OCIYC created the students sign was to support the federal Development, Relief, and

Figure 5. Amnistia. Photo: Franco, Alex. 2007. San Francisco Bay Area Independent Media Center. https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2007/04/12/18396515.php

Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, a bill that would provide citizenship to students, and similar laws (Arellano). Arellano viewed the sign as a "clever take on California freeways' iconic illegal-immigrant crossing signs; instead of desperate people running across highway lanes, they feature students in their graduation robes and mortar boards, each clutching a diploma." In their second iteration, the OCDT/OCIYC show the same three graduating students, but transpose a symbolic multi-colored rainbow flaw over the entire sign while the students are still starkly black.[18] The intention of the transposed rainbow flag is to spotlight the ways that the immigration system targets migrants, students, and queers.

The "AMNISTIA!" and graduating students iterations exemplify one common world-making tactic: The artists (re)draw migrants/queers as empowered political agents, as opposed to ordinary running or walking persons. It is important to note that the artists of these iterations are pro-immigration activists that have long standing purposes to reform the systems of immigration and education. As such, the signs are proactive and prescriptive because they represent migrants' goals of changing the political and educational structures. Unlike previous iterations that solely change the way we represent, view, and discursively construct migrants, the three new iterations proscribe physical, material changes and they echo movements' intentional goals and purposes of transforming society beyond the discursive. These iterations are an example of what Cloud considers "materialist ideology criticisms" because they seek material transformation, as opposed to

idealist changes in discursive representations of marginalized others ("Materiality" 141). Furthermore, the artists challenge what Sandoval viewed as "naturalized signs," or those that are critically unquestioned and central markers of "imperiality" (90–91). In other words, unlike previous iterations, the new images traverse the imperial connotations that dehumanize the individuals because they (re)imagine migrants as politically empowered agents with energy and motivation to transform structures, demand changes, and be reflective. The new agents are not mere replicas of the former, nor do they leave the original family intact. The new images are protesters, students, and contextualized in a multicolored queer backdrop. These images

> [diagram] out the containers that structure consciousness in order to propose a praxis for breaking meaning and mind free out of their living yet frozen 'mythical' forms, and return them to 'life,' to a process that can occur beyond domination. (Sandoval 90–91)

The visuals are important insofar as they are tied to textual and physical protests to build and organize community and protest. The silhouettes echo the rallying cries and intersectional goals, including amnesty and education rights, as a means to (re)make the world.

Unfortunately, the new iterations seek inclusion and assimilation into the nation-state, which, according to many scholars, maintains a world of dangerous marginalization via reterritorialization. Such demands reterritorialize the colonial state's material and ideological borders, as was evident after the 1986 amnesty and other recent policies that gave access to some well-deserving migrants, such as students, but excluded many others, including queers (Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics*; De Genova; Gutierrez-Perez and Andrade; M. E. Morrissey). Migrants often perpetuate the logic of exclusion via their demands for inclusion, or what Luibhéid refers to as "neoliberal logics that produce violence" (181), particularly in everyday rhetoric that maintain unconscious hopes in nationalism (Enck-Wanzer). In the case of students, Cacho argues that they are "differentially included" because the system needs them to be in a "subordinate standing" to continue exercising power (5). Inclusion is often limited and although the law keeps promising to integrate them because of their educational fluency, it keeps postponing the passage of laws, such as the DREAM Act. These "youth are relegated to the realms of social death, perhaps permanently so" (143). Moreover, the construct of the good student migrant functions to demarcate those that are not, including queer migrants like my father and my tío, who are continuously forgotten (Anguiano and Najera).

Fortunately, hope lies in the ways that OCIYU creates new world-making tactics by queering the sign and establishing materialist activism to raise awareness about all migrants/queers. The OCIYU (re)drew the sign (the rainbow iteration) to (re)imagine themselves as change agents to create communal solidarity efforts and to activate an unflinching and intersectional reflexivity, a characteristic of queer of color world-making, to prevent the exclusivity ingrained in inclusion and citizenship (Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics*; Gutierrez; Gutierrez-Perez and Andrade). In some ways, the rainbow image reveals the limitations of previous iterations; namely, previous iterations did not account for queer migrant experiences. In addition, one branch of the OCIYU name themselves the Undocuqueers because they have the purpose of raising awareness about the intersections between migrant, queer, and racial oppression in protests and beyond the sign (OCIYU, "Don't Leave Undocumented Queer People"). Undocuqueers are empathetically mindful of exclusionary logics of the state and, therefore, create

communal power networks to materially transform their surroundings, while offering educational, health, and support services (Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics*; Ortuno). According to Chávez, Undocuqueers have pioneered the fight for immigration rights, though they uniquely place sexuality and gender in the center of discussions over citizenship reforms. Undocuqueers raise awareness of the multiplicity of identity in migrants and shed light on the anti-black, anti-indigenous, and failed strategies of mainstream White LGBT movements. Though they call for political recognition, they do so principally to energize their communities, while disidentifying with the normative and colonialist structures (Muñoz). The world-making of Undocuqueers provides insight about every day, transformative tactics; as Anzaldúa suggested, we must "Listen to what your Jotería is saying" to realize how they intersectionally challenge gender boundaries, citizenship, and racial structures (107). They create community beyond and outside of the law while affirming radical difference and desires (Berlant and Warner). Unfortunately, Undocuqueers are also some of the main bearers of violence against migrants (Chávez, "Homonormativity").

(Re)Making the human

Mi mama died on November 19, 2005 due to complications from breast cancer here in the U.S.. Mi abuelita died on December 17, 2017 from gaping wounds that spread across her body after over 20 years of being on dialysis here in the U.S.. In excruciating pain from the massive open wound on her back, at the hospital, mi abuelita refused medicine and kept telling the familia to let her rest, "Ya, dejenme descansar." She welcomed death because she knew she would enter a spiritual state to join my mama (her best friend) and protect us into the future. She had long given up on the system of immigration. Until her dying days. Had I known that their destinies would be as painful, perhaps I would have cautioned them against coming to El Norte, the U.S. But I was an escuincle. And now I am grown. I now know they came here for me to be their heir and to take care of la familia after their passing. And they guide me daily as specters to productively navigate these colonial landscapes. They are buried at a cemetery in Orange County, California. Were they ever alive?

In an iteration from 2015, Lalo Alcaraz replaces the original family and human silhouettes with three black skeletons to signify "Muertos Crossing," or the dead crossing (see Figure 6). Alcaraz explained, "The image honors those who have died trying to cross the border, but also evokes the crossing of the dead into the land of the dead." Alcaraz shows the images in a park environment, open to the public and spectators.

Alcaraz's iteration is a pessimistic world-making tactic that functions as a death warning, reminding migrants that we are dead upon arrival and that integration and assimilation may be empty promises. I view the iteration as raising a central epistemological and ontological question: What good is migration if we are mere skeletal corpses in the vastness of these colonial terrains? Pessimistically, I see my papa, mama, and me with curly hair dangling in the air in the skeleton figures; perhaps we were dead upon arrival to the U.S from my beautiful Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico in the early 1990s. I understand Alcaraz' intention. The iteration directly questions the previous iterations' attempts to humanize, empower, or liberate migrants/queers in the current and future social-political landscape. Cacho argues that the bodies of black and brown bodies are repeatedly scripted

Figure 6. Muertos Crossing. Image used courtesy of Lalo Alcaraz, Photo and Artwork ©2019 Lalo Alcaraz. www.pocho.com/lalo-alcaraz-this-year-for-ddlm-my-altar-is-muertos-crossing/

as criminal, lawbreaking, immoral, and undeserving, which, according to the author, reduces them to a status as "socially dead" (4).

> These permanently criminalized people are the groups to whom [Cacho refers] to as *ineligible for personhood* – as populations subjected to laws but refused the legal means to contest those laws as well as denied both the political legitimacy and moral credibility necessary to question them. (6)

But, optimistically, this new iteration is also a world-making tactic that commemorates our dead ancestors and spirits that inhabit the barren deserts of the borderlands and, if Cacho's analysis is correct, for all migrants that are reduced to social death. Alcaraz' iteration is an opportunity to commemorate migrant ghosts – in the past, now, and future – that were murdered, persecuted, and exploited by the nation-state, including those that died crossing the border into the U.S. and remain nameless, voiceless, faceless. In the possibilities of commemoration, the new image is a memorial that opens new possibilities of

giving credence to the dead, including what I previously referred to as a "collective rememberance and ethnic mourning" that challenges imaginaries of citizenship not by seeking humanization, but by mourning the dead and giving them the credence they were denied ("On the Death of mi Madre"). Ad infinitum. Alcaraz' iteration may be the altar we need to burn our incense, light our veladoras, and pray to. In commemoration, we seek communal mourning and pray, bury, and interact with our dead because the nation-state would otherwise attempt to censor us (Butler; Hoag). The dead have agency; they protect us and we can actively interact with them to create mutual empowerment (Andrade, "On the Death of mi Madre"). In doing so, we create a phantasmic collectivity where we are not passive, immaterial entities. As ghosts, we navigate and morph the material and, hence, can materialize into invasion of these territories to haunt the colonialists still living here.

Toward more and more and more migrant/queer iterations and worlds

Our work is far from over. In "Homonormativity and Violence against Immigrants," Chávez proposes a "Radical Queer Worldmaking" with recommendations that include, but are not limited to: looking beyond single-issue reforms, such as gay marriage, centering queer political discussions on citizenship and sexuality and gender, and adopting an international framework against homonationalism amd necropolitics. Most importantly, Chavez states, "Rage against the normative. Always and at all costs" (135). I agree with Chávez' material and structural recommendations, though I add that we must look further at the everyday performances of migrants/queers that activate new world-making processes to address anti-immigration and xenophobic ideology. This essay is but one instance of such immersion into the performances that reconfigure power circuits in modern/colonial gender systems. To truly understand the meanings of artifacts, we must force ourselves to bodily "immerse" ourselves into the environments of the actors (Conquergood 82). The border sign represents a visual and embodied ideograph that migrants/queers have (re)drawn to enact new world-making tactics and to formulate new possibilities for who we are and what we can be. An ideographic analysis of the sign reveals that whereas the original ideograph perpetuated negative ideological dogmas, migrants/queers create new iterations to shift space, including museums, and to change predominant conceptions of migrants as stereotypically invasive or dangerous. Interestingly, however, several iterations, (un)consciously manifest new dangerous ideologies, including a defacement of migrants due to the vague silhouettes, the heteronormative nuclear family structure, and statist demands for inclusion. Promising, though, is the opportunity of even newer iterations that reface faceless silhouettes, disidentify with violent cultural structures, such as heteronormative familial structures, and formulate demands that do not recreate neoliberal logics of exclusion even when working within the state apparatus. Additionally, new iterations of the ideograph are about commemoration and confrontation of a very possible existential reality that migrants/queers may be socially dead in the modern colonial gendered landscapes.

Taken together, the new iterations of the border sign show how migrant/queer world-making often happens; many migrant/queer world-making strategies are unpredictable, contradictory, (in)visible, shifting, ghastly, deathly, but all the while material, performative, and powerful. And while the original ideograph was rooted in violent ideology,

migrants/queers are resilient and creative. The daily performances of migrants/queers beyond the sign, such as those by my familia, tactically show endless shifts and unpredictable movements in our identity and modes of living that are not mere abstractions, but are, on the contrary real and carnal. These performances help us survive and have the real effect of dispelling ideological myths about us. Enck-Wanzer suggested that the uprising of art, murals, and houses made possible a cultural production because these materials were socially grounded and say so much about the cultural, performative networks of the agents. I agree, but I also see an enduring, productive reflexivity to deterritorialize borders, culture, and identity when there are potentially new reterritorializations. New iterations emerge to resist and oppose ideologies of the old and new. In the interplay between the figures in the signs and the very real flesh they represent, as well as the ways these lives motivate the production of new iterations, we learn that they are here to deterritorialize tactically, endlessly.

As an endnote, reader, this piece is asking you to look beyond the ideograph and new iterations to avoid the risk of reducing migrant/queer identities, or dangerously reterritorializing identity, to what is represented in the ideograph. We ask you to look at the faces beyond the signs, but not for the sake of certainty and absolute comprehension. You may never understand. It is in the interplay between the symbolic and material/performative that our communal agency happens – unpredictably and sometimes (in)visibly – in the same ways that migrants' imaginations allow them to draw new protest signs that morph the silhouette of the original families. The signs do not exist in a vacuum, but rather echo and show ephemeral, incomplete silhouettes of the lives of migrants/ queers beyond the sign. When we see the sign and the actors that bring the images to life, we realize that we have specific demands that fully capture our ever shifting needs and identities. In the event that we may always already be dead (Cacho), we begin to imagine these new worlds in creative and radical ways to find meaning even in our phantasmic state and we replace images that demonize or hurt us. Additionally, new iterations push us to (re)imagine our communal values (e.g. normative familial relationships, inclusion, assimilation, and life) in unprecedented ways. We come to realize that migrancy/queerness is in constant flux and, hence, our communal relationships and identities shift and morph concurrently (Moreman and Calafell). Enck-Wanzer writes that this continuous shifting is perhaps a solution to nationalist and identitarian politics that divide our communities. As Tsing's analogy between migrant world-making and rivers suggests, we trickle into the American landscape, while forming pockets and campaigns for self- and other-empowerment and transformation. The signs meld with our bodies to spring whole new worlds.

This essay spotlighted only a few iterations of the border sign. New iterations are emerging, including those from non-migrants/queers that very directly criticize policies, such as Trump's family separation orders. There is ample room to identify new iterations and to investigate their embedded discursive and performative meanings. In all, the signs are a reminder that, although the physical sign has disappeared along the border of Mexico and the U.S., we have not forgotten the anti-immigration roots of the sign and its landscape. We act on our memory to show new, empowered identities, all the while performing new possibilities for who we are and how we define ourselves beyond the sign. Tracing its historical landscape, we notice that the sign emerged from racist, exclusionary, and anti-immigration tropes that are alive today and intersect with cultural homophobia and

gendered colonialist legacies. Hence, migrants/queers engage the construction of new iterations, in daily episodes of activism, daily performances, cultural transformations, and resistance to show the evolution of new worlds that challenge traditional ideologies in the original ideograph.

Notes

1. Family.
2. Stories, or experiences.
3. Kid, or rascal.
4. Toy cars.
5. Little brother and mommy.
6. Holy Virgin Mary.
7. The use of tactics is intentional. Enck-Wanzer provides a comprehensive explanation of tactics in contradistinction to strategies. Namely, Enck-Wanzer draws from Certeau to argue that tactics "activate performative repertoires, craft spaces of resistance to the established order, and alter the capacity for others to act" (351).
8. Stylistically, scholars use the "<" and ">" brackets to notate ideographs that reflect "the normative, collective commitments of the members of a public," but many scholars, particularly those that study visual ideographs, do not use the brackets for ideographs that may be vague and will, consequently, require additional "linguistic details of spelling out specifically what those [ideographs] are supposed to be standing for" (Boyd 147). In this piece, I do not use brackets for the border sign ideograph because, although the sign is a constant referent in discussions about immigration, I contend that migrants'/queers' iterations push our collective memories to visualize the sign in unpredictable, newly emergent ways that could stand-in or replace the original.
9. My aunt is a badass.
10. Anzaldúa refers to this as a profound sense of understanding (*The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader).*
11. Grandma.
12. Uncle.
13. Friends.
14. Queers.
15. Queers.
16. Much desire.
17. Beautiful.
18. The OCDT displayed the multi-colored image on their Facebook page, which is no longer available. I archived the image in my personal collection of border sign iterations/images.

Disclosure statement

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