

Poetry, Code, and Desert Landscapes: An Interview with Amy Sara Carroll

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TBT circa 2010 (image by Brett Stalbaum, courtesy of the artists)

Tiresias: Could you tell us about your work as a poet and academic?

Amy: I view all my work—my writing, my teaching and *artist* projects—as interconnected.¹ My life/work reflects my training. I have both an M.F.A. and a PhD. I started out graduate school in Anthropology and then took a leave of

Tiresias 6 (October 2014)

<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/rll/tiresias/index.html>
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¹ The neologism “artivism” emerged in the 1990s. Sometimes it is used almost interchangeably with “relational aesthetics” and “socially based art practices”—all labels assigned to artwork that engages communities and is regarded as socially or politically as well as aesthetically driven.

absence to get an M.F.A in Creative Writing in Poetry. After teaching for a couple of years as a lecturer in creative writing, I decided not to return to my Anthropology Program, but to get a PhD in literature. So I've had a very circuitous, sentimental education—what is *not* recommended to graduate students these days. I wandered around in order to think and feel the intellectual questions that still inform my work/life.

Thus, in my own teaching, I try to encourage students to name the terms of their own educations, to think about writing, for instance, in various voices and modes. But, even as I note this, I also find myself still drawing lines between *this* poetry collection and *that* critical monograph, between *that* critical monograph and *this* collaboration.

Tiresias: What is the Electronic Disturbance Theater and how does it play into the rest of your work?

Amy: The Electronic Disturbance Theater (EDT) is an activist collective. There have been two instantiations of the group. Brett Stalbaum, Carmin Karasic, Stefan Wray and Ricardo Dominguez developed the concept of electronic civil disobedience and specifically E-actions. Some of their early work was done in solidarity with the Zapatistas. EDT staged virtual sit-ins, for example, one against the Mexican government's website after the Acteal Massacre in Chiapas in 1997. They posed questions that used the "404 File Not Found" response to create elegant virtual installations.

"Is democracy found here?"

"Democracy is not found on this website."

"Is justice found here?"

"Justice is not found on this website."

Ad infinitum...

Around 2007, EDT re-grouped to include Elle Mehrmand, Micha Cárdenas, Brett Stalbaum, Ricardo Dominguez and myself—EDT 2.0, as we playfully call this regroup. We began to work on the *Transborder Immigrant Tool* (TBT).

Tiresias: Why is it called “theater”?

Amy: This is a good question that many have asked. Ricardo and Brett both speak eloquently about the question of performance, indeed about re-performance, in the case of the development of the Java applet that made possible the virtual sit-in that I just referenced. In that action, people participated via a very inefficient technology that nevertheless temporarily took down the Mexican government’s website in the name of “speaking truth to power.”

Tiresias: Tell us one story behind *Transborder Immigrant Tool*.

Amy: With TBT, we sought to think about ubiquitous technology and the question of the virtual as it intersects with the literal. The project utilizes cellphones. We have worked in collaboration with NGOs along the Mexico-U.S. border to rethink how we map landscape and how we use technologies to intervene in what is (and has been since 1994) a humanitarian crisis in the region.

I began to work on this project in 2008. Brett and Ricardo already had come up with the idea of repurposing cell phones to guide anyone—regardless of nationality—lost in the desert to potential water caches left by humanitarian aid organizations like Water Stations and Border Angels. Thirst is one of the leading causes of death in the region. We became involved in conversations about shifts in migration patterns and questions about human beings dying in the borderlands. Operation Gatekeeper, and the philosophy of “prevention through deterrence” behind it,

has created the unnatural disaster of treacherous places like the Devil's Highway in Arizona. There, the incredibly harsh climate, and the landscape act as policing mechanisms.

In my conversations with Brett and Ricardo and later with Micha and Elle and Brett's partner Paula Poole, we talked about all of the above, but also about the profile of the so-called "illegal alien," or undocumented entrant. We considered the ways in which the archetype of the "illegal alien" registers as subhuman. So, as we developed TBT, we were thinking, on the one hand, about how human beings need water, food, and certain kinds of information regarding survival in the desert. On the other hand, we found ourselves asking, *What about the intangible things that human beings need? What would it mean to say that poetry could function as sustenance, too?*

Somewhere in the middle of these discussions, Brett and Ricardo said, "Why don't you write some poems for the project?" I responded, "I don't know if I could write these poems. That seems like a really hard task." In the theoretical, it was a great idea. In practice, it became both a theoretical and pragmatic "problem." We discussed what it would look like to create different selections (like a playlist of poetry) for the project and what that poetry would sound like.

Tiresias: In your introduction to the poems, you speak of "dislocative media." What do you mean by this phrase and what role does it play in the project?

Amy: TBT definitely is in the tradition of locative media. Overwhelmingly, however, as Brett has taught me, locative media projects tend to be urban-based. So one of the first questions we found ourselves asking about TBT was, "what would it mean to 'dislocate' locative media work?"

In the locative media tradition, initially at least, people were doing a lot of storytelling projects where they would present information about very specific sites in cities. For instances, sites in Los Angeles would be hash-tagged and you could use your phone to hear the history of a specific street corner. The weight of the prosaic interested me here, but what about the poetic?

Tiresias: Can you tell us more about the process of writing the *TBT* poems?

Amy: I started to write a series of poems that were well received in museum contexts, however, after spending some time in the desert space, I came to the conclusion that I needed to populate the phones with a very different kind of poetic series. I am interested in visual poetics, concrete and experimental poetics, but I realized that these types of work that had animated my practice previously didn't fit this project's conceit. If I were walking the Devil's Highway without water, that kind of poetry might interest me, but also might not be what I'd immediately want to encounter. So I started to do research about landscape because what seemed most striking to me was how the rhetoric of the humanitarian crisis in question always circled back to the specificities of the environment.

I was in southern California at the time so I started to spend some time in desert locations, specifically in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (<http://www.borregospringschamber.com/abdsp/mission.htm>). Anza-Borrego is a critical contradiction: it is a state park where people go for recreational camping and off-trail hiking and driving, but it is also a place where many undocumented entrants end up dying on the U.S. side of the border. It represents an intersection of the recreational and military industry complexes. In the park, there are many border checkpoints and some travellers (not all, but some) don't realize they'd have an easier time navigating the park if they brought their passports with them. It's also

a place where NGOs water-cache. Water Stations and Border Angels go out there and leave barrels full of water jugs. The barrels are marked with flags. Meanwhile, other organizations and individuals sabotage those water caches by dumping or contaminating the water. Anza-Borrego is only one of many places of contradiction. In Arizona, a wildlife refuge doubles as a high traffic zone for undocumented entrants. Such zones inform my writing for TBT, repurposing it as map-making.

I read camping and military survival manuals to write the series of poems that eventually would become the series for the phones. I consulted a manual that had been issued by the Mexican government free-of-charge to would-be border-crossers. The manual—which the U.S. government asked its neighbor to stop distributing—is in Spanish and in the form of a graphic narrative, which raises questions about ‘our’ expectations of who will be crossing, what languages those crossers speak, and the range of their literacies. I did this research, then rewrote the TBT poems from scratch. The result was a series of twenty-four prose poems, one for each hour of a day.

This series is in conversation with the previous ‘museum’ series that I wrote for the project, but also functions independent of it. Now, I should note that I had worked previously with the prose poem, but I usually employed a lot more rhyme, punning, and visual play in that already expansive form. In contrast, I wanted the poems for the second series for TBT to be deceptively pared down like the landscape, to be filled with information useful in traversing it, but also to appear as ‘plain-spoken.’

The number twenty-four was key, too, because we were thinking about how the poems would function on the phones. We imagined that with not a lot of battery power, users wouldn’t want sound files that ran continuously, but rather discrete files that would sound off every hour, but also could be muted.

Tiresias: Could you tell us about the code, which begins the volume *[({ })]* *The Desert Survival Series/La serie de sobrevivencia del desierto* (bilingual edition), that is about to be published by the University of Michigan Digital Environments Cluster Publishing Series (coordinated by Tung-Hui Hu and John Cheney-Lippold)? In particular, we wonder, why does the code precede the poems?

Amy: Well, the code was actually written first and so this placement made sense to me. At one point we had it in the reverse order, but Brett is my collaborator and I wanted to honor the work he did to initiate this project.

Tiresias: Do you see a relationship between TBT's poetry and computer code, or even between poetry and computer code more generally?

Amy: Yes! In the case of TBT, I see a deep relationship between the poetry and the code, and I know that Brett does, too. We started to think that one couldn't function without the other and that in some ways, each explained or mirrored the other. Somewhere in the middle of the project, I began to imagine the code as part of the poetry and Brett reversed this formulation to read the poetry as its code. Ever since, I've seen the pair as code switching in TBT. For me, this involves acknowledging the amplitude of languaging in the project and beyond, of realizing that code functions as a language itself here and elsewhere. The poetry could be published disconnected in a book object, in a journal, or online, but the poetry and the code were meant to function together and to be paired, executable resources. Putting the code in the volume as such renders both more 'performative' in my mind.

Tiresias: Can you tell us more about the intended deployment of the poems and why that deployment had to be 'rewritten' or 'rescripted'?

Amy: We all strongly feel that when people say: “Well, the project failed” or “It didn’t get deployed” that, in fact, there was a very different kind of deployment of TBT that happened in 2010. Specifically, we’ve learned to read the project as ‘deployed’ into the general, continental conversation about immigration. This is a conversation that has gone in many directions over the years, and yet has remained, alarmingly, immobile. For a couple of very good reasons, we began to feel that it was impossible to deploy TBT as we initially had imagined (in *Casas del migrante* on the Mexican side of the border, for instance).

One, we were suddenly under investigation for committing a federal felony with the project. Two, the routes of human trafficking along the Mexico-U.S. border were so ensconced and territorial that to distribute the project without taking the magnitude of this informal economy into account would involve putting a lot of people at risk. So we started thinking about these two factors and arrived at what some might view to be the compromise of a question, “What’s the best we can do with this project right now?”

When an article was released on TBT that went viral, it was a very strange and awful experience in many ways because we received copious amounts of hate mail and three U.S. Congressional representatives requested that TBT and its creators be put under investigation. On the other hand, people were talking about the project, but not just about the project. For a brief moment, they were talking about border conditions, U.S. immigration policy, continental labor.

So, this summer (2014), when I was watching the news, border crossing was being described much more clearly as a humanitarian crisis nationally than in 2010 when we were working on TBT in earnest. In 2009-2010, many people in the NGO context were describing the border situation as a humanitarian crisis, but others were insisting: “That’s ridiculous! It’s not a humanitarian crisis, you’re blowing this

out of proportion." I think the rhetoric of "humanitarian crisis" just wasn't fully accessible, or in circulation. Reflecting on why it was available (specifically in the context of a relationship to the figures of Woman and Child, women and children) is a much longer conversation, though.

Tiresias: Could you tell us more about the role that the poems played in the political controversy and federal investigation of the project that you reference?

Amy: When TBT was put under investigation, people were more comfortable understanding the project as an art project when they understood that poetry was included in it. We hadn't understood ourselves that the poetry would function that way within the project until the investigation unfolded. It was very interesting to me to register people's varied reactions to the poems. I remember investigators asking me to read the poems to them for a couple of hours and asking me questions about lines from them. I was surprised by how closely they had listened to the poems! Perhaps they were imagining that the lines had additional meaning. Occasionally, they actually voiced such opinions and gave me feedback, too: "Well, I don't like that image" or "that poem doesn't make as much sense as this one does."

When I was talking to other people, say in poetry or academic communities, I found that there was a lot of second-guessing about how TBT would function and whether it was really viable. But for me, the whole project was a thought experiment that involved deeply engaging an issue of political significance, and also involved the difficult work of producing something collaboratively. I learned so much working on this project that I couldn't have learned by myself. In this regard, I'd also note that the poems also were more collaboratively oriented than other any other poems I've written.

Tiresias: In regard to the federal investigation, what law were you allegedly breaking and how did this figure into how the project was represented in the media?

Amy: Well, Brian Bilbray, Duncan Hunter, and Darrell Issa, the three Congressional representatives who asked that TBT be investigated, proposed that TBT and we might be in violation of Section 274(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. This section forbids the encouragement of undocumented entrance into the United States. The idea was that the project was not about an intervention in a conversation, but rather was going to be distributed to guide people crossing the border. As Brett often points out, one of the many things that was frustrating about this characterization of TBT was that it fails to take into account that anyone could just go to Wal-Mart and buy a much better phone or GPS system to guide her or him in overland navigation. Responses to these accusations, however, don't take into account how they also represented an attack on the university as a structure (as evidenced in the language of funding inquiry in the representatives' leaked letter to the UC Chancellor). The panic underlying the call for an investigation is as familiar as the repeating images of border panic.

At the time that I was working on TBT, I also was doing research in the newly opened inSITE archives (part of the Special Collections and Archives) in the University of California, San Diego, Library. inSITE was a border art installation festival or event that functioned for several years (NAFTA's years) in the San Diego/Tijuana corridor. What I found striking about the attacks on TBT were that they recycled the language of attacks on various border art projects from 1984 onward. For instance, there was a project by Judi Werthein, an Argentinean artist, that was included in the last instantiation of inSITE in 2005. For "Brinco," Werthein worked with *Casas del migrante* in Tijuana. She created prototypes of ideal shoes for crossing the border. They were called "Brincos" (from the Spanish

verb “brincar”) to pun on the idea of “jumping the border.” She distributed these shoes (which incidentally were manufactured in China) for free in shelters on the Mexican side of the border. On the U.S. side of the border, she sold them for over \$200 apiece in a high-end boutique. The shoes sported compasses, maps, images of the border saint Toribio Romo. These features were intended to make users think: “These could be good for walking in a desert environment.” But the right-wing media outlet’s coverage of the project—ultimately a thought-experiment, too—completely villainized “Brinco” and jeopardized its inclusion in *inSITE05*. And, the images that the right-wing media used of people trying to get over the border wall in this instance were almost, if not exactly identical, to the footage that was shown in critiques of our project!

To me, this was really interesting in terms of thinking a border “image environment” (to use the words of Roberto Tejada) and the aesthetics of immigration policy and control. I had been thinking a lot about questions like this in my academic research. At the time, I was writing about border art, trying to reimagine a periodization of it (most people date U.S./Mexico border art to 1984).

Tiresias: Are the *TBT* poems in conversation with some of those texts or works of art that you studied and wrote about?

Amy: Yes, *TBT* as a whole for me was and is in conversation with an archive of 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s work that will not quit my mind. I would tell my collaborators “Look at this! This happened in this time period and the language is recycled in the critiques of our project, in the outrage surrounding it!” Nothing seemed to have changed. I started to think about the U.S. Culture Wars because much of this border art overlapped with or catalyzed those skirmishes. People sometimes date the end of the Culture Wars to 1994, but, like some others, I think they’ve never ended. They’ve continued, and one of their

primary flashpoints remains the border region. So when we were contemplating all this, we realized that the media coverage of TBT had to be realized as a form of the project's deployment.

Working on border art produced in the San Diego/Tijuana region taught me to read the backlash against TBT along such lines. For instance, Louis Hock, David Avalos, and Liz Sisco had done a bus poster project in San Diego years earlier. *Welcome to America's Finest Tourist Plantation* (1988) challenged its viewers to think about undocumented labor in the borderlands region. The poster, which circulated on the back of city buses, featured three sets of hands juxtaposed with a faux advertising meme, a riff on the city's promotional sound bite at the time. *Welcome to America's Finest Plantation* outraged some residents, making them so angry that critical descriptions of the project eventually did not focus on the poster proper, but rather on the rhetoric surrounding the work's reception. The 'situation' created in that instance helped me to see that we of EDT 2.0 were doing something very similar with TBT, albeit by accident.

The other 'deployment' of TBT, that was happening conterminously, involved its incorporation into a museum and gallery circuit. I have a lot of ambivalence about this institutionalization of the work because even though we conceptualized it as an activist project, as artwork, I never expected it to receive the attention that it did in the art world. At one point, we lamented that once it got incorporated into things like the 2010 California Biennial, TBT's political efficacy was diffused. We didn't know if we could recuperate that political efficacy because it was suddenly neatly categorized or quarantined as 'only' artwork. Some of that happened initially with the "there's poetry in the project" reaction, but then there was also this process of incorporation by invitation. And, I'd note that process of incorporation isn't unlike the processes by which we are incorporated as graduate students or faculty into larger institutional structures. There is a way in which

certain kinds of commentary that we can offer might be diffused by this institutionalization. There is a way in which certain kinds of commentary can be furthered by it, too, though.

By this I mean—to return to TBT—that it’s not that we didn’t want to show the project because it does function rhetorically. At the 2010 California Biennial, for instance, there were six phones lined up, which ‘sounded’ off. One phone would play a poem and after the poem was done, another phone and poem would begin to speak. In that installation, both series of poems were presented and the poems included had been translated into ten languages. It was more of a “tapas version” of the project. There was Mandarin here, something in Portuguese there, and then the sounding off in English. I was comforted by both what I could and what I could not understand. I wanted no single viewer/listener of the project to be able to comprehend its meanings entirely. It was lovely to step into this almost immersive, lo-fi environment. Even though Elle and Micha recorded various individuals’ reading the poems in a sound studio, the recordings crackled on these cheap phones. I liked that they didn’t sound completely polished and finessed. And, I liked that I never had imagined anything quite like this for the project initially.

Tiresias: Do you think we could see the project in the form of a printed book as a type of *dislocative media* as well? How do you think the project’s various media forms have affected people’s responses to it?

Amy: Again, I would say yes with an exclamation point! In the same way that there was a dislocative effect and affect produced with the museum presentations that I’ve described, I think a printed book represents yet another very distinct mode of distributing the project. I think of TBT as a “conversation piece,” following the work of art historian Grant Kester. Kester locates certain recent contemporary artwork as intended to generate conversation. So for the

ten brief minutes of fame that the project enjoyed, maybe there was *one* person that thought: "Hmmm... What does that mean? How does that make me rethink immigration?"

I'd repeat that a lot of people in the university or museum context were cynical about the project's efficacy. Then, I met people in those contexts and beyond who had heard about or experienced TBT and responded to it on emotional frequencies as intense as those channeled by rightwing media outlets. I recall one woman, who spoke to me as she wept. She said, "This is very beautiful!" and "It doesn't matter to me if it even really works, the idea is what's most beautiful to me." I felt that people had a range of reactions to the project and that the most cynical readers of TBT were sometimes people that I couldn't have imagined as cynical readers beforehand. Many right-wing pundits took it completely seriously. They used extreme language and said things like: "It's going to dissolve the U.S. border" and its "poetry is destroying the nation." If I took a step back from the uproar, I found it very interesting to consider who took TBT seriously, and how and why they took it seriously. I sometimes thought that this really extreme sentiment that was expressed, even against the project, fascinated me most because it was coming from a place of passion that I myself had felt while collaborating on the work's production. I didn't politically agree with many of the diatribes directed against us and the work but I did "disidentify" with the passion behind those diatribes.

Tiresias: Do you think the medium or the materiality of the text (printed book, digital media) has an effect on its content or the way in which we read or will read it?

Amy: I do think that the medium, or the materiality of the text will have an effect. Listening creates a different experience and every voice we hear rewrites or 'translates' a given poem. Sometimes I hear poems and no longer recognize them. For instance, Elle read one where I had the sign for male and female in different combinations with just

a single musical note in the middle of this dense 'image.' Now, that poem doesn't make sense to me without hearing Ellie's reading of it. She performs "male, female, male, female, male, female, female, female" and, then, she sings a high note, interrupting, mutating the sequence's string of gender and genre sonically. Her interpretation of the work still startles me, changes how I read and understand the poem. I think of the poem as hers now, not as something that I wrote.

Tiresias: Could you tell us about the translation process? Do you believe the translation process changed the meaning or even your relationship to the original text?

Amy: I think of that gesture by Elle as a kind of translation that is different than the translations that I did with the two of you and the rest of the University of Michigan *Border Collective* (Francheska Alers-Rojas, Iván Chaar-López, Orquidea Morales), as well as Natasha Hakimi Zapata, Julieta Aranda, and Omar Pimienta. For me, my relationship with the text definitely changed after we all worked together and thought through the translations of these poems. I look back on that process as one in which we collaboratively rewrote the poems. The exchange—over the winter 2014 semester—was a gift from you to me. It sustained me during those long winter months!

Spivak has described translation as "the most intimate act of reading." I love that description of the process. Still, I suspect that when she wrote that she was describing the labor of the solitary translator. What does collective translational intimacy look like? What was happening in the process of dialoguing about the TBT poems felt distinct. Orquidea Morales and Omar Pimienta had begun this work the summer before and had laid at our metaphoric doorstep a complete working draft of the twenty-four poems in Spanish. There were other versions of some of these poems in Spanish floating around, too. We set out to streamline the translation. It happened as an extended conversation.

And, I feel like I never fully will own these poems again. And, that makes me happy! I even wonder if my name alone should be on them in English because this process felt so different than the writing processes behind both of my collections of poetry. I like that we can put all of our names on this book. It was really important to me that it wasn't one person working on them and it seems like it was useful to have multiple people talking with one another about word choice, ideas, et cetera.

Tiresias: *TBT* seems to have an instructional (one could perhaps say neutral) voice? Could you tell us about how you arrived at that tone?

Amy: Again, one of the ways that I have thought about how the poems function involves comparing the work they do to the work done by *TBT*'s code. The code is executable. Similarly, the poems are executable and, thus, they function as performative utterances. Instructions are performatives if the people who receive them enact the steps, procedures, recommendations described or proscribed.

I think that when I was writing and thinking about what kind of poems needed to be in this project, the question of whether something could be executable was always on my mind. I imagined that the poems ideally would operate like the code, laying out very specific directions or instructions. So if the code was intended to lead its users to a way station, I thought of the poems as directives, too.

Tiresias: What is it like to write poetry that emulates instructions, that attempts to remain "ideologically neutral" (to quote your introduction to the poems)?

Amy: In my brief essay about the poems, I place the phrase "ideologically neutral" in quotation marks because I believe that this is the fiction that we carry around about information. Technically, code is ideologically neutral. So is

technology, more generally. But when we think about the uses to which we put technology, the fiction of ideological neutrality evaporates. Similarly, these poems that I consider so “plain-spoken” generated a controversy because they were inscribed in—and, I’d argue on—a very specific context—that of their imagined deployment. And so, they prove a certain point about language and ideological neutrality: even our laundry lists can become ideologically charged under certain circumstances.

Similarly, the fiction of the desert as being empty or vacuous, as a blank slate for the strategy of “prevention through deterrence,” doesn’t hold up when we register the language of governmentality here that marks the desert as a policing instrument. This is why when I write about the poems, I think about other instances where landscape, which is often considered ideologically neutral, proves to be nothing of the sort. For example, as Camille Dungy points out in *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African-American Nature Writing*, for some African-American poets a tree is never just a tree; because it doubles as the rememory of a lynching. Alternately, the desert or the ocean in a Raúl Zurita poem becomes the placeholder of the dumping of the disappeared. The desert functions like this in the U.S. Southwest and the alteration of its meaning is temporally inflected; magnified after 1994.

Tiresias: Speaking of the year 1994, how would you say that these poems are in conversation with your critical work?

Amy: The intersection of these poems with my critical work definitely depends on the significance of the year 1994, which is the advent of NAFTA. This is also the year when Operation Gatekeeper is put into effect, and there are very clear shifts in the flows and routes of people, information, and goods as a direct result of both juridico-political “events.” Previously, there was the crackdown on the transportation of cocaine from Colombia in southern Florida

and the Caribbean. That crackdown was so effective that it shifted certain flows of illicit substances, redirecting them across the Mexican-U.S. continental corridor.

Peter Andreas writes about this extensively in a book titled *Border Games*, which has taught me a lot of that history. He is a political scientist and he addresses the relationships among the U.S. drug war, immigration policy and border control.

I write about artwork produced in the context of this socially dramatic restructuring of North America. Most people just think of the implementation of NAFTA as 1994, period. However, if we think of NAFTA as a period, like economists do, which is, to say, if we think of NAFTA's full 15 years of implementation as a period, then we can understand the gravity of its continued effects. In my forthcoming critical monograph *REMEX: Toward an Art History of the NAFTA Era*, I attempt this through close readings of artwork produced in Mexico City and the Mexico-U.S. border region. I suggest that my archive tracks shifts in how we've come to understand "greater Mexico" (what was once mapped as the U.S. Southwest and northern Mexico by Américo Paredes, but now encompasses Mexico and the United States, flowing into each other and becoming a border state of a different sort).

So that is what I'm really interested in and I am not coming at it from an ideologically neutral position in my critical writing about this archive either. This represents a formidable continental restructuring and it spawned various humanitarian crises.

To repeat, no one associates NAFTA with the year 2008, which marks the treaty's full implementation but also the explosion of narco-violence in Mexico. But, I want to insist that we periodize along such lines. For this particular region, 2008 does not simply signify global economic meltdown. The Mexican GDP had been rising for nearly the

whole NAFTA era, but only an elite few benefited and continue to benefit from Mexico as the new "Aztec Tiger."

Tiresias: Could you tell us about any of your upcoming projects?

Amy: I have a few future projects keeping me company. I'm laying out an expanded version of the *Transborder Immigrant Tool* volume that includes critical writing about the project. I'm writing about new Mexican cinema and I'm trying to write specifically about the figures of Woman and Child in this archive. For instance, in a recent essay, I address the films *Babel*, *Children of Men*, and *Pan's Labyrinth*. I imagine this book as three inter-connected essays. I'm also interested in greater Mexican concrete, visual, and digital poetics from the 1950s onward. Finally, these days I write haiku (in the plural and singular). I give myself fifteen minutes for each. The constraints of this form comfort me. I don't modify the haiku's 5-7-5 count; but embrace, indeed welcome, its parameters.