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Articles

Body, space, and gender. The Bagayeras women in the Aguas Blancas, Argentina-Bermejo, Bolivia, Bolivia boundary

Cuerpo, espacio y género. Las mujeres bagayeras en el límite Aguas Blancas, Argentina-Bermejo, Bolivia

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Abstract

The general objective of the research is to reflect about the dynamics and tensions that arise in the dynamics between space and body in women bagayeras, who cross merchandise by alternative circuits to avoid control in the limit Aguas Blancas-Bermejo. Methodologically, the text puts in dialogue bibliographical sources that intersect transdisciplinary Latin American cultural studies with ethnographic descriptions and interviews made during the years 2016 and 2017, in order to exhibit how the atmosphere, the environment and the spaces, acquire political dimensions that link corporalities and spatialities. Based on the data obtained, we can conclude that the bagayera women, when crossing merchandise on their backs and confront with gendarmerie personnel, they learn cunning, skills, strengths and strategies that produce corporal transformations.

Keywords: body, gender, border, women.

Resumen

El objetivo de la investigación es reflexionar sobre las dinámicas y tensiones que se suscitan en las relaciones entre espacio y cuerpo en las mujeres "bagayeras", quienes cruzan mercaderías por circuitos que evitan el control aduanero y de gendarmería en la frontera argentino-boliviana en el límite Aguas Blancas-Bermejo. Metodológicamente, el trabajo pone en diálogo fuentes bibliográficas que intersectan transdisciplinariamente estudios culturales latinoamericanos con descripciones etnográficas y entrevistas realizadas durante los años 2016 y 2017, a fin de mostrar cómo el ambiente, el entorno, el medio, los espacios, adquieren dimensiones políticas que liga las corporalidades y las espacialidades. A partir de los datos obtenidos podemos concluir que las mujeres bagayeras, al cruzar

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mercadería sobre sus espaldas y enfrentarse al personal de gendarmería y aduana, aprenden astucias, pericias, fortalezas y estrategias que producen trasformaciones corpóreas.

Palabras claves: cuerpo, género, frontera, mujeres.

Introduction and Methodological Framework

How are corporeality and spatiality bound together in border areas? This question, as our point of departure, calls us to reflect on the relationships constructed between corporality and spatiality in our research. To that end, we will consider the dynamics and tensions involved in the transformations of bodily and spatial formations. We set out to understand the changes provoked by such situations, with a particular emphasis on the bodily transformations of women based in the border cities of Aguas Blancas, Argentina and Bermejo, Bolivia.

This study seeks to analyze the dynamics and tensions that relationships between space and body produce in *bagayeras*,[1] women who earn a living carrying merchandise across the border via routes that circumvent border and military checkpoints. This work establishes a transdisciplinary dialogue among reflections in which Latin American cultural studies intersect with ethnographic accounts and in-depth interviews conducted between 2016 and 2017 with women from Aguas Blancas, whose main source of employment is *bagayeo*, or petty smuggling. In doing so, we seek to understand this social phenomenon from the perspective of the women involved. To achieve this understanding, we employed an open research methodology (Guber, 2014) consisting mainly of maintaining a presence in both border cities, primarily in each of the spaces that these women must pass through to complete their work, to reflect on how the acts of carrying merchandise across the border on their backs and confronting military and customs personnel at the border dissolve into a series of flows and transactions that produce changes in their bodies.

The Biopolitics of Space and Body

Biopolitics, the bodily control of human life, emerged at the same time as the formation of nation states in the modern period. Both processes of bio-corporeal structuring began in the West during the nineteenth century (Foucault, 2006; 2007). The use of the census, map, and museum to impose order on the population (Anderson, 1993) not only structures the nation but also manages the vitality of the social body: life is administered through statistics and population control, through the construct of territory as the limit and area of life's paths, and, lastly, through the collective epiphanies of the memories for which the act of remembering is authorized. The drawing of maps structured not only the social body and space of the nation-community as a plasticity to be governed but also the consecrated body as a segmented unit subject to control.

[1] Although both men and women engage in bagayeo, or petty smuggling, we believe that considering it from the female perspective reveals certain unique characteristics. For that reason, this study will only analyze the profession of bagayeo and its associated spaces from the perspective of the women involved.

The biopolitical management of the body and the nation were accompanied by the reification of knowledge related to the sciences of habitat (architecture, urbanism, and engineering), population (statistics and demographics), and medicine (social medicine, epidemiology, hygiene, and sanitation) into sciences in the statutory, disciplinary form that we know to this very day. Normalization mechanisms were developed in which what is authorized and what is not is defined through a dynamic that includes and occludes through simultaneous, complementary operations.

With its simultaneous structuring of the nation and of the human unit, modern biopolitics mapped out space by creating the agro-dimension of territory and mapped out corporeality through models of management and control. Highly disciplinary normalization enclaves, such as the insane asylum, the prison, and the school, emerged. Such enclaves can only be understood as the padded clusters of the microphysical networks that extend throughout the space.

As a way of seeing the nation, the map is the apex of spatial organization in an extensive network of spaces and, within those spaces, of bodies. From it, the archetypal figure of civil humanity emerges: the good citizen, the white, bourgeois, heterosexual male who takes part in public space. At least in appearance, he is a healthy, sanitary subject who is monitored as the prototypical figure of the inhabitant of that space. Baudelaire's *flâneur* (Benjamín, 1972), who enjoys the modern city and its architecture and spaces, is the embodiment of this way of urban life.

However, bodies and spaces are never fully normalized, despite automation making it appear as if they were. The disciplinary function of normalizations also projects utopia: it builds place, *topos*, as an idealization. Here, the structuring of the republic, both in terms of that national citizenry and the space it inhabits, echoes the Enlightenment project of reason. Although the control and management of bodies and spaces is fragmented, vectoring into several complementary circuits, dystopic formations come together and slash open that structure and control.

Foucault (1999) reflected on the potential of these places in his discussion of heterotopic spaces as hubs for the inversion or rejection of normalcy. Far removed from the utopian project of biopolitics, heterotopic places contend with their own dynamics and rules, which differ greatly from the typical dynamics and rules of public space, corrupting bodily life and letting it take on other forms and different, defiant uses. The body's plasticity responds to the ergonomic dynamics that arise from corporeal materiality and habitable spaces, vectorizing vanishing points that open up other ways of thinking about space and body (López & Zubia, 2014).

Blind spots in space, heterotopic places remix the intersectional dynamics that shape the relationship between body and space, expanding the spectrum of possibilities of how body and space are understood, above all when the paths of lives that undergo metamorphoses are considered. Heterotopic places are a manifestation of other embodiments of corporeality (Butler, 2002) that unveil dissent.

Shifting Borders

In this article, our point of reference for our analysis of bodily transformations is the practice of *bagayeo*, or petty smuggling, on the Argentine-Bolivian border between Aguas Blancas (Salta) and Bermejo (Tarija). We will first explain our understanding

of the border and then contextualize it by describing certain distinctive features of the selected space.

In our understanding, borders and border cities are constructs developed by nation-states in pursuit of territorial sovereignty. Borders are used to establish the material limits of the spatial fiction that is the nation and are understood as the port of entry or exit of the national territory and as the margins of citizenry in its spatial manifestation. Borders are edges that demarcate the spatial reach of a State's rights, duties, and guarantees, as well as the text that builds that very space.

Thus, the border's limits are not physical but textual. Through those textual limits, the official map of the State is created. This map is valid whenever the border is considered a fixed place, the limit of the nation and its territory and not a space for dialogue or interaction. Despite this officially codified fiction, which shapes hegemonic spatiality, borders are also transit, movement, passageways, and circulation. Not exhausted by official mapmaking, these spaces are therefore breeding grounds for the profanation of the citizenry and the constant reinvention of its material limits.

In both chronological and topographical terms, borders differ from the official temporal-spatial map of the nation. At the same time, borders challenge abstract space from the bottom up and challenge the neutral view in which abstract space is grounded. Border spaces must be understood as performance, production, and a product that undergoes an ongoing process defined and created by its actors through several complicit acts. Therefore, border spaces cannot be separated from the experiences of the subjects that inhabit them (Ficoseco, Gaona & López, 2014). A unique relationship with place, environment, culture, territory, and social relationships shapes how these spaces are lived in. They are spaces of corporeal, experiential development, where experience hints at alternative ways to interpret the hegemonic configuration of the territory. There, specific norms of what should be (archetypes, maps, citizenry, legitimacy, gender, etc.) are subverted through appropriation, through people being themselves.

Borders are porous and dynamic spaces characterized by heterogeneity and a complex, fragmented, and fluid mobility. In them, the experiences of their inhabitants are occasionally altered by the arbitrary blows of the State, yet they remain enmeshed in a blasé continuity whose defensive, wise, and memory-laden forces shelter them (Camblong, 2009).

When the Argentine State began the slow process of defining its national territorial boundaries, it also commenced an arduous transformation of the demarcation of the border between Argentina and Bolivia. Diplomatic talks about the border with Bolivia began with the first treaty in 1881, were later modified in 1891, and culminated with a supplemental treaty in 1925. Borders were imposed from each nation's central region, Buenos Aires and La Paz, respectively, where there was hardly any knowledge of the terrain or the population's cultural characteristics (Celton & Carbonetti, 2007). This process is how three "legal" border crossings with Bolivia were established:[2] La Quiaca-Villazón, Aguas Blancas-Bermejo, and Profesor Salvador Mazza-Yacuiba. La Quiaca-Villazón is located in the province of Jujuy, while

[2] Although the border with Bolivia stretches 773 kilometers, only three "legal" border crossings have been established. However, border crossings at other locations are possible. For example, the Agua Chica outpost is located 10 kilometers away from the border; there, one can cross into Bolivia without a military presence.

the other two are located on the border of the province of Salta. We will focus on the second.

The city of Aguas Blancas was founded on April 23, 1912. It is located 50 kilometers away from the city of San Ramón de la Nueva Orán, one of the most important departments of the province of Salta. On the Bolivian side, the city of Bermejo was officially founded on December 7, 1952. However, people had resided at that location since 1902 because of a military base and the drilling of Bolivia's first oil well (Souchaud, 2007).

Since 1986, the Bolivian city of Bermejo has transformed into an important hub for migrants who are campesinos or indemnified miners who have become traders. In Argentina, Aguas Blancas has also expanded, supported by the growth of Bermejo. The two urban centers have a complementary relationship in which one undergoes greater development due to favorable exchange flows and variations between the two countries and commercial flows of purchases. Without a doubt, Bermejo was the hub for greater urban expansion and demographic growth in this symbiotic relationship (Rabey & Jerez, 1999).

As for the economic dynamics of Aguas Blancas, the city's population almost exclusively makes a living from businesses associated with border trade and transit, such as food establishments, hotels, retail shops that cater to travelers, and wholesale shops that cater to exporters, or from jobs created by public administration or border crossings. A small percentage of its residents work for small conglomerates dedicated to horticulture or agriculture dedicated to cultivating local fruits (grapefruit, lime, mango, papaya, banana, green pepper, tomato, watermelon, squash, and melon). We believe it is important to note that the privatization of the Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales oil and gas company (YPF) during the 1990s was a government policy that produced economic and social changes for many parts of the province of Salta that had focused on the extractive industries, especially the cities of Tartagal and Mosconi. The impact of 75% drop in employment rates (Gordillo, 2010) was also felt by nearby cities such as San Ramón de la Nueva Orán and Aguas Blancas since many residents of the area commuted to work in those cities because of their geographic proximity.

A Border Profession

On the border between Aguas Blancas, Argentina and Bermejo, Bolivia, a profession that locals call *bagayeo* is flourishing. *Bagayeo* is understood as the transportation of merchandise across the border via routes that circumvent customs and military checkpoints. These crossings take place in an economic, political, and geographic context shaped by the foreign exchange relationship between the two countries, which establishes the value of goods and merchandise on both sides of the border. During the 1990s, the decade of neoliberalism in Argentina, the purchasing power parity of the Argentine peso in relation to the dollar meant that the Bolivian peso had lower comparative value than the Argentine peso. At that time, Argentina's favorable exchange rates gave rise to consumption practices involving Bolivian goods and merchandise: people would cross the border to shop on the other side. Despite the continuous devaluation of the Argentine peso against the Bolivian peso—Bolivia's official currency—in recent years, textiles and electronics can still be found at lower

prices in border cities. These practices increase and decrease seasonally, but the flows of merchandise across the border never come to a complete halt.

Dozens of individuals, mostly brokers, arrive in Aguas Blancas with the intention of crossing into Bermejo to buy large quantities of goods and resell them in nearby Argentine cities. However, Argentine customs[3] sets a US$150 limit on the transportation of bulk goods across the border. If the merchandise's value exceeds that amount, the corresponding taxes must be paid, which increases the cost of the product and drives up the transaction cost. For that reason, the brokers hire the services of *bagayeras*, women who carry the merchandise across the border via routes that circumvent customs and military checkpoints.

Below, we will describe the different tasks involved in this job, which will help us analyze and reflect upon this practice and the transformations that it entails.

Generally, in this border region, bagayeo[4] is a process that requires more than eight hours per day. It begins in the streets of Bermejo (Bolivia) and ends in San Ramón de la Nueva Orán, 50 kilometers away from Aguas Blancas (Argentina). Although not all aspects of the work are carried out by the same person, all participants must be present while they wait for the other participants to complete their tasks.

The work begins in Bermejo (Bolivia), where most of the wholesale businesses that sell the products are located. The goods and merchandise range from clothing and footwear to small household appliances. Although these goods are brought to Bermejo from the Bolivian interior, they are usually not items produced in Bolivia but rather goods imported from other countries.

Alongside the several businesses found between Colorado Street and Coronel Araya Street, dozens of women can be seen waiting for wholesale buyers who need to transport their goods. Once the women receive the merchandise, they must write down each product, check each bag, and fill their backpacks or duffel bags, until they have formed a group of five, six, or seven people. The job almost inevitably requires group work, both out of the need to trust others during the entire process of transporting the merchandise and because the trip always needs to be made in groups, regardless of the means of transportation used. Many groups consist of several members of the same family, since the entire family needs to participate to obtain better living conditions and because of the need for trust when completing this work.

After all the women have filled their bags, they find a taxi, which will drive them to the river that marks the border between Argentina and Bolivia. The first checkpoint that must be evaded is the office in Aguas Blancas that houses the migration and customs offices and the military. To do so, the women cannot make the crossing by *chalana*[5] (boats), the conventional way of crossing this border. Instead, they use *gomones* (rafts built by workers), which are found along some stretches of the Bermejo river that are not more than 200 meters away from the official border

[3] The State's public office located in border regions, ports, and airports, that registers imports and exports and collects the fees owed in accordance with the corresponding tariff schedule.

[4] In other border regions and even in this same region, comparable figures are called *paseras*, *pilotas*, or other names.

[5] Only individuals can cross the river by *chalana*. Cars, trucks, buses, and other transportation systems must cross by "the bridge", another checkpoint in the area that has the same function. The bridge is located one kilometer away from this border crossing. However, the *chalana* border crossing is more frequently used since it is located in front of the commercial district.

crossing. These rafts are moved by the strength of their operators, who are almost exclusively men.

The rafts are used to reach the Argentine shore of the river. There, the women readjust their backpacks and duffel bags. Once they have reorganized, other essential actors come into play: private drivers. In most cases, these drivers have already established an agreement with their "patrons". Not only are these drivers responsible for transporting the women, they are also informants who report what they have seen or heard about the situation at the 28 de Julio post of the Argentine National Gendarmerie, which is the second checkpoint that must be evaded. They are not just drivers; their involvement gives the women a greater chance of crossing without being stopped.

Two things must be done to avoid Squad 28, which is located between the city of Aguas Blancas and San Ramón de la Nueva Orán. First, the women take private hired taxis from the Argentine shore of the river to a spot located one hundred meters before the squad's outpost. There, the women get out of the cars and follow a path that takes them along an alternative route so they can reroute the merchandise behind the military facility and the customs office.

On that trip, the women must sidestep various obstacles, such as the barbed wire fencing put up by farms, river overflows, and, most commonly, military patrols and checkpoints. For each of these difficulties, the women formulate tactics to overcome the "hassles". This trek is the longest and most difficult part of the process, because they must walk for approximately an hour, sidestepping any obstacles, while carrying backpacks that weigh approximately 50, 60, or 70 kilos. This path sometimes takes even more time depending on the circumstances, such as when the women have to hide to avoid being spotted by the troops or the time they must take to "negotiate" or "fight" to keep the troops from confiscating the merchandise.

Once they have completed this trek, the women exit onto a road that ends 200 meters from the official checkpoint, on the other side. The car that left them one hour earlier waits for them there, and once again they load up their bags and start the second part of the trip, from the trail's end to the city of Orán, either at the "strip of sand" in front of the terminal or at some of the warehouses as agreed with the buyers. There, the women's work ends.

The work of carrying merchandise across the border takes place several times each day, following the same route over and over again. During the trip, the women meet and run into others performing the same task. When they meet at different points of the path, they share information about the potential customs and military checkpoints.

Border Bodies

The relationship between body and space under biopolitics described above, considered alongside parts of the interviews we conducted with bagayeras, will allow us to reflect on how these women's bodies are transformed by border spaces and their border profession.

The mechanisms of state control, positioned in several locations, structures the dynamics of transporting merchandise through the border region and, consequently,

the body that carries that merchandise. In the case of the Aguas Blancas-Bermejo border, the enclaves of control—the military and customs (population control and commercial control, respectively)—have two fixed points: one on the river bank and the other approximately 25 kilometers from the border. At the same time, as a way of bolstering strategic control mechanisms, mobile checkpoints are set up in different places throughout the region to conduct random checks. The bagayeras' work consists of transporting merchandise and keeping it from being confiscated. Therefore, they must evade these checkpoints, sidestepping both fixed and mobile checkpoints. Transporting the merchandise is strategic and requires the daily use of the bagayeras' cunningness.

> Do you work every day?
> Yeah. All day long, Monday through Saturday.
> Do a lot of women do this?
> A lot of women, a lot. You'll see women carrying the bags on their heads. They carry them as backpacks. There are some women who make two or three trips.
> How much can one of those bags weigh?
> If you're carrying a real, real heavy one, maybe up to 90 kilos. The heaviest ones are 100 kilos.
> Have you ever picked up one that weighed 100 kilos?
> Yeah, when they used to know to give us, because there once was a time when there was, it was one time with sheets, shoes, jackets, all of that stuff…and yeah, once it was 100 kilos (Angélica, 2017, 30 years old).

During transit, the women carry large, heavy bags of merchandise on their backs. Their bodies are trained to perform the agile tasks involved in transporting the merchandise: picking up bags, getting onto the rafts to cross the river, offloading the bags on the other side—where they circumvent the first customs checkpoint—and then picking up the bags and placing them once again on their bodies, carrying them to the private taxi that drives them part of the way. To evade the second checkpoint, they complete part of the trip on foot, hiking for approximately an hour and a half while carrying the merchandise through the wilderness. If there are random checkpoints, they run off the beaten path, never taking their bags off their backs, to keep the goods from being confiscated.

Their work consists of the arduous task of transporting merchandise through a border region. These women's bodies must endure the weight of the bags and the weather conditions—with high temperatures during the summer months—and they must also develop several strategies for evading random customs checkpoints to ensure that the goods that the brokers have entrusted to them remain in their possession. They offer the service of transporting and safeguarding the products until they return the goods to their owners on the other side of the border.

The dynamics of transporting the goods and the corporeality needed to carry out bagayeo requires craftiness, skills, and strength to carry the bags and transport them upon request. Here we must point out the transformations undergone by the bodies of women who engage in bagayeo. Because of their work, their bodies become stronger and more streamlined. This alteration marks a shift in the archetypal prototype of the body marked as feminine—fragile, lightweight, and delicate—and an adaptation not only to the tasks that these women carry out but also to the space in which they carry out those tasks.

This shift entails a complex process of collective, changing learning that happens in bagayera communities, insofar as there are ties of solidarity, sorority, and a communal identity (Lugones, 2016)[6] among women. In other words, the bodily transformation is learned and takes place during the practice of bagayeo itself, through the tasks that these women carry out. To carry out their work, they adopt body movements and behaviors through a learning process that is supplemented by images and metaphors that are conveyed in day-to-day life. Such images are embedded in the group socialization process of women who engage in bagayeo and are refreshed through their actions. In short, it is a group learning process through which bodies are conditioned to tasks and spaces.

During the bagayeo experience, other interpretations of the shape of one's body, of what the body can do, arise. These alternative interpretations displace the meanings of traits and features as the exploratory threshold to corporeality. Deviation from the archetype that has been marked as female, as an aspect of biological pseudodestiny, entails a transformation of the body, which undergoes a constant transformation of form and function as it takes part in the community of affective tasks in which the practice of bagayeo takes place. As Foucault (2006) said, shifting dynamics lead body matter to retain particular features from certain places. Therefore, the bodily figures of these women are a mediated hiatus between their work and the spaces in which they carry out that work.

Learning Transformations in Daily Life

As we mentioned in the previous section, the corporeality of bagayeras deviates from canonical, normalized adaptation because of the practices in which they engage, opening their bodies up to transformation. The process of socializing work techniques—which produce the transformations that their bodies undergo—takes place in an everyday, family context. In a certain way, the body is what learns the movements and intentions, as well as their corresponding manifestations and emotions.

> How long have you done this?
> It's been about eight or nine years.
> Why did you start?
> Out of necessity, because I had four kids and I was alone. My husband at the time left me, and I had to work. Now, I have six kids, so I need it even more. I was working more before, but then I met the guy who was my husband, who worked with another group, so then later, when I was left on my own, I had to work.
> Did someone help you get into this?
> Yeah, a friend. Then I learned the ropes and struck out on my own. Then they

[6] Lugones defines the communal self as those spaces where we can find in others something that resonates with us, something that brings us joy, or something we desire. These experiences can be found in places where popular education or community organization take place, where a communal life is built "in which, as women, we perceive that we have more than just one self, that we are more than one person, and where we can see our handicapped, reduced, fragmented self that cannot escape the crap that is imposed on us because we are women" (Lugones, 2016, p. 1).

> talked to me to bring some over, and then some more, and so on. Now I get it and we just come (Susana, 2016, 28 years old).

The movement techniques are learned without much explanation, because they are absorbed through day-to-day life; they are instilled in family relationships and friendships and are interwoven into everyday affairs. Furthermore, this embodiment intensifies women's relationships within the performance itself. Thus, it is a communion of experiences: someone who is getting started in the work focuses her attention on the woman who is already engaged in smuggling activities, who in most cases is a relative or a friend.

The changes that occur in these women's bodies come along with transformations in the collective body. Women who belong to the same social group tend to share certain embodied images because they have acquired them through a mimetic learning process (Rodríguez, 2010). In other words, the learning process includes images and metaphors that are transferred through socialization. Body techniques are an important means of socialization for women who belong to bagayera groups; through them, these women and their bodies come to learn a trade and make a living from it.

In these border spaces, the body expresses itself through symbols and becomes an emblem of the situation. The types and amounts of goods and the women they are entrusted to reveal experiences, journeys, routes, and gender relationships. The "consignment" of merchandise by clients who come to border regions from other cities speaks to the skill and recognition of the bagayeras' experience in transporting goods across the border. The body conveys the "craftiness" to cope with the trip, complete it faster, and cross without being noticed, as well as the strategies for dealing with the possibility of a military checkpoint.

As Turner (1984) has pointed out, the body offers an ample, apt surface for projecting signs of family position, social standing, tribal or religious affiliation, age, and gender. In bagayeo, the consignment of the goods to be carried across the border is grounded in readings of the body and the cunning strategies that can be seen there. The framework of the agreement is not merely the discursive contracting of the "service" but also corporeal development and hexis. Based on the number of clients that groups of women can obtain for transporting the merchandise, a series of acknowledgements come into play: acknowledgements between the broker and the bagayeras, certainly, but also within the group of women itself.

Here, we believe it is important to reiterate that learned techniques and improvisation are in a process of constant renewal. Even though the activity is repeated over time and the path is "always the same", the stories reveal different tactics that were learned or, in many cases, improved. Bagayeo, as an activity that involves social subjects, is historically modified by processes that require knowledge to be constantly refreshed.

Embodying Learning

The strategies taught in the groups include ways of transporting merchandise. Merchandise is organized in ways that provide the best conditions for its transportation by the body, adapting not only to the body but also to the displacement of bodies

through space. Thus, the merchandise that must be carried across the border is distributed in bags and backpacks to make it easier to carry. When large volumes are involved, several products and weights are distributed across several people who will make the crossing.

The distribution of weight and volume of the goods to be transported is based on historical configurations of how bodies are read. Women who have started recently carry less weight than those who have more experience. Along these lines, one could assume there would be an equal distribution of weight between the genders—in which men would bear more weight than women. However, the experience of crossing the border counters that reading and gives an account of more interrelated processes between bodies. Many women, over the course of their experience, end up bearing even greater weights to transport merchandise, which formats gender and body relationships in this context.

> How much does your bag weigh?
> Who knows how much, maybe 45 or 50 kilos. Their bag weighs more, around 60 kilos.
> How do you put up with the heat during the detour?
> Gum. I chew gum when my throat dries out and I can't walk. You always have to have it, even if it's just a piece of gum. A lot of women chew coca leaves.
> How do you feel after you finish the crossing?
> Dead tired. The weight tires you out and makes you feel like you don't want to do anything. It's awful. The heat is awful. You don't suffer as much in the winter, but you do in the summer (Marta, 2016, 40 years old).

These women also learn different tactics to help their bodies withstand the long hours required by the work and the circumstances to which they are exposed day in and day out. We spoke of circumstances related to climate (remember that summer temperatures in the Aguas Blancas-Bermejo border area rise to 40 degrees Celsius), space (river overflows, muddy paths, wells, rocks, feces), and checkpoints (military patrols at different places). Bagayeras copy from one another tactics, movements, and even ways of caring for their bodies.

When speaking of their experience, the women recount how they learned to use comfortable clothing and footwear, preferably in light colors, which help them move with greater ease through these spaces. In addition to the loose t-shirts and pants that each woman uses, they also tie back their hair and use a hat to help protect against the effects of the sun.

Constant hydration is also essential in these spaces. Each group was seen to have bottles of water, soda, or juice, which they pass to each other as they wait for the merchandise, during the crossing, and when they are delivering the goods to their respective owners. For many of the women we interviewed, water and wearing a hat were not enough to help them withstand the conditions. That is why some women, such as Marta, also use candy, gum, suckers, and, most commonly, coca leaves[7] to shore up their strength. Throughout our fieldwork, we saw most women place coca

[7] Coca leaves grow in the warm, humid regions of the Andes (Yungas or highland tropical forest region) at altitudes that range from 800 to 2 500 meters above sea level. The coca plant played, and continues to play, a significant role in Andean culture and is used for ritual purposes, for workers to restore their energy to work, and for medical uses, such as a digestive aid, a painkiller, or a medical remedy.

leaves in their mouths as *acullico*.[8] According to their stories, they adopted this practice after being taught to do so by other *bagayeras* so they could withstand the conditions and the weight that they must bear on their shoulders during the entire duration of their work.

Individuals who belong to lower classes tend to convey their physical strength and their pain (Louveaur, 2007). The lessons and teachings required by bagayeo include lessons about bodily pain. All of the women interviewed have worked for over five years and have learned to live with the work's effects on their bodies. They have learned to endure the pain caused by carrying backpacks, duffel bags, or other bags that weigh more than 40 kilos every day. They have become bodies in pain: back injuries, strain-induced cramps, and heel and knee pain caused by the sacrifice needed to complete all of their activities. These are a few of the scars that bagayeras say they have experienced, with which they indicate that have learned to cope.

All of the techniques that are socialized and learned in daily experience give an account of an image of a woman who is the *other*, a woman who inverts Western female stereotypes. The intention of laying out the interpretative framework in which the bodies of bagayera women are formed and established is meant to show *other* ways of being a woman. Their bodies—passionate, painted, sweaty, resistant bodies—have become a sign. Being a bagayera is much more than a discursive and symbolic task: it is also an experiential and bodily task of existence in these border spaces.

Domesticity at Home

The body is, par excellence, the place of culture and socialization. As we know all too well, there are different bodily norms for each gender. Women are subjected to several disciplinary practices that result in a body type with characteristics that are similar from woman to woman. Different public (the street) and private (the family) spaces operate according to different norms that determine how we present ourselves and how we interact with others. Thus, the body is used to give substance to certain cultural ideals, identities, and relationships and to legitimize them through explicit rules and practices. Embodied arrangements in space produce and structure the representation of gender.

> How do you and your husband make arrangements to stay with your son?
> My husband hardly ever stays with him.
> Does your husband work every day?
> Recently, since there's no work, he works when my mom has some work or when his other boss comes from Buenos Aires. He has steady work Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, but he's hardly ever home. When I don't go to Orán, I'm usually at home all morning with my son. I help him with his homework, all of that.
> When you go, what do you do with him?
> He goes to school until 6:20. After that, he comes here and stays with my nephew or he goes to my younger brother's house until I get back.

[8] *Acullico*, *cuyico* (from the Quechua word, *akullikuy*), or *acusi* refers to the practice of placing a small cluster of coca leaves in the mouth between the cheek and the jaw to wet them, thereby slowly extracting their active and stimulating substances.

> And then you do everything?
> Yeah. I check his workbooks. I make sure he takes a bath, because he's kind of lazy (Adriana, 2016, 36 years old).

Although we have argued that bagayeras represent *other* way of being women in border spaces, it is no less true that motherhood and childcare are socially imposed on them, as they are on most women, as a way of demarcating and controlling the female body. Even when the participation of women and their importance in various public spaces is socially recognized, that civic recognition is mediated through motherhood and the special responsibility of educating children and building their character. Norms that refer to women's spaces are the strictest precisely because of how the woman-mother has been culturally defined (Anzaldúa, 1987).

The characteristics ascribed to the maternal role are the product of established social lessons and orders (Curiel, 2011). In women's lives, the socialization of motherhood begins at an early age. Their bodies must be pretty and fertile. Above all, their bodies are meant for others (Hirsch, 2008). Therefore, a woman's essential role is to take charge of reproduction: in other words, to have children, care for them, and assume responsibility for their education. In the public imagination, a good mother is one who cares for her children even if she has paid work outside the home; otherwise, she tends to be labeled an abnormal mother. These women must be able to earn financial resources, adapt to the economic ups and downs of border spaces, and fulfill the "obligation" of taking care of their children and of all domestic chores.

In these spaces, bagayeras are portrayed as the *other*, with their bodies undergoing transformations to be able to carry backpacks that weigh over 50 kilos. However, when they return home, they embody what we call the domesticity of the home. They become women-mothers whose bodies must be weak and fragile in interactions with their children and partners (in the case of those women who are not separated).

In terms of social acceptance within the home, these women are placed at a disadvantage by bodily commitments that resemble those associated with men, such as being seen as muscular and lifting heavy things, because these are ways of being a mother-father that cause problems for the women. What these women adopt as a minimal rebellion (*other* bodies) tends to be included in the norms of the dominant woman-mother.

In public spaces, bagayeras confront, resignify, and challenge many of the mandates of femininity, but they comply with those mandates in their homes. The family, as a social institution, places a series of controls on female corporeality that transform women into fragile bodies placed at the service of others (Federici, 2010). The materiality of their bodies in their homes should be understood as the most productive impact of patriarchal power.

Conclusion

The use of the map to design and plot out an extensive, neutral space capable of being managed, on the one hand, and the structuring of civil society through the sanitary management of the social body, on the other hand, are simultaneous, complementary technologies that are problematically intertwined with the structuring of the nation in modern times. The combination of the governance of space and the governance of the

body has created a series of processes that have dislocated and relocated the meanings that formerly bound body and space in specific relationships so that they could be structured and managed. These processes shaped space as the national territory and the individual body as the "good citizen". Both bodies and spaces entered into the modern anonymity of being normalized and shaped into prototypes as a multilayer technology of governance.

Managing this national policy entailed the fabrication of the social life force, which was embodied in the human figure that was, in turn, codified into standard behaviors that were gendered male and female and served as behavioral prototypes. In this way, specific marks of body and space—indigenousness, ethnicity, gender, etc.—were erased. However, the body-space relationship remained politicized, returning from its abjection, bearing witness to the transformations that were produced by this relationship. For us, focusing on the latter was key to our reflection on the corporeality of the *bagayeras*, deviant bodies in distinctive spaces.

Due to the dynamics of the trips required by their work, the bodies of bagayeras are trained to perform the agile tasks that their job entails. In these borderlands, these women learn to be cunning and develop skills, strengths, and strategies that cause their transformation. Their bodies become stronger and more streamlined as a function of the work they carry out. Their transformation is collectively taught and learned, and it takes place through the practice of bagayeo, as they adopt bodily movements, behaviors, metaphors, and images that are conveyed day in and day out, during each trip. These images are inscribed on the group socialization process and renewed in each of their actions. In short, bagayeo is a process of group learning through which bodies are conditioned for tasks and spaces.

The experience of bagayeo gives rise to an interpretation of "what the body can do". In this string of events, the body ceases to be a segmented unit and becomes a form that resembles the continuity of the space. Environment, atmosphere, medium, and spaces are imbued with a political dimension that links corporeality and spatiality.

In much of this article, we have emphasized the strength, resistance, and vigor of the bagayeras' bodies. However, we do not subscribe to those ideas that tend to explain and specify cultural or phenotypical features based on arguments that blend culture and biology to give credence to the belief that certain social groups have permanent, innate abilities due to their biological or genetic aspects (Gómez, 2008).

In our view, the bodies of the women we interviewed are not "naturally" accustomed to enduring the excesses that they are exposed to each day, nor do we view them as mere market tools, transporters of cargo. Here, we have reflected on some of the characteristics developed by the bagayeras' bodies as a result of the different tasks they must complete, the circumstances they face day in and day out, and the space where they live, giving an account of the gender, racial, ethnic, and class diversions that are articulated in those spaces.

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