

hola turquia

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“hola turquía” is a collaborative piece that sets out to reflect on and challenge the arbitrariness of border-tracing. It was completed in the summer of 2013 while conducting fieldwork in the Putumayo region of southern Colombia, near the border with Ecuador. The Putumayo region of Colombia has been, historically, a site of exchange between Andean and Amazonian cultures. After the Spanish colonization, it became an important outpost of, first Franciscan and later Capuchin missionaries. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was also one of the epicenters of the atrocious “rubber boom.” In the present, the remnants of its turbulent history are still alive. As a problematic area far from any urban centers, it remains imagined as “marginal” in (inter)national discourse, often exoticized. We welcome the opportunity to include our work in this special issue of JAST because we are interested in addressing the role of institutions in border-tracing. Following Vertovec’s definition of transnationalism – “sustained cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations spanning nation-states” – we interrogate how these relationships, exchanges, affiliations, and formations are complicated by institutions. Our choice to convey ideas that engage border-making through photography and poetry also seek to challenge the rigidity of what many have referred to as the logocentric nature of academic discourse. As we hope to demonstrate, the numerous ways in which delimitations exist (e.g. definitions of genre, tracings of (inter)national borders, imaginations and otherings, etc.) are hardly ever straight-forward; rather, they are messy, overlapping, and complex. Part of the inspiration behind the project came from encountering the disjuncture between the way borders are drawn theoretically and the way they are practically experienced every day. At the time of the project, there was a main road construction project underway in the town of Sibundoy. The initiative claimed to better connect some of the main cities of the Putumayo with each other, with Bogotá, and with Latin America in general. The old rhetoric of a transparent, generalized, and necessary pan-Americanness

appeared especially problematic in an area where the dominant languages are not Spanish. One major point we pursue in this project is to engage with the idea that tracings and delimitations are given meaning according to perspective. What does it mean, for example, that there is an “official” brand of liquor sanctioned by a local government? What does it mean that toothpaste boxes in a supermarket bear the mark of US currency used across the border in Ecuador? What does it mean that Capuchin priests circulated a particular version of what they encountered globally? What does it mean to categorize according to geography? More broadly, what does it mean to study a geographic area (Latin America in this case) from afar?

postales desde la frontera

postcards from the border

*entre colombia
y ecuador, desde el putumayo,
desde sibundoy*

between colombia
and ecuador, from the putumayo,
from sibundoy

*porque cuentan que la misión
capuchina se la llevaba diseminando fotos
de su misión civilizadora, de los llamados
salvajes
y nosotros
no civilizamos pero sí circulamos (hola
turquía)*

because they say that the capuchin
mission
used to send out photographs
of its civilizing mission, of the so-called
savages,
and we
are not civilizing, but we spread our word,
too (hello turkey)

*porque la frontera a veces
se enfatiza pero a veces
se ignora
la frontera a veces o casi siempre se hace
en lugares lejanos a la frontera*

because sometimes the border
is enforced and sometimes
it is ignored
the border sometimes or almost always is
drawn
in places far from the border

*porque a veces hay una patria grande
otras veces una patria
chiquita
otras veces latin american studies
latino studies
ethnic studies
y compañía*

because sometimes there exists a patria
grande
and other times only a patria
chiquita
other times, latin american studies
latino studies
ethnic studies
and so on

*hoy vimos un partido de fútbol
y como siempre
habian uniformes, líneas trazadas en el suelo,
goles, autogoles,
y un árbitro*

today we went to a football match
and, as always,
there were uniforms, and lines drawn on
the
grass, goals, own-goals,
and a referee

hola turquia



made in manizales (a 14 horas de viaje terrestre)

*hace un año proliferaba aguardiente
contrabandeado
de pocos kilómetros al sur
era marca cristal, producido al otro lado
en el ecuador,
siempre sabroso a las lenguas
tanto de allá como de acá
sabrosísimo, siete mil pesos la pachita*

*hoy hay un aguardiente oficial
el aguardiente putumayo
y el cristal no fluye más a este lado del río
putumayo,
río fronterizo, divisorio*

sabroso también, pero a catorce mil pesos

hay que lavarse los dientes

*en el supermercado
hay pastas de dientes que traen impreso
el precio en dólares (hola ecuador)*

hay que reparar alcantarillas

*están ampliando la carretera que pasa
por el pueblo
para estar más conectados con
el resto del putumayo,
la américa latina y
con el mundo!
me dijo un niño que si su tío aurelio
excava suficientemente profundo
se llega a la línea del ecuador
y si excava aún más
hola china*

made in manizales (14 hours travel by land)

one year ago, in every store you could find aguardiente smuggled from a few kilometers south, a brand called cristal, produced on the other side, in ecuador, always sweet to the tongue, whether there or here, very sweet, seven thousand pesos a bottle

now there is an official aguardiente, the aguardiente putumayo, and cristal no longer flows this side of the putumayo river, a border river, a river that divides,

sweet, too, but for fourteen thousand pesos

you have to brush your teeth

in the supermarket there are toothpaste boxes stamped with a price in dollars (hello ecuador)

you have to keep up the plumbing

they are digging up the road that passes through town to have easier access to the rest of the putumayo, to latin america, and the rest of the world a boy told me that if his uncle aurelio dug deep enough he would reach the border of ecuador and if he dug a little bit more hello china

hola turquia



made in barcelona

*está la diócesis
que ha estado desde antes de los tiempos
de los
mayores
y al otro lado del río putumayo
también*

hay pegamentos

*para las botas que vienen y van
o la gran lengua castellana, por ejemplo
la gran herencia mítica, lingüística*

*está también la sombra
del gran libertador
lo que antes fue la gran colombia
es ahora
venezuela, ecuador, colombia*

pero también hay maíz

*y también hay
otras herencias de antes, raíces más
profundas*

*basty sibundoy (así se dice hola en
cämentsä)*



made in barcelona

*the diocese in the square
has been here since before the time of
the
elders
and the one from across the putumayo
river, in ecuador,
as well*

*you have to have glue
to repair the boots that come and go
or the great spanish language, for
example, that great linguistic, mythical
heritage*

*there is also the shadow
of our great liberator
and what was once la gran colombia
is now
venezuela, ecuador, colombia*

but there is still corn

*and there are still
the heritages of what was, deeper roots*

*basty sibundoy (the word for hello in
cämentsä)*

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