Out-of-Bounds: Re-imagining the border through contemporary art narratives.

Clyde Arch McGill
BSc, BVM&S, BA (Hons) Visual Art

An exegesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

School of Art,
College of Design and Social Context
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Declaration.

I certify that, except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone;

the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award;

the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program;

and any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged;

and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Signature__Clyde McGill_____________________________________________________

Date______________________________________________________________
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Summary

The materiality of national borders is changing from structures of stone and steel to networks of ideas and understandings. Containment and exclusion, while still evident, are being understood more broadly in terms of their social and cultural impacts. Nationhood and citizenship are beginning to be diluted as economic opportunity gains primacy, such as in the European Union. Globalization spreads with little regard to locality. The Internet transcends place.

Artists have explored the significance of borders in many ways, including their role as political entities, during war and its aftermath and the effect on refugees, after colonization, in their cartographic form and as barriers to individual crossers. In this research, I consider how, as a visual artist, I can gain insights into borders as a contemporary phenomenon through personal experiences of a range of borders.

This research was carried out in the United States of America, Indonesia and Australia, at several sites, using contemporary inter-disciplinary art methodologies to re-contextualise and re-imagine borders. Drawing on my personal experience, news-media reports, and observational field trips, I have constructed narratives, using video and still photography, text, prints, drawings and artist books, performance and sound, to formulate my own multi-dimensional experiences of borders, as a visual method of understanding border dynamics.

Working at the intersect of artists such as Guillermo Gomez-Pena on one side and the notions of social theorists such as Eiki Berg on the other, I consider the impact of the flux of borders through memory, stories and reminiscence. I propose that contemporary national borders can be perceived as transcending history and geography, nurturing the ascendancy of the non-citizen, and existing experientially so that each person, everywhere, into the future, could be the new border.
Figure 1. Clyde McGill. Out-of-Bounds: Re-imagining the border through contemporary art narratives (2012), in progress.
Introduction

Contemporary ideas in sociology and human geography are changing understandings and definitions of borders as boundaries, recognising them not simply as lines on a map or fences dissecting a landscape, but rather as dual and contradictory identities, simultaneously impervious and permeable, ranging from “solid walls to clothes to internalised rules” (Hodge & O’Carroll 2006, p. 2). While borders are boundaries that still mark territories, identities and values to be proclaimed or defended, they are increasingly also recognised as “dynamic processes and discourses” (Berg & van Houtum 2003, p. 2). My particular research interest is in geopolitical borders and the ways that they can exist as internalised, personal experiences, manifested through imaginative visual and textual narratives.

This project is grounded in current ideas and research in sociology and human geography concerning international borders and globalisation. Borders have historically been the first attempts to keep out external threatening forces and to maintain control within. However the way borders are now perceived is changing. They are not only geographical but also cultural, as cartographic lines and as conduits for narratives and communication, as delineated as much by context as content and conflict, and created and re-created on the outside and the inside by individuals and communities (Berg & Van Houtum 2003 & Hodge & O’Carroll 2006).

According to Australian sociologist, Sonia Tascon, borders are physical and metaphysical constructs, “motifs of powerful sway” (Tascon 2002, p. 2). Tascon writes that national borders show territorial limits, what is included or excluded from a nation and bring into being the nation’s identity and geographical integrity (ibid.). While borders can be seen simply as manifestations of geometry and the arrangement of objects and parts, the sociologist, Noel Parker observes that borders or margins have prospects and possibilities that make them privileged sites for observing the formation and reformation of space (Joenniemi & Parker, 2008).
In contrast Berg and van Houtum argue, “a border is not a border” (Berg & van Houtum, 2003, p. 2). They assert that borders are now interpreted as the communication of practices, as points of view that are believed by some and identified with or contested by others and that how the border is understood and interpreted “varies with our own interests, conventions, social relations and situations” (ibid. p. 2). Borders are also part of location in a spatial or geopolitical sense, often locating communities, usually from the outside. The idea of locational space is ‘the notion of place around which groups form existential commitments’ (Tuathail 2005). Political scientist, Daniel Elazar proposes that location has three important aspects: spatial, temporal and cultural (Elazar 1998). Additionally, location can be imagined as a function of perspectivity, seeing it differently from here or there, and contemporary connectivity (Karskens 2012). From a spatial politics point of view, when a border changes, in form or purpose, the alteration in location has flow-on effects.

A collection of “networks, flows, and trans-nationalism” describes the notions of contemporary globalization that “presupposes some transcendental imagination” (Shamir 2005, p. 198). Global politics theorist, Anthony McGrew lists the central principles of democracy as territoriality, sovereignty, autonomy and legality and stresses the significance of the bounded sovereign state in providing the political space for the struggles for democracy (McGrew, 1997). Conflict continues to be an agent of border change and terrorism is now responsible for efforts by countries such as the USA, Australia, and Britain to increase border security. From these perspectives of border transformation the boundary is where ideologies elide and collide, the tension between different points of view are most keenly felt and the pressures of the contemporary world are often borne. This concept of transformation is central to my project.

Many of the borders I investigate in this project have disputed ownership, have a significant gradient of wealth across them, are crossed illegally by local communities and people traffickers and are increasingly militarised.
For example, the USA/Mexican border is a land and river border with a fence for more than 1000 km. Much of its length was part of Mexico until the Treaty of Guadalupe in 1848. It currently has close to 500,000 illegal crossings per year. The wealth differential is created by a Mexican per capita income of $US14,200 compared to $US47,000 in the USA. The Australian/Indonesian border is a maritime border through an ocean area that has been traditionally used by Indonesian fishers, and has much less trafficking of illegal crossers who predominantly originate from outside Indonesia, though the media and political attention is high. The border patrols, often carried out by the Australian Navy, are centred on remote locations such as Ashmore Island and Christmas Island in the Northwest of the Indian Ocean.

This project is circumscribed by the current literature on the broadening of the field of scholarship of border studies that suggest that contemporary borders exist and are experienced in diverse cultural forms, from clothing to films (Hodge & O’Carroll 2006). Berg and van Houtum assert that border studies now have a social and relational focus that emphasises the need to re-present and hybridise different contexts and contingencies in stories of bordered spaces in daily life. Furthermore, that “the field of border studies has been re-routed to other paths, it has been opened up to scholars from human geography, sociology, environmental studies, anthropology, immigration studies, semiotics and so forth, allowing for a more transdisciplinary approach to, and debate on, borders” (Berg & van Houtum 2003, p. 3). This research project will engage with Berg and van Houtum’s claim by being a border study which uses performative visual art practices which are informed by a diverse range of disciplines: art, sociology, cultural studies, anthropology, media studies, philosophy, politics and geography. I interrogate the effects and perceptions of national border alterations through the lens of this question:

*In what ways can I articulate notions of geographical, cultural, social and political borders based on personal experience through narratives and visual art that contribute to and extend contemporary understandings of global re-bordering?*
In studies on democracy it is proposed that the bounded sovereign state provides “a relatively pacified, territorially delimited political space within which the struggles for democracy, the nurturing of solid solidarities, and constitutional forms of government could develop within the rule of law” (McGrew 1997, p. 5). To allow a sustainable development of democracy, borders are established and maintained. Artists too have focussed on issues of the solid boundary of the nation-state in relation to democracy.

To demonstrate the effects of politics and so-called democracy on Israel’s border, performance artist, Francis Alÿs, used performance art in *The Green Line Trail* (2005) to redefine the original Palestine/Israel border, by pouring green paint on the ground following the original border, as he walked through Jerusalem.

Clive Barnett and Murray Low argue that democracy is not possible without “sharp geographical boundaries between polities” (2004, p. 9). These boundaries should also be socially contextual and “located within the broader socio-spatial practice and consciousness of the state” (Passi 1996, p. 28). Within the politics of the time in Northern Ireland, Alistair McLennan performed along the Irish Loyalist border in 1977 by walking the border with a dartboard hanging around his neck (Haining 2008, para. 8). Derry-based interdisciplinary artist, Willie Doherty uses photography, video and performance to explore the issues of living in a divided society. In an interview with Tim Maul about his video installation filmed on the border near Derry in 1993, *the only good one is a dead one*; Doherty explained that he explored the power relationship implied by surveillance, terrorism, and victimisation between the community and those in authority (Maul 1995).

Palestinian artist, Mona Hatoum, who has been “long concerned with the issues of entrapment and enclosure” (Garb 2002, p. 18) addresses democracy, inclusion/exclusion and exile in her artwork. In her installation, *Entrails Carpet* (1995), the floor of a room is covered in moulded acrylic, which resembles intestines from disembowelling and the viewer’s ability to open the door from the room is disrupted. To exemplify the difficulties of entering sovereign space such as when crossing national
Borders of almost all countries are becoming ambiguous as the globalisation of world trade seeks a level playing field or as Friedman contends, “a flat world” (Friedman 2005, p. 31). Social theorist, Nikos Papastergiadis, considers the nation-state is being disordered by transnational corporations, as much as by conflict within and the growth of other neighbouring states. (Papastergiadis 2000). However, there is a paradox here. While manufactured goods and capital have increased freedom of movement across borders many people in the third world are still unable to afford to move because transnational companies employ workers in the developing world for very low wages. Vijal Devadas and Jane Mummery conclude that borders of today’s nation-states are a “system that precludes certain forms of movement while fostering others” which leads to an inequity of mobility and movement (Devadas & Mummery 2008, p. 1). The narratives of Mexican performance artist, writer and poet, Guillermo Gomez-Pena, demonstrate such border-crossing problems. Gomez-Pena defines himself as a “migrant provocateur, an intercultural pirate, a border brujo, a conceptual coyote (smuggler)” (Gomez-Pena 2000, P. 9) and writes that his political and aesthetic praxis intricately involves his life as a border crosser. He asked, during a performance in Washington in 1996, why basic humanistic concerns are not on political agendas, and why with all the rhetoric of globalisation, the USA and Western Europe are retrenching to isolationist and xenophobic positions. Gomez-Pena also questions why the USA advocates open borders from North to South and closed borders from South to North (ibid.). Coco Fusco, a Cuban interdisciplinary artist living and working in New York, whose interests include colonialism, migration and cultural conflict, has written a series of essays, English is Broken Here (1995) on the meanings ascribed to the Mexican/US border (Zednik 2003). Fusco collaborated with Gomez-Pena in Madrid (1992) to protest the colonisation of South America at the 500th anniversary of Columbus’s
arrival in the Americas, in *Two Undiscovered Amerindians visit Spain* (also known as *Couple in a Cage*), in which the two artists performed in costume as two people of unknown culture and society from the periphery of America in order to demonstrate the ongoing politics of post colonialism.

Since the destruction of the World Trade Centre (USA) on September 11, 2001, the consequences of terrorism have been felt in countries including Spain (Madrid train bombings 2004), England (London train bombings 2005), and India (Mumbai Hotel attack 2008). The threat of terrorism has lead countries to make borders stronger, more durable and, most noticeable, much more difficult to cross for those with legitimate documentation. Knowledge and history of war as a crucial borderland issue has been the subject of performance art by Walid Raad and his ‘collaborators’, The Atlas Group. Often using fictitious narrators and narratives, the Atlas Group’s work, *My neck is thinner than a hair* (2002) interrogates the use of car bombs in Lebanon resulting from border wars (Christov-Bakargiev 2003). In a 2005 video work *We can make rain but nobody came*, the Atlas Group represented the ruin and reconstruction of Beirut’s civil wars (Gilbert 2006).

The art of the Australian performance artist Mike Parr explores the issues of refugees who are incarcerated in Australian jails and detention centres for border violations. In Parr’s 2002 work, *Close the Concentration Camps*, performed at the Monash University Museum of Art in response to asylum seekers in immigration detention centres who felt they were not being listened to by Australian immigration authorities, Parr had his mouth and eyes sewn shut and ‘alien’ branded on his thigh (Heinrich 2002). Parr describes his performances as "a fantastic vehicle for political action" (ibid.). While this project is not specifically engaged with individuals on either side of the border, the place of refugees, migrants, nomads and others are inherent if not overt. Nomadism is not at the forefront of this project on border modification. From the description by Deleuze and Guattari in 1987, that migrants travel from this point to another and stop, whereas nomads go from point to point as a way of being (Deleuze &
Guattari 1987), indicates that nomads accept borders as a part of life and are not deterred by them nor need to change them. However, more recently, philosopher Robert Sinnerbrink, discussing Marcus Zizek’s 'critique of Deleuzian-Guattarian politics’, suggests that the ideology of contemporary nomadism fits well with the sweep of global capitalism irrespective of boundaries (Sinnerbrink 2006). Further, Nomadic Theory has been developed far across the fluctuating borders of subjectivity since then by writers such as feminist theoretician, Rosi Braidotti to include the self and mobility, gender, power, race, capitalism and politics. This idea has some resonances with the research and writing in this PhD.

In this project I create fictional narratives that employ current discourse around borders in the fields of political science, social geography and cultural anthropology in order to re-imagine contemporary borders as communication spaces and re-create borders as dynamic personal experiences. I have identified that border studies require a social and relational focus (Berg & van Houtum, 2003) that re-presents the stories of borders in a transdisciplinary way in order to broaden the debate on how borders are defined. It is in response to this need for a multidimensional analysis of the physical and cultural spaces of borders that this project emerges. The work of political and social theorists Bob Hodge and John O’Carroll (2006) and Eiki Berg and Henk van Houtum (2003) are particularly important to this project because they approach contemporary borders as processes, discourses, cultural objects, and social entities.

In this research, I engage with different examples of borders including actual borders such as the US-Mexican border at El Paso, the city of Darwin that is the closest city to the Australian-Indonesian border, and the cities of Melbourne and New York, which are examples of national points of entry and exit. I construct performative installations that draw on my personal experience, news-media reports, and observational field trips to Indonesia, New Orleans and El Paso. I use video and still photography, text, prints, drawings and artist books, performance and sound, to re-contextualise and re-imagine the stories, the memories, the impacts on the self and the psyche that formulate my multi-dimensional
personal experiences of borders, as a visual method of understanding border dynamics.

Interdisciplinary art practice, such as my own, has a number of resonances with this type of project, and I am interested in exploring this methodology as a way to research a complex area of ideas and influences. The major advantages with interdisciplinary visual methodologies is that making ideas visual with different methods means that there are always a number of points of view to match with the myriad perspectives of socio/cultural research on borders. I make art using many different materials in a range of ways depending solely on what seems to me to work in the situation. With an awareness of the host of positions held about medium by McLuhan, Greenberg, Krauss and others, I am a contemporary artist using whatever is available to make art, and to install the work in an exhibition with a syntax that will also contribute to its communication. I recognize that there are remnants of Expressionism, Conceptual art, Dada and Fluxus, and perhaps a little Surrealism in my work. Critic, Arthur Danto’s description that, ‘much of contemporary art is hardly aesthetic at all, but it has in it’s stead the power of meaning and the possibility of truth, and it depends upon the interpretation that brings these into play’ (Danto 2013), goes some of the way for me to think about what to use in my artmaking. Postmodern artists including Anselm Keifer, Mel Bockner, Joseph Bueys, and Robert Rauschenberg, among others, inform my methodologies. All are artists who use many types of medium to explore numerous ideas, often all at once. Drawing is at the centre of my work and I am heartened by curator, Emma Dexter, writing in the introduction to Vitamin D: New Perspectives in Drawing that ‘Bruce Nauman’s entire oeuvre can be seen as a form of drawing. Whether the results appear in video, film, sculpture or print-or actual drawing themselves-his artworks are all drawings in the sense that they are the results (and documentation) of his various experiments with material, space, and language’ (Dexter 2005). With my broad range of ways of making artwork, I recognise that there will be tensions and gaps for the viewer, especially where Expressionism collides with the Conceptual. This
fits well with this project and the strains, conflicts and disparities that occur with borders and their transformations.

In this project, I investigate the proposition that visual narratives can be used to show that contemporary borders can exist as holistic personal experiences, within ourselves, as ideas, conversations, and memory loops. Other artists have presented the politics (Alistair McLennan, Willie Dougherty), the effects of war (Walid Raad), colonial incursions (Coco Fusco), cartographic representations (Francis Alÿs), crossing difficulties (Mona Hatoum, Guillermo Gomez-Pena), and the politics of refugees (Mike Parr), of national borders. This research, however, explores the impact of borders on my senses as an individual and the retention of the knowledge of the personal occurrences of borders as a space of communication.

My project develops and expands the understanding of the meaning of national borders by considering them through personal experience rather than as an object, a rule, or a division. I investigate how re-imagining and re-presenting my observations of border interactions as fictional narratives can be used to further define the purpose of the delineation of nations and the rationale of being bordered. These narratives have their origins and inspiration in the performative political installations of Guillermo Gomez-Peña, Mike Parr and Walid Raad whose work interrogates the social justice of borders. It also builds on the interventions of ‘border artists’ such as Alistair McLennan and Willie Dougherty who explore the politics of divisive bordering. One of the key contributions of this project is that it does not approach contemporary borders as colonial or postcolonial marks on maps but as an aggregation of the social and cultural impacts of the current state of globalisation.

In this project I experiment with performative installations using photography, film, video and sound and examine methods of making and using artist books that integrate into, reference, and describe the installations. I investigate fictional narrative in order to create written and spoken texts that articulate new perspective of borders and “use
performance as radical theory turned into praxis through movement, ritual, gesture, sound, light and spoken text” (Gomez-Pena 2000 p.7).

My aim through this project is to re-imagine contemporary borders as dynamic spaces of communication, using examples of national and international border sites, by employing methodologies such as constructed narratives and performances, creating artist books, video, drawings, sound-works and photographs, alongside established sociological practices traditionally used for border research. I begin, encouraged by Nikos Papastergiadis, who writes that artists provide ‘a new grounding for the debates on globalisation, the ethics of hospitality, and the culture of cosmopolitanism’ (Papastergiadis 2012).
The exegesis

Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, in his essay, “What is an apparatus?” writes, “terminology is the poetic moment of thought” (Agamben 2009, p.1). I have found this phrase useful in considering and reflecting on my way of working in this project. John Cage, in his performance, Lecture on Nothing (1950), says, “our poetry now is the realization that we possess nothing” (2012). Poetry over-rides the ownership of words over things, of the strictures of language usage. Poetry provides another prism through which to appreciate, think and communicate. I consider that Agamben’s phrase, while being aware of the exactitude of language, gives me tacit approval to explore and enhance words and texts, as in this exegesis by using a similar methodology as for the creative project.

To this end I have considered this exegesis of my research project as a textual narrative component of the visual and sonic narratives within the project and as such an essential constituent of the artwork. In order to provoke the relationship between artwork and exegesis, I have written the chapters as both factual and fictional narratives of the processes of making each artwork. The text requires the reader to bring their own interpretation to some of the events that occurred, in a similar way that a viewer interprets works of art. I have been inspired to construct my exegesis this way by Judy Maxwell’s presentation of the RMIT School of Graduate Studies seminar, ‘Alternative ways to structure your thesis or

Figure 2. Clyde McGill, Borderflux (I) (2013).
exegesis’, in which this form of integration is proposed as “close blending of artefact and exegesis” (RMIT 2010) and cites Kamler and Thomson (2006) that research can be presented as a writer’s text in which the reader interacts with the author’s writing, in a sense re-imagining it for themselves.

*Questioning within the process*

My dilemma in writing this exegesis was whether I could articulate the process of my project as the progression developed. In some sense there are two of me – the questioner and the respondent, the practitioner and the writer, the logical thinker and the imaginative thinker – and I use the conversations with others, both real and imaginary, and myself to conduct my research. Arguing with myself I say that there has to be some seam, some fold, some line, no matter how difficult to unpick, or how imperceptible, even obscure, that can be followed, perhaps in the embroidery or hemming which we can track, which will show the way, because access to this project can’t be offered to others without some indication of the manner and course of its exploits.

I considered the border between the artwork and the exegesis to be porous and fluid. The more I pushed toward it the more it receded, the harder I listened for it, the quieter it got. If I imagined it into existence suddenly there was a place for me to stand, yet it was an imaginative space, in which the concept of border could arise, and be described by its stories, all its narrativeness.

*The space and the experience*

As a project about borders I didn’t want to be constrained by perimeters. It was important from the outset that, in keeping with this PhD topic, the space of the project was the structure of the research, an endless, elastic space fabricated out of ideas, imagination, and possibilities. According to Graeme Sullivan, “it is often from experiences that are both simple and complex, precise and uncertain, that the most insightful outcomes are revealed, and the most important questions arise” (Sullivan 2005, p. 226). Anecdotal accounts of art-making experiences are a significant reflective nidus for my practice. I also remain open to the possibility that
this produces evidence, perhaps not the titrations of drug dose trials, but evidence as ideas, as ways of seeing, as lenses through which to focus and refocus on contestable questions and answers. Reflective practice relies on engaging with the chat coming back from the artwork to further the development of the investigation. Story telling facilitates the interpretation of research findings back into the art practise, and divulges pertinent subjects into an explicit context (Marshall & Newton, 2000).

The heuristics of this PhD research, like determining the whereabouts of the maritime border, includes probing for the invisible, using trial and error, proceeding with undetermined procedures, searching for something and finding something else more relevant than whatever began the search; as documented in this exegesis, it is not the artwork per se but an integral component of it. My major preoccupations of this project presented here exegetically, are an essential part of the making of art that is this research.

The performance artist and writer, Guillermo Gomez-Pena, is important to this project not only because of his interest in borders, but also because “the kind of world I am trying to articulate in recent texts is what I call end-of-the-century society” (Harper 1998, p.4). Gomez-Pena also writes of cross-border and trans-culture walking. Writer and poet, W G Sebald, a ‘walking’ writer who, according to Eric Homberger, his obituary writer in The Guardian, found it “necessary to invent a new literary form, part hybrid novel, part memoir and part travelogue” (Homberger 2001) to describe his walks in the country-side often ruminating on the horrors of war, contributes to my research through his fictionalisation of uncomfortable facts. I think of these artists from time to time as I draw a few more sketches, look down there and up here, go over there, watch what’s happening, think of what I’m doing, change my approach, more photos, notes, snippets of writing, drawing, go home or back to my studio, download the photos (maybe not today), unload my stuff, do it again tomorrow usually in a different place (sometimes over and over in the same place).
I recognise the existence of autoethnographical elements in my process, the mix of autobiography and ethnography, and the suggestion by Stephen Pace that this form of narrative breaks through the space between the traditional methodology of social science and the creative arts (Pace 2012). This duality in my imaginarium asks: is the space apparent now, does it have mass, is it a vacuum, is it also a container of intention, can it exist as multiples, can we transit between them?

The apparatus (and its components)
This project is constructed from my personal experiences, of living and words and writing are part of it. My methods are many and varied, from traditional to invented, in the moment, experimentally, interdisciplinary and many faceted, from drawing to performance. To harness these ways of working, I use a methodology that I think of as an ‘apparatus’, to borrow Giorgio Agamben’s term. My methodological apparatus connects and cross-links, attaches and drives all the methods and is dependent on each as each relies on another as a machine depends on all its cogs and pistons, every rivet and drop of oil, each bearing, each task for its impetus, its intention, its outcomes. The methods I use for a particular part of the project only contribute within this apparatus.

Figure 3. Clyde McGill, Borderflux (ii) (2013).
**Framing this research**

Naming projects eludes me just as the contemporary border is elusive. It is not limited to the border area or landscape, rather it “manifests itself in social and cultural practices and legislations, as well as in films, novels, memorials, ceremonies, and public events” (Berg & Van Houtum, 2003, p. 1). These contradictions in the current view of borders are regarded by Michele Acuto as “a three dimensional view of frontiers: as walls, as permeable ideal lines and as borderlands” (Acuto 2008, p. 1). The view of the border being at the edge of the sovereign state is further eroded by contemporary policies such as “offshoring the border” and as Nick Vaughan-Williams points out, borders continue to be strengthened outside the state, such as at embassies, as “technological developments have enabled the proliferation of new kinds of bordering practices” ( Vaughan-Williams 2009, p. 33). This bolsters my initial thinking.

However there is always a long way between the first thoughts, what about...?, what if...?, how could...?, the tenuous reaching into the cloistered, fragile, easily embarrassed long before obsessed, neuronal tangle that splutters occasional presumptive barely discernible sensations of could be, may be compiled into scrabblings deleted and forgotten a thousand times, too sleepy, too wakey, too inattentive, too social, too noisy until perhaps one sticks, and is there again with a tiny bit more detail, enough to listen to, and then enough to write a few words about, writing the work into existence, provisional, makeshift, a direction seeking something, or roughly away from what it is not, an inkling. I am taken somewhere occasionally in these moments of creativity, when I see for the first time, the potential of being able to see the art. Julian Young, art theorist, interprets Schopenhauer’s experience of looking at art as “losing” ourselves so that “we are no longer able to separate the perceiver from the perception” and, in this “aesthetic state”, we become unaware of ourselves as one spatio-temporal object” (Young 1992, p. 12). I think that moment is one of the most exciting times of being an artist. Practice as research relies on it. Carole Gray and Julian Malins, researchers at Gray’s School of Art in Aberdeen, research new methodologies “that place creative practice at the centre of the research process” (Gray & Malins,
Losing ourselves in our creative practice is an absence from our physicalness, a void. Conjuring up this transitory void is covered to some extent by the geographers term ‘the imaginary’, as in the ‘geopolitical imaginary’. Writing of cosmopolitanism, the universality that transcends borders (and perhaps individual greed), Papastergiadis proposes the imaginary as ‘the zone within which the creative imagination and social habituation occur’, hence cosmopolitan imaginary (Papastergiadis 2012). In defining a nation as an imagined political community, Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*, describes it as imagined “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (2006, p.6). If a nation is an imagined concept, is a borderland an imagined concept? Everything I can’t see that I know exists is in part an imaginary.

**Durational performance and walking**

I think of the studies for this research project as durational performances, many of which contain me, as an artist, walking. I recognise in conducting this walking work that I participate in a context assembled by others. I walk in the footsteps of those who have gone before. I think of my method of walking as a substance that is porous, being able to absorb information and ambiance, breachable, being sensitive to encroachment yet being deployable in difficult circumstances, having a naivety to other compounds, but mostly having fenestrations within which there is opportunity to enhance its utility with additional techniques, such as photography, writing, drawing, language, that result in a more effective methodology.

My art-walking is an interdisciplinary activity or a series of activities, a behavioural cluster, a group of events, the goings-on, the learning experience of day to day observation transforming into art, to scratch at the palimpsest of place, text, futures and people. And me, the I in this alliance of being, of living, of object and subject, the hands that press the shutter button, the fingers holding the drawing pen, folding the paper, the larynx articulating the words in reply, in conversation, in quest, the
freezing feet turning for home without permission at the first sign of danger, a self wracked by needs and pacified by sustenance, I that is not detached, “I is sometimes truer than ‘one’ or ‘it’” as Luce Irigaray (2002, p. 2) writes in To Speak is Never Neutral about the impersonal in science, in this expedition of discovery, I am I, not as Irigaray suggests a one or an it that is a subject “exiled within a discourse” (p. 4). I, the performance artist, perform and experience the work first hand, living and breathing the trek, the sojournista making the work.

In 2005, Manifesto for a New Walking Culture: dealing with the city was produced by Wrights and Sites, a collaboration of four artist-researchers at the University of Exeter, whose “work is focused on peoples relations to places, cities, landscape and walking” using “disrupted walking strategies as tools for playful debate, collaboration, intervention and spatial meaning-making” (Wrights & Sites 2012). The city walking parts of my research has been informed by this performance.

Photography
Extending the reach of Baudelaire’s flaneur, “the photographer is an armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitring, stalking, cruising the urban inferno, the voyeuristic stroller who discovers the city as a landscape of voluptuous extremes” (Sontag 1973, p. 55). I see the relationship, but I am not a flaneur, more a researcher with perhaps flaneurial tendencies, using a self-generative way of being. Not of no purpose, more of a haecceity, looking to find the distinctions of this particular assignment. I walk past the corner back onto Broadway heading north, a Japanese tour group on their way from Wall Street to the absence of the World Trade Center, the tour guide is saying the most serious threat to the nation ever, hiding within us, we’ll find them, it goes on, the group passes, crosses over down a side street. I photograph the scene, using my pin hole lens, I feel as if the essence of life here, in this moment is distilled to the image, there is no glass for the light to pass through, straight to the camera’s sensors and stops, I think it may be more immediate than my eye, though that can’t be true, yet it returns a life doppelgänger of accuracy of spirit and vision, as correct as a map.
Walking through the image, more valuable than walking across bitumen, spit, Saturday morning vomit, and brokenness, walking in the reflection of reality, though it’s truth or dare, offers up outlooks for the observer, I see and re-see objects, placements and envelopments that I didn’t realise eluded me as I walk. Time held in space is detectable, time stops as for the woman at the Bull, forever, and the space provides the frame. Susan Sontag emphasises photos don’t increase our understanding about how things function as they hide much more than they show and, ultimately, only narration makes us comprehend (Sontag 1973). Function falls out because it relies on time, if time is held still, stopped, tranched, portioned, as in my images of the street, function can only be guessed at, deduced, from what occurs in the image, or from what we surmise is hidden, yet isn’t that the prime ‘game’ of photos, attracting us to construe and presume, providing a shaky synopsis of a questionable truth, a map on paper not the whole city in a box, and of course stories may not tell the truth any better than an image, both photos and narratives are at least two sided, the audience brings their imagination to the narrator.

![Figure 4. Clyde McGill, Borderflux (iii) (2013).](image)

**Drawing**

Artists who work with maps can re-write and transform the connections and overlays between geography and symbology, such as the language, point of view, opacity, and shared histories (Rogof 2001). Additionally, Irit Rogof points out “mapping as a cultural, political and epistemological
activity is deeply imbricated in nation’s narrative of their own formation” and “produce the law through the establishment of such parameters as the ‘border’, which sustains division between those privileged with rights and those outside of them” (Rogof 2001, pp. 74-75). Following on from these assertions, my drawings re-construct, re-fabricate my observations as I search for a border or more specifically a borderland, knowing only variously how such occurs, and being mindful of the idea that the border doesn’t exist or is no longer the border, or is not at the border, then we don’t need maps to tell us where the border is, because it is not there now.

Interpreting political spatiality such as power, nation states, history and regional borders as two-dimensional cartography resembles only an indication of negotiations and battles and fails to represent or frame the complexity and heterogeneity of contemporary communities (McNevin 2010). Maps that demarcate topographic features have less and less relevance to describing our world. Nick Vaughan-Williams expands McNevin’s view, indicating that the state borders frame and map the characteristics and location of the adversary (against us and on the outside) in a way that pacifies our anxieties, however the border is now biopolitical and the enemy can be thought of as within us and resistant to conventional mapping (2009). Perhaps the space of the expanded border, the borderland, is concurrent with Vaughan-Williams assessment of Giorgio Agamben’s state of exception, the ‘bare life’ that exists without political or juridical power, is rather only biological, the life of the undocumented in the borderland, a space of exception whose characteristics “usually associated with the edges, margins, or outer-lying areas of sovereign space gradually blur with what is conventionally taken to be the ‘normality’ of that space” (Vaughan-Williams 2009, p. 115). If the borderland can be thought of as a part of the conceptual space of exception, then conventional mapping of it by me seems absurd. My maps are a set of subversions, abstracted contours of the topography, more of my momentary recollections, attentions, notations to become a visual record of my observations, and photographs in the record, as part of the diagrams, a share of the chart, enables the cartographic sequence
to function as an indicator of direction and context of this elusive borderland.

*Reading The Narratives and Borderflux*

In order to approach the subject matter in a manageable way, and to allay my feelings of enormity of the task of this research, I have looked separately at parts that I have then considered together. In some way this has allowed me access from six different angles of insight. I have called these six parts *Narratives*. They tell the story of their own area of the progress and the process of my research. They are not necessarily linear nor in order of doing. They are fictional, although I was there throughout almost all of the walks, journeys and experiences. So they are imaginary and factual all at once, as art-making often is. *Borderflux* is an artwork of small black and white photographs within this exegesis. It is a set of images that document my creative visualization, my curiosity, my reflections during the formation of these stories. As an assemblage of touch-points, they are a non-linear array of portals back to the instants of the research and are a crucial component of this exegesis, becoming a part of the journey, images as descriptors, an installation of recordings documenting the underpinnings of these narratives.

![Figure 5. Clyde McGill, *Borderflux (iv)* (2013).](image-url)
Narrative 1: Historical borders

Historical borders, the first part of my research considered here, is multi-modal, trans-disciplinary and open-ended. It comprises walking, photography and text, and the end result is a sound work and a small artist book. It is concerned primarily with the transformation of borders into non-existence so that there is no geographic or political role for the boundary to fulfil. The binary of existence and non-existence of borders is part of the historical progression. Space and time are close associates of borders and could be considered to be borders, perhaps as in the end of a century, or the ever-changing coastline of a country. For borders that disappear, I wonder if there are often significant changes to the physical place and its temporality. I think of the physical space at the border as being in three pieces – this side, that side and between these, the space of the border itself, however wide that may be. These spaces could easily be described as the inside, the outside and the space that holds them apart (or together). While geometry is invoked by this description, Gaston Bachelard suggests that inside and outside should not be “abandoned to their geometrical opposition” (Bachelard 1969, p. 230). Alan Watts, an influential early Buddhist scholar in the USA, expands this view, stating that space enables materiality and density and is the relationship between solids (Watts 2000). When I think about solids in this sense of borders, I feel that memory and self can be those solids. Besides these objective views, I am motivated to consider the borders that exist in our lives, our memories and in our view of the world.

Time on each side of a national border can be seen as different. The border can be the differential catalyst through holding apart societies or it may be societies being held together though they have differing social and political imperatives, such as North and South Korea or, historically, East and West Berlin. Time that sometimes changes at borders, as with local longitudinal zones and International Date Lines. There is also the time of the border itself, the life span of the effect of the border, which, for example, was twenty-eight years for the Berlin Wall.
I am aware that borders may have what I think of as defining moments, epochs that somehow define change or mark an era when the border begins to lose power. Taking into account the above, while working on this project in the USA, I explored the reasons for the demise and subsequent non-existence of the Mason-Dixon Line that once had the status of a national border.

Interestingly, those that spring to mind are political. For example, John F Kennedy’s ‘Ich bin ein Berliner’ speech by the Berlin Wall in 1963, during which he pledged USA support for Berlin and the USA opposition to the Wall. Twenty-four years later, in 1987, President Reagan spoke at the Brandenburg Gate, inviting Soviet president, Mikhail Gorbachev to “tear down this wall” (Reagan 1987). By 1989 the Berlin Wall was down and Berlin was free. It made me think of other borders, such as the Mason-Dixon Line.

In my apartment in New York, I read the Gettysburg Address again. It’s an emotional document. So, inspired by Mario Vargas Llosa writing in *Wellsprings* of the activation of his own work that fiction “provides a transitory relief from an existential discontent” (2008, p.6) I know I must take Lincoln with me and walk around the remnants of the Mason-Dixon Line near Gettysburg, to explore a defunct border, to feel what is left and to photograph the remains. As far as I knew, the best place to approach Lincoln, in this fictional narrative, this reimagined journey, is in Washington DC at the Lincoln Memorial on the Mall. Because of the
reputation of his speech delivery, sound was important to the project, so armed with camera, laptop and microphone I set off to DC to convince Lincoln to travel back to Gettysburg with me.

The Lincoln Memorial and the whole of the Mall are busy. I talk to everyone that I can around the memorial. Americans are great to chat with, especially about America and even more about Abraham Lincoln. I am carrying all my artist’s stuff in my backpack (camera, video, laptop microphone) that is quite bulky. The security contingent watches me but doesn’t approach.

Lincoln is sitting up there as I enter the memorial – enormous – and there’s this hum and buzz in the room. The Address is up on the wall in huge lettering. I read it again along with the crowd. The noise is tantalising so I unpack my laptop and microphone near the back wall, as far as I can from the security people at the front. If I can record the sound here, is there still a skerrick of the Address surrounding Lincoln, could I still hear it? I record the big hollow sound that almost booms around the room, the ringing silence and over the top the rising and falling murmur of the crowd. It’s mesmerizing. I listen into it, I listen through it, I let it wash over me, I relax, I concentrate but Abe is silent. I watch him but the stone edifice doesn’t move.

![Image of Lincoln Memorial](image_url)

Figure 7. Clyde McGill, The Mason-Dixon Line Walk (2009).
Figure 8. Clyde McGill, *The Mason-Dixon Line Walk* (2009), in progress.
Figure 9. Clyde McGill, *The Mason-Dixon Line Walk* (2009), in progress.
A security guard walks across and asks me what I am doing. I tell them I’m here on a Fulbright Scholarship, that I am an artist researching borders and I’m recording the sound (my microphone looks like a remote, I suppose my laptop could be a bomb). I don’t tell them I’m really here to chat with Abe about coming to Gettysburg. I make sure they don’t see me talking to Lincoln. Security is interested and pleasant and let me continue. There are some words coming through the background and I get excited for a moment but they are from people reading the address and repeating sections to themselves and others. This is alive now, an important text for Americans.

So I pack up, ask Abe will he come. He agrees and we make arrangements to meet at the bus station in the morning. How exciting, I can’t believe he’s coming with me. I photograph him again for the hundredth time and leave thanking the security group as I go by. One of them asks me what I’m going to see now – I tell him Gettysburg and he says it’s the greatest battleground in the world.

We arrive in Gettysburg on the bus, though I feel we should be getting off the train. Abe says it all looks different. Truthfully, it has been a while; this place has changed since he was last here. The border has gone, has disappeared, the border between slavery and freedom, the economic barrier between free labour and having to pay for staff. This line of principles that killed so many men and destroyed so many families in a relatively young country divided by appalling civil conflict. We look around the town of Gettysburg where some very old houses remain. Abe says he remembers the burials and the many horses killed in the battle. Dead horses everywhere. Some of the original houses have been taken over by tour groups. There are people everywhere, lots of tourists, mostly Americans. I wonder why we are not mobbed because of Abe. Remembering Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, again I imagine borders, are they part of some imaginary. I ask the guide, ‘I am the guide’, hard to get a word in, am I imagining this, is this Line a construct of my imagination? He hesitates, silently, head down, says we should move on now. I think perhaps Abe and I are only imaginary.
However, the reality is that there is abundant interest in this battleground and everyone can tell us about the Mason-Dixon Line, the location, the direction the reasons for it and often what it means to the US today. It was a great step forward; they say over and over, it was absolutely necessary to have the Civil War to stop slavery.

The guide as he says he is, I am the guide, the battlefields guide, I am the history guide, on and on, the guide to the Civil War, this was a border between the opposing Northern and Southern halves of US; the south with its slaves and the north against slavery – the basis of the American Civil War, I am the guide, one of the defining moments of the American Civil War was Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address after the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863. Dressed in battle ready fatigues, ’I am the guide’ looks like the end of a fancy dress party, is he truthful, are story-tellers honest purveyors, he asks, I don’t know the facts, this is history, the proofs may lie, he says, I can smell cordite, I am the guide, although this battle was very significant to the outcome of the war, it did not end it, the only battle north of the Mason-Dixon line, the only incursion by the Confederacy from the south into the territory of the Union in the north, I forget the details he says, who is this the lady next to me asks, I remember he is the guide. Then we had coffee, out of the wind.
Figure 12. Clyde McGill, *The destiny of dead horses* (2012).

Figure 13. Clyde McGill, *The destiny of dead horses* (2012).
We walk along the Line, dodging the guide, there are now only a few posts left, concrete markers and perhaps they aren't original. We stand astride it. Is this all there is? The geography is now irrelevant although the line lives on in the memory of many. A border that is now transient, portable in stories, an intangible heritage. I look around my feet at some bones, dead horses?

The day goes, we hurry back to find where the Address sits. Abe is getting impatient. There it is on the side of the hill, there is a plaque but Abe is not sure, he thinks it’s over further. We ask and ‘I am the guide’ says yes the location is not definite, it is just nearby. The trees have grown. Abe mutters about modern linear time and says trees are real. Then Abe, looking out at the horizon, says it was here and starts to intone his Address, “Four score and seven years ago…” This was the defining moment of the Mason-Dixon Line, I don’t doubt that. So quickly, Abe is done, “of the people, by the people, for the people”, and he says, “this is democracy, today it’s real”. I think of this line being constructed of democracy, of the equality it brings. Abe says the American Revolution brought a place for USA independence in which democracy could be established from the ancient tenets from Greece. I watch the squirrels in this memorial park and think that borders are also constructed of war and reconstructed by the winners. What would have happened in this and many other wars if the losers had won? Almost certainly there would be many different borders. I wonder about finding and meeting Alexis de Tocqueville who described the new politics, in his book *Democracy in America*, so long ago (Tocqueville, 1835/1964).

Suddenly Abe has gone. The President has disappeared, back to his memorial, back to reality. I photograph the site, listen to the breeze and, in the distance, hear a train, puffing and whistling, moving away.
Narrative 2: Geographic borders

While I wait for the French writer and social researcher, Alexis de Tocqueville at the border that was, this River which was the barrier at the Western edge of the East of the USA, this rim of civilisation, I am consumed by the question of what survived in history of the composite parts and meanings of this border that has been so important and is now defunct. Jacques Derrida in his final book speaks of survival as ‘originary’, not additive to life or death, and not only is it about existing to the end of life but also after life is over, living on after death (Derrida 2007). Sitting here looking forward into the time in the future, time that is yet to come, I am buoyed by this idea of Derrida’s, and the notion that this border, as perhaps with all borders such as this, is a good example of a geographic border. It has the politics, the geography, the power, the economics, this border may survive, albeit in a different form, as I may survive or even this fictional narrative, this imagined story that explores this barrier, that is of and about the border, in a recognisable though probably metaphysical arrangement.

Figure 14. Clyde McGill, Borderflux (vii) (2013).
It’s complicated here in this conjectural journey in 1831 (as it has been since 1541), because on the west side of the River there are the miscellanies of the Spanish colonisers and opposite are some French fragments mixed with British empiricists and the burgeoning United States. Native Americans are grimly holding onto their increasingly fragile title to their homelands. The Mississippi has been a very functional waterway surrounded by fertile land for many thousands of years – dividing North America into an eastern third and a western two-thirds. The French have already changed the name or at least reinterpreted it from Misi-Ziibi (Great River) of the Onishinaabe people or so the information sign reads, I read on, as I glance across from atop the abandoned pyramids of much earlier people from South America who remain in our memory only because of their constructions, to the flatlands that are delineated by the enormous swirling loops of the Rio Mississippi, it is the border variously between New Spain, New France, and Britain, the ambitious colonisers of the One Nation People.

I know from de Tocqueville’s itinerary that he will be in Memphis on the river on December 13 after being in Nashville. He’s looking at a penitentiary there. So I’m drifting from St Louis towards the South, waiting and looking along what was once a great geopolitical border in a wild world. It’s snowing, the snowploughs are busy, and there’s ice on all
the slow moving parts of the river. Bald eagles, national symbol of the USA, overwinter here. Fish, which is an essential part of their diet, is available here through winter where the river doesn’t freeze around the locks and dams. They are not abundant, back from the endangered list after the ravages of DDT, though I see some and it’s hard not to think of Australia’s northern coastline where the Sea Eagle lives, a very close relation to the Bald Eagle. It makes me think of the political implications as well. There are breeding and nesting reserves to visit, sign posted from the road. I drive into one and photograph the one eagle that is there, though I get abused and chased out by a farmer who says it’s private land inside this fence. I leave quickly, wondering if he has a gun with him in his truck.

Figure 16. Clyde McGill, Borderflux (ix) (2013).

Looking across the river there, it was Spain’s colony, on this side it was France’s colony and the River itself was French. Further south, Louisiana was French on both sides of the river, including New Orleans. The British pushed the French out, the fledgling USA beat the British and purchased Louisiana from the French. Another tourist sign indicates that the First Nation People, the original and long-term owners of the land were slowly decimated (it’s not quite that undiplomatic) as settlers from the USA moved west. What a time of change for this river border. When I meet up
with de Tocqueville I need to talk with him about democracy and new colonies and the concept of border.

I am in something of a quandary about why I am meeting Alexis. Or perhaps the question could be why not meet him. The whole idea of researching appears to me to revolve around what initiates the 'why' and the 'why not' during the practical, walking around, making, and looking part. As I travel toward my meeting, I am collecting knowledge artefacts, listening for evidence, looking at the 'lie of the land', reimagining the known facts, and letting the variables of this ancient and now impotent border seep into me. It is an experiential and intellectual activity, not one following the other, but rather both dissolved together to a point where they are inseparable and in unison to create a space in which, I, as an artist, can completely be, asking questions of the materials that I have chosen. Asking and re-asking, for me the why and why-nots, of all the answers, which are often questions, that arise out of working in this phantom place. Generating ideas and knowledge, often in small scraps that wait in abeyance, which then from time to time, collude with zap and fizz of fireworks to form another angle, a new perspective, a different vantage point from which I can gain a previously concealed understanding of border transformation. Very exciting!

More questions. It occurs to me that Alexis de Tocqueville could be one of the original practice-based researchers. In the introductory chapter to *Democracy in America* (the great advantage of travelling by car rather than just with backpack, is being able to have a box of books on the back seat), M de Tocqueville writes “It is not, then, merely to satisfy a legitimate curiosity that I have examined America; my wish has been to find instruction by which we may ourselves profit” (Tocqueville, 1835, p. 32). Curiosity leading to knowledge, research through extensive travels in America from May 1831 to February 1832, which is described by his Introduction writers as exhaustive and logical, including every question important to his inquiry (Morgan cited in Tocqueville 1835, p. 8). He
considered his observations as evidence and he was “neither a panegyrist, nor an advocate, nor a critic” (Ingalls cited in Tocqueville 1835, p.16). The knowledge exists as writing in his book, *Democracy in America*. I hold the original book, type-set in lead, they bring me every edition, smells seep out, of library, of foxing, of collectability, seep out through the indentations around each letter gloriously rubbing across my fingers, in Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, light percolates through the marble screens. The thing that appeals to me and aligns him with me as a researching artist is that, instead of going to the library and commenting in his work on what others have written, he went to the studio, in this case the USA after some half century of this new form of government, and while reflecting on his findings, made work. When I return to New York, I set about typesetting an artist book, *Atlas Strongman*. From the Mississippi to Lee Lawrie’s *Atlas* (1937) at the Rockefeller Centre, a huge bronze sculpture holding up the heavens, avoiding the crowds to photograph from underneath and across the street, remembering Farnese’s original *Atlas* from the second century, in Italy, wrap the world in maps, speak the social and cultural cartography, Tocqueville to the tentativity of borders, *Atlas Strongman*, text, typeset and drawings.


While walking along the Mississippi back to the car, I wonder about the performance artist, Francis Alÿs. He investigated the effect of Israel’s democracy on its borders and its neighbours in *The Green Line Trail* (2005), by re-defining the Palestine/Israel border, pouring green paint on the ground following the original border, as he walked through Jerusalem. Does democracy impact borders or do the people bring changes directly?

My view of democracy and borders is informed by Alÿs, and by global politics theorist, Anthony McGrew. The central principles of democracy are territoriality, sovereignty, autonomy and legality and the bounded sovereign state, in providing the political space for the struggles for democracy, is very significant. Borders are established and maintained to provide a relatively peaceful, geographic political area for nurturing the government and constitution lawfully (McGrew 1997). Anyway, I must get on, if I am to catch him in Memphis and ask him of the influence of democracy on borders of the USA. I feel like I am never getting out of St Louis.

Is it post-colonialism or multi-culturalism when eating hot tamales from a truck on the outskirts of Cairo where the Ohio River joins the Mississippi? I can hear another performance artist, Sophie Calle saying "I chose to display relics from my own life amongst the interior of Freud’s home and also to select objects from his personal collection which relate to stories I wished to tell" (Calle 1999, p. 9). Maybe she is one of the staff in the Tamale Truck posing as an artist posing as me. Or maybe I am turning into her, stalking Alexis. I know he has been on the Ohio further upstream just as the river was freezing, it held him up and they had to walk a way to Louisville, before going on to Nashville, to interview prisoners at yet another penitentiary.
Figure 22. Clyde McGill, *Rio Mississippi Walk* (2009), in progress.
This performance piece I’m in the middle of is going on and on but I get some respite and encouragement from the live artist and sound artist Laurie Anderson saying that live art is elusive and ephemeral and once it’s over it tends to mythology and some photos or tapes (Goldberg 2004). I am ephemeral, Tocqueville is elusive and the old Mississippi border is the mythology. I wonder what Alexis thinks of live art. Does he see his journey to America as a twenty-six year old Frenchman of upper-class heritage as a chance at artistic freedom, live art or a gap year? I make a note to ask him, and I photograph my last tamale.

Camera in hand, I walk across the road, and up and over the levee bank and onto the river’s edge. The river is so hard to see or to get near all the way south because of the anti-flooding mechanisms, the locks and levee banks.

Figure 23. Clyde McGill, *Borderflux (xi)* (2013).
From this East side looking west, it is, my informant says, the civilised side. Everything of value is on the East side of the river, is and always was, he says. I met him this morning at a coffee stop. As is often the case here, he is very interested in my project and well informed. He quotes Constantine Cavafy’s ‘Waiting for the Barbarians’. (Cavafy 1904) (After telling me that the poem is an oppositional dialogue, a series of questions and answers. I ask him where he was educated. He says Yale, he’s now retired but he’s been a cotton farmer, like his Daddy, all his life. He’s bequeathing his cotton farm and everything he owns to Yale when he dies. He says that pursuing quality by educating the best is what makes the USA the greatest country in the world.) He quotes the final part of the Barbarians:

*Why all of a sudden this unrest*  
*and confusion. (How solemn the faces have become).*  
*Why are the streets and squares clearing quickly, and all return to their homes, so deep in thought?*

*Because night is here but the barbarians have not come.*  
*And some people arrived from the borders,*  
*And said that there are no longer any barbarians.*

*And now what shall become of us without any barbarians?*  
*Those people were some kind of solution.*

We finish our coffee and say goodbye and he says to call in if I’m back this way. Don’t be strangers, he says. I keep heading south, looking out towards the Mississippi, thinking of Cavafy’s poem. I catch glimpses of a long string of barges of gravel going by. This industrial waterway, once a border is now a byway, historically and practically. The cotton farmer still sees it as the edge of civilisation. I’m waiting for M de Tocqueville, the barbarians have gone.
There is something desolate here though, something like missingness, a Mississippi missingness. Despite everything, there appears to be extreme poverty, people living in old demountable type houses on the river mudflats. It somehow reminds me of Helene Cixous in ‘Stigmata’ writing about painting, “In Vermeer, light enters by the window on the left and draws. Everything is in the cell. The outside knocks on the windowpanes. The exterior enters the interior” (Cixous 2005, p. 6). I have an almost overwhelming feeling here of being on the exterior, of being inside this area but remaining on the outside. The light is yellow even in the early morning and the whole day seems to be about left and right...something else to ask Alexis about.

Travelling to meet de Tocqueville and his friend Beaumont has its interesting times and waiting times. This geographic border or ex-border or perhaps now a non-border of the Mississippi River has a history that I was mostly unaware of. Research by practice happens as the artwork is made and I mustn’t forget that. It’s about making art and thinking or art as thinking. Reflecting continually on what I have done, how I did it, and then what does it conjure up to do next. Waiting is a great way to think about and reflect on my art making as I am making it. I watch him as I wait. He walks up the stairs to the observation tower, up the wooden stairs, unseen by us, unseen, quoting from his notebook and her grandmother’s diary, the passages, the days and weeks of the journey as they referred to it as they aged, the journey from there. A re-enactment or a progression?

I am aware that Alexis progresses. He has departed Nashville and is now travelling by stagecoach towards Memphis. As I am in a small SUV because of the snow storm out of Chicago and across to St Louis, I can’t help thinking if he would like to ride with me. The only thing is he’s coming from the other direction, from the east. I’m from the north. Meeting up in Memphis seems best.
Figure 24. Clyde McGill, *Rio Mississippi Walk* (2009).
Figure 25. Clyde McGill, *The wooden stairs* (2011).

Figure 27. Clyde McGill, *The wooden stairs* (2011).

Figure 28. Clyde McGill, *The wooden stairs* (2011).
Big decision today, I’m crossing the river. I turn right on to the 412, heading west and over the water, such a sight. I leave Tennessee and the sign says ‘Thanks for visiting Tennessee’, on the other side another sign says ‘Welcome to Missouri’, this morning the man who served me breakfast said I was welcome, when I fuelled the car two people said I was welcome. Maybe I’ve been travelling too long, welcome is everywhere here but it stands out today. It made me feel, well, sort of welcome, greeted, invited, with always at least a hint of happiness, sometimes an outright enthusiasm. Beautiful bridge, I pull over. Small backcountry roads allow stopping and looking. Lone Twin appears, the performance artists from the UK who walk bridges, amongst other things. I have attended workshops with these artists and have always been fascinated by their work. Barry Laing, critic for Real Time, writes, “their performances entertain walking as knowledge” (Laing 2005, p.5). Walk with me, in which they walked across two bridges over the Glommer River in Norway for 18 hours back and forth, joined by some local people, has “a gentle humanity, vitality, and absurdity floods into the vacuum left by the absence of a punch line” (Laing 2005, p.5). They see themselves often as migrant workers, as strangers and use this as an observation place from which to see anew (Govan, Nicholson & Normington, 2007) We walk up onto the bridge. It’s not a very good bridge to walk on and it’s fairly high. As I get to the middle of the river, I realise that there is no fear here for me, no frisson of anxiety that I usually have at borders. It’s peaceful and quiet, apart from when the big trucks go by. I can see this as a border, though it isn’t now. It’s only a geography, maybe a little state politics, still powerful, but free. I walk across and walk back. Gregg and Gary from Lone Twin have gone, on to walk elsewhere, another time, another place. As I walk off the bridge, I go down to the river and let the water run over my hands. I feel a kind of hum, a motor, a memory incumbent in the wetness. Perhaps an accumulation of imaginings. A steamboat slides past in midriver; it looks like it’s from a much earlier time.
Walking back to the car, I have a sense of freedom, as if the river had hemmed me in. Now I’m in the West. Not surprisingly it looks very similar to the East. The proximity of M de Tocqueville still feels familiar, I’ll follow him from the west for a while. There is a new book out about him, in a slightly different guise, by that old master of tricks, Peter Carey. I read it on and off, a bit like I dip into Cavafy and Cixous and the rest of my in-a-box library. Carey says that the servant of Olivier, the Alexis character in the book, suggests, “all New York was drunk on the idea that a French nobleman was about to defer to their wisdom” (Carey 2009, p. 161). Alexis agrees, and in his first draft that he is sketching out in Nashville as I wait, writes, “the discovery of America offered a thousand new paths to fortune, and placed riches and power within the reach of the adventurous and the obscure” (Tocqueville 1835, p. 21). So the Mississippi border of the new USA was pushed outwards by the adventurous and the obscure supported by the principles of democracy. I wonder what M de Tocqueville thinks of having himself starring in fiction as someone else, especially as he is now only a few days away. Othering yourself to another is breaching one of the most sacred borders, isn’t it?

I’m entering Memphis after driving the last three days on the west side. Looking back at the old border has a liberty about it. Maybe this clearly defunct border does still have some pulling power, once a border always a border? For the last three nights I’ve been putting together a set of three
performances for video in the cheap roadside motel rooms where I’ve been sleeping. They are based on that experience I had a few days ago with all the ‘welcomes’ I received. Welcome, this greeting, acceptance, offer of friendship, this invitation. This overt hospitality freely offered. I have more work to do on it, though for now I can see that borders could exist solely as constructs of hospitality.

Figure 30. Clyde McGill, *Borderflux (xiii)* (2013).
Figure 31. Clyde McGill, *You’re Welcome* (2009).

Figure 32. Clyde McGill, *You’re Welcome* (2009).
Arriving in Memphis December 16 in the late afternoon with a shock. Democracy in America is evident everywhere. Cars, music, guns, bars. Does this all need a border? If Spain were still across the river (it’s not, but even my Spanish works for everything I need), would we have the Blues in Memphis? Is this part of the ‘national character’? No sign of AdT, he’s due in tomorrow by stagecoach. What will I ask him, pre-VIP anxiety makes me shudder. Ribs for dinner followed by blues in Beale Street at BB Kings and photograph the scene on the way back to the motel. On the way a man, perhaps a little drunk, approaches me as I take a photo, and says ‘I’m not the enemy, you know. Where do you come from?’ I say New York and he replies, ‘Man, maybe you’re the enemy!’

Early morning, more photos, a walk down by the river to a huge model of the whole delta. More photos. On the way back I look for Alexis. There have been three coaches in overnight. He would probably stay at the Peabody Hotel. The clerk there says no, though I’m not sure he’s truthful. Could he hasn’t arrived yet; time is tricky with horses and coaches. I’m waiting again. It’s almost 1832 and the Black Hawk War is about to begin by the sound of what the guys on the wharf are saying. The West side of the river is still very dangerous to colonists and opportunists. Abraham Lincoln has travelled from the East coast as part of the army contingent for the War. I guess he won’t remember me from the Mason-Dixon Line because that was later. The War is quite a way north of us so we should be safe here. The Black Hawk have moved east across the Mississippi to get back their land in Illinois, the army has moved in and it’s been a slaughter as Black Hawk and his people try to escape back across the river. The newspapers are triumphant and calling for more.

I’m down by the river, reading the paper; the days expand as I wait. On an impulse, I walk along the river edge and pick up some of the water in my hand and taste it. I can taste fish and a sort of industrialness, though mostly its just mud. Could I taste blood? What does politics taste like? Apart from decay and the inevitable biology of decomposition, can I taste death? Can I taste the past or the future? I drink some of the water. The
border is inside me, like a memory, an anamnesis. Do we carry the borders we have crossed inside us forever? In our hearts, in our souls?

I search and walk, walk and ask, wait and watch, but no Alexis. I keep visiting the coach house. I go to the wharf, again. Maybe he changed plans and is arriving by boat. The river is becoming more unreliable, they say. More sandbars, more difficult for shipping. By Christmas Day it’s obvious that this is not happening. Alexis has become invisible. I’ve crept around town, aroused suspicion, taken photos of ‘could-be’s’, the guys at the wharf are talking openly about me ‘here comes that mad guy again’ (they don’t seem to get it, one minute they’re loading stuff for the Black Hawk war then they are talking about Barack Obama, makes me ponder on Daniel Elazar’s ideas that, in a spatial politics sense, there is space, time and culture embedded in our recognition of borders, new and old. He says Tocqueville understood the multi-dimensionality of place because AdT wrote of the physical, the future and the social aspects of America, those three dimensions again - place, time and culture. The place hasn’t really changed too much here along the Mississippi, but time and culture have moved on, the border has changed with them), so before I get locked up or worse, I think I’ll head for New Orleans and catch up with my fellow researcher there. He’s supposed to be getting down river on the Louisville, maybe he’s been held up collecting evidence from the penitentiary. I’m pleased that I’m not researching prisons, but then, maybe I am. Onto New Orleans and on the way checking in on the river for Alexis on a steamboat, I don’t like my chances.

It’s still a French territory – well at least there’s a quite benign post-colonial French Quarter in New Orleans – more about tourists and the remnants of the Jazz industry than politics these days. Perhaps more about democracy than Alexis could imagine. The Gulf of Mexico is the only geographic border here now – the US stretches east and west from coast to coast, but ends just south of here in the Gulf – or does it? The colony or dependency of Puerto Rico lies south of Mexico – citizens there have US passports, and then there’s Hawaii to the far, far West too. A nation state

‘...But I’ve forgotten
The places I was born in
And I’ve left my soul in Yugoslavia
along with my passport
and my best suit
as though I prefer
stealing across borders
armed with nothing but Kafka’s suitcase
still searching for a Kubla Khan
*that Coleridge never dreamed of...*’ (Patric, A 2011)

Jazz, time, culture, tourism – the activators of border change, geopolitical variation, spatial dynamics. The mighty, rushing, surging Mississippi can’t do it better.

The paddle steamer is not the *Louisville*, but it does play ‘Yankee Doodle Dandy’ on its steam whistle, and provides lunch on board as we ride up and down the river. There’s still no sign of him – I hear later that his steamboat stranded on a mud bank for two days and they don’t arrive here until the New Year. As I wait, the Indian Removal Act is signed into law by President Andrew Jackson, it’s in the brochure. This allows for moving so called ‘uncivilised’ tribes across the Mississippi to the west side, by offering land swaps (is this hospitality?) or straight out removal. Across to the barbarian side, the outside. Just north of here at Natchez, I walk along a trail that has been used to follow the river for millennia. Here the Cherokee are being moved across the river border. The US army moves the whole community. Alexis may be watching as he steams past. Four thousand Cherokee die on the forced march – on the later named Trail of Tears. A very powerful border, this Mississippi River. I must get M de Tocqueville to speak about this with President Jackson when he meets him later in Washington.
This morning the river is quiet, a huge muddy waterway, an industrial necessity, and I’ve walked down to say goodbye. Christmas is close and I have to go. This river, once an important border of strategic potency through colonisation and in wartime, especially the Civil War, is benign now. I can’t find Alexis, perhaps it’s a matter of wrong place, wrong time.

Figure 33. Clyde McGill, Borderflux (xiv) (2013).
Narrative 3: Geometric Borders

I first became aware of the role that geometry has played and continues to play in the making and re-making of borders by hearsay. I spoke at a conference in Borneo and as usual, with camera and daypack, I walked through the surrounding town and outside into the villages both on the water (Kampong Air) and in the jungle, listening and enthusing for birds, what exquisite gorgeous creatures they are, photographing plants, ruins, houses, architectural surprises, rivers and other waterways, geographical persistence and anomalies, and whenever the opportunity arose, speaking to people. I had very little knowledge of the indigenous people in this area, apart from what everyone remembers from school.

I wandered along and across roads, found things I didn’t want, found things I couldn’t keep even if I’d wanted to, found objects that I would have kept but felt culturally bound not to, finally walked into a bit of a clearing not too far from town where there was a long house and a few people. It was beautiful, rural, hand built. I felt uncomfortable immediately after my rush of excitement, out of place. Am I welcome? Then I remembered the blowpipes and cannibalism. Then I wanted to go home or more correctly, be home. Beam me up. A youngish woman came and spoke to me in English, ‘Hello, can I help?’ as if I was in a shop. We had a little chat in which I asked if they were Ibans, yes and citizens of Indonesia (Kalimantan) and the neighbouring Malaysia (Sarawak). Of both or different people different citizens? Of both she smiled.

When the two countries were divided in the early nineteen-sixties, she said, with the advent of Malaysia, the border was inaccessible, only by foot (to the chagrin of the English soldiers during this Konfrontasi) and still is in many parts. So many parts of the border were realigned by geometry, by lines on, often inadequate, maps by those who had inadequate knowledge or weren’t concerned with the border people, or didn’t even know there were people there, that it was someone’s home that the pencil was ruling through, she went on, and some people went
from one country to another without leaving home. Art historian, Simon Schama, writing in *The American Future: a History*, of the changes that occurred to the US-Mexican border as the US appropriated Hispanic territory and redrew the border back south to the Rio Grande, observes that the “Mexicans did not cross borders: the borders crossed them”, leaving many Mexicans inside the US as disadvantaged exiles (Schama 2008, p.259).

Both Malaysia and Indonesia insisted that to work, the Iban had to show evidence of citizenship in that country and they couldn’t work in the other country, which as she said, was confusing when you didn’t know which country you were in, or belonged to because you had never been part of either country, you were part of your country, and anyway you didn’t know where the border was, as it had changed and it was never marked on the ground, and in reality it couldn’t be. Much like a maritime border I thought. As itinerant workers, it was important to be able to work where the work is. So, Ibans living in the borderland, applied for citizenship with both Indonesia and with Malaysia, and gained duality, unbeknown to either country. They could follow the work regardless of the absurd geometry imposed on the border.

Figure 34. Clyde McGill, *Borderflux* (xv) (2013).
The farcicality of this awakened the geometer in me; the border is defined in numbers, and then styled by politics. When the border changes location, politics pronounces the move followed by the geometer absurdly measuring the absence and the discontent. I am haunted by the question, how can a geometer, how can anyone measure a border? Yet another absurd assignment for the geometer.

The idea of the farcical follows me, all the way to Times Square. Broadway, the old Indian trail, which cuts at an angle across the exquisite grid of the colonists, makes some very pointy spaces here that are now filled with red chairs and tables, as in the Luxembourg Gardens. New Yorkers said they were too busy, not enough free time in their lives to be sitting around like Parisians. However in a short time the seating has proved very popular. New York is different now. Some people say 9/11 did it and others say it was happening anyway, it’s friendlier, people reach out to strangers, and the hassle level is as low as any city. As an artist doing performance on the street, it is easy; people are welcoming, they want to talk to me, and are happy, as ever, to provide a critique of my work. Today it’s rainy on and off and cold. So with the farcicality of geometry in the construction of borders in mind, I start rearranging the red tables and chairs in Times Square, video camera under my arm, self-documented, own direction. Such a place this. A borderland, a long way from a borderline, here a very real border space. I think of Archimedes’ *Palimpsest*, a tenth century parchment codex, that I saw posters for in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. This square is a palimpsest, walked over, reorganised, driven across, marks of generations, echoes of the lingua franca on all sides, an urban palimpsest.

As I carry chairs to better places, I think that borders are palimpsests, reused, altered, used again, changed, carrying all the scars, old directions, the erased sense of place, or more likely, carried by those who have crossed, recrossed, failed to cross, carrying the palimpsest of the border on their body and in their hearts forever, passing it on to their children as a postscript a coda on their DNA, as stories, experientially in
their actions, their obsessions, their memories. The layers of events, overlain, compressed, evidenced still. I keep on, carrying chairs,

Figure 35. Clyde McGill, *The Geometer*, (2010).

Figure 36. Clyde McGill, *The Geometer*, (2010).
rearranging them, looking for the best configuration; is this better, what about over here? I film the pieces I like, or the set-ups that don’t work. I have about thirty chairs and ten tables to work with. I imagine I am the geometer drawing the border on a map. The docent at Walters told me of Leo the Geometer, in Archimedes’ _Palimpsest_, who set up fire stations in a line from the border to the capital. The fires brought news quickly of border incursions so far away. This borders on the absurd. I have a small crowd watching, some participate in my deranged scheme. We stand back and look, reflect on it as if we are creating an empire, winning a battle, some moves meet with a light smattering of applause. The insanity of geometry, of making a border a line on a map; aren’t people involved? People can’t be drawn with straight lines. A young man is by my arm talking, asking what am I doing, insistent, shabby in more of a London way than New York, questioning, following, delightful. I say I am a geometer. He says I thought so. Do you know about manifolds and topology? What! He says Man, any Latin? I say amo, amas, amat, which at least gets a smile.

I place two more chairs carefully by the silver table. No, there’s a siren screaming by, I shake my head, I can’t hear him, he can’t hear me, mime on Broadway. The geometry of place, the young man says, topology, the bridges of Konigsberg, qualitative, Henri Poincare, I mistakenly think he means Henri Lefebvre, well we are in the middle of the home of the most vertical architecture in the world, and his Le Droit a la Ville, the Right to the City, was significant in my ability to do this performance work here in Times Square today, and there has to be some Dada influence there, just as there is a Dada and Fluxus heritage here. Those chairs aren’t right. I indicate to him to wait, he follows, telling me that we could make a Mobius strip out of chairs. I am not sure that I have time for another artwork today, nor am I that concerned with sculpture as a discipline in this project, closing down now, stay open to the possibility of ideas, Mr Geometer. I have questions about borders, I am using fictional narratives to inquire, some of my inquiry is using hypothetical questions, a question that is provisional, is proposed, is conjecture, not necessarily a real
question, a supposed question that I will test with art, I will hold its feet to the fire of the art forge. Then I will know the real questions as opposed to the queries masquerading in the costume of doubt, of issues, of bereavement, of resemblance, of approximation, and have some indications for answers that provide core meaning, some insights through which I can look for answers, some knowledge pristine from the production processes of my studio. This is too much; I lie on the road, amongst the chairs. I quite like questions presenting as something else, as artefacts, inference, found questions, as answers. He sits near me on one of the red chairs, moving it slightly, I note.

The question I have here of myself, of the project, of the idea, of the research, in fact, also, of the evidence so far, the real evidence, not the propositional, as yet to be elucidated evidence, the question of the resulting evidence, the albeit in-progress evidence, but nevertheless the evidence which is the stepping stones to the forthcoming inquiry, because without it I am flailing in the water of continuing inconclusions, gasping for breath between the raft of understanding and the hull of presumption, the question I have is this: is geometry, including the physical measurement, the careful transcription on paper, the cartography, the line between two points and the celestial findings, the angle of the sun and the horizon at the noting time, the numbers of latitude and longitude, is all this constant for all perimeters of nation-states, is the physical unencumbered by the factors that fill the space, or is the space and therefore its boundary defined by its contents – any changes that occur are dependent on the answer to my question, on the evidence obtained here.

With my recent questioning of questioning and where it fits in the world, when he asks my area of geometry, I start to tell him, “borders” and he interrupts with, “idealizations”, this Mobius strip you didn’t want to build out of the chairs, has only one side, only one boundary, one border, though a far more interesting geometrical shape about borders is the Klein Bottle because it has no boundary, and no inside or outside, described by Felix Klein, German maths addict, 1882, he keeps talking. I
feel like I have crossed an isthmus to a place of knowledge. Klein Bottle, a
geometry, an idealization of a space of no inside, no outside, no border.
Could this be the space of the new nation state? We take the formula,
insert the coordinates, and voilà! A new place, an unheard of home of
nothing and of everything. So I make the new place with the chairs and
tables in the tiny v-shaped ‘park’ in the left over intersection of Broadway
and 42nd Street. I construct the imaginary model, this construct of the
geometry of borders. The materiality of chairs welded (or wedded) to the
stuff of fences, steel, mesh, wire, stuff you and I can’t go through. In
chairs they support us, in fences they repel us, or cut us into thin slices,
egg slices, shredded, extruded by the political machine, politica machina,
made of political punditry, of statehood (the pageantry), nationness.
Collect the lines, points, angles of Euclid, the volumes of Pythagoras in all
his shapes, circles, spheres, cylinders- measure the quantities of water
versus gold, gold versus silver, gather in your shopping cart by the silver
chairs the means, surfaces and locations of tomorrow’s globalized
geometry - the re-imagined Mobius strip of singular boundary, no
beginning, no end, inside equals outside equals inside and out, and Klein’s
Bottle where there is no inside, no outside, no border; can I really make
this out of mere chairs and metal tables with nothing more than
imagination and intuition? In a world of physical conjoined and merged
into metaphysical that cannot be prised apart, of equal volume, where
those across the border equal those across the border, so we need a
number of acrosses to be hung off the shapes the future is made of, from
the light shades that contort the objectiveness of the divisor with the
subjectivity of the me in this, the me, the artist, the imaginar of this post-
geometry installation that necessarily is borderless, and turns inside out
(if I can discern which is which) to accommodate the influx of those that
take shelter under the wings of hospitality. Something here reminds me of
Gomez-Pena describing himself as a “conceptual cartography” after an
interviewer has pronounced him “a state of mind” (Gomez-Pena 2000, p.
201). To make artwork around borders do I need to be intangible? Or is
immaterial imaginary art enough?
It seems like my geometer friend has dematerialised, my re-installation of the chairs and tables is mostly done. My disruption of the park and the examination of the ideas surrounding the fabrication of borders from the perspective of geometry realises some prospects for further investigation. I see that, as in developing geometry or topology, things such as borders and space are not set in stone, there are other ways, and there is a flux of change to accommodate the prevailing view. The social, cultural and even national space could easily be gazumped as more research is carried out, evidence or practice based. By re-imagining our epistemological way of being, we can step outside the outside.

Figure 37. Clyde McGill, *Borderflux (xvi)* (2013).
Narrative 4: Political Borders

Strange geometry continues, I observe, on the border between Australia and Indonesia. Speaking of this border at an Australian National University presentation, I Made Andi Arsana from Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta points out, “unlike land borders, which are usually represented by physical markers, maritime boundaries are imaginary in nature” (Arsana 2012). Maritime borders are only a list of geometry, unable to be seen or felt, writ in water, not a line, even on the sandy shore. Easy for the geometers.

As I make my walk, across this terrain termed geometry, I see the Internet exists undeterred by the idea of national borders, despite occasional efforts by governments to apply geometry to the ever-increasing mutability of digital communications. Borders in the ether, hypothetical in the air, as maritime borders are imaginary in the water.

Not having any transport and needing to get further and quicker than I can walk, El Paso is bigger than I thought and the University is further from the river and border than I thought, but we’re going past a few shopping malls on the way and a gunslingers graveyard and Rosa’s Cantina. I wake up, neck awry, the Texan is saying, Rio Grande, border, something rude about Mexicans, and thalweg. Thalweg? (the measure of the lowest point of a river, which is then designated the middle of the waterway for border purposes) What. Taaaalvegggg! Come across the river, so we scooped it out and concreted the sides in a perfect ‘U’ so’s they can’t get out, straight down and out into the Gulf of Mexico, sink or swim, they’s gone. The river has changed course at times so the thalweg of the original Tex/Mex agreement is not relevant cause the river silted up lots over the years, as long as the border is movin their way and not ours, on-and on, the tour guide. I can hear Guillermo Gomez-Pena, a ‘Chicano’ performance artist ‘in the process of Chicанизation’, answering my Texan tour leader, saying to her, “Will I ever become a real Chicano? Will I ever arrive? Will they - the border guards of identity - ever let me?” (Gomez-
Pena 2000, p. 12). She may have trouble with his self-description of “an intelligent Meskin who talks back, a mariachi with a big mouth” (2000, p. 10).

There is a sudden reality check when I stand next to the massive fence that is the US/Mexican border, it’s so much more than a fence, it’s a line of hope, it’s made of dreams not wire, how can they be constructed in numbers, how absurd, metaphysical, incomprehensible. I, the geometer, carefully measure the bag of belongings, weigh it, 12.3 kgs, 94.5 cms in diameter, 23 cm zipped opening, closed for now, two 12 cm handles, bound cloth over woven polyethylene, he left it here in his rush to escape, to hide, it is the border, not a fence, a container of life’s stuff, a biographical force, an aura of what might be.

I wonder where else I might find this bag; today’s paper, The Indian Express, has a report of Sir Creek, a waterway, another thalweg, disputed at the border of Pakistan and India. Journalist, Ipsita Chakravaty (2012) writes that India’s border disputes arise from its colonial past. Also, there is a discussion in international law on whether the thalweg should be the border or the main navigable channel is the border. Finally, there has been a drift in the position of Sir Creek.

I am flying over what could be Ashmore Island. I am looking south from Venice toward what could be Libya. I am standing in the teahouse at the Grand Mosque in Paris looking toward the Arab Institute and further to the north coast of Africa, to what could be Algeria. I am leaning out of the ferry window looking for the border, the sea border, the dividing line between languages, between cultures, culture that is everything about our lives, how we eat, what food grandmother bought at the market, what implements great grandmother used to dig the garden, what she dug, and the clothes, the textiles, the fabrics, the scarf she flicked around her shoulder as the music began to play, and she danced, that music, those instruments, the words she said to her daughter’s baby, those utterances are divided from her neighbours by the line in the water. Where, though, is the line? As the ferry left the wharf, he points out to me the headland
where the border joins the land, as we thump out into the increasing waves away from the coast, the land fades and the headland is out of sight, where is the border now? Somewhere, here there, now a set of figures, some algorithm, some blue lines with a red moving line on the GPS screen. Earlier he said they watched for the current pattern on the water, not the “chicken’s feet” of the southern wind, more a scrumpling just beneath the surface, easy to see on calm days, the chop made it hard, then they would smell it he said, smell the line writ in water, smell the edge of a culture, smell the ancestral links. I am the one you’ve been drawing about, the one of the many, those who come ashore on the Spanish coast, in the Mediterranean at Lampedusa Island, Italian territory, 180 miles off the Libyan coast or being featured by Al Jazeera as dragged up in a fishing net, on the coast across the border, across the sea, I am the one. It always seems easier to cross the sea border. Of course it is not, it’s trickier, it’s dangerous, it’s tempting though, a small boat and you’re away, it can’t be that hard. Can it? I am the one who finally makes it, rolls up on the foreign speaking beach, bloated, half clothed, quiet, fingers nibbled away. Caught in the mangroves, washing back and forward in the tidal ins and outs, I am the one. Me, caught and handcuffed, taken to the jail, that ungodly noise of jails at night, a mix of wailing and pleading, in an empty theatre, a hollow institution, humanity shackling humanity.

He approaches me, already talking, as I take yet another photo of the water by the wharf, looking down. It’s low tide, high above the surface, light green with dusty swirls, muddy but light and mixed, tropical, aromas of frangipani, fecund mud, poltergeists, dead fish in fresh dragged splotches and scrawls of blood. He’s chatting, it’s very early, not many around, chatting to me. He stood here you know stood almost where you are now stood there while they took his mug shot his photo up against the rail with the harbour in the back yes all of them straight off the boat the Customs guys right here looking into the afternoon sun after lunch made them put the plastic bags of shopping they bought them rice and chillies made them put the bags over here by the down walkway all their rice was wet and salty and fermenting you know the way it goes after a couple of
good wash overs at sea unless its in plastic drums then often you lose it because the drums float away as the water comes through sometimes half kills you as it goes took one picture each of them up against the rail click next click next like the firing squad in that Goya painting in the Spanish War against Napoleon though they shot them in a group, Third of May 1808 I think, he says, saw it at the Prado you know, though as a study for it there is that etching of Goya’s, Y no hay remedio, done a couple of years before, we used to have squid rolls, beautiful fresh caught this morning once you remembered you were in Madrid, from that hole in the wall place along the Paseo near the train station with yellow Chartreuse for breakfast followed by tostada and café con leche before siesta.

Figure 38. Clyde McGill, Selfie, as border crosser (2012).

I photograph myself, a selfie, looking the way he says, half squinting into the sun, looking west, to see how it feels, could re-photographing a different border crosser bring the border crosser back. The difference between difference and differance, speech and writing, performance of life and re-performance of memory, trying to make sense of this as I look back at my selfie on my phone, the border crosser and the border crosser. He’s still talking. Pointing south east drawing an arc with his left hand while fluttering a tattered sail with his right, he shows me where their boats were towed in and hove to on an buoy that’s not there now just off the point of the overnighting rig servicer. I draw his talk. I draw him leaving home, hills behind him, what is home, how is it drawn?
First I begin to draw on found paper, from by the pizza shop, flour bags. I tear them open, then glue. Making the marks, consuming the materiality, producing the syntax, what a great experience. Though quickly it is evident to me that abstracting this conversation doesn’t work. I am denying the humanness of his talk, my humanness. I can’t ask the questions from this used paper, impersonal place; I could before. I can’t here with this research.

Figure 39. Clyde McGill, *Border Crosser* series (2010).

Figure 40. Clyde McGill, *Border Crosser* series (2010).
I draw the hills again, the sail of his boat stretches to eternity, his life, his wall to cross, the lines of the sail, this border fence, protrude out in front of him, to the future, to what lies ahead in the dark and turbulent edge of the drawing.

Figure 41. Clyde McGill, *The Border Crosse (1) (Leaving)* (2011).
Figure 42. Clyde McGill, *The Border Crosser (1) (Leaving)* (2011).

Figure 43. Clyde McGill, *The Border Crosser (1) (Leaving)* (2011).
Fishing boats unload in the warm dark predawn, she carries baskets of fish on her shoulders up the incline, toward the market, he cooks, sprinkles charcoal around the edge of the glowing stove frame. Odours reminiscent of fish and chilli, seep out later as I draw the scene with the broken pieces of black heat burnt mangrove, ubiquitous edges of waterways and directions here.

He hands me more ash from the margin of his cooking fire, tells me he’s never seen him since, went away never returned, not dead, not alive, not come back, not here not here either. He won’t come back now, we watched for him for three moons, for three months, for twelve weeks, for two lifetimes, mine and his mother’s, watching, riding down on the scooter at midnight because we heard a small boat’s motor, sometimes I could swear it had that flywheel ping of his, out here somewhere, arriving, slow, backing up, sarongs askew we rattled down the market road, before we got the new scooter, the old one was hard to start, we’d push it, she would jump on and I’d catch up as she circled, often the boat was an archipelago boat or the gypsies looking for anything loose, it was never him, not once, we would wait maybe we heard something else, waiting in the quiet we would talk to him, he’d come out just as he was and we’d talk, tell him our news, his sister’s baby, how our business with the cooking stall was moving closer to the market, more customers, he could bring his fish straight up to us then, easier, would his boat be safe anchored out in front, would he stay with us some nights or have to sleep on the boat. I go back and draw his home more prominently, more softly, more portrait like, more abstract and realistic one and the same, more, more. Leaving emerges from the hills and valleys.

Today, I wander along the wharf in Darwin with a questioning statement by Jacques Derrida in my head in three or four parts:

(i) “What does this mean, this step too many, and transgression, if, for the invited guest as much as for the
visitor, the crossing of the threshold always remains a transgressive step”

(ii) “Where do these strange processes of hospitality lead? These interminable, uncrossable thresholds, and these aporias?”

(iii) “It is as though we were going from one difficulty to another. Better or worse, and more seriously, from impossibility to impossibility. It is as though hospitality were the impossible...”

(Derrida 2000, p. 75)

Although in these field trips to the Northern Territory to gather data on the border between Australia and Indonesia, I move far and wide, searching and listening, whenever I am in doubt I find myself back at the Darwin Wharf. It’s a tangible component of the border, and a touch stone, a place to think, almost a yardstick against which I can measure yesterday’s findings, and I can always chat to the Indonesian fishers hanging over the edge as they pursue tonight’s dinner. So who’s transgressed here, could this be where the border is? Along the wharf where so many foreigners have come ashore, coiled up discreetly and unseen in the tourist buses, along the fishing lines or large, sleek and wedge shaped as the aluminium Customs boat tethered on the other side of the wharf?

Where is the border? “It’s when we arrest them, that’s where it is”. Drifting across fishing, is that incursion, is that transgression? He says the law is the law. I draw an arrest at sea, this narrative, though a generic seizure, an act of exception by those with power, power in a paper boat with an impossible observation tower that would surely capsize them, racing out of the latitude and longitude, manacling the fishers. Missing the border, perhaps a traditional missing, starts to have dire consequences, borders are a set of attitudes, which may devolve to culpabilities.
Figure 44. Clyde McGill, *The Border Crosser (2) (Except)* (2011).

Figure 45. Clyde McGill, Preliminary drawings, *The Border Crosser (2) (Except)* (2011).
We meet years later after visiting the north coast at Coburg Peninsula. We muster cattle there, a months expedition, watched fleetingly by Timor ponies, Banteng cattle from Indonesia, catching them to bring to the research station on the main road heading out to Arnhem Land, scientific research. The Bantengs were brought across the Timor Sea to provision the early white settlement, the Timor ponies to muster them, and some deer. We made a camp behind the first line of dunes, near the water well that has been used for millennia by indigenous people of the area, by trepang fishers from Malacca, now by us. We caught cattle, lived out of the sea, and found artefacts of Malaccans, clay pipes, old steel boilers, pieces of boat shaped wood, left by others from the north. Did these people transgress anything? Or was that still an ideal of the future? He says go see the paintings at the museum, I ask which paintings, no response, they explain everything, trade and friendship across a border that may be constructed of that thinking, those ideals, a border line, a boundary that hangs together woven and stitched into a fabric of hospitality. He says wherever borders are being tightened; it's done by people who are frightened. Frightened of what? Other people. Hospitality is after all, as Derrida says, impossible. Perhaps the border consisting of hospitality, of welcomes, of geniality, of cordiality would mean the guest is everybody and the stranger no longer remains outside friendship, so hospitality becomes possible. My informant on the wharf smiles at me, and goes over to see a huge grouper that has been pulled from its world to this strange place where he can't breathe.

Home. Waiting to return home, homesick, home. Nostalgic for home, saya kangen tanah air, for my homeland. Across a sea. Waiting, looking back, remembering, hoping, detained, on the other side, sharing memories, waiting. He said they waited for a month or more. Others wait for longer, in limbo, waiting to cross, or held after arrival. Some place that doesn’t relate to the physical, an inertial realm. The boat shape around them echoing the upturned roof of the longhouse, the traditional architecture,
he says *rumah adat*, self built, community projects, wood and pegs, the boat leaks like it was meant to, have to hand bail and sleep up on the deck, reflected in the gathering water below.

Figure 46. Clyde McGill, *The Border Crosser (3) (Thinking of home)* (2012).
Figure 47. Clyde McGill, The Border Crosser (3) (Thinking of home) (2012), in progress.

Figure 48. Clyde McGill, The Border Crosser (3) (Thinking of Home) (2012), in progress.
His father climbs into this drawing, seeing the boat that the ferryman is about to row across the River Styx, across the border between life and death, his father, seeing his son’s body wrapped in shrouds in the boat, climbs on to the bow and, arms around the front of the boat, pushes his feet up on the edge of the drawing to prevent the ferryman from moving out of the drawing, moving into the world of the dead, desperately denying that his son is dead, doing everything possible to bring him back, to return to the land of the living, using the strength of grief, the ties of family, anything to thwart the hospitality of the ferryman, a reluctant guest of the ferryman.

In the early morning, the cemetery is shrouded in fine mist, the office is empty, quiet except for the curlews and plovers, curlews standing on one leg, still as death, watching. I hear my singer naming the Masked Lapwings previously known as plovers, with their yellow wattles, flying in
circles close to the ground, swooping me. The plan shows the Muslim section past the swoopers so I follow the trees around the side for protection, ducking, looking. Morning light shuffles through the mist, my camera lens fogs less, I almost step on a curlew, then I see her kneeling, covered in cloth, doing something with her hands on the ground, I hesitate, I the intruder, stops, she hasn’t looked up, she continues, I wait, the Lapwings seem to quieten, there is a peace, moments of feeling an accord with her. She looks up, we smile. The gravesite I have come to see is where she is, is this real? She is tending the grave next to it, in fact tending both graves, as she talks, paid the ferryman, left the golden coin on his chest and bought a headstone for his grave because his grave is next to her son’s grave and his parents are far away. Hospitality for a guest, for a fellow citizen, a citizen of life. I hear my singer singing the birds, I draw her by the boat, holding the gold coin, ushering her proxy son across the divide, watching him leaving, standing, back against the mast, up on the cabin of his boat, looking forward.

The guest, the intruder, the guest, the outsider, the guest, the unwelcome. Those afloat over an indeterminant line that says no, a line of the geographer or more pertinently, the ethnographer. An invisible linearity of persuasion. A gate made of the Barbarians on one side and those who must defend on the inside, the inside is defined by power, and the outside is the transgressor. Derrida’s interminable, uncrossable thresholds, aporias from earlier today, remain in my drawing, my painting. They are drawings to me, though they could lie somewhere at the margin, at the border between painting and drawing, attributes of both exist in their commission and performance. The figures carry the dead guest home foregrounded by a path, a wharf, a deck of large timbers, ephemeral see-through elements, ghostly, death. This is the way we treat guests, guests here as the transgressors, not ever able to return home, the dead are not repatriated, she said, only the living. They carry him through the afterlife, heading home.
Life or afterlife, where is the edge of either, the boundary of loss, I watch, I scan out and back, today, this large border, across the top of Australia, I travel the edge looking out to sea, knowing I’m not on the border. I’m as close as I can be, this morning. I read the Australian Border Deaths Database from Monash University; I hear it as a dirge, a requiem, an edge elegy. To re-vision, re-imagine, re-present, reflect on the ways of the person at the border, I read reports, feeling sick, BBC, Al Jazeera, Ruth Balint’s Troubled Waters, coroners notes, people dead by freezing, drowning, over-heating, young, hopeful, death-by-border, unidentified, DNA stored, meagre possessions, jewellery-one-bracelet-broken-in-an-envelope, I despair, I can’t research here without considering this, without being a part of this, this is the worst. Loss. Forfeiture. Bereavement. Art historian, Simon Schama asserts that my postmodern painting informer, Anselm Keifer’s ‘lines … do not travel in the direction required by teleological optimism’ (Schama 2005). Today I feel the same. As I draw here, I draw pessimism. Is a researcher allowed the same freedom of emotional response as an artist? Is it a condition of contemporaneity or
barred, outside the commitment. I don’t see that in Keifer’s work, I see the angst of the loss of his country, Germany, to radical Fascism, to unfathomable grief. I stand in the Pompidou Centre in front of a huge Keifer painting (or is it a drawing, or a sculpture) that has a stack of burnt books on it, as I watch a large part of one of the books begins to fall, not my fault, didn’t touch it, burnt pages, German text, cascade on to me, the floor, dust, covered in it, I can’t move, the same as I felt looking at his massive artist books made of lead and glass a few rooms back, teetering, on the point of balance, some crashed already, somehow a rupturing border, reality breaches, the floods of the end of time, only now its me, at the hands of Expressionism, though the books add a whiff of Conceptualism, an objectness of notions, perhaps even for me at least, an opportunity of Conceptual Art for ‘the viewer to participate in, move around, interact with, and literally complete the work of art in myriad ways’ as art historian, Grant Kester explains. (Kester 2004). A performance like Keifer’s early bathtub and Nazi uniform pieces, should I salute, the prison guards are everywhere, rester debout, rester debout! Does that mean attention, my French is rudimentary, no stand at attention, shouldn’t they be speaking German? I think stand still. Brushing me down, picking up the pages, I want one as a souvenir (I remember it comes from to remember, funny), they say no. This rough, half made, falling apart work, contemporary art. Back to my drawing with an oil stick, pieces everywhere, rubbing paint on the linen with my hands, thinking of Arthur Danto’s power of meaning and possibility of truth.

From here I imagine I can see Ashmore Island. Ashmore Island is the closest Australian land to where the border was before it was changed to somewhere else. I email the wild bird group in Darwin and Broome as they both have annual trips out to Ashmore, the migration of birds cuts across all the national borders, it’s something that is determined by the environment, the ecosystems that remain in place, not amendable by politics. The trips run by both groups fall through this year. Send us a deposit for next year. I do and Darwin is disbanded and Broome falls through again. I go looking for pieces of boat, for opinions, for points of view, points of contact. Broome and north. The shelters on the beach at
Cape Leveque have pieces of Indonesian boat as bowsprits on some of them. The Bardi people at One Arm Point show me Aeroplane Island, just a few hundred metres off the coast where the Indonesian fishing boats anchor. I am sent an Indonesian hatch cover by Don Maclean that he found on the beach where he lives north of Wyndham. The pieces of boat seem as migratory as the birds, I list the birds, migratory or not, and the singer sings them for me, the performance carries the sound waves out and up, giving the taxonomy wings, through space, unimpeded. I fly over Ashmore Island, a circle of light green water, a large lagoon, like all the reefs and islands there, cut off cones of old volcanos, worn down to water level, visible and invisible, depending on the tide, only very small shreds of permanence, as are we, our lives, our existence, our families. It makes me examine again the placement of borders, today’s borders, if they can be moved, annulled so easily, can they exist elsewhere, say inside ourselves, in our heads? Could we, do we carry our borders with us, do we forever live looking through past borders at the others, wondering?

Figure 51. Clyde McGill, The Border Crosser (6) (Citizen) (2013).
Narrative 5: Approaching Borders

Approaching a border, approaching a city, interchangeable in this contemporary world, every city is a portal to other nations. An airport, a train, seaport, any of the accoutrements of travel, embroidered into the metropolitan fabric, threading through. I walk toward the city along the pavement like a friend, across the traffic lights, in the crowd, in the rain, somehow questing for the approach, the run-up, the smell of getting closer to all the entrances of borderhood. Crossing the apron to the fabulous, invisible border, wondering if I will feel a force field, a power, perhaps the nothingness and the everythingness of a demand.

I walk from my home in St Kilda to my studio at RMIT to explore the concept of border approaches, of arrival (and departure as I walked back as well). My walk takes approximately 1.5 hours and was carried out 15 times during 2011. Each time of walking had some variation, although the core experiences each time were of approaching the citadel, the place of power, and crossing the bridge, joining and separating, having some sense of running the gauntlet as I neared the city, salved by the red aromas floating from food as I pass Chinatown. Quickly back to increased adrenalin, a mixture of fear and excitement through the streets up to the

Figure 52. Clyde McGill, Borderflux (xvii)(2013).
safe space of my studio. Approaching the city on the southern side, I would pass the Military Barracks, which appear to be very much as a citadel – citadel and city are derived from the same Latin root, both from *civi* – meaning citizen – a fortification for defence of the city. Always heavily guarded and with a high stone wall surrounding it. Makes me wonder, with this barrier, this fortified boundary, this border between the barracks and the people passing by, who is defending who. Are we on the outside in power or are the occupants of the citadel in power? Do the citizens have the authority, why the Wall?

Lots of questions to occupy me as I walk past. Then on the second trip I notice a sign on the outer side (the citizens’ side) of the wall (image), which says something like “you are not allowed to enter here without lawful excuse”. “Without lawful excuse.” An interesting triumvirate. An expression of power described by Michel Foucault as a discipline. Clare O’Farrell, the author of the book *Michel Foucault* describes “discipline” as a key concept of Foucault’s philosophy of power and expands “discipline is a mechanism of power which regulates the behaviour of individuals in the social body. This is done by regulating the organisation of space (architecture etc), of time (timetables) and peoples’ activities and behaviour (drills, posture, movement). It is enforced with the aid of complex systems of surveillance.” (O’Farrell 2007) I’m just standing there thinking of what Foucault would think of all this and how relevant this is to changing borders and the inhospitableness of it – after all I’m standing on the footpath – not even near the wall. So, as part of my research, walking and collecting, I take my camera from my pocket and photograph the sign. “Without lawful excuse”

- without – something absent, missing
- lawful – authorized by law, in time with the law
- excuse – a justification

The without bothers me though, especially on this side of the citadel’s wall – within/without. Who is without here – me as part of Foucault’s social body or are the occupants of the citadel without/outside of citizen’s space, that is, not contained by the restraints of the people – that’s one of the issues with borders and walls and constraints, its hard to know which side
is in and which side is out and can they change, within may become without by legislative change and the social withdrawal of hospitality – hence, “they are on the outer now”.

Figure 53. Clyde McGill, Approaching the Border Walk (2011).

Commonwealth of Australia
Department of Defence

TRESPASSING IS PROHIBITED

IT IS A PUNISHABLE OFFENCE FOR A PERSON TO BE ON THIS PROPERTY WITHOUT LAWFUL EXCUSE

Crimes Act 1900 (Cwth)
Defence Act 1939 (Cwth)

Figure 54. Clyde McGill, Approaching the Border Walk (2011).
Just as I take the first photograph, my camera still to my eye, someone taps me on the shoulder. A young man in civilian clothes with a pass around his neck.

“Any reason for photographing the sign?”

“Who are you?” I ask.

“I work here – any reason for photographing the sign?”

“Why not?” I ask.

“Humph” he says and walks back to his citadel. This citadel has undercover guards, a Stazi; perhaps they are photographing me, ‘without lawful excuse’. I walk and think about some of these issues – without lawful excuse – can you come seeking hospitality here, uninvited, unexcused, unlawfully?

- does a border exist without lawful excuse?
- Is “without lawful excuse” a border as “hospitality” may be a border?

- how do we deal with the idea and the reality of within/without when borders are dissipating and become stronger simultaneously and Foucault’s discipline is more evident and less evident? The authority figure is not as clear though still very evident.

I vest the authority in the sky today, dank, cold, windy, dreepy, intervening through the tiny gaps in my clothing, walking toward the city, toward the citadel, thinking what is my edge, my boundary, if I am made of water plus a few other ingredients, a formula that goes H2O+salts+very small amounts of stuff, I think it can be said as oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium, phosphorus, then everything else is less than 1%, as I remember, so O+C+H+N+C+P contained by what. Something to keep it all inside and not running outside, like skin. The traffic is diabolical, going to somewhere, coming from somewhere, day passes for work, for shopping, this is Melbourne, land of the free (or one of them) no day passes required, so where is each one of these people going, I run up to the cars stopped at the lights, “where are you going, where are you going?” they toot their horns, wave their hands, and drive away. Away. My compatriot laughs, we both laugh, the truck driver says he’s going to the city, delivering paper, the taxi says he’s taking these
people to an airport, I don’t catch where. All going to some place, now, surrounded by a thousand events, the citadel looms, the wall all black stone and authority, we stop asking the traffic every time it stops. Around my formula, is there a wall, apart from my skin, which, like the citadel, has to be crossed, a threshold, even a moat, a security door that commands me to obey and comply? Walking, stepping around the puddles, finding a way, asking of the journey itself, “how do I go”, “is this the way”, research by asking, by recognising answers, nuances, and by ignoring the obvious? If I think about, say, the border crossing at El Paso, then the condition that grabs my attention is the presence of authority, so maybe we do it with attitude, with the way we look, our appearance. As I pass the St Kilda Road Police Station I notice that I don’t look at the police officers standing around outside, I don’t have a uniform, an outward sign, a way to show authority, only a camera and a daypack and a pair of old sneakers and a person sometimes, that I talk to, a study, an understudy, who is often not there and whose answers are inaudible to others, who could be said to be imaginary, a mere phantom, a set of questions that comes and goes.

Guarding the border, skin \((O+C+H+N+C+P)\) x attitude (chutzpah), the citadel of life. Is this correct or just an hypothesis, something suggested though not expected to be permanent, a supposition? Where is the veracity in imagination? Walking constructs the truth, I decide. The formula of me and my border seems to hold water, and I see that it also needs other elements, perhaps veracity, imagining, my informant says it requires thoughts and senses, and he laughs, laughter, but all these things drift out already and we survive, I am more interested in the inorganic, the molecular, the containing, the rest will follow. The citadel impends, menacing us from around the corner, all CCTV, security uniforms, boom gates, one look from them today, he says, and I’m gone. We head toward the city, background, looming.
Figure 55. Clyde McGill, *Approaching the Border Walk* (2011).
Approaching, approaching, coming into view, walking often affords a
drawn-out, can I see it yet no though it must be soon, onset, and slowly,
determinedly the barracks arrives, sliding ponderously around the corner,
guns first. I wonder here about my role, outside the wall, banished, as
Steven DeCaroli, in discussing Giorgio Agamben and Sovereignty,
concludes requires a boundary, which does not have to be a wall, it could
be imaginary or geographic or even of God, but it must be there and also
it is the basis of citizenship and authority, which is the power of
abandonment. (DeCaroli & Calarco 2007) I walk and stop. If I’m not
permitted inside, am I abandoned outside the border, the stone wall, the
citadel, and do I obey the rule? Do I go to another location, does it insist
that I continue on my peripatetic way? Is this nomadism or is it an
example of the nomadic thought as a way to explore a many-theoried
globalising world as Rosi Braidotti suggests. (Braidotti 2012). Or a
cosmopolitainising world as Nikos Papastergiadis postulates
(Papastergiadis 2012). How do I arrive at a consensus here, outside the
wall, with all the hybrid opinions that surround me? If I choose to be
nomadic, does the joining together with others make a difference or do we
just create another community and wait for the Barbarians?

As a human, with a formula of Skin(O+C+H+N+C+P)x Attitude(Chutzpa),
my formula as a citizen, the one who obeys the law, could be different, if I
am not to be abandoned, not allowed entry through this portal, or I could
change the portal, modify the border, by law, by democracy, or I could
not obey and alter the exclusionary line if enough of us disobey and who
said revolution. Musing, resting, feet up on the tree stump outside the
wall. Alternatively, we have abandoned them inside. Borders change,
transform, they are not forever. They are bypassed, they become
ceremonial. Why can’t I go inside, why am I banished? No lawful excuse.
Formulaically, as a citizen my central core=OBEY, so (OBEY)x
skin(O+C+H+N+C+P)x attitude. I leave off the chutzpa, cross cultural as
it is, because it might get in the way, though on second thoughts it should
remain, so (OBEY)x skin(O+C+H+N+C+P)x attitude (chutzpa), looking
back at the sky, a break in the weather, he’s there again, Sir, no sitting
outside the fence (he carefully doesn’t call it a wall, though it’s made of black stones and concrete, reminds me of the Mexican Wall being spoken of as a fence), especially with a backpack, he is the extension of power, he has moved the border, the boundary now exists in some ethereal way right out to the edge of the road, he is the border. Shall I disobey? As a Human/Citizen, can I refuse to comply, what makes me lawful?

![Image](image.png)

Figure 56. Clyde McGill, *Borderflux* (xviii).

Shephard Fairey’s bumper sticker *OBEY* hoves into view, OBEY OBEY. Should I obey, or should I disobey? Are borders constructed out of obedience, he asks me. I ask him back what does that mean or is it rhetoric and not a real question, QUESTION. OBEY. Shephard says in his *OBEY* manifesto that this *OBEY* campaign is linked to Heidegger, is an exercise in phenomenology, and Heidegger says, according to Fairey, that it’s about seeing things that are obscured, letting these events come into view, bringing them out of their taken-for-granted hideouts. Sounds like borders. Seeing through the fog. OBEY. OBEY. So I stand up and walk into the gatekeepers portal, through the main wall to where they stop the cars, and suddenly I’m inside the wall, so easy, unexpected, and ‘Without Lawful Excuse’ is there beside me, agitated. I ask the gatekeeper if they have guided tours, WLE can’t get his words out, no no he’s an infidel. The gatekeeper says no, your request is denied. You are denied entry. This is not allowed, you must not approach the gate, says WLE. Shephard, I obeyed. On on to the bridge, the next obstacle to approaching the border, entering the city. Over or through, which way. This way, this way.
Figure 57. Clyde McGill, *Over or Through* (2013).

Figure 58. Clyde McGill, *Over or Through* (2013).
The bridges do the work, the heavy lifting, carrying the cars, buses, (autobus, trucks and trains - tren grande). Sometimes two trains, and the whole stretch of river is engulfed in the dull roar of an almost unbelievable - from the middle of the earth - sound. A cacophony that begins slowly, quiet murmur and develops up and louder until it can’t increase more and it does and it does. Makes me want to run and hide, away from the demons of the hunt, from Zeus and all his family, the Armageddon soundtrack, the collected sounds of a thousand wars.

Then there is the paradox, the Bridge Paradox, part of the Hypothesis of Hospitality (or the Hospitality Paradox), for which the material is being collected, the data analysed. The results so far support the paradox (or is it a dilemma?). When I am on top of a bridge...for example, walking over the Brooklyn Bridge with everyone else, on a Sunday, it seems somehow a waste of time (that damn continuum) an indulgence to be doing it during the week. A bit like someone said recently, that I believe that life is so long (my life) that I can just walk along here for a couple of hours, looking around (or not) for those who don’t belong, soaking up the smells of Other, and the breeze, perhaps a little sun (Cuban sun or from Cancun), discovering important things like Americans use trash cans for essentially food containers (the essential life), though sometimes there is cardboard boxes, election posters, ubiquitous handouts on everything from having your nails done (arrive in good order especially your feet 'you who have travelled so far'), to saving the planet, to the latest conspiracy theory (including 9/11 or even the moon landing...going back a bit...the flag, our beloved Jack could fly in the anti-gravity), to a political rave (ahhh Mexique! Ex-illegal, ex-alien, ex-health care, ex- ex- ex- the right wing raves on), things that make the morning work, that keep the day running – surely they are worth an hour or so. On the Bridge... on the crossing, the place between places, the day goes on, mesmerized by the contingency, watching the score board (the coach said not to), mesmerized by the passings, the bikes, bikes on one side, walkers on their side (politics again), except that sometimes the walker needs a
photo from the Other side or just a view from that side…or, heaven forbid (the fundamentalist position) the stranger is totally oblivious that there is any system at all and wanders into or even stands and chats (offers hospitality) where the bikes go. It’s like Pacman changing colour, or the jolly green giant, growing, ripping his clothes, and turning green. The cyclists have a tantrum, blow their whistles, ring their bells, shout, even occasionally slow down – a milieu of angry lycra - often the walkers in question continue on in their obliviousness and the lycra gets louder, swerves around ‘them’ and bobs off, side to side, huff and huff, faster and faster until they are swallowed up by the next ‘illegal’ blockage, repeating the performance and the walkers repeat their nonchalance. The arrogance of “life is long”, provides fascinations that would otherwise be missed, often I need to watch these things a few times especially if they are as funny as the bikes on the bridge. There are good places to sit as well. But you mustn’t look down! Every time the down view creeps into my field of vision –flicks across my retina – the strings in my knees go slack and (if I’m standing), gravity takes hold unmercifully and the apple falls from the tree landing on it’s knees or worse. Not good up on the bridge…I’m always up there when this happens…the Border Patrol are only at the border… a side view, a head up view, horizon, horizon, a navigator’s dream.
Within the “life is long” flaneur’s morning, overwhelmingly (perhaps interestingly, fleetingly) is that when up on the bridge, I am completely engulfed by the ‘bridgeness’ of it all, between two land masses, suspended in space, and perhaps time (waiting waiting – especially if it’s a ‘good’ wasted morning), held in this capsule of crossing, a place that is separate, different from the norm, almost a warp (held aloft by the weft of wire, aspirations, hopes, dreams and steel), though more so the experience (the memories, the fades, the phrases, the tastes) of being asleep when you wake – where was I, was it a dream – like being on an island and the return, though more metaphysical than that, a zoneful circumstance of drawing, of total engagement, you are the drawing, the crossing, the charcoal, the paper – the components of the bridge and the self, of space and identity, the experience of living, the tenuousness of travel from life to death (especially if you suffer from a horror of heights), the wasted morning on the Bridge. I sit on the railing and read his letter again:

Images in your email stir some memory pod of mine that ventures forth as if it has been wrapped in exquisite sheets of embroidered silence and waited, as the wood-fired teacup in Kyoto swaddled in discarded kimono and left to ferment for three generations in the wooden ink box near the shoe rack that stood by the door of his house. As I remember, I realise that it is not specific, it is ‘of’ sometime, more than that, it makes me think of the whole experience that I can’t recall exactly. Your travels around the bridge are excursions into a context, an intangible journeying around the girders, the steel, the concrete of the physical structure. It prompts me to reminisce on this teacup as I drink from it, being close to the narration of an object old and beautiful, and to realise that the importance of everything lies in it’s ness-ness and that all objects, and in your case, borders, rely on being events for their power. I’m also thinking that the collaboration between you and this study, is in fact a boundary, a delimiter, a space you imagine within, a space constructed by thought, a time of discovery where object and subject collide. These sites, in general, can be, perhaps must be,
not places nor spaces, rather events, times, compilations of activities, performative and enduring, existing in our personal and collective memories, shared and communitied, as is this tea cup. It reminds me of Henri Lefebvre saying, forgive my memory, I don’t have his book with me, something to the effect of, space is not a medium, a milieu or an intermediary, it is all these, and it’s role is an instrument and a goal, less neutral, more active, a means and an end.

Back to the ness, a beautiful suffix, she once said to me that she aspired to living in the suffix, because the action is there, where we can see the real language, the tenses, the pluralities, the capacities that surround, outline and provide meaning to the ancient frame of the word. And it’s more than that, ness shows the value, the measure, even the being of what is represented, for example, by these bridges you have chosen. So, I enjoy the concept of ness-ness, the quality of the state of something, not of the thing itself, but of its characteristics, it’s aura, and it’s distinctiveness. This is what you are chasing and catching, the beauty, the ugliness, the utility, the habitat, the detritus, the formation of the bridge situated in the community and environs, using all those aspects, but if I am right, not necessarily the structures themselves, to reconnoitre the dynamics of what is happening and what it means.

Dynamics, events in action, set the scene for me here. I imagine from your notes standing under the bridge and I can scarcely keep my feet. I am buffeted and pushed around by the constant flow of the elements; the flow could be a motif of this work. Looking here and there at the images there is the flow of the water, of the cars and trucks and buses rumbling and roaring overhead, the graffittos hounded by the vigilantes, the tags, the spray paint covered by the brushed on greys and pinks, the park garden along the wall with it’s annual and perennial plants, the seasonality of growth, the phloem and xylem of the juices, the walking and running people coming by, the evidence in the paths of people clambering off the track making
paths for themselves, all transitory events happening around a place. It reminds me of Gilles Clement, his Garden of Movement and the found energies. The birds, a constant fidget in this landscape of flow, add in their flight to the exchanging feast of activity. Power lines hitched to pylons directing Ohm’s stream of electrons overhead, is the magnetic field linked to the migratory birds (or the traffic)?

I must go. Before I do, I have a sense that the movement of the site surrounds you, you are between the components of the physical and your thinking self, spatiality and compression of what matters, stillness and a blaze of rushing, approaching, faltering, re-approaching, using and informing, yoking and releasing, telling, listening and leaving, moving, moving, nessing the ness.

Still, there is this huge bridge when I am up there. I can’t ignore it, I can’t not see it, it’s everywhere, and to prove its existence, it moves. I wish it didn’t shake so much, large rumbling tremors, longer orgasms than the Manhattan Bridge...even with the trains across. Or the gathering of the warlords, sounds untenable, shaking the Gods of Capitalism from Wall Street, who could have known? Assembling in the dark, the soft splish splash, waves against oak, clinker-built row-boats (the British sentries sniff and listen ‘all is well’) Washington and his troops silently cross Retreat, the age-old border from defeat, here the East River, out-maneuuvring the English, avoiding defeat and colonisation, living to fight again from Manhattan Island. Half frozen water, salt, leaches the blood (the pain, the sorrow, the loss) from their leather boots, in small groups they float the fragile flotilla, feeling themselves magically bobbing along on the water, held up bodily (and boatily), defeating gravity as well. Delicious, unimaginable suspension. “Quiet! no sharp noises, we approach the citadel, keep your muskets high and ready, Quiet”, as they slip away, retreat to victory, he tells the tale, this time-honoured and oft repeated tactical response, he assures them, approaching success from defeat, from humiliation.
Today, the park is quiet too, and the only evidence of the bridge is the huge stone edifice, almost as a bully that can’t be avoided at school, standing, immobile, still there when you sneak a look back, hard to look elsewhere, block hard and heavy, constructed, fabricated, visible, yet invisible. The closer you are you can’t see it, and you can’t see anything else, the moose in the room, the elephant on the dining table, but it’s not a bridge from here. It’s an insurmountable pile of stones. Unphotographable. Grand canyonesque. Too gigantic even to be an idea (or an aspiration). The only thing that makes it a crossing place is the ferry to Governors Island, though more relevantly to Battery Park, to Flinders Street Station, Federation Square assembled with glue that leaked from the squash of colonisation, he says, insisting from the other side that the bridge is haunted, every stone is the soul of someone, and can’t you feel that, city workers walk at right angles to each other or descend to be swept up by the iron horse demons bellowing and screaming in the foreign night, walking around him, avoiding his testimony, as he wanders obliquely through the now obsessive, many dimensional, Mondrian grid. Lets have gyoza, chicken rice, dim sum, too late, sweet and sour, believe me I’m serious, crispy skin duck, lets go, we go. Chinatown. The zone spread across the world, border zone, through every city, Chinatown, how. We eat, he chooses. He shows the gold dust in his mother’s old Glomesh purse. They smile. I pay. He tells me he pans for gold at Dai Gum San, a mountain of gold, here, it could be California, it could be, it could be anywhere.
Figure 61. Clyde McGill, *Yellow River to Dai Gum San* (2012).

Figure 62. Clyde McGill, *Yellow River to Dai Gum San* (2012).
And yet it is only of my knowing, a joining of the apartness, where Batman and Washington’s ghosts ride the ferries, rocking and laughing on the gentle bell curves, this massiveness roars and rumbles overhead, big enough, hard wired for carrying, holding the land masses together (and apart), Atlas-like, the space of approach, the preamble, a prologue to crossing the Yarra River, into the border, it-could-be-any-city-space, Melbourne, Manhattan, Kyoto.
Narrative 6: Borderland Borders

He says he is Gooseman. He merges into me, together apart adjacent now and almost completely merged, in-step, (he says he knows everything) our difference indecipherable, our hotdog in hand, a T-shirt in the cheap plastic bag, foreigner defined, redefined, just exemplified, absurd. He is Gooseman, though perhaps Ghostman, incomprehensible, a space, delimited by metabolism, (he has all the answers), a changeling, a me, an other, a you. We’ve been listening to the trumpet player in Battery Park, reminds him of Schopenhauer, looking and listening, one and the same he says, or rather hums, a representation without a thing, expansionary, imprecise. Like the borderland I’m looking for here, the expanded space of the borderline, a border that has moved, or at least there is not just one border, or it has broadened to include many other ideas, not just the edge, the end of this nation, or the beginning of another country, it is not the border, it even has other meanings that are not the old bordering issues, more concerned with us, our lives, our families, something novel has come into being, the old border has changed it’s tune, the further distant trumpeter wails, what now, where has it gone? What’s the chance of that, Gooseman asks, it really makes me think of Stockhausen yes Stockhausen, what’s the chance of that, in all this space, over and over, any chance? He brings a trash can over, starts to go through it, offering me stuff, says if we’re searching for a borderland we might as well start here, is he serious?

Like we are the traffic, like we are the borderland, maybe as in drinking the Mississippi water the border exists inside us, so will eating the hotdogs be like that, the border will be in us, ingesting the outside so it becomes the inside of us. Throwing ideas back and forward across the park, the borderland project starts to appear, finding the border, finding the borderland. Broadway starts to line up. It occurs to me that that border could in reality exist right across the USA from Mexico to Canada, a huge borderland, is this the borderland exemplified, with those who are still in
transit, still within the space of the border having penetrated one side of the border, and not exited, stuck within the border itself, within the borderland, no papers no exit, on the way to citizenship or not, or not on the road to legality. Ghostman declares he’s coming with me, skids the trash can across the street, I try to hide, he follows, he yells, he accosts people in Spanish, tells everyone he’s aboard the artist, off we go to explore where the border is, is it a borderland, to question the location in all its narrative appearances, through a year of walking following Broadway along Manhattan Island, traversing New York, drawing, filming, stills, with the proviso of doing the work on the street, within the social and cultural scene, the working day and night of the city, travelling the pavements for one or two days a week for the twelve months, the four seasons that I am living here. Gooseman nods. Ambiguous, indeterminate, non-linear.

Figure 63. Clyde McGill, *Borderland Broadway Walk* (2010), in progress.
I think of my artwork for this investigation as providing a way to see beyond my looking, I think of Gearöid Ó Tuathail, geopolitical theorist, writing "geopolitics involves ‘framework’, the work of creating frames for interpreting events and making them meaningful” (Tuathail, Dalby & Routledge 2006 p.2). This is a work of geopolitics, a meander through a geographic space alive with the politics of the United States of America. Primarily, this work provides me with an imagined framework, to borrow the context of O’Tuathail’s term, to peer into this city via the environs of Broadway, to consider my proposition that there is a border lingering here, drawn out and enlarged into a borderland. A framework of imagination, " the faculty of making present what is absent” (Arendt 2007. p. xiii), a framework that is constructed out of my imagination and, also, provides a made-up place, a viewing tower built of hypotheses, from which to arrange perspectives, to see around corners, to be invisible on, on which to part the figurative clouds to clarify the scene, the structure of content that trains my lens on the context, a fabrication bringing ideas into being, framing them, accusing, yo acuso, uncovering the guilt of the obscure, a framework of my self.

Figure 64. Clyde McGill, *Borderflux* (2013).
In my head, Dürrer’s grid, there I am, decoding, converting, interpreting, through the framework of supposition, drawing my observations of this currently absent borderland, bringing it into being, if I can find evidence enough, through a grid of my imagination, perhaps the grid of the streets, bringing form from an unruly skein of conjecture. Where is this borderland, I start counting out my steps, measuring from corner to corner, for now the only evidence I have is statistical, the numbers that begin to invoke some appreciation of occurrence, begin to sketch out a map of arrival; however, I am wanting the territory, not just the map, imagining up a journey of discovery, a detournement of intent, or as Guy Debord defines it, “a deceptive detournement” that is “a detournement of an intrinsically significant element which derives a different scope from the new context” (Debord & Wolman 1956), with the USA national border as the significant element, the scope of me as a frame, and the idea of looking for a border, in the form of a borderland here on Manhattan as a new context. But of course there is parody or a parodic-serious juncture which “will express our indifference toward a meaningless and forgotten original” (ibid.), here the ridiculousness, the irony, even the satire of measuring and recording by drawings and photography, the possibility of the actuality, of the presence of some form of the Tex/Mex border running through the ‘Big Apple’. I walk further and count my steps.

I keep counting, drawing can’t stop, security ‘sir move’, I stand sideways, I am the foreigner also, are we all foreigners I ask myself. Not belonging, aliens. Even a tiny park would be welcome now, and food. Under the bagel shop kitchen awning, soaking up the Spanishness, feeling the existential loneliness disperse temporarily, my boundaries’ increasing permeability, _la experiencia es tiempo, la experiencia es tiempo_, experience and time, learning as I go, whenever I speak Spanish here, ordering food, buying bagels, greeting with Hola rather than good morning, simple words, I’m a beginner, but some border moves, the boundary evaporates, the national border composed of language deflates, the void becomes. The difficulty is of becoming, of developing to someone else, not the difference between the first and second language, aiming at
deterritorializing the first language rather than reterritorializing yourself on the new tongue (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, p. 61). As soon as I speak Mexican-Spanish, I feel I have crossed the border or entered into the borderland of identity, I have become in some small way less a stranger, more perhaps a compatriot, and my perspective, my point-of-view, my opinions alter, access to and from me revise, I am in a different social and cultural territory, a modified place, the communal composition of the space unloads, lightens. It takes a little time to experience. I can’t find Gooseman.

Figure 65. Clyde McGill, Borderland Broadway Walk (2010), in progress.
La experiencia es tiempo, I find a place near treasury, sit on the window ledge, evading the security man, watching, listening, his experience is my experience, waiting, el fugitivo. I am hiding out, going to ground, almost lurking, not quite, in order to draw and write; he is looking out for people like me, the hunter, la cazador, a big game hunter, cazador de caza mayor, and these times of terrorism dissolved in tourism provide la luna del cazador, a hunter’s moon. I wait and watch, trying not to look like el fugitive, observing the street, the occupants, hearing the conversations, watching them eat, taking the time to experience the space, I catch a glimpse of him, he is bringing empanadas.

From Portugal he says, really from Mexico, singing a little song I can’t hear, ending in lagrimas, later he cries as we eat, wipes his eyes with the paper napkin, his madre would steam the maize filling. I draw the recipe, I draw the corner, he wipes his eyes again, I draw again, they are really from the corner cart, drawing what is increasingly becoming a map, or a series of maps, an atlas, diagrams of travel, generative charts, cartographic clues that are without syntax because they are marked out to indicate an investigation of un-knowledge, looking for something that I
can’t find yet, what are it’s parameters here on the ground, in the streets. Re-imagining ways of power, times of loss, positions of being, subjections of place.

‘Take a photo of me’ she says, ‘take a photo of me, please?’ passing me the camera, in front of the Bull, she poses with her arms around the bull’s neck, sort of, I capture the moment, it will be that way for ever, she will be that way for ever, ‘thanks’, ‘bye’, ‘bye’, photos exist outside space.

I meet Gooseman late today. I heard a man today, he says, a ghost I think, at lunch time in that tiny park, there is no evidence he exists (he says non-existir), the other man leaves, picking up his lunch wrapper, looks like he had a hot beef sandwich, probably a Reuben, though its not certain from here, and an empty coffee cup in his left hand, brushes crumbs off his shirt, and pulls at the seat of his suit trousers, phone, looks around, is that hereditary that look around, a quick cast about for likely predators before leaving the light of the fire, and back to work. G goes on speaking, I’ve missed the beginning now, he wasn’t talking to the guy who just departed, I’ve definitely missed the start now, I wonder if it matters, is a story between the beginning and the end or a continuum, the storyteller, the Don De Lillo, the Octavio Paz, only crafting a start and finish place to please the audience, G says the ghost spoke on the principle of levers which is the absolute of it, the only way it works, using a small word to hold a whole world up in the imagining of a poet, words on one side of the fulcrum, usually a concept, it becomes indecipherable for a little, and large understandings remain elevated. Gooseman wonders who he was, el fantasma, el fantasma, he has a notebook which he refers to from time to time, and he holds up his hands as if to get a scale, quite like a painter drafting, or a singer cupping his ear to hear the note, still holding forth on the balancing, the assisted lift occurring with words, writing, his friend explains to me that an idea can’t poise without a counterbalance, not just bringing it to equilibrium, rather hanging it out there to give it power, relevance, to accentuate the opposing force. Abruptly, he stops. Silence, as if to straddle the fulcrum, standing his storytelling denouement on its head. My drawing falters, I look up, I’ve
drawn the counting of my steps, a balance, a lever, I think I’ve drawn his story, perhaps more his telling of his ghost story. I’ll add every drawing to the photos, an unbound journal of the borderland.

To the river with Gooseman, the early geese, migratory, down and back, Sisyphus demands repetition, the guy from South America, Gooseman’s friend, says he went to the border nine times before he crossed, rolling the stone, carrying the cardinal signs of sanctuary seekers, red white and blue woven nylon bag and photos, of the living and of the dead. I photograph the geese. People die in photos, geese keep eating bagels, oddly makes me think of Keynes, economy and society, separate or together, the economic short term overrules thinking ahead, in the long run we are all dead, the nihilist side of my brain begins to whir, Gooseman and friend walk on up the river talking talking. I draw repetition, sanctuary by nine, the geese, patterns, borderland elusives.

Figure 67. Clyde McGill, Borderland Broadway Walk (2010), in progress.
Figure 68. Clyde McGill, *Borderland Stories* (2010).

Figure 69. Clyde McGill, *Borderland Stories* (2010).
A crossroad. Avenues and streets. Calculate the crossroads in my project, I think there’s fourteen avenues, including Park, Madison and there’s one hundred and ten streets all the way north to the Bronx, I think they all cross Broadway, I count them as I walk, I keep thinking of Samuel Beckett and to some extent Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Mostly Beckett, there are 1540 corners, each is 4 ways, there are four corners per corner, that makes 6160 right angle corners, plus four by 110 for the streets that cross Broadway, crossroads, this whole island-city is a crossroad, Beckett. Absurd. Sitting here in this smelly doorway near 63rd street, I see there is always something else, a missingness, that’s the fail point, again, fail. To think that I could, with pen, notebook and camera, drawing, taking photos, looking, observation, reflection, deduction, talking to Gooseman who I’m missing a lot just now, find a borderland here. Absurd. Where is the border, does it exist in this maze, this labyrinth of meaning and no meaning? I feel that I am now at a place of greater uncertainty, in an
ambiguous space that is foreign, Camus describes this for me in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and "between the certainty I have of my existence and the content I try to give to that assurance, the gap will never be filled. Forever I shall be a stranger to myself" (Camus 1991, p.19). Perhaps this is my re-imagined borderland, located within and between our-selves, this mythical social place of nothing, something and biopolitics.

Past Canal Street, market place, Chinatown, Chinatown here and Melbourne and almost every city I can think of, the Chinese border swoops across a thousand towns leaving an indelibly branded cultural precinct, photographs of another borderland; he sidles along, his spiel mostly inaudible, "'lex,'lex,'lex" in a north African accent, is that possible, it sounds like it, definitely not American, its globalized, "'lex, 'lex, 'lex", another Gooseman’s ghost? This is noisy, loud, clatter everywhere, he has to be by my ear to hear him, copy watches are illegal here and the pavement territory is held and guarded, selling space is fought over, he keeps moving to avoid the conflicts that erupt everywhere. I imagine *The Social Contract* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau here, a cast of thousands shuffling in their own space with occasional border incursions, the Sovereign overseeing all, the Government regulating, the General Will, Freedom inside the State, Tocqueville making a late appearance, on the way to globalisation, all wearing sneakers. Rousseau dodged along here, I think, in his *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (1782/1979); I think I should re-create his ten walks, maybe, another day. Balancing on the ledge, I close my eyes, low background high foreground right here going past loud fast fade loud again overlaid by another Spanish Spanish Cantonese Spanish Vietnamese I think Cantonese Spanish a Creole beautiful Black American white upper Manhattan Spanish Spanish fade a gap Wow loud English French Spanish very Mexican Spanish Fire Siren one street over Spanish, going to sleep as I fall off the edge. Someone has written in my notebook in green pen: (I don’t use green.)

*Along Broadway, I will look for an imagined borderland, perhaps though it’s hidden from me, I can’t see it, I can merely imagine it, create it in my mind, include this imagined place in this fictional narrative, hoping that to create it is to understand it, otherwise it’s*
back to failure. A borderland as an imaginary, a geopsychographic imaginary, because we know that those who are neither on one side of the border nor the other, but somehow in the middle, must be in imaginary space, we can’t see it, we can only make it exist by imagining it, to have the image of it live in our minds. Imaginary lives, to imagine some parts of our life, our future.


Today is an imaginary portal, the subway broke my pencil as I fell onto a seat as the train stopped suddenly, I came up from underground to a place that reminds me of Liz Hickok’s Jell-o New York City (2011), a sculpture of New York constructed of Jell-o in which “seemingly permanent architectural structures are transformed into something precarious and ephemeral” (Hickok 2011).

The borderland that I am looking for is as tenuous as this shaky portal, an imaginary place, not at all permanent, nor even a structure, el edificio es fragil, a fragile edifice at best, as evanescent as Jell-o. I draw with the broken pencil but it won’t make a mark, just a light groove in the paper which I have to hold up to the light to see if it exists, even then I can’t be sure, although something about this mode of mark making fits the subject matter, drawing the imaginary and there is almost nothing on the paper, this is fun, makes me laugh, I draw on, mapping the whole area, I could
argue that this is what Benedict Anderson had in mind, all morning I draw nothing, or almost nothing, pages and pages of it, quickly getting down a detailed diagram of this place that may or may not exist, it’s exciting, maybe this is it, the borderland I’ve been looking for. As with Jell-o, however, the precarious nothingness begins to evaporate, I pack up my drawings, photograph the site, escape back through the portal to the subway, home. I sneak a look at the drawings the next morning, they’re still there, how exciting.

I wonder, ask the question or ask the answer, hoping for a riposte, even any reply. Back on the street, asking questions again. All I do is ask questions. I have set questions, not today, today is free form questions, a bit like free dress day at the bank, free form, answers, I ask answers today. Cognizant of the conversation on linguistics in *A Thousand Plateaus*, “Actually, there is no question, answers are all one ever answers. To the answer contained in a question, (cross examination, competition, plebiscite) one should respond with questions from another answer.” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, p. 110), I am to question questions and to answer answers, research, postulate, today I look for the response, I must have a reply, I am ‘the desperate’. After questioning and questioning there is no answer. Hypothesize this, any answer is better than a gaping blank, any question will answer my question, what is the answer? What is the answer? I run north out of Times Square my back pack and camera bouncing up pulling on my shoulders, I hold my drawing book and pencil, past the Geometer’s triangle, I run and ask, run and ask, calling out down the early morning streets, asking the avenues loudly, shouting my question, hearing the echo, asking again, shouting, calling, answering now, he answers, I don’t know, calling again, he’s running with me now on the other side of Broadway, we could only do this before the day begins, before all the answers are set in stone, while the questions are still warm and malleable, fresh out of the cerebrum, the thinker, the words still able to be ordered randomly, he calls I call back, the pace is terrifying, the silence between the call and the call back is terrifying, we territorialize our space with questions, we deterritorialize our space with answers when we find them, running, slowing down to catch the reply, I’m
off on a side street, his call is distant but it has the upward inflection, still a question, I call, call, call, not waiting between for something that may never be, no answer can fit in the tiny gap, he’s shouting from the corner up ahead, we’re approaching Columbus Circle, shouting and calling in a strange song, a rise and fall, a request rather than a requiem, though it has the sense of loss, the answer is departed, running on, diverting past the Natural History Museum, maybe the answers are preserved in there, in a diorama in the Grand Hall of Questions, beyond the Mammal Hall, answers trompe l’oeil, answers shown in their real habitat, answers with their protein held fast in ancient Indian jars of formalin, answers after taxidermy, running through East Harlem, people call back, is that the one, running across to the Hudson, looking for Gooseman to ask him about the Museum, looking is a question, where is it, what is it, we are calling and looking, Gooseman waves, that’s an answer, waves, desperate for answers, running through the space of no knowledge, knowing nothing, do only answers provide knowledge, or can questions, lonely without their answer partners, contribute, providing questions, searching the questions, he has now veered back up towards Broadway, I cut through further up along a street of old shops derelict closed boarded up rubbish lying around blowing about water flowing across the pavement deep jumping into space, social space, along the edge of altitude looking up, he makes a noise from further along, in the distance, meeting on the bridge, calling incessantly, the rib shop man says what are you running from, the guys across Broadway watch, stop talking, watch, there’s more people about now, he’s ahead of me, calling backwards, the rail line is overhead now, upside down, the East River bridge to the Bronx is coming up, I shout to him, shout across to the park, questions I never knew I had, questions on a tumbril, cranking and turning, firing out, explosives, running out of glycogen now, hitting the wall, painful, foggy brain, calling quieter, we meet, I’ve never met him, all the way from Times Square calling and asking, running, seeking answers, asking answers, now we meet.
Insights, into finding the borderland, abound through reading *The Production of Space* by Henri Lefebvre, I look down at the World Trade Center site and know that ‘space’ has changed since he wrote this book in 1974; however, there are still many handholds for me here. The foundations of social relations are spatial and they only occur in and of space, social space, where we live, work, raise families, is as real a space as mathematical space or geometric space, the borderland then could be a space, a layered space of social connections, and no doubt, connections with authority, and the influence of space can be seen or felt on all planes and their multiple attachments (Lefebvre 1974). If the borderland is a space carved out of its surroundings, sounds like I could find it then, here in Manhattan. Fifteen years later, social geographer, Edward Soja, in his book *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, writes, “the spatial order of human existence arises from the (social) production of space, the construction of human geographies that both reflect and configure being in the world” (Soja 1989, p. 25). Standing here, this still seems relevant though more than thirty years have passed since Soja wrote it, it is evident to me that a space is produced where groups of people, especially those with a shared purpose, gather, for example those in the precarious regions of half-way across a border, neither here nor there, departed and not yet arrived completely, en route in no-mans-land. Something akin to life in a refugee camp, at
least in principle, to borrow from Giorgio Agamben, “a space of exception”, in which those undocumented border-crossers are “outside the normal juridical order” (Agamben 1995, pp. 169-170). Is it possible that the whole of Manhattan could be considered a camp, this space of exception, a long bow to draw, yet an interesting place from which to view the borderland conundrum.

I look up to the tiny red helicopter, buckled up, I’m finally airborne, the Brooklyn Bridge falling away beneath us, will this give a better view, through this transparent floor, of an imaginary space? Up, down, side to side, this ride through the sky, bending the mathematical constraints of space, almost into an imaginary place. Being in this fragile shell, this construction, looking out, things occur to me, if you inhabit the borderland you can see it however if you are on the outside looking for it, you can’t see it, and the occupants of the borderland cannot be seen, ascertained, by anyone else.

I can’t help thinking of the truth of this exploration, do all explorers have times when the end is in sight, almost, and the journey seems to have disappeared, just some scattered things strewn about to give some credence to having travelled through the space, about as much evidence that remains after the helicopter traverses the sky. This artwork is not an object. If it was conceptual art, art critic and writer, Tony Godfrey, asserts that it would take a number of forms such as “everyday objects, photographs, maps, videos, charts and especially language itself” (Godfrey 1998, p.4), for example, Duchamp’s Fountain. My walk up Broadway, this durational performance, has no thingness. While it may not be the time here, in East Harlem, to pursue this whole discussion, while reflecting on this work and evidential truth, last night I re-read Art and it’s Shadow by the Italian philosopher, Mario Perniola, ideas akin to the aura of art. This is not only relevant to my art-walk but also to the existence or not of the borderland for which I am searching. Perniola considers that the central nature of the thing, the real, is that we cannot imagine it and translating and producing meaning from reality is possible only through a process of “imaginary projection” (Perniola 2000, p. 9), the
reading between the lines that we do continuously each day. So, I was encouraged by this, understanding that by being an educated imaginist, I could pursue my quest for a borderland, a biopolitical imaginary anyway, and the sense of it, by using a course of action, a walk, within which I conjure up, I re-imagine how and why the borderland may be present within this metropolis of New York. Gooseman arrives asking have I read his ghost story.

Figure 73. Clyde McGill, *Borderflux* photographs, (2012).
Epilogue to the Narratives: Within/Between

What happened, what happened, tell me the whole story, all of it. Gooseman is back after a break, I sum up the narratives for him, I’ll make him a book, the essence of the narratives, their identity. This is *Within/Between: a Libretto of the Borderland*. Gooseman asks does it contain everything and everything else. As I have been collecting up the experiences that haven’t been spoken of, or that have, there is also something else, something unavoidable, elements colluding within the Narratives, between the Narratives, as at a border, postponed, delayed, unacknowledged. More than the sum and less than the subtraction. Transnarrative trans-narrative. Crossing the narratives, divining for the streams gurgling below, encouraged by writer and post-colonial theorist, Bill Ashcroft’s coining of *Transnation*, a cultural memory of the nation distinct from the nation state, an in-betweeness in the infrastructure, a potential space of possibility, unimpeded by traditional boundaries (Ashcroft 2011), in order to re-vision the whole of this research beyond the individual parts. How to look anew, seeing for the first time after seeing it so many times. G and I draw eyes on the chalkboard in the old classroom studio, they write reflexive pronoun, different in Spanish, I see myself, the research sees itself, and looks again, I am the artist, I am the research, research and I reflect together, again.

This is my task, I took over from him earlier, though firstly I must speak to you. These multifarious inventions, declares Gooseman - he thinks you require a *scenario direzionale* (you know his penchant for words and language he has picked up in the street, he says it makes for better meetings, I tell him he’s a lingual bricoleur, he says he only steals from the Brooklyn Public Library, not private theft), some stage directions, if we are going to make this performance work, in reality. I’m not sure that he gets the concept of fictionality that exists around our interrogation of borders (real or not), or between him and I, not the way you get it. G contends all our adventures of investigation, all our finds, all our non-
discoveries, and, as he notes very loudly, as he informs a carriageful of people on the G train, all that is critical, crucial and vital, may remain outside the fence, where you can’t get to it. He and I can break through the imaginary borders, through the fourth wall; you may not be able to. I understand, I take his advice - will this work for you? - we’ll include the essentials, updateable (and scalable), a script of scene and stage directions, and a dialogue, an altogetherness, an orthography of demarcation, within the between of our lines, in this book. Gooseman wants a list of characters, he insists, he asks how many, ask them, ask you, how many?

Figure 74. Clyde McGill, Within/Between; a Libretto of the Borderland (2014).
Figure 75. Clyde McGill, *Within/Between: a Libretto of the Borderland* (2014).

Figure 76. Clyde McGill, *Within/Between: a Libretto of the Borderland* (2014).
The G-man is not available this morning. He borrowed three books; he is working on his long time project on the migration of Canada Geese. (He photographs, with the analogue camera, where the geese have been, and are not now, there is no film, lamented pictures he calls them.) So I begin to make the *within/between* book, of folds and counter-folds, ink and wire stitches, being a book community of one, stencilling our results, the metafacts and artefacts. (He doesn’t care what anyone thinks; I don’t discourage him, though I don’t know, it works for him. I can ask him when he returns.) G’s friend calls in with coffee. We talk. He dreams of departure, forced departure. Once illegal (he murmurs undocumented, now) always temporary, always watching, always on the cusp of departure. We cut the new book together, pinking the linen edge, pursuing the quiddity of border change, the components, the rudiments, the shifts, the oscillations, setting down a glimpse of right now, what now, a momentary frame freeze of conversion from this to that. So much change, the dynamic normal, G’s friend says *regularidad*, we sew with wire.

Figure 77. Clyde McGill, *Within/Between: a Libretto of the Borderland* (2014).
Jane Rendell challenges art criticism, which she says often has a restricted perspective, by drawing on memory, imagination and dreams to supplement the observed, using numerous sites to develop an understanding of artwork. (2010). Rendell’s place of writing from to the creative space of my artist book, *Within/Between: a Libretto of the Borderland*, is encouraging me to consider that as my research project completes, it should reach out again, into the unknown, within it’s process, within it’s enunciation of itself, challenging it’s own subjectivity, the outside/inside spatiality of it’s existence, and recognising, or at least speculating, that the edges of realisation may be again re-imagined, folded, ready, of the page and off the page.

The first words for this artist book came to me as I read Giorgio Agamben’s *State of Exception* and asked myself ‘do I believe this?’ ‘where is the evidence?’ Can a researcher just make up a place/concept/set of values and propose they are real, or even just propose them? Propositions, creative space. My narratives are propositions, setting up conditions in which I could propose reality as a place to view ideas about borders. I make notes for the reader, space-corrupt, beyond-mythico, paradigm-paradox – a semblance of an occupation of the frontier between picture and word for me, juxtaposing time and culture, stage directions in the playwright’s notes, second page, some would say page three, a rough measure of the indeterminacy of this imagined border-on-linen that digs it’s wire links and intersections into my hands and abrades my skin, disrupts my boundary, lets my blood seep along it’s imaginary edges.

Perhaps the method is imaginary (not in the sense of fabricated, rather as invented) in this collection of notes, the places that are synonymous with power and authority, though also topographically and culturally, with loss, endings, separation; phenomena that are ambiguous, even inseparable from our being. My proposal is to use this method to make this work (*Within/Between*, an artists book) which explores the themes of the six narratives in a cross border way, that is, looks obliquely, from another perspective, through another lens across the principal subjects of this
research in order to re-examine these areas with a view to establishing a crosshatching that reveals other features that may be lying in the shadows. My co-conspirator, Gooseman’s friend, self-appointed as a result of assisting me cutting the linen for the book and flying it in the street outside my Melbourne studio under the flags, to gain an understanding of the task ahead, dragged the fabric through the wet tar in the work area in the lane opposite, asking the Hi-Vis standing about, if they considered themselves citizens today. And what about yesterday? He said they were defensive, almost aggressive and asked him “What, mate?”

Of citizenship (and others), Uniform speaks abruptly, defines the term alien for us. The border disagrees. Fictionally, a citizen becomes an alien. I want to know how do you, citizen, come back from this State of Ambiguity. The zone between sovereignty and acceptance is unlimited, it extends forever, when do the aliens turn into humans, or like ET do they

Figure 78. Clyde McGill, Within/Between: a Libretto of the Borderland (2014).
only have the two choices, neither of which transforms them into us, its
death or go home. So, Uniform, who has the power, proposes the
confirmation of difference as the definition of alien, GF counters with the
definition of border being anywhere there are aliens. I can’t draw the
border because the border is everywhere, how do I draw that I ask, how
do I draw everything except everything else. Draw words.

Two words. so simple. through there. this way. They enter. come on. at
last. all together. over here. in words. GF’s father’s father would stand at
the back door and say ingreso in a long sentence, cautioning going in is
easy once you get through the door, as long as they don’t want
documentos, sometimes they don’t, work hard, two words. Then there is
the neither, no exit, no eg-zit, (or upsidedownness of the e, the phonetics
of despair), the nor, not here, not there, two words, he said, two more.

Two. A Unicorn, a dragon? Is a unicorn extant, a reality across the
landscape, through pristine verdant valleys, (are the valleys still with
us?), in the broken afternoon we speak Greek, not omitting the Byzantine
accents, write with a brush, mumble about Leonardo’s notes, is this to
prove a unicorn, snare a unicorn. It’s a rhinoceros, einhorn; it does be in
the world, isn’t it. As to the line on the landscape, is it extinct? How will
we trap it, with a unicorn on our shoulders, on our heads, looking out,
looking forward, sniffing the dawn breeze, any sign, any sign? Speaking
ancient Greek again, to placate the unicorn, to hold the unicorn in
existence and the unicorn holds the mythico-border, the border beyond, in
between actuality and fancy, the so-called line-in-the-sand, more likely, a
mark-in-the-book, far removed from the unicorn, or the dragon, the
unicorns friend. As we look out of this valley, there is a mountain, another
valley, unicorn stirs.

In the morning, after the unicorn, this book and I, hesitate at the notes on
diametrics as ideas, having walked across the circle, the Great Circle
Route, Ring Road, North Circular, no, no, this is cultural rather than opting
in and out of space, the corrupting gap, space between us that creates
them from some of us, incarcerates them until we go around the back and
magically we are behind bars, like a mirror on the wall, a folding page, somehow between fails to include those within the wall. We are stuck across this side of the circle as you stand inside the ring. We are stuck, the distance around the diameter is constant, you go towards us one way and we are bound to retreat as them. When we are unstuck we’ll write the theorem of cultural diametrics, QED.

Proof or demonstration, QED or QEF, Gooseman asks, as he converses, shows us his new photos, constructing stereotypes, your messages distil the subject, the points-of-view, the note-in-a-bottle we found floating near the Mediterranean beach, stuck in the mudflats of the mighty Mississippi, caught in the fertile mangroves lining the Timor Sea, yet there is more than antique etymology, more than the extraterritorial, foreign is invisible for now, the barbarians are gone, aren’t they or did they morph into penitentiary guards, politicos, or us. Come back, Constantine, at-the-gate is only-a-figure-of-speech; the proof is in the new song, a seafaring ballad of our present voyages.
Conclusion

My experience, at the point of leaving this part of the project, is of there being an additive field of crops, of harvest, so all the conclusions are cross fertilised, not only by their fellow findings, though that occurs, but also by an amalgamation, even a conglomeration, some might say an agglomeration, of pertinences remaining transparent until the final surveying, the ending search is complete, the positioning, even though transitory, is determined and the fruit is picked. In short, while I have looked back, reversed through the studies, carefully picked and weighed relevancies and irrelevances, turned over previousnesses, and wondered, until the forward motion ceases, the retrospection cannot be fulfilled and then, the introspection is out of balance without it’s future. So I see that the conclusion must include what has been seen and what is to come, even if the forward thinking, the counter-weight, is truncated within the boundaries of this document. Looking back through the artwork which is the foundational implement of digging through this fecund discursive space, this public and private sphere of concurrence and disapproval, there are two lynch pins for me, firstly, to Berg and van Houtum emphasising, in 2003, the indeterminacy of national boundaries, pointing out a border, any contemporary border, is not a border (Berg & Van Houtum 2003), and secondly, to Guillermo Gomez-Pena, describing himself as a migrant provocateur and a border brujo (a sorcerer) (Gomez-Pena 2000). The magic created by conflating these profound views of bordership in the world, has been a guiding light for me, during the process of seeking ways to enunciate a lucid sense of today’s understanding of borders, and leaving the gate a little ajar to allow access to the artist-as-researcher. My experience of the transmutability of all the borders that I included in this PhD leaves me with no doubt that magic is evident in many ways.

Perusing the Mason-Dixon Line in the long shadow of the Battle of Gettysburg in Narrative 1, provided insights into the transitory nature of
borders although the trail they leave in history may be more permanent. This may be emphasised where there is a tendency for monumentality owing to the bellicosity of man, as after war and it’s destructions. Our experiences and memories endure.

While geography provides ideal bases for where a decision on border placement could be, an understanding of the social pressures that may come to be is afforded to me to some extent by following the Mississippi River as the natural geographic boundary between the East and the West of America, in Narrative 2. The aftermath of colonisation of this area, and a post colonial view-point, offers awareness of the shortcomings of using geography alone as a limiting structure.

Despite every mode of developing nations by the allocation of space, indicated by bordering, there are indications for me from Narrative 3, that geometry wilts in the face of societal pressure. People dismantle borders, contemporary borders persist until society resists. The line itself may remain, but like a Klein Bottle or a Mobius Strip, inside and outside fuse into one, there is a porosity of purpose at the divide.

Some understanding of the demise of hospitality at the hands of contemporary circumstance, is made available to me by my research of politics and borders in Narrative 4. Nations today bring decisions of exclusion into place with great force and intention, some people remain outside of economic and social benefit, and the consequences, such as death at the border, are marginalised. Fault is apportioned to the seekers of freedom. I see, that at least in some senses, today’s concept of nationhood or citizenship doesn’t work.

Walking slows me down and delivers respite from the contemporary scramble. Among border portals, having time to look and realise, assists my perception of the everywhereness of todays border posts in Narrative 5. My suburban meander in Melbourne begins a comprehension of the US Consulate being a place where I could stroll to the US by entering the building. Or, I couldn’t cross to Australia at the Australian Defence Force
Barracks at the cusp of the City of Melbourne, although I can delight in the old Sino-Australian border at Chinatown with those arriving who have just crossed the border to the World at Tullamarine.

The confluency of edges of some nations, or perhaps, some aspects of national borders, is clarified a little for me by previous narratives, although there appear to be gaps. Narrative 6 leads me to see that one of the gaps in contemporary borders occurs as an expansion to form a borderland in which life goes on. Culturally and socially things seem the same to me, except there may not be an escape route from this conundrum as it exists inside the border itself. My intuition leaves me wondering if this isn’t the shape of things in the future, we will be a border, rather than having a border around us.

My experience, within which this project is embedded, or is it the inverse, is typically within David Malouf’s suggestion, in his book *On Experience*, of being of the moment and of me, though also captured, often frighteningly, by the dynamics of the broad paroxysms of history (2008). I am aware that I have included here experiential “relics from my own life” as Sophie Calle influenced me as I worked along the Mississippi (Calle 1999, p. 9), and this intensely personal method of exploring borders, of travelling a selection of representative lines-in-space, and visualizing their narratives, has encouraged me to think that our experience, including our feelings, our memories, our knowledge of history, constructs borders, builds these immensely complex barricades in our fictionalities, our imaginaries, or as my geometer friend would say, our idealizations.

As a researcher, one of the difficulties in the project was dealing with loss, as I moved on from one study to the next, feeling that a part of me was left behind, abandoned. Although I could, and often did look back, go over the work, reflect on the previous studies, the reality was that I had to look forward, think about my current study, work in the present, although sometimes I felt it wasn’t even really the present, I had to work in the future often, planning, watching the future change as I constructed the present, or influencing the present with the past work and the planning
ahead. As the research went on, this experience helped me see the loss of crossing a border. People spoke to me of how they once lived there, now they live here, but they feel that they live half way between, neither here nor there. Neither here nor there constitutes some part of the borderland that is more evident than the border, the place that is neither inside nor outside but composed of both. A space of gain and loss, though additive, not as a balance. An ambiguous palimpsest of citizenship, of nationhood, of home, of rights, of imagined benefits.

Magic and loss are dominant portals to an imagined set of narratives formed through my personal interaction with borders during my research. However, of course, the other portal is stories, everywhere I looked there were stories. I can only think that reflects the humanness here, this is not about a colour, or a shape or even a line, as art may be, rather it is of people, us, all of us, so there are stories, where events are told. Stories or narratives form the borderland; create the infrastructure of borderliness, bringing the borderland into being. All of my research project is created as narratives to show my experience in the field of being enmeshed in stories, rattling along the rail line, caught in the fence, imagined, stories of others, stories that tug at my sleeve; some of them I narrate, other voices intervene, communicate, future and past, the narrative questions the research (and the reliability of the narrator), fictional plots and identities appear, articulating the contexts and meanings of borders.
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Addendum

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