WORKING PAPERS

Embodying the deported spectacle in Tijuana. The lived experiences of Mexican deported men who stay in temporary male-exclusive shelters in Tijuana.

Renato de Almeida Arão Galhardi

Working Paper No. 2023/07
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Abstract

Historically, Mexicans deported from the United States tend to be overwhelmingly adult men, where the Mexican borderscape of Tijuana is and continues to be the primary site (and sight) where the majority of deported Mexicans are sent to when deported from the United States. Consequently, the semiotic social topography of Tijuana is peopled through the experiences of deportation. How, then, do Mexican deportees negotiate, mediate and articulate their lived experiences of migration? Working with my ethnographic research in Tijuana, during August 2021 and March 2022, I address the ontopological conditioning of living as a deportee in a borderscape such as Tijuana, assessing how their phenomenographic experiences are shaped by the bordering of the Border, and how Mexican deported men are often "unjustly suffering" and enduring "the bare life." Through discussions on coloniality of Being, I build off Nicolas de Genova's "border spectacle," and argue that deportation is better described through its own "spectacle," the "deportation spectacle," highlighting how deportees perform and negotiate their agency between the tensions of suffering and resiliency as a consequence of the practices of imposed by deportation. I posit that deportation is not the end of a process, but reshapes migrancy continuity within new constraints, challenges and obstacles. Finally, I conclude by emphasizing the need to recognize misrepresented, misinterpreted and misdiagnosed populations such as deportees in borderscapes such as Tijuana, in order to better attend to the challenges that deportation creates.

Keywords: borderscapes; deportation experience; deportation spectacle; Mexican deportees; migrancy; phenomenology; resiliency; Tijuana; unjust suffering

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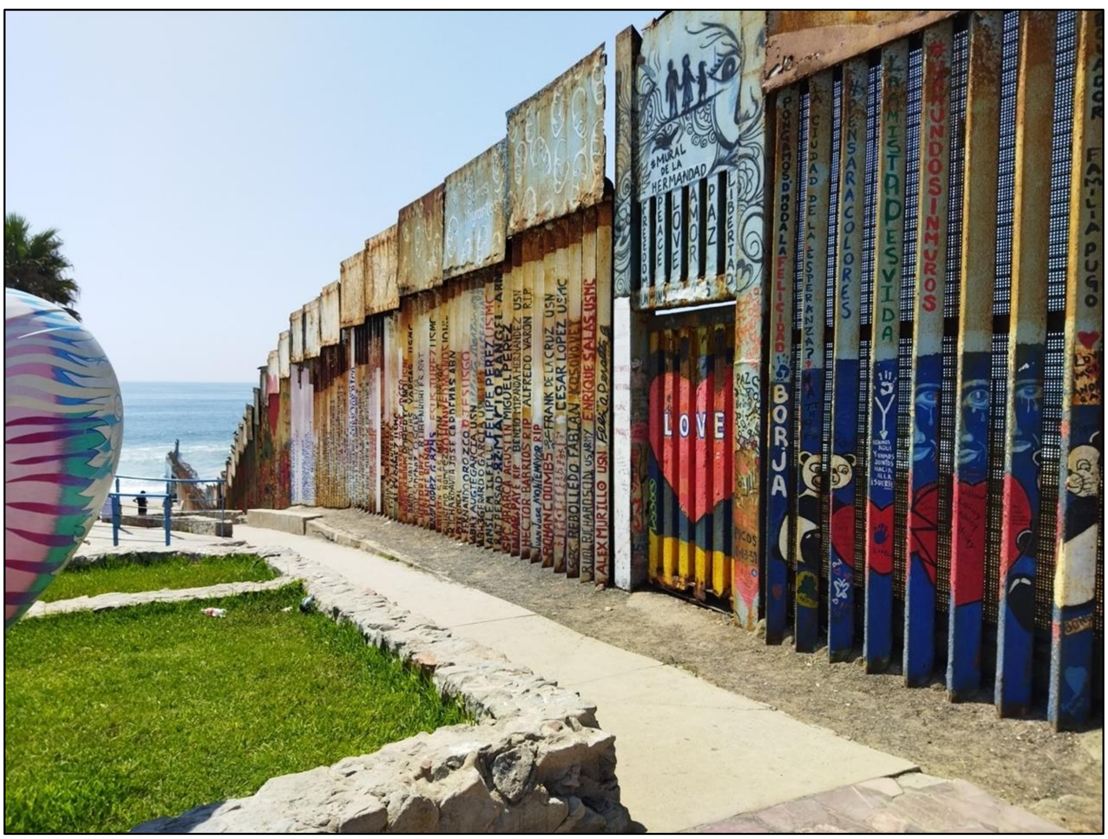
Introduction

When arriving at the Tijuana airport, the first thing you notice is that the border is in plain sight. The iconic wall that separates Mexico's political territory and Tijuana's administrative area, from the United States, is in full view. When I arrived in early August 2021, the horizon was filled with the tints of a sunset that filled the sky with a reddish hue that blended with the ocher color of the rusted wall that gave a lingering impression of harmony and peace. It is a view purged, only momentarily so, of the biopolitical processes of migrancy that fill this borderscape. Here, in “plain sight,” I do not yet “see” the complexity of these migrancy expressions and embodied experiences that fill the lives of so many people that share this landscape and view. I do not “see” their stories and their tears; their faces tensed in fears and frustration; their eyes bright with hope; their mouths silent in the face of reality. I do not “see” them, here, “in full view.” In “plain sight,” the migrant seemingly does not “exist.”

On my second day in Tijuana, a sunny Friday in early August 2021, I head to the Pacific Ocean, to capture the narratives that surround and speak through this division that delimits the political territories of Mexico and the United States. As I approach the beach, I encounter a streaming narrative inscribed on the wall, with names, images, messages and stories of the border and its bordering processes. Here, the border “speaks.” It speaks through the emotive narratives inscribed on its metallic surfaces that narrate the histories of this borderscape. I read the stories of hope, despair, frustration, love and anger, as the wall slowly sinks into the ocean.

Figure 1
The Mexico-United States border, seen from Friendship Park, in Playas de Tijuana, taken on the 13th of August 2021.



Source: Photograph from personal archive*.*

As I reach the beach and stop at a popular viewpoint, I am met with various groups of people, casually taking pictures, contemplating the sea, the border and the patrol guards that can be seen skirting the sand dunes "on the other side." On this scenic point, I can see how the wall sinks into the sea, taking with it the extension of the bureaucracy of territory, whilst maintaining the politics of mobility. It is approximately 14:30, and I am glad to find a shade area where I find temporary respite from the burning sun. While I take in the surrounding social geography and consider my next steps, I hear a commotion next to me. I look for the source of the commotion, coming from close to the border fence. I follow the gaze of those around me and, with a little effort, I manage to see a young man scaling down the second tier of the fenced structure, setting foot on United States territory. Close by, a man, dressed in black, is glued to a cell phone, shouting instructions: "Get down! Get down!" he shouts. I quickly realized it is a "pollero"—a human trafficker[1]— guiding the actions of a young man, who has now set foot "on the other side."

He is shouting instructions to the young man who stands indecisive, not sure where to go, looking distraught, on the other side of the border. The border spectacle, here, is in full effect. The young man sports a dark blue jacket, blue jeans, a dark baseball cap and a small black backpack. He seems hesitant and moves in awkward bursts. He looks toward Mexico seeking reassurance, instruction, guidance, some form of help. I look on, as does everyone else, waiting to see how this scene will unfold, while the "pollero," shouts: "Get down and stand over there!" he yells. A man walks quickly through the crowd saying, "*Ya lo vio; ya lo vio*" — "they've spotted him, they've spotted him." Now the pollero yells, "Run! Run! Over there! Run!" I tense up in the terse silence that surrounds me. The border has, as it almost always does in Tijuana, moved into the lives of those surrounding and close to it. Children, mothers, fathers, families, acquaintances and strangers are now collectively witnessing this human "spectacle" of border politics.

The "pollero," now visibly angry, shouts: "Go up, *wey*![2] Up! Up! Up!" whilst pointing toward the ocean. No one speaks besides the "pollero"; no one intervenes. "Get down!" shouts the "pollero," "get down, *pendejo*!"[3] The young man has not taken more than a few steps in United States territory, having moved sharply to the left and, as if rethinking his decision, moving quickly to the right. He doesn't seem to know what to do nor where to go. "Down the road, *wey*!" insists the "pollero," but the young man doesn't seem to understand. "Go down there, *pendejo*!" shouts the pollero. "Over there! Over there!" he insists, emphatically pointing to a location close to the ocean. Before the young man can situate himself and understand "where" he is, a border patrol car appears over a sand dune. The crowd, here, shuffles and I hear a murmur in the crowd: "It's enough, they got him." The "pollero" quickly spins around and quickly walks away. With his back to the young man—to his detention, to this tragedy called the border—the "pollero" leaves, under the terse gaze of the border and the stunned eyes of everyone present. People slowly begin to wander away from the scene. There is nothing left to do, nor to see. The border, here, has made itself viscerally present, as it always does in Tijuana.

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[1] "Pollero," crudely translated to "chicken handler," is a commonplace terminology that, in the context of migration practices, refers to those who instrumentalize the crossing of people by extralegal means. The terminology is akin to human trafficker, as in Spanish there is no readily available concept that distinguishes between "smuggler" and "trafficker." "Pollero," on the hand, is widely used as a means to reference the similarity between the ways in which chickens are packed for transport, and how people are often grouped together when they employ a "guide" for an extralegal border crossing. The term is often interchangeable with *coyote*, another analogy for "pollero," which possibly refers to the cunning nature of the animal, in addition to being a prevalent desert animal, one of the most common terrains for extralegal crossings between Mexico and the United States. For more, see Meneses (2010).

[2] "Wey," also spelled as "güey," is a colloquial Mexican Spanish term that, in this context, is used to reference a general person akin to the commonplace usage of "man," "dude," or "buddy" in informal English.

[3] Colloquial Spanish insult, usually referencing a more offensive version of idiot or foolish.

Figure 2
Still frame from a personal video of the moment a young man scaled down the Mexico-United States border, guided with instructions from a "pollero," 13 August 2021.

Source: From the author's personal archive.

The above excerpt is part of one of my first entries in my field diary when I arrived in Tijuana to do fieldwork on the phenomenology of migration experiences. Tijuana, on the foremost edge of the Mexican state, sits on the border with the United States, on the outer edge of the limits of the state of Baja California. It is Mexico's sixth-largest city and one of the primary migratory gateways to and from the United States, be it through official administrative channels or by extra-legal means. With a population of around two million individuals, Tijuana hosts a growing and permanent migrant population, one that seeps into the girth of this borderscape.[4] As in the above scenario, the border is a spectacle whereby the bodies of migrancy press against the crevices of coarse border politics and selective migration practices. As Prem Kumar Rajaram and Carl Grundy-Warr (2008) aptly point out

> The border is a zone in between states where the territorial resolutions of being and the laws that prop them up collapse. It is a zone where the multiplicity and chaos of the universal and the discomforts and possibilities of the body intrude. (p. x)

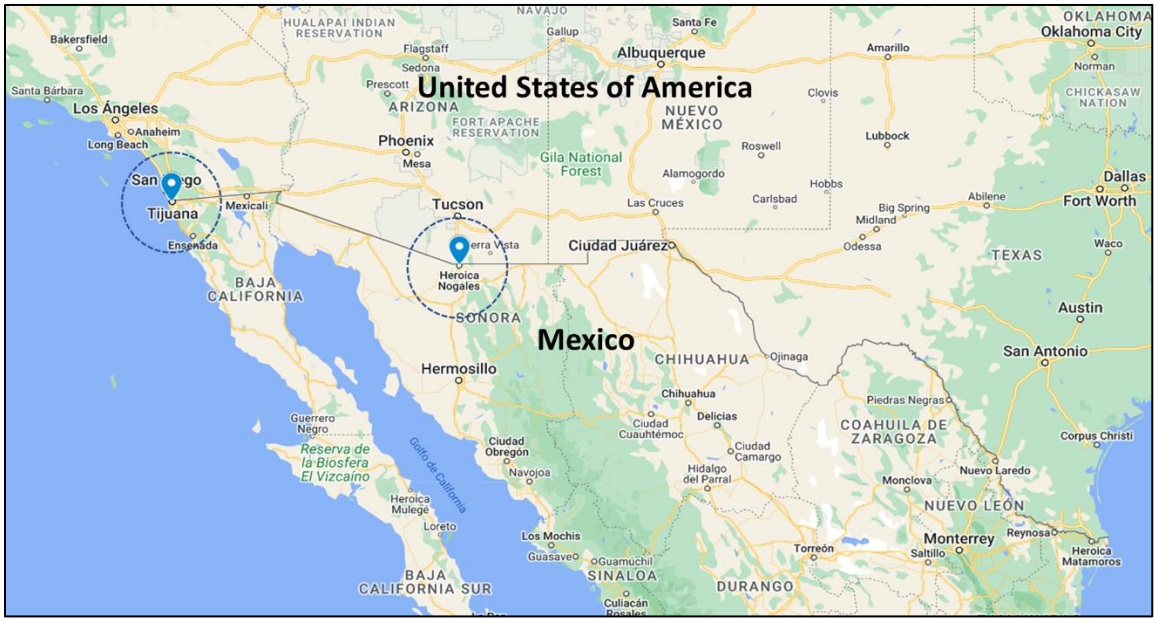
It is here in Tijuana, alongside the San Ysidro and El Chaparral Ports of Entry, that one enters what has been described as the busiest and most dynamic land crossing in the world.[5] Tijuana, consequently, is a site (and sight) peopled by migrancy expressions.

[4] Comprehensively approached and disused by Rajaram & Grundy-Warr (2008), they define a borderscape as "an entry point, allowing for a study of the border as mobile, perspectival, and relational," allowing for the analysis of "practices, performances, and discourses that seek to capture, contain, and instrumentally use the border to affix a dominant spatiality, temporality, and political agency" (p. x).
[5] See "The Smart Border Coalition" for good overview on Tijuana border statistics: https://smartbordercoalition.com

Tijuana: A Site and Sight for Deportation

Tijuana has a structural history with migration. It is, in many ways, a primary site and sight of migrancy expressions. According to official statistics from Mexico's Migration Policy, Registration and Identity of Persons Unit (UPMRIP, 2022) during January to November 2022, Tijuana received 87,084 deportees, equivalent to 36% of all deported Mexicans to Mexico, placing it as the single largest Point of Return for all deportees sent to Mexico from the United States.[6] For context, the second-largest Point of Return during the same period was Nogales, Sonora, which received the accumulated 32,164 deportees, equivalent to approximately 13% of the total deported population registered (UPMRIP, 2022).

Figure 3
Geographical position of the two largest Point of Return for Mexican deportees from the United States, 2010–2022.



Source: Elaborated with Google Maps.

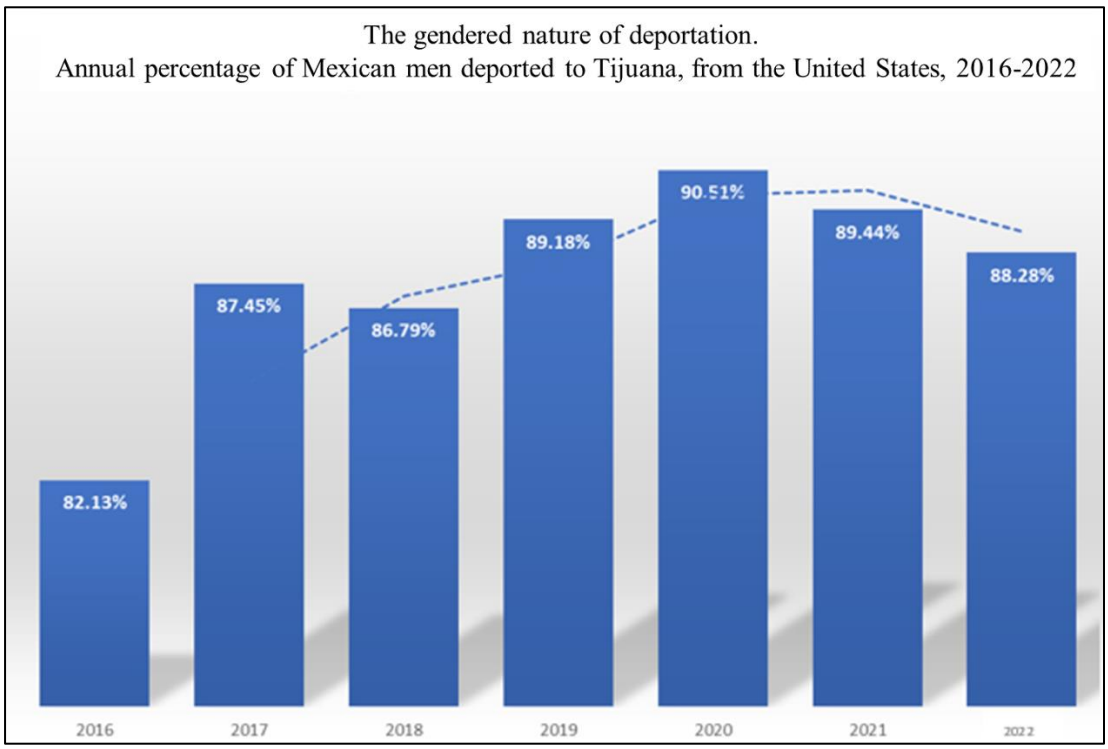
Comparatively, Tijuana received circa 171% more deportees than the second-largest Point of Return for deported Mexicans, with Mexican men faring, by far, as the largest gender group returned. With respect to the same period from January to November 2022, approximately 76,877, equivalent to 88% of Mexican nationals deported from the United States, identified as men. This translates to a monthly average influx of about 6,890 Mexican deported men arriving in Tijuana between January and November 2022,[7] which, in turn, translates to roughly 626 deportees arriving per month, or approximately 20 deportees arriving in Tijuana each day. The prevalence of men as the main deportation population in this time series is characteristic of the historical makeup of Mexicans deported from the United States, as highlighted in the following

[6] "V Return of Mexican nationals from the United States (formerly repatriation of Mexican nationals), 2022", Statistical Bulletin, Migration Policy, Registration and Identity of Persons Unit, Ministry of Interior; http://portales.segob.gob.mx/es/PoliticaMigratoria/CuadrosBOLETIN?Anual=2022&Secc=5

[7] See "IV Events for the return of Mexicans from the United States, 2022", Statistical Bulletin, Migration Policy, Registration and Identity of Persons Unit, Ministry of Interior; https://portales.segob.gob.mx/es/PoliticaMigratoria/Cuadros_MyH?Anual=2022&Secc=4

graph (see Figure 4), and has only consolidated itself throughout the years. Mexico's official statistics demonstrate that, between 2016 and 2022, 87.7% of the annual deportation population arriving in Tijuana identified as men. Not only is this data a telling sign of the gendered nature of deportation, but it is also demonstrative of the gendered expressions of migrancy that fill the borderscape of Tijuana.

Figure 4
Percentage of Mexican men deported to Tijuana with respect to Mexican women deported to the same Point of Return —2016–2022.



Note. Elaborated with statistics from Mexico's Statistical Bulletins of women and men, Migration Policy, Registration and Identity of Persons Unit, Secretary of the Interior.

Moreover, using recent data from the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC)[8] and University of Syracuse's statistical migration database, during 2020, approximately 22,102 Mexican men were deported in 2020, having no prior criminal convictions. This is one of the most common characteristics of the deportee. Additionally, 12,717 Mexican men were charged, and consequently deported, for "Illegal Entry" [pertaining to the legal statute INA SEC.101 (a)(43)(O), 8USC1325], alongside 6,158 additional arrests during the fiscal year of 2020 for "Illegal Re-Entry" [pertaining to legal statutes INA SEC.101 (a)(43)(O), 8USC1326]. These three categories represent approximately 57% of the most serious crimes deported Mexican nationals committed that led to their deportation; a sentence that probably led many of them to pass through Tijuana. It is important, here, to highlight that these characteristics are non-violent and are exclusively administrative transgressions.

[8]Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC): https://trac.syr.edu/

Making Sense of Deportation Through Storytelling.

By all accounts, Tijuana consolidates itself as the primary site (and sight) for deportation and, consequently, the phenomenological expressions of deportation as a show of its historical and intangible ties to the United States. Consequently, Tijuana, with its relentless resiliency of migrancy, becomes a place where the "border resides," as Étienne Balibar (2002) might say. Making sense of this process is a process in narrative; a process in storytelling. How one "makes sense" of being in a borderscape such as Tijuana is part of a biographical narrative weaving that structures identity, meaning-making and ontological interpretation of one's self and one's position in the world. The way we structure our stories is one of the foremost means we—as humans—have to structure our "sense" of the world and the mode in which we configure our *ontopological* understanding of social reality.[9] As Barbara Hardy (1968) mentions,

> we dream in narrative, day-dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative. In order really to live, we make up stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as the social past and future. (p. 5)

Tijuana-as-border exerts a gravitational push and pull on idealized and ideated forms of hope that "pulls" migration towards it, all the while "pushing" migrancy through it. It is a dynamic flow conditioned and fashioned from coercive biopolitical border practices.[10] The migrant, here, is constructed through and with the border, including the forcefully returned Mexican, now a deportee. *What, then, does it mean to be a deportee here? How is deportation experienced, lived and felt? How do deportees make sense of the deportation now "on this side of the border"?* One way to address these questions is to engage with situated biopolitical perceptions of deportation as seen from and with deported men, living in (and through) Tijuana.

Methodology. Finding Migrancy in Embodied Narratives

To address how deportees enact, articulate, perform, situate their lived experiences of deportation, and keeping with the "plea to de-migranticize" migration research and analysis (Galhardi, 2022b), I gathered ethnographic data with 15 deported male Mexicans, housed in male-exclusive migrant shelters, in Tijuana, during August 2021 and March 2022. These interviews sit alongside eight in-depth interviews with heads of pro-migrant agencies, shelter workers, humanitarian aid workers and other institutions working with active migration phenomenon in the area. One way to approach the intersectional complexity of migration experiences and their phenomenological properties is to attend to discussions from feminist phenomenology, and to think "through the body." Phenomenological discussions from feminist thought are crucial to rethink, denaturalize and demigranticize the conceptual tools of the ways of seeing, describing and narrating migration phenomena.

"Thinking through the body" implies recognizing the explicit role of the intersectional complexities that the body acquires, through migrancy, becoming an embodied expression of migration. The body is a performative act, a place and a space as well as being an inherently

[9] Ontopology is a term coined by Jacques Derrida (1994), that builds off ontological presumptions adding to it the chronopolitical geography of enunciation. In his own words, he defines ontopology as "an axiomatics linking indissociably the ontological value of present-being [*on*] to its situation, to the stable and presentable determination of a locality, the *topos* of territory, native soil, city, body in general" (pp. 102–103).

[10] Biopower, and biopolitics, is the domination of bodies through coition. It is, as Achille Mbembe (2019) reminds us, the "domain of life which power has asserted its control" (p. 66).

political constitution, forged within history and articulated under historical understandings of the body, sex and gender. This, of course, engenders the body and makes the body a semiotic territory in which ethnicity and class, to name but a few, are referents that determine actions, positions, interactions, perceptions and social interpretations (Merleau-Ponty, 2002).

The body, as a social construction, is a political territory - an expression of the "gendered geographies of power"[11] - where biopolitical relations of power - biopower - emanate and are established. These biopolitical relations are extended and expressed in bodies established within heteronormative hierarchies sustained by patriarchal politics that structure the ways of being, occupying and interacting with social spaces (Foucault, 1978; Esteban, 2013). As Katarzyna Krzywicka and María Elena Martin (2020) point out, the body as a political territory, is the stage "on which discourses sustained by a heteronormative, androcentric and cis-sexist logic are traversed, denoting the existence of a stereotype constructed for each gender within the cis man - cis woman binary" (p. 17).

Therefore, the ways of experiencing migration, from this perspective, are inextricably linked to the ways of experiencing gender. The experience is categorically different depending on which body experiences it (Boehm, 2012). To approach the phenomenology of migration from the corporeality of the experiences themselves is to consider and articulate the ontological impact of migration on social and embodied realities. Therefore, to consider the experiences of Mexican deported men in Tijuana, is to articulate the phenomenology of experience of migration, through the biopolitical expressions of the biopolitics of the border.

To address the ontological and ontopological implications of the phenomenographic expressions of deportation, I applied an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach to life-story analysis, aided with MAXQDA. My focus on the lived experiences of Mexican deported men is due to two structural factors: (i) the characteristic gendered nature of deportation in Tijuana, and (ii) my access to narratives through mimetic rapport (as I present myself as a cis man), coupled with a commitment to raise visibility of this often-neglected population in Tijuana in migration analysis and research. The results I present here have been anonymized to protect the identity of my collaborators, and stem from approximately 10 hours of interviews I gathered in the span of close to six months *in situ*.[12]

Preliminary Findings: A Life Mediate Between Suffering and Resiliency

The Relentless Pursuit of a Better Life. The Case of Four Young, Recently Deported Men from Chiapas.

A little past 7 in the morning on September 15, 2021, a day before Mexico's Independence Day, I made my way through Tijuana's red-light district known as "*zona norte*" and—not coincidentally—one of the neighborhoods with the highest concentration of migrant shelters and pro-migrant organizations. On the way, I pass a *taquero* counting his earnings. I notice he is counting only dollar bills. Despite it being the early hours of a regular Wednesday, the *cantinas*—bars—have music on at full volume, and the sidewalk is peopled by sex workers. I pass a young man talking eagerly with one of these young women and I overhear her saying she charges 750

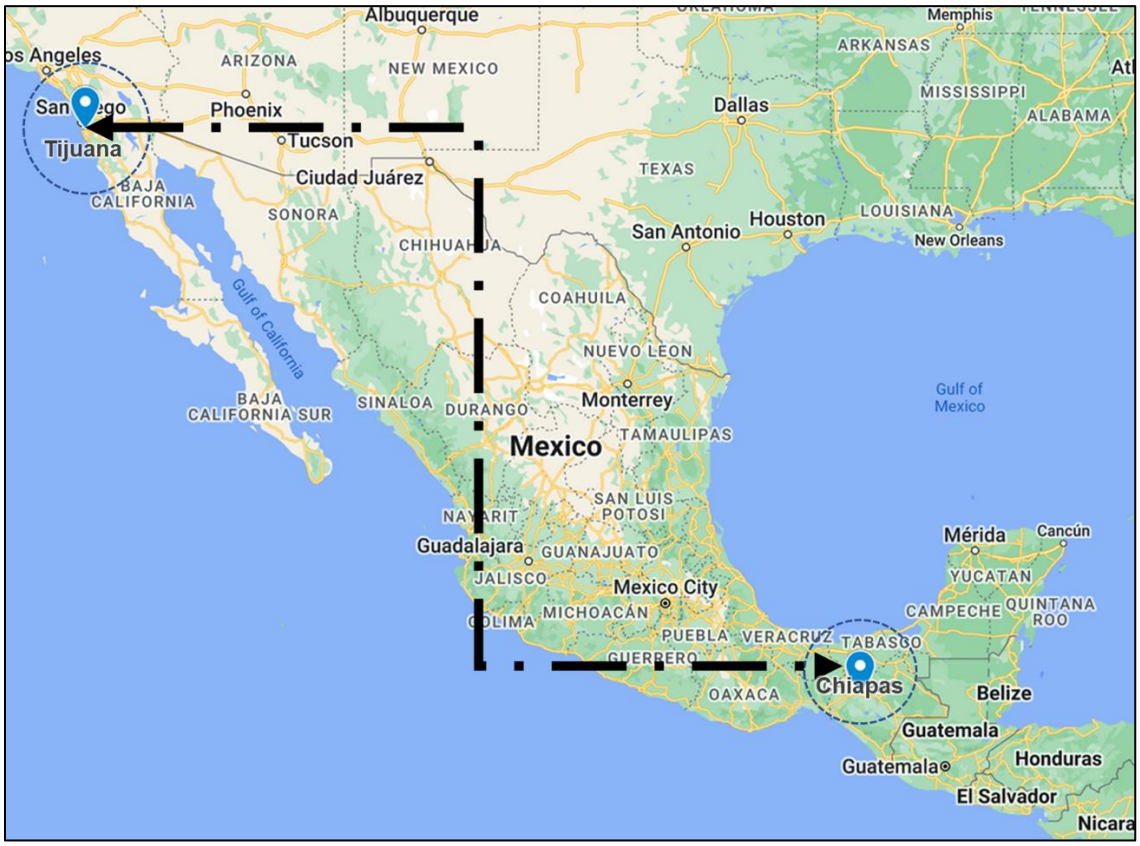
[11] See Mahler & Pessar (2001).

[12] Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is an analytical technique to analyze the range of experience. As Esther H. Riggs and Adrian Coyle (2002) point out, IPA is "a method which offers a systematic way of analyzing qualitative data and which aims to explore each participant's story to obtain some sense of their experiences, cognitions and meaning-making" (p. 5). The IPA method has been selected for this research since it ties together with the premises of the objectives of this research, as well as its methodological framework.

pesos for a room “with shower and bathroom.” The man seems eager to strike a deal. I cross a few more streets to reach a migrant shelter, where I would meet four young men from Chiapas, recently returned to Tijuana after having been deported, the week prior. For some of them, it would be the third deportation of the year. Undeterred, they are back in Tijuana and planning their next attempt to cross the border.

As we gather around *atole*[13] and sweet breads, they begin to share their stories, first collectively and then individually. All of them have less than a week in Tijuana, but this is not their first time in Tijuana. The week prior to our encounter, three of them “jumped” the border and made their way through the desert. They walked one full day and night when, suddenly, under the limelight of dawn, they were surprised by border patrols, detained, and deported back to Mexico. They were sent to Tijuana, on the edge of the United States border, and then back to Chiapas, on Mexico’s most southern border (see Figure 5). As soon as they arrived in Chiapas, they boarded a bus back to Tijuana, a journey that took a full three days and three nights, “the same as in the desert,” they tell me.

Figure 5
From Tijuana to Chiapas, and back to Tijuana. The deportee’s relentless journey.



Source: Elaborated with Google Maps

They are all between 18 and 33 years of age, eager to cross extra-officially to the United States, again, in search of the constant migrant desire: a better life with better conditions, removed from suffering, poverty, violence and anguish. Only one of them has yet to experience the hardships of crossing the border through the desert. The rest have attempted this crossing at

[13] Typical Mexican beverage made from corn flour.

least three times, always getting caught by border patrol. For one of them, this would be either his fifth or sixth attempt (he isn't sure how many times he has been deported).

I ask one of them, "Miguel," 26 years old from Chiapas, how it felt to be in Tijuana again, so soon after having been deported. He shares his feelings on the perils of crossing the desert and the feeling of sadness, abandonment and risk that shrouds the experience. He tells me,

> The truth is that it is a great sadness. I feel sad, you know? It is hard . . . because you risk your life, when you fall on a rock, if you get attacked by an animal . . . nobody is going to look for you. Who is going to look for you? Nobody! There's no way to get to a hospital and a lot of people are left stranded. A lot of people are left stranded in order to make a living for their families. Many, thank God, have made it, and I know that—someday—I will make it, too.[14]

"Miguel" is sullen in his demeanor and speaks with teary eyes. He tells me about his family and children in Chiapas and how he misses them. He is under no illusion that attempting to make a living in the United States will not be easy. His previous experiences endowed him with a solemn understanding of how life as an undocumented migrant in the United States often reduces life to the mercantile exchange of body as labor creating, what Karl Marx (1844/1977) had noted in 1844, "estranged labor." It is, as Karl Marx once wrote, "labor in which man alienates himself" as a form of "self-sacrifice, of mortification" (p. 71). He confides in me that, over there, in the United States,

> it's not easy. You earn money, but you still suffer because you work every day. It's not the same as here. As soon as you leave work, you go to your room. You have to wash your clothes and make your food. You go there alone; you remember your family, and you feel a great sadness. It is not like as they say, because there you don't have a great life; you go and work, you have to suffer to earn money. If you don't work, it's the same, you're screwed over there.[15]

"Miguel" emphasizes suffering throughout my conversation with him. When he states that "it's not like as they say," he effects a clear path between the ideated expectation and the lived experience. When he emphasizes that "[there] you don't have a great life," it brings a necessary argument to the murky promises the border makes. Here, in this narrative, through "Miguel," is the idea of the "bare life" here.

The Coloniality of Being and Living the "Bare Life"

"Miguel's" experience in the United States suggests a form of domination. His body is no longer "free". "Miguel" lives, as Gregg Lambert (2006) might suggest, under "the totalizing object of power." A "coloniality of power" in terms of Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007), understood as "the interrelation among modern forms of exploitation and domination (power)" (p. 242).

This state of coloniality is an overlapping theme in the life of the deportee. "Tomás", a young man from the state of Puebla, was deported either in 2017 or 2018—he isn't sure—to Tijuana. When we met in mid-September 2021, he mentioned he had been living in temporary migrant shelters ever since he arrived in Tijuana, 4 to 5 years ago. Temporary migrant shelters are, in reality, a misnomer of function. They are more permanent than temporary, and more

[14] Excerpt from interview with "Miguel", a young man from Chiapas, recently deported, recorded on 15 September 2021, Tijuana, B.C.
[15] *Ibid*.

persistent than transient. They hold onto the idea of bringing temporary relief, but the reality is that the overall phenomenological experience of deportation is primed by a shift in chronopolitics, where the deportee finds time "suspended" in expectation, and ideation. This coincides with another term brought forth by Maldonado-Torres: *coloniality of Being*; a condition that imposes a permanency in living the "bare life." The border slowly solidifies time.

By demonstrating how coloniality survives colonialism through the reproduction of long-lasting patterns of power that result from colonial practices, Maldonado-Torres demonstrates how coloniality can exist—and persist—outside of colonial frameworks but *through* colonial practices. One such practice is the consistent omission of bodies—and its representations—from institutional recognition and visibility. "Invisibility," writes Maldonado-Torres (2007), "and dehumanization are the primary expressions of the coloniality of Being," for the coloniality of Being

> refers not merely to the reduction of the particular to the generality of the concept or any given horizon of meaning, but to the violation of the meaning of human alterity to the point where the alter-ego becomes a sub-alter. (p. 257)

By shining a light on the process of othering that borderscapes create and exacerbate through deportation, the coloniality of Being appears as a dominated perception of Self through biopolitical relations and power geometries that reduce living to what Giorgio Agamben has coined as "the bare life," a life that exists on "the margin of the political order" (p. 9).[16] Borderscapes are primers for the perpetuation of colonial relations, through such exercises as the imperial gaze[17] —the imperial *attitude*, as Maldonado-Torres (2007) calls it[18]—and thus are more than mechanisms of control; *they are mechanisms of domination*.

"Tomás" and "Miguel" both live with, and through, anguish. "Miguel" is distressed to have left behind his wife and children, and even more so when considering the time he may be separated from them. He sums up his position by saying, "the life of being a migrant is hard [. . .]. Here, one suffers. You suffer hunger, thirst, tiredness, sleep, trying to get to the United States [. . .] and if you don't work, you die."[19]

Suffering as a Trope of the Phenomenology of Deportation

Suffering is an ongoing trope of the phenomenology of mobility here in Tijuana. It is something lived and felt. For "Tomas," the young deported man living in migrant shelters in Tijuana, as is the case for many of the deportees I spoke with, life is located, "on the other side" of the border. It resides somewhere "else"; it is not "here" but "there." When "Tomás" was deported either in 2017 or 2018, he left behind a wife and son, finding himself to survive in Tijuana. Initially seeking temporary refuge in migrant shelters, its temporary sanction progressively became more permanent. At the moment of our interview in mid-September 2021, "Tomás" had no real prospects of leaving the shelter, despite him expressing a desire to do so. Desire, hope and wishful thinking are a staple trope of the resilience of the deportee, as a form of dislocation of the "unjust suffering" endured. It is one of the ways deportees manage "the bare life". The suffering of the deportee is a political condition and a biopolitical expression. As Boaventura de Sousa

[16] Succinctly, the bare life is a "life exposed to death" (p. 114).
[17] See Galhardi (2022a).
[18] In his own words, Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007) defines the "imperial attitude" as promoting "a fundamentally genocidal attitude in respect to colonized and racialized people. Through it colonial and racial subjects are marked as dispensable" (p. 246).
[19] Excerpt from interview with "Miguel", a young man from Chiapas, recently deported, recorded on 15 September 2021, Tijuana, B.C.

Santos (2018) aptly argues, "the social experiences of injustice and oppression caused by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy are always corporeal experiences" (p. 79).

"Chiapas," a young man of 23 years of age, was recently deported back to Mexico the week prior to our interview after a failed attempt at crossing the border with a few bandmates. With two other migrants, "Chiapas" attempted to cross the border, and in doing so, he got his hand stuck on some barbed wire, almost losing a finger and permanently damaging his hand in the process. He recalls the events as follows:

> Well, we jumped and unfortunately, I had an accident. I cut my hand with barbed wire. [. . .] [Nevertheless] we jumped, and walked for the rest of the night, but I was already in a lot of pain so I was staying a little bit. [. . .] We walked until dawn, encountering a lot of rattlesnakes until "they" caught us. . . At dawn on a hill, "*la migra"* caught me.[20]

He shows me his wounded right hand, taking off the yellowed gauze, revealing a deep split from the midsection of the first segment of his middle finger, all the way to the middle of his palm. I try not to grimace at the image nor reveal my private concerns that maybe he will never recover full mobility in his hand. I address some words of comfort as well as suggesting we go to a local clinic close by that provides free medical services to the Tijuana public—mainly attending to Central, African and other in-transit migrants in the area, including the permanent deportee population. He declines. One of his fellow bandmates' comments that, due to this injury, they, now, "must wait for his hand to heal," before "trying again." The wall is not a deterrent, but an obstacle. As "Jaime," a young man in his early 20s and the most experienced member in this group, states, "I will keep trying until we make it. [. . .] If we make it, then it is fine, but we will keep trying . . . once, twice, three times, whatever we can until, I hope, we make it."[21]

When I asked "Chiapas" about his time in Tijuana, he emphasized that, here at this borderscape— "one suffers a lot." When I inquired further, he mentioned that "you have to suffer to be able to have something of your own," and with this he justifies himself here in this borderscape. "Chiapas" goes on to share that he is spending, on average, between "200 and 300 pesos per day" (approx. U.S.$10–17) which is "a lot of money." He tells me that he is "running out of money" and that his "savings are finished," but he must "hold on here, because there is no way I'm getting stuck here. The goal is to get there." He wants to "get there" to find his father, who migrated to the United States 15 years ago, and with whom he has had sporadic interaction since. He hopes to meet his father "before he dies."

The Cultural Imagination of Border Crossing and the Effects (and Affects) of Deportation

"Wagner," the oldest member of the group of Chiapas, is 33 years of age and has yet to cross the border. He joined this group of migrants earlier in the week, after a chance encounter in a migrant shelter. Being from Chiapas himself, and sharing the same affinity to cross the border, he was accepted, after some consideration, into the group. He is enthusiastic to "jump over the wall like every migrant does."[22] Crossing the border, by alternative means than the state-sanctioned gateways, are part of, as "Wagner" demonstrates, the cultural imagination of entangled lives. The border, again, is not a deterrent, but an obstacle to a shared space, place and idea; one that lies

[20] Excerpt from interview with "Chiapas", young man from Chiapas, recently deported, recorded on 15 September 2021, Tijuana, B.C.

[21] Excerpt from interview with "Jaime", a young man from Chiapas, recently deported, recorded on 15 September 2021, Tijuana, B.C.

[22] Excerpt from interview with "Wagner", a young man from Chiapas, recently deported, recorded on 15 September 2021, Tijuana, B.C.

beyond the identity of the Nation-State. There is a larger history here that migrants, and deportees, recognize. Jumping "the wall as every migrant does" is a clear expression of the deeply rooted ties of reflexive migrancy particular to the Mexico-United States migration field.

In contrast with his fellow bandmates, "Wagner" is overtly cheerful about their prospect of crossing the border. His eyes sparkle as he narrates his expectations of being able to achieve "what I can't do in my own country". His demeanor is a telling sign of the transformation of Being when the body is crossed by the experience of deportation. Unlike the others, he seems to "dream" in brighter colors, while his bandmates are more solemn in their approach. What happens, then, to the Self of these migrants when they are deported? The deportation experience seems to remove any notion of banality of life and press the enduring weight of the bureaucracy of "othering," and the "bare life." "Wagner" has yet to undergo the forces that have shaped these other narratives and pushed their performativity and presence through the deportation experience.

In the meantime, they wander the streets of Tijuana, looking for any opportunities that can generate a monetary return in order to attend to their ever-growing urgency to find a means to satisfy their basic needs. As they wander, they crisscross between what Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018) has called the "the abyssal line." The abyssal line, writes de Sousa Santos (2018), "marks the radical division between forms of metropolitan sociability and forms of colonial sociability that has characterized the Western modern" (p. 20). It is a division of "two worlds of domination," divided between "the metropolitan and the colonial world." "The metropolitan world," explains Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018), "is the world of equivalence and reciprocity"; the world of the "fully human." On the other side of this abyssal line is the colonial world, "the world of 'them,' those with whom no equivalence or reciprocity is imaginable since they are not fully human" (pp. 20–21). The abyssal line is the contextual horizon of ontological experience of the deportee.

It is imperative for "Jaime," "Wagner," "Chiapas," and "Miguel" to "keep moving", for the streets of Tijuana are an end in itself. If they stop moving for too long, they just might, like many around them, get "stuck here" and become, in terms of Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018) a "dying body."[23] The phenomenographic experience of being at this borderscape is shrouded in what Boaventura de Sousa Santos has called "unjust suffering."

The Deportee and His "Unjust Suffering"

Unjust suffering, argues de Sousa Santos (2018), is the suffering "caused by oppression" and endured without the ability to disengage voluntarily (p. 90). It is, as Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai (2012) might argue, an expression that can only, and truly, come to fruition from the actual experience of the lived experience.[24] Guru and Sarukkai (2012) are clear on this aspect, and argue that:

[23] In his brilliant discussions on corporality and epistemology, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018) defines the dying body—as part of three categories of corporeal differences—as "the body of the provisional end of the struggle. But it is also, almost always, the body that continues to fight in another living, fighting body" (p. 90).

[24] The authors argue that

> even if the experience is unpleasant, there is no choice that allows the subject to leave or even modify it. The experiencer comes to the experience not as a subject who has some control over that experience but as one who *will* have to live with that experience. Consequently, they argue, "All this makes lived experience qualitatively different from mere experience. (p. 35)

> the structure of lived experience is one that acknowledges the essential unbreakable relation between the subject who experiences and the context and content of experience. This unbreakable relation is the relation of necessity and creates the absence of choice. Thus, while experience can be duplicated and simulated, lived experience cannot be opened out for experience by *any* subject. (p. 36)

Deportation, then, is a particular experience developed through, and *only through*, the deportee. Suffering, unjustly, is a condition that bears witness to the "spectacle of deportation," as the enactment of coloniality through biopolitical will of the imperial gaze particular to the deportee, and *only the deportee* (Galhardi, 2022a). "Tomás," the young deportee from Puebla, was empathic in describing how "everything is very complicated here." When the perception is that "everything is very complicated", then the ensuing experience is one of navigating a turbulent terrain. Another of my informants, "Jesús," encapsulated this sentiment and embodied condition by describing his experience of being a deportee in Tijuana as having to "re-survive."

More than Surviving, The Deportee Must "Re-survive"

"Jesus" is a young man in his mid-40s, originally from Sinaloa, who entered the United States extra-officially in 1986, when he was 11 years of age. Then, "Jesus" was seeking a better life, one as far removed from the sexual, physical, emotional and economic violence he had suffered in his mere 11 years of existence. Taking cues from friendships forged in living on the streets, he made the perilous journey toward the northern Mexico border and entered, with ease, the United States through Texas. He survived his first couple of years, living in trailer parks until he met a loving American couple who became endeared with him and expressed their desire to adopt him. When he tells me this anecdote, he straightens his posture, and beams with pride as he recounts—almost astoundingly so—how this American family wanted him —*"me of all people!",* as he tells me— to be part of their family— "to be ***a*** family." He seems incredulous to the fact that someone could become endeared with him. However, as he puts it, he had "a lot of psychological problems" and "was very rebellious" due to "everything that had happened to me with my family." He was at an impasse—emotionally and psychologically—and simply "couldn't get over it."[25] There is a melancholic pause, as he proceeds to tell me how he rejected this opportunity. It would seem that love, here, is part of what "Jesús" is searching; seeking; longing. Love and acceptance; love as belonging. Love as realization. Throughout his story, it becomes evident that the border between Mexico and the United States represents much more than "better opportunities" or a "better life." It becomes a signifier of the different narratives "inscribed on his body," where, on one side of the border, lies the lived experiences of sexual, physical and emotional violence, which "suddenly" dissipate "on the other side." As he recounts his life in the United States, he assigns a sense of comfort to the life he lived in the United States.

Despite having undergone a few deportations between 1990 and 2012, he always returned to the United States, managing to return to "his life." It would not be until 2013 where he would be stopped for speeding and cited to appear in court, that things would change. Fearing that his appearance in court would reveal his undocumented status, leading to his immediate removal, he failed to appear and a warrant for his arrest was issued. He was apprehended soon-there-after and promptly deported back to Mexico.

He was returned to Mexico, a "loveless" place, with "nothing" as he put it. He was sent back into "the same thing", but this time "more different." He is evidently anguished to have to be in Mexico. Not only that, but he goes on to describe how, now back in Mexico, he needs to "re-

[25] Excerpt from interview with "Jesús", young man from Sinaloa with multiple counts of deportation, currently living in Tijuana at the time of the interview. Interviewed on 27 September 2021, Tijuana, B.C.

survive."[26] At the moment of our interview, he had been working a night shift in a sewing factory approximately two hours away from the migrant shelter, four days a week. Besides this employment contributing to his agency, he was facing the particular "unjust suffering" migrants and deportees face in Tijuana. Since the policy of the migrant shelter he was staying at—as is the case with the majority of the migrant shelters I visited—is to usher all able migrants out of the shelter by early morning and only allow access again in the later afternoon, "Jesus" was facing the ongoing problem of what to do—more specifically—where to go at the end of his shift at 6 a.m. Barred from entering the shelter until the allocated time, he had sought respite in several public spaces in Tijuana, only to be harassed by local police. Consequently, "Jesus" found that he could rest, partially, in a surprising location: the airport. There, he could at least sit and rest his eyes for a while and wait to be able to enter the shelter again. As he tells me: "and there I fall asleep sitting up, and I rest, but you don't rest well."[27] "Jesús," ultimately, is now concerned with "re-surviving." He hopes "to get up and get off the streets, to go to the shelters, and to rent . . . to be in a house."[28]

Agency and Resiliency: The Infrapolitics of the Powerless

Borderscape positionality, consequently, structure spaces of emotions, creating affective territories that become part of the experience of reflexive migrancy as a deportee. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018) argues,

> Emotions are the door to and the path of life in struggle. And bodies are as much at the center of the struggles as the struggles are at the center of the bodies. The bodies are performative and thus renegotiate and expand or subvert the existing reality through what they do. (p. 89)

Thus, deported migrant men often have a difficult time navigating the affective territories of these borderscapes, as it seems to reflect on their capacity to engage with masculine tropes of manhood. For example, one of the young men from Chiapas I interviewed, "Jaime," was hesitant to talk to me but finally accepted. I thanked him, earnestly, for his sharing and confiding in me. After answering, briefly, to my questions, he finished by saying, "nothing more . . . that's my word." Here, "Jaime" has taken full control of this interview. He has chosen, carefully, what to share, how to share, and how to end what could also be reminiscent of deportation interviews and interrogations. After all, "Jaime" has been deported at least five, if not six, times.

"Nothing more" and "that's my word" seems to counter the vulnerability that migrants are made to feel and embody when traversing the biopolitical geographies of border bureaucracy and the extension of the "border spectacle." "Jaime" demonstrates a fierce resiliency in surviving this borderscape, a form of "re-surviving" in terms of "Jesus" characterization. This invokes strategies that recall James C. Scott's (1990) description of "the infrapolitics of the powerless." To choose to migrate and endure the biopolitical practices of coloniality of Being is a means to regain agency and overcome what Étienne Balibar (2002) has called the "non-life."

Infrapolitics of the powerless (also framed as the "infrapolitics of subordinate groups") refers to the "wide variety of low-profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name" (p. 20). They are often—but not exclusively— legal transgressions that occur in the shadows of public space. They are a form of private rebellion, a "hidden transcript" in the words of Scott (1990). As coloniality begets the subaltern in the form of the castaway deportee, the deportee is

[26] Excerpt from interview with "Jesús", young man from Sinaloa with multiple counts of deportation, currently living in Tijuana at the time of the interview. Interviewed on 27 September 2021, Tijuana, B.C.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Ibid.*

denied, as James C. Scott (1990) so aptly put, "the ordinary luxury of negative reciprocity." "Every subordinate group," writes Scott (1990), "creates, out of its ordeal, a 'hidden transcript' that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant" (p. xii). It is here, then, through these "hidden transcripts," of the infrapolitics of the deportee, that the deportation spectacle comes to fruition; a spectacle as lively as the border spectacle, enveloped through the embodiment of biopolitical and infrapolitical will of resilience. The bare life is often the center stage of the deportation spectacle, guarding prying eyes of the Border apparatus (and accomplices) from the infrapolitical will behind the stage: the scheming of another attempt at subverting the condition of coloniality of being; of overthrowing the non-life.

Final Remarks: Tijuana and the Deportation Spectacle

Tijuana is a complicated city where the politics of "othering" becomes an unequivocal reference to its identity. This is a process through, with and due to a border and its continuous push of "bordering" (Newman, 2006). The fallacy of most borders is that it portrays itself as a stable, linear point in space, whereby the reality of most (if not all borders) is that it develops as a process of "spatialization," a concept that Tone Bringa and Hege Toje (2016) argue "not only delineate territory, but also delineate and even separate social space and spaces of interaction" (p. 3). In this borderscape, migrancy is performed, constantly, through and with the border. First as a political spectacle (Edelman, 1988), then as a border spectacle (de Genova, 2002) alongside, as I put forth, the ongoing deportation spectacle.

Invoking Guy Debord's notion of "the society of spectacle" (1967/1995), Edelman (1988) contends that political spectacles are produced through symbolic actions and events intended to influence public sentiment and emotions rather than tackling issues in a more substantive manner. A political spectacle, then, is a brute form of political discourse; it is a vulgarization of ideas, unabashedly manipulative in its intent and presentation. The narrative, in a political spectacle, is usually theatrical in form and substance, and its message is often alarmist and, frequently, inciteful. By performing the issue through clear spin and biases, the political spectacle seeks to circulate a performative reaction to an issue, one that migration phenomenology knows, unfortunately, all too well.

Performative representation, hence, is the core of political spectacle. The political spectacle of migration is a cornerstone of how migration narratives are framed and shaped in contemporary (if not all historical) migration flows. In the context of the Tijuana borderscape, the political spectacle has centered on the "illegality" of bodies transgressing international law and sovereign political lines, i.e., crossing the border from Mexico into the United States through extra-official entry points (notably, the desert). This political spectacle has often expressed itself through racialized conceptualizing of social membership in the United States (Brambilla, 2020). It has become an integral part of the structural violence that is exerted through the border, onto the bodies of migrants; it is an expression of the biopolitical will of the border. Overall, the political spectacle is a biopolitical artifact of control.

As Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta (2006) remind us, "performances assume an interface between actors and spectators," implying that "performances both constitute and are constituted by an audience." Hence, "the ***structure*** of bureaucratic authority depends on the repetitive re-enactment of everyday practices,"[29] a practice that categorizes migrant bodies within a matrix of migration biopolitical acts, structural violence and narratives that shape the "border spectacle," as Nicolas de Genova (2002) might suggest. The bureaucracy of migration politics, then, can be framed as the performing of the political spectacle of the Nation-state.

[29] p. 13.

Building on the historical structural predation of migration policies on migrant bodies, Nicolas de Genova (2002) demonstrates how nativist and xenophobic political spin have reframed migration through securitization narratives with terms such as "crisis," "illegality" and "illegal aliens," argued in narratives that emphasize the "loss of control" of border management—the essence of the *political spectacle* in the terms of Murray Edelman (1988).[30] "Hence," writes de Genova (2002), "it is precisely 'the Border' that provides the exemplary theatre for staging the spectacle of 'the illegal alien' that the law produces" (p. 436).

The theatrical production here is needed, argues de Genova, because there is a need to substantiate a narrative that "sees" the migrant through "illegality," in order to justify the use, development, and expansion of biopolitical enforcement. As Nicholas de Genova (2002) aptly puts forth,

> The legal production of Mexican (and also Central American) migrant "illegality" requires the spectacle of enforcement at the U.S.-Mexico border for the spatialized difference between the nation states of the United States and Mexico (and effectively, all of Latin America) to be socially inscribed upon the migrants themselves-embodied in the spatialized (and racialized) status of "illegal alien." (p. 437)

And, as Galina Cornelisse (2010) argues,

> deportation and detention are often merely regarded as simple instances of immigration law enforcement. In official political discourse, they are presented as the proper and natural response of the sovereign state to those who have violated its territorial sovereignty. (p. 101)

As the border spectacle is (re)produced through enacting policy that seeks to contain and terse the ebb and flow of migration flow through Mexico (Anguiano Téllez & Trejo Peña, 2007), the deportee is subjugated to the alter-effect of "illegality," becoming the process of othering, in constant displacement from its self-referenced ontopological footing. The deportee, hence, is performed. He/she does not do so voluntarily but enters the "deportation spectacle" as a condition of the expressions of coloniality that ensues deportation. As he/she delves further into the need to "re-survive" as a deportee, the infrapolitics of the powerless react to the "bare life" and "unjust suffering," putting the deportation spectacle in effect, as the social outcome of the phenomenology of deportation.

It is worth highlighting that deportation is a landmark experience for Mexican men in migrant shelters in Tijuana. My interviewees ranged from young men in their 20s who had been recently deported, to men over the age of 65 who had been deported over a decade prior. Some, mainly those in their early 20s, were actively seeking to cross the border again, while others had resigned to staying on in Tijuana. Some had been in migrant shelters for less than a week, while others expressed having lived in migrant shelters for many years. Some had grown up in the United States, while others had spent less than a year there. Some crossed by themselves, others with family members, and others crossed with friends. Most crossed with the help of human smugglers; some arrived at their destination without incident; others were apprehended en route. Some got involved with drug cartels, while others were returned to Mexico without ever committing a crime besides entering the United States through extra-official means.

Despite the varied and heterogeneous nature and positions of many of my interviewees, each and every one spoke from the margins of the "spectacle of society." Each of my collaborators referred to the pressures endured by their displacement to a borderscape as having to fight a

[30] To this point, Nicolas de Genova (2002) aptly states that "it is deportability, and not deportation per se, that has historically rendered undocumented migrant labor a distinctly disposable commodity" (p. 438).

diminished life, within brighter, tighter, and more densely packed biopolitical and bordering politics. These practices, nevertheless, are counteracted by the resiliency earned through migrancy. Deportation, then, is a form of survival, that plays out in the deportation spectacle of every day border and bordering practices.

As a final point, it becomes imperative, then, to recognize that deportation is not an end of a process, but lives on, reconfigured, as a new facet of migrancy expressions now articulated as part of a larger deportation spectacle; a spectacle that includes the lives of hundreds and thousands of Mexican deportees that suddenly find themselves in borderscapes such as Tijuana. To recognize the continuity of the colonial practices that reproduces deportation, is to promote the visibility of an often misrepresented, misinterpreted and misdiagnosed population that lives on, having to re-survive.

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