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Cruz Arzabal, Roberto.

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Writing and the Body: Interfaces of Violence in Neoliberal Mexico

Roberto Cruz Arzabal

What constitutes the political gestures of a book that doesn't necessarily address a political subject or which engages with other texts that are "solely" political or economic in nature?[1] How must signs be handled in order for the book to operate in the direction of the present and the future—like a vanishing line that originates in a permanent state of crisis and moves toward the crisis of the production system? In viewing the relationship between text and cultural practices as an intersection of powers and intensities,[2] these questions ultimately address threshold-codification and crisis-production in these spaces of mediation.

According to Félix Guattari, "[T]o learn the intimate workings of this production [of subjectivity], these ruptures of meaning that are auto-foundational of existence—poetry today might have more to teach us than economic science, the human sciences and psychoanalysis combined."[3] In this way, poetry could function as a space of codification and crisis for these thresholds. However, it is important to contextualize poetry's importance in this respect. In addition to being an ideology and a program, neoliberal capitalism is a semiotic operator that has endeavored to extend the goods-production process into the production of signs;[4] the arts in general and poetry in particular can participate in sign-reproduction through the policies of financialization, speculation, and the generation of capital gains,[5] which is why not all poetry is necessarily posited as an autonomous space in the face of capitalism. Poetry's role is no longer to reproduce language out of exceptionality; indeed, for poetry to serve as a critical connector of capitalism's semiotic operations, it must occupy an indeterminate space with respect to the referentiality of language (the utility of the capitalist sign)[6] and the aestheticization of life and violence—not acting solely in the pure immanence of literary writing, but rather in the political activations of poetic form and voice.

Unlike poems and literary texts in which violence or the neoliberal economy appear as a representation, I want to propose the reading of a small body of texts that express "a singular vibration of the voice."[7] The voice of these proposed poems is defined not only by their sound, but also by their corporality, comprising the construction of interfaces that permit us to read beyond a book's evident materiality. Following Alexander R. Galloway, my conception of the interface is broader than the one traditionally used: no longer as its own medium or as a medium's operative surface, but rather as "the point of transition between different layers of media within any nested system. The interface is an 'agitation' or generative friction between different formats."[8] The interface, then, is the space of operation that enables transitions between media and forms of language. Not all interfaces are visible; in fact, part of their nature involves remaining invisible in order to function properly. When an interface appears, it has stopped operating as such and has begun to function as a medium. Thus, I have chosen to study four works containing at least two types of language whose critical relationship reveals the operativity of their interface.

The book *Hechos diversos* (In Different Incidents, in Spanish, 2011, unpublished in English) by Mónica Nepote (b. 1970) employs a particular visual format that distinguishes between two parts of a poem: one written in poetic language, another in referential language. *Antígona González* (Spanish, 2011; English, 2016) by Sara Uribe (b. 1978) rearranges excerpts from disparate sources, testimonies of relatives of people killed by narcotrafficking, data on murders in Mexico, and fragments of literary and academic texts on Antigone. *Anti-Humboldt* (2014) by Hugo García Manríquez (b. 1978) is a visual and textual intervention in the text of the North American Free Trade Agreement signed by the United States, Mexico, and Canada in 1994. Finally, *The 27th/El 27* (2014) by Eugenio Tisselli (b. 1972) is an intervention in Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, defamiliarizing its reading as a legal text through the use of global financial flows.

Each book employs a collision between two forms of interface-mediated language, impeding a functional or representational reading of the texts. These poems are not produced through the poet's enunciation as a medium;[9] rather, they are works in which the language of capitalism's abstract machine is made visible. In the four works studied, we can observe the production of the body, or of the fracture, as effects of poetic language in the face of capitalism's own dematerialized language, as well as the task of defamiliarizing signs and signification procedures toward the production of interfaces of materiality.

The body: Mediations from what remains

Neoliberalism is a semiotic operator that administers flows and tensions for the production of subjectivity. One of the premises for the flows of contemporary capitalism is the alienation of bodily processes from sign production; these signs' apparent dematerialization portrays the body as a mediated body within circuits of capital. Thus, the body appears as a remnant: no longer as the space where mediations occur, but rather as what lies beneath them—the ruins of sign-production, and what, therefore, cannot be communicated.

The poems in Mónica Nepote's *Hechos diversos* can be read as reflections on the transfer processes and interfaces between written texts, social practices, and bodies. An original edition published by the artisanal press Ediciones Acapulco, the book was configured as a wallet containing three stitched booklets (chapbooks) and two loose sheets. Each chapbook collected poems that were structured according to shared motifs. While each group of texts could be read via the mediation processes operating therein,[10] I propose, for the purposes of this article, a reading of the third chapbook alone, also titled "In Different Incidents," as this one best exhibits the poem's possibilities as a place of enunciation and mediation of discursive heterogeneity. With a single lens, each poem in "In Different Incidents" combines various critical operations: the poem's enunciation, the correlative narration in referential language, and the creation of tension through a simple visual layout.

The phrase in the title is a translation of the French term *fait divers*, which French newspapers use to denote crime stories, known as tabloid pieces or sensationalist press. Each poem refers to an act of social violence chronicled in this press, from murders known publicly for their cruelty to torture cases like those registered in the humiliating photos from Abu Ghraib or news of murdered women in Ciudad Juárez. These actions' general context is not necessarily one of biopolitical violence or dispossession resulting from neoliberalism. Nonetheless, I find it pertinent to study these poems in relation to the other texts discussed here, as such events are indeed framed by a social process that is intimately connected with the rest: the society of hyper-mediatized images that are both consumption and medium. Nepote's poems critically engage with what we know as visual culture.[11]

On the one hand, the sensationalist press habitually chronicles these types of brutal events using coarse, callous, judgmental language, one tending toward morbid and unethical fascination with corpses as an object of circulation. On the

other, in addressing such occurrences with poetic language, one risks "softening" violence. In both cases, it appears that documenting these "diverse events" means traveling between two forms of aestheticizing violence, especially given the effects of mediating that violence. Referential language proves inadequate in registering such crimes' true weight; aesthetic language is also insufficient, as it may conceal dehumanization and participate in highbrow aestheticization. In both cases, both types of language contribute to the overexposure of bodies and peoples through images.[12]

In view of this phenomenon, Nepote's poems can be read as a critical linkage of both languages through their interaction within the *mise en page* and the creation of an intermediate space that does not correspond to either one, but rather to the interface produced between them. The poem "In the Cell a Name" is based on Marc Dotroux's kidnapping, rape, and murder of Julie Lejeune. During her captivity, Lejeune writes her name on the cell wall: "Todavía puede leerse,"[13] states the referential text on the mark she left behind. This trace is repeated in various forms throughout the text; however, the poetic text makes no reference to any act of violence, but rather to what remained in its wake: "Tocar el nombre/ en la superficie sucia"; "Tocar el nombre/tu testamento."[14]

In examining each of these vocabularies as layers of media nesting within a system of mediation, the unit comprises both its arrangement and the media inside the container. The interface is the agitation prompted among all elements in order to communicate what none can express on its own. Both referential and poetic language prove insufficient and unfeasible when facing reality—which must be mediatized not through one of them alone, but rather through their agitation. In order to deliver a message, mediation hides the usual forms of poetry and referential language and focuses instead on the materiality of the system.

Another poem in the book, "The Girls Dance," repeats the structure of interaction between the two media: In the poetic text, an unidentified lyric voice insistently wonders about the eponymous girls ("Dónde están bailando, dónde las muchachas, todas"[15]), and then denies that the remains of their bodies can be equated with their lives ("Digan dónde, dónde quedan las voces, luces en la arena, no sus marcas en las dunas"[16]). The poem's key moment occurs in the medium assigned to referential language. Here, where one would assume the presence of a neutral account, the referential voice states: "En Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua han sido asesinadas más de cuatrocientas mujeres en los últimos diez años. Tan sólo por ser mujeres./Nada más qué agregar."[17]

"*Excommunication is given as a message, a message that proclaims: 'there will be no more messages'*."[18] The unsayable cannot be communicated in words, but rather with their remnants or with the refusal to explain, with what remains of Lejeune's murdered body and with what takes a stance without saying so, what opposes the brutality of such murders, the material mark left by violence. The writing on the wall during Lejeune's last days is also an attempt to express inexpressible suffering; her name remains as a vestige of impossible saying, the impossible said. Violence stole Lejeune's and the Ciudad Juárez women's chance to raise their own voices: In losing the opportunity to name themselves, they have been excommunicated, expelled from the community to which they once belonged—not by a political order, but by the outright act of patriarchal violence.

Excommunication, like interrupted communication, is associated not with the inability to deliver and receive messages (that is, a problem with the channel), but rather with the chance to experience the message, an effect of mediation that understands what has been received, turning it into a communicative sign. The paradox posed by critical poems on contemporary violence and the violence of images is problematized, in this case, through the vagueness produced by the interface, the "being on the boundary"[19] that seeks to communicate what cannot be communicated. That said, it doesn't do so with words, but rather with what Guattari calls "a-signifying semiotics," which "can bring into play systems of signs that, though they may incidentally have a symbolic or a signifying effect, have no connection with that symbolism or signification as far as their specific functioning is concerned."[20] Nepote's poetic writing draws from the agitation between media in order to communicate beyond words. The interface is a fundamental element in the poems' significance; the interaction between layers of media does not function as a symbolic element, but it has a symbolic effect on the relationship with the poem's other components. The interface established by the layout yields different tensions and superimpositions among media, representations, and semiotics.

One element I would like to highlight in Nepote's poems is that violence is mediated by the interface not only with respect to the relationships among the media-related elements that project meaning toward the crisis of representation, but rather in the topics where it operates. In both poems, the bodies of murdered individuals become present through the emergence of traces that intervene in violence's historicity. In both cases, then, bodies appear through the marks left by violence: "La lucha/huella fotográfica"[21] for Lejeune; as negation for the

murdered women of Juárez ("… no sus marcas en las dunas"[22]). In this sense, the mark or the trace, as both topic and interface of the poems, allows bodies snatched up by violence to reenter the terrain of language; at the same time, they create a crisis for traditional forms of representing bodies. The inoperative interface emerges from the reading, refracted, toward the nonrepresentational space that directs and channels the production of images with respect to violence.

While similar in its topological relationship with bodies that suffer violence, Sara Uribe's *Antígona González* differs in form. The book was written by assembling quotes drawn from many kinds of sources,[23] and it coheres around the figure of Antígona González, whose fictional interventions are interspersed with the quotes. This female character tells the story of her brother Tadeo, kidnapped either by the state or by narcotraffickers (no one knows), and of the search for him—until he is found in a mass grave in San Fernando, Tamaulipas.[24] In *Antígona González*, as a parallel to *Hechos diversos*, the book produces an interface that agitates the relationships between documentary and fictional texts. This one isn't a visible interface, as in the prior book's *mise en page*, but rather an invisible one that appears in the endnotes. More than facilitating a reading of these specific books, the interfaces enable other readings—those based on materiality or textual relationships, for example.

When it comes to communication, what does it mean to "take the floor" if not speaking over someone else, wresting away what she says, and saying it in her place? In a context in which relationships between subjects and texts are governed by positions and hierarchies of property and dispossession, it is naïve to think that one can make use of others' words without aestheticizing them. More than offering spaces of enunciation or re-enunciation, *Antígona González* constitutes itself as spaces of a loss that is carried out, not named. Mourning

> … consists always in attempting to ontologize remains, to make them present, in the first place by *identifying* the bodily remains and by *localizing* the dead … One has to know. *One has to know it. One has to have knowledge* [Il faut le savoir]. Now, to know is to know *who* and *where*, to know whose body it really is and what place it occupies—for it must stay in its place.[25]

If the interface is the ambiguous space between layers of media and their transitions, we can expand this idea to define media materiality as the space where a deferred loss, one that occurs in writing itself, appears. Thus, we can think of *Antígona González*'s grieving poetics as a deferral between writing and

materiality; its production conditions as the mediation of a specter is none other than the violence triggered by the necropolicies that support the reproduction of capitalism.[26]

In *Antígona González*, Sara Uribe makes the book into a space for mourning by connecting two elements: the grief of the eponymous character, searching for her brother Tadeo's body, and the unresolved sorrows of the many mourners whose testimonies are concentrated here as fragments. *Antígona González* is a work produced by the double movement of excavation and montage: It is written with writing's remnants, with the residue of the news, thus giving form to the absences of the missing.[27] "La absurda, la extenuante, la impostergable labor de desenterrar un cuerpo para volver a enterrarlo. Para confirmar en voz alta lo tan temido, lo tan deseado: sí, señor agente, sí, señor forense, sí, señor policía, este cuerpo es mío."[28] Antígona González continually wonders, and without rhetoric, what is left of her loved ones. The answer isn't easy: what's left is the fragment, the found cadaver. A void remains in place of the person who won't return. However, in Antígona's own voice, the response takes on aspects of perseverance: "Frente a lo que desaparece./: Frente a lo que desaparece: lo que no desaparece."[29] The ghost torments with its presence, although it isn't entirely present. A ghost is the deferred spirit, but a ghost is also what's unfinished. It is fitting, then, that the fragments comprising this work largely consist of relatives' voices. More than a realist aesthetic or one of denunciation, *Antígona González* shows us the effects of disappearance and death in the crisis of language and quotations. As Jo Labanyi states: "What memory can do is communicate the importance of the past in the present—that is, reestablish the affiliative link with the past that capitalist modernization set out to break. Memory does so by representing not the past directly, as realist narrative promises to do, but the effects of the past on the present—its unfinished business."[30] *Antígona González*'s engagement with grief is focused more on memory than on ghosts; what persists isn't what occupies space, but rather the attempt to reconstruct it. This work with loss is what permits a community to form around what disappears and what has not.

In *Antígona González*, as a counterpoint to the silence of *In Different Incidents*, those "excommunicated" by disappearance resist that disappearance through the voices that name them. Grief and the book come together in an undetermined third space, a threshold in which their reappearance occurs. The disappeared don't entirely return; they cannot be conjured back into corporality. Nonetheless, they acquire a floating form between the book's materiality (the act

of reading, the performance) and its deferral. Only in this way can the grieving and the missing become part of a new community, the community of grief—which only exists as an event in order to disappear once again. The book as a space of mediation, as a "being on the boundary," is also a space through which codes take on a feeling form. Both books' interface, then, is the space in which the body supersedes the sub-media space, what underlies the interface, what becomes visible in its alteration.

Writing: Mediations through fracture

According to Boris Groys, the sub-media space—that is, the format allowing signs to appear and which consequently disappears—constitutes the space of truth. "The truth of media-ontology is not the truth of scientific description but the truth of coerced or voluntary confession … [The observer does not look] for the state of exception, for the special moment that allows us insight into the interior, into the secret, into what is hidden behind the medial surface."[31] An interface's job is to conceal the sub-media space and operate on a surface that presents itself as a bearer of signs—which makes it invisible. Referential truth is a mediated truth; by contrast, the truth of the sub-media space is a field of exception, an aberration of mediation. In this regard, Groys finds the role of plagiarism and quotation singularly relevant as political procedures: "the distinction between quotation and plagiarism plays a crucial role in this context, because this distinction marks, at the same time, the border between the symbolic economy and the market economy."[32] Perhaps it isn't strange, then, that some of recent literature's most critically interesting works implement citationist principles. That said, these works cannot be described exclusively through the practice of citation; to do so means situating them in a potential "aestheticization" of this practice. Thus, I propose a different way of conceiving them.

In "A Conversation: What Is It? What Is It For?" Deleuze explains his concept of the "pick-up" as a search for lines of flight in one's thought: "You should not try to find whether an idea is just or correct. You should look for a completely different idea, elsewhere, in another area …"[33] Using this method, he sought to show the heterogeneity that characterizes things and people, a heterogeneity that does not always allow them to know "which line they are on." The "pick-up" would ultimately be the opposite of the "cut-up" popularized by William Burroughs (a purely citationist aesthetic); indeed, while the latter "is still a

method of probabilities—at least linguistic ones,"[34] the former "is a stammering. … no cutting, folding and turning down, but multiplications according to the growing dimensions."[35]

I return to Deleuze's concept in order to establish an interpretation of the proceedings at work in *Anti-Humboldt* and *The 27th*. Before seeking to determine the truth or falseness of an idea, Deleuze suggests looking for another idea, a different one, to confront it with the previous—somewhat like the search for sub-media truth. This truth-of-surfaces doesn't emerge without mediation, which is why it is necessary to create an interface that enables us to discern it. Not just any interface, however: it must be an inoperative interface.[36] This is not a dialectical process, but rather a collision, the creation of lines of flight; not simply compilation, not an aestheticizing erasure, but rather the critical exception within the biopolitical exception.

Anti-Humboldt by Hugo García Manríquez is clearly a counter-text to one of neoliberalism's key documents in Mexico: the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Despite its citationist and conceptual aspects, García Manríquez's poem develops a study of textual material that heads in a different direction than that of other similar conceptualisms. The book is built by erasing passages from NAFTA in a way that emphasizes phrases and words as if they were floating against a spectral background. These words and phrases generate propitious associations that, on first reading, seem to be the product of a fleeting lyrical stutter; indeed, as we read, the background reappears, rising to the surface every time, and thus preventing us from forgetting the biopolitical framework from which they were extracted. The truth of the sub-media space is not the words left after an attempt to erase them, but rather the impossibility of total erasure. To show an example of such fragments:

> Each Party shall grant duty-free entry to commercial samples of negligible value, and to printed advertising materials, imported from the territory of another Party, regardless of their origin, but may require that:
>
> […]
>
> Article 307: Goods Re-Entered after Repair or Alteration[37]

The 27th seems to be a counter-text to the document against NAFTA, Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution. The sub-media truth is that the article turns out to be a counter-text to itself in the age of the treaty, now put forth as the ultimate meta-text of neoliberal territoriality in Mexico.[38] Following the modifications made to the constitutional article in 2013, under Enrique

Peña Nieto's administration, "'the Nation' has acquired the *right* to transfer the dominion over lands and territorial waters (and, consequently, over the humans and non-humans who inhabit them) into private hands."[39]

The citationist principle in Eugenio Tisselli's work[40] operates through an algorithmic reading of the original text; its seemingly simple interpretative method, conducted via algorithmic networks, means that:

> every night, after the activity at the New York Stock exchange has come to an end, a robot obtains its last closing price and its respective percent variation. If the variation is positive, another robot chooses a fragment of Article 27 randomly, translates it into English automatically, and inserts the translation into its corresponding place within the original text written in Spanish. Given enough time, the algorithm will produce a version of Article 27 fully readable in an effective—yet incorrect—English.[41]

After a year in operation, the translation of the full article was complete, at which point it was restarted from the beginning.[42] Clicking on each phrase in red allows the reader to see when the phrase was translated and with what percentage the Stock Exchange closed that day. The text becomes, then, an image of the extractive economy by indicating the red stains of text in an effective English; at the same time, it also becomes its own counterimage in revealing when these texts were extracted. The image's past and present simultaneously constitute the future of the constitutional text, the legal function of which has been fractured by algorithmic incision.

> ARTICLE 27. PROPERTY LAND AND WATER INCLUDED WITHIN THE CITY HOMELAND, CORRESPONDE ORIGINARIAMENTE A LA NACION, WHICH HAS HAD AND HAVE THE RIGHT TO TRANSMIT THE DOMAIN OF THESE INDIVIDUALS, CONSTITUYENDO LA PROPIEDAD PRIVADA.
>
> […]
>
> LA ASAMBLEA GENERAL ES EL ORGANO SUPREMO DEL NUCLEO DE POBLACION EJIDAL O COMUNAL, WITH THE ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS THAT THE LAW BE ALE. EL COMISARIADO EJIDAL O DE BIENES COMUNALES, DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED IN TERMS OF LAW, THE ORGAN OF REPRESENTATION OF THE KERNEL AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR IS EXECUTING THE RESOLUTIONS OF THE ASSEMBLY. RESTITUTION OF LAND[43]

"Every text presupposes a political economy supporting the codification of its own legibility. The political resides precisely in problematizing 'the codification

of its own legibility': its own legibility as suspense,"[44] writes García Manríquez in the endnotes of his book. The suspended codification of NAFTA doesn't produce collective voices, but rather enunciations that surpass the personal. "The declaration which founds an institution, a constitution or a State requires that a signer engage him- or herself. The signature maintains a link with the instituting act, as an act of language and of writing, a link which has absolutely nothing of the empirical accident about it."[45] There are no collective voices behind the signing of a treaty like NAFTA. Moreover, the signing itself doesn't constitute the establishment of a country that, once founded, will initiate a relationship with its citizens into the future; rather, it entails the formation of an archive of equivalences for transfer and conversion among physical objects and their financial value. NAFTA's "demented" language originates in neoliberalism as a production system of meaning and subjectivities that, over the past forty years, have mobilized vast quantities of tecÚiques, tecÚologies, archives, flows, and multiplicities in order to remain the semiotic operator par excellence. Ultimately, NAFTA isn't only a set of rules that govern political, territorial, and economic relations among countries, but also the discursive archive from which it is established that individuals (both human and nonhuman) can acquire exchange values among themselves within this territory.

Both *Anti-Humboldt* and *The 27th* undo the equivalences among sign-bearing surfaces in order to expose the sub-media truth in the threshold of the interface effect produced by erasure. Here, too, they can be read from Groys's perspective, according to which:

> The artist must, first of all, forcibly reduce, destroy, and remove the exterior in order to expose the interior. This trope, according to which insight into the interior is the effect of a violent dismantling of the prior, produces in equal measure the cases of exception relating to war, art, and philosophy, all of which announce their own truth, which is radically different from the truth of "peaceful" and "superficial" normality.[46]

If the great codifier of NAFTA's language is the abstract machine of neoliberalism, *Anti-Humboldt* and *The 27th* thus function as schizo-analytical cartographies of the archive of neoliberal language—not only as interventions in specific documents, but also as producers of fissures in the linguistic forms that characterize the financial economy's legal framework.

On an initial reading, both works result from engagement with textual material, which allows for the identification of interpretations and associations that reveal

other meanings in the treaty and the article. But this is not, strictly speaking, a matter of appropriation, because the originals remain in the background: a specter stalking the superposition of the phrases. Perhaps it would be pertinent to address another kind of excavation, one that seeks not remains or ruins but the textual structures of extractivist violence, a geology of neoliberal textuality. The permanent production of fractures across NAFTA's surface creates an interface effect that permits a simultaneous reading of what has been extracted through "excavation" and of the site where it originally resided.[47]

By altering the legal text in a-signifying fragments, both works dismantle the rhetoric that naturalizes the media surface. During the recodification process, the text neither issues nor receives significances; first, it becomes a surface that refracts the reader's gaze toward the political conditions that surround it. Though interfaces inoperative for a legal reading of the juridical text, these works raise the possibility of observing components that had been mediated by the legal interface: territory and sovereignty as social practices nullified by the algorithms and equivalences of the neoliberal financial economy.

Some of NAFTA's many paragraphs are dedicated to the installation of a harmonized system; that is, a numerical codification that permits objects or object-fragments to be identified for exportation, sale, and international recognition. "Ultimately, it is a system that aims to be able to translate not only commodities and objects, not also animal life, into fragments of an architecture without apparent contradictions: a system, in which the heterogeneous is disassembled, reassembled and exchanged. The heterogeneous, the same."[48] By contrast, the Constitution's Article 27 is the space of jointing and territorialization of heterogeneousness through the figure of national territory: a territory no longer distributed and dominated by the national state, but rather by flows of financial capital. The harmonized system and legal code are the meta-languages that seek to become singular: "Language stabilizes around a parish, a bishopric, a capital,"[49] write Deleuze and Guattari. The harmonized system is the new capital around which language attempts to stabilize. Conversely, the poem de-structures a legal/linguistic system that demands the equivalence of two language systems, Spanish and English, as well as the creation of a territorial system, North America. NAFTA is the de-territorialization of language and individuals inside a new geographic/market space: North America itself. With respect to this space, *Anti-Humboldt* and *The 27th* are works of re-territorialization within language through their engagement with multiplicities. In the way of a Deleuzian "pick-

up," both works are a stutter between languages, the provocation of fracture inside harmonized systems and legal codes.

Translated from Spanish by Robin Myers

Notes

1 This article has emerged from broader research on the relationships between materiality and poetic production in contemporary Mexico. Such research has been made possible by a doctoral studies grant from CONACYT.

2 I am adhering to Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the book when I ask "in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed," Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. and foreword by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 4.

3 Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 21.

4 On capitalism as a semiotic operator, see Félix Guattari, *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (London: Penguin, 1984), ch. 2, "Towards a New Vocabulary"; and Maurizio Lazzarato, *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2014).

5 On this respect, see Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014); on the Mexican context, Ignacio Sánchez Prado, "Más allá del mercado. Los usos de la literatura en la era neoliberal," in *Libro mercado. Literatura y neoliberalismo*, ed. José Ramón Ruisánchez Serra (Mexico: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2015), 15–40 and Irmgard Emmelhainz, *La tiranía del sentido común: la reconversión neoliberal de México* (Mexico: Paradiso, 2016).

6 Here I follow Bifo, for whom "now poetry may start the process of reactivating social solidarity, starting from the reactivation of the desiring force of enunciation," Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *The Uprising: Poetry and Finance* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), 20.

7 Berardi, *The Uprising*, 147.

8 Alexander R. Galloway, *The Interface Effect* (New York: Polity, 2012), 31.

9 With respect to traditional poetry, Galloway writes:

> All media evoke similar liminal transition moments in which the outside is evoked in order that the inside may take place. In the case of the classical poet, what is the outside? It is the Muse, the divine source, which is first evoked and praised, in order for the outside to possess the inside. Once possessed by the outside, the poet sings and the story transpires.
>
> Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, 32.

10 For example, the first chapbook is titled "Prodigios" (marvels) and addresses what Galloway calls iridescent mediation; the second is called "Ventanas" (windows) and its motif is perception mediated by windows as cultural objects—but also as metaphors of what mediates between perceptions and representations.

11 Visual culture involves the things that we see, the mental model we all have of how to see, and what we can do as a result. That is why we call it *visual culture*: a culture of the visual. A visual culture is not simply the total amount of what has been made to be seen … but the relation between what is visible and the names that we give to what is seen,

Nicholas Mirzoeff, *How to See the World: An Introduction to Images, from Self-Portraits to Selfies, Maps to Movies, and More* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 10.

12 My understanding of the term *overexposure* follows Georges Didi-Huberman's definition, in which the figuration of bodies and peoples can oscillate between *sous-exposition* (an absence of representation) and *sur-exposition* (cliché figuration that circulates as merchandise). On this subject, see his *Peuples Exposés, Peuples Figurants*. L'oeil de L'histoire; 4 (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2012).

13 Mónica Nepote, *Hechos diversos* (México: Ediciones Acapulco, 2014), 41; "It's still there to be read," "In the Cell a Name," Mónica Nepote, *In Different Incidents*, trans. JoÚ Pluecker (unpublished manuscript, March 23, 2015). I am grateful to the translator and the author for their permission to access the unpublished translations.

14 Nepote, *Hechos diversos*, 40; "Touch the name/on the dirty surface"; "Touch the name/your will and testament," Nepote, *In Different Incidents.*

15 Nepote, *Hechos diversos*, 46; "Where are they dancing, where the girls, all," Nepote, *In Different Incidents.*

16 Nepote, *Hechos diversos*, 46; "Tell where, where are the voices left, lights in the sand, not their marks on the dunes," Nepote, *In Different Incidents.*

17 Nepote, *Hechos diversos*, 46; "In Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, more than four hundred women have been killed in the last ten years. Just for being women./ Nothing else to add," Nepote, *In Different Incidents.*

18 Alexander R. Galloway, Eugene Thacker, and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation*. "TRIOS" (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 15. The italics are from the original text.

19 "The interface is this state of 'being on the boundary' … [A]n interface is not a thing, an interface is always an effect. It is always a process or a translation," Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, 33.

20 Guattari, *Molecular Revolution*, 171.

21 "The struggle/photographic trace," Nepote, *In Different Incidents*.

22 "… [N]ot their marks on the dunes," Nepote, *In Different Incidents.*

23 At the end of the book there is a list of all sources from which the numerous quotes and references have been taken; Sara Uribe, *Antígona González*, trans. JoÚ

Pluecker (Los Angeles: Les Figues Press, 2016), 172–187. This is a bilingual edition and both Spanish and English text comes from it.

24 This refers to the discovery of a mass grave in San Fernando, Tamaulipas, which contained the bodies of seventy-two Central American migrants who were murdered by the paramilitary group Los Zetas on August 22 and 23, 2010. While the book declares neither nationality nor birthplace, Antígona González's account concludes that Tadeo González's body was found in in this grave ("I came to San Fernando to search for you, Tadeo. I came to see if one of these bodies was yours," 113). However, other quotes in the book refer to people murdered in other parts of Mexico or to other relatives of those killed in the San Fernando massacre.

25 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuff, intr. Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg (New York: Routledge, 2006), 9.

26 Without delving further here into this matter (which certainly merits a separate, broader reflection), we could consider the problem of the interface in *Antigona González* as a means of existence of spectrality, especially in its condition as a response to circumstances of extraction and dispossession: "Spectrality or haunting rises as an aesthetic opposed to conditions or moods generated by military, political, or economic violence in the context of modernity. It is an aesthetic that seeks ways to counteract erasure, silencing, and forgetting that eschews melancholic attachment to loss," Alberto Ribas-Casasayas and Amanda L. Petersen, "Introduction. Theories of the Ghost in a Transhispanic Context," in *Espectros: Ghostly Hauntings in Contemporary Transhispanic Narratives*, eds. Alberto Ribas-Casasayas and Amanda Petersen (Lanham, MD: Bucknell University Press, 2016), 6.

27 The translator's note is interesting in this respect: "The translation of *Antígona González* begins with the specificity of this one absent body. In a world overwhelmed by bodies … this translation is specific to this one body, this one person, this one search," JoÚ Pluecker, "Translation as a way to join to take up [*sic*] the body," in Uribe, *Antígona González*, 193.

28 Uribe, *Antígona González*, 124–125. "The absurd, the exhausting, the urgent labor of unburying a body to bury it anew. To confirm out loud what is so feared, so desired: yes sir, agent, yes sir, medical examiner, yes sir, police officer, this body is mine."

29 Uribe, *Antígona González*, 66–67. "Facing what disappears./: Facing what disappears: what does not disappear."

30 Jo Labanyi, "Memory and Modernity in Democratic Spain: The Difficulty of Coming to Terms with the Spanish Civil War," *Poetics Today* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2007), 113.

31 Boris Groys, *Under Suspicion: A Phenomenology of Media*, trans. Carsten Strathausen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 19.

32 Groys, *Under Suspicion*, 89.

33 Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*. Revised edition, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 10.
34 Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues II*, 10.
35 Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues II*, 18.
36 "… *[D]esoeuvre*—nonworking, unproductive, inoperative, unworkable." Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, 39.
37 Hugo García Manríquez, *Anti-Humboldt: A Reading of the North American Free Trade Agreement* (Mexico/Brooklyn, NY: Aldus-Litmus Press, 2014), 22. As the author has sought to show the fracture between equivalent expressions in the treaty, he does not translate; rather, he intervenes in the original texts in both Spanish and English. As a result, the texts don't match up with each other, and so I have decided to omit the Spanish-language version, unlike in other citations.
38 Different views exist with respect to when the Mexican cycle of neoliberal integration began, ranging from the bank reforms in the late 1970s to first political reforms during the 1980s to the signing of NAFTA in 1994. However, it is possible to consider that this cycle of integration ended with the so-called structural reforms signed during the Peña Nieto administration, which opened the hydrocarbon sector to foreign investment and extraction, in addition to social policy initiatives. On this subject, see, among others, Sarah L. Babb, *Managing Mexico: Economists from Nationalism to Neoliberalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004) and Simon Springer, Kean Birch, and Julie MacLeavy, eds., *The Handbook of Neoliberalism* (New York: Routledge, 2016).
39 Eugenio Tisselli, "Article 27 | Artículo 27," in *UrgeUrge* (blog), September 9, 2015, http://urgeurge.net/2015/03/09/article-27-articulo-27/ (accessed February 9, 2017).
40 Eugenio Tisselli, *The 27th/El 27*, in *Electronic Literature Collection*, ed. Stephanie Boluk, Leonardo Flores, Jacob Garbe, and Anastasia Salter (Cambridge, MA: Electronic Literature Organization, 2016), http://collection.eliterature.org/3/work.html?work=the-27th (accessed February 9, 2017).
41 Tisselli, "Article 27 | Artículo 27."
42 The first complete version can be found at http://motorhueso.net/27/first_edition.html (accessed February 9, 2017).
43 Eugenio Tisselli, *The 27th/El 27* [Excerpt], December 31, 2014, http://motorhueso.net/27 (accessed February 9, 2017).
44 García Manríquez, *Anti-Humboldt*, 75.
45 Jacques Derrida, "Declarations of Independence," *New Political Science* 7, no. 1 (1986), 8.
46 Groys, *Under Suspicion*, 82.
47 With respect to this analogy, I am naturally reminded of Walter Benjamin's notion of the historian's labor. See Walter Benjamin, "Excavation and Memory," in *Selected Writings*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, trans.

Rodney Livingstone, vol. 2, part 2, *1931–1934* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 576.

48 García Manríquez, *Anti-Humboldt*, 74.

49 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 7.