Parte / Part III: **Fronteras de género. Intersección, agencia y resistencia / Gender Borders. Intersection, Agency, and Resistance**

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Bordering Experiences

A Transnational Latin American Woman between Italy and Peru

Abstract: The chapter aims to explore the transnational Spanish-speaking Latin Americans' reflective construction of *bordering* by analysing the different forms of boundaries crossed by a Peruvian transgender woman who experienced back-and-forth migration to and from Italy in order to reveal the way she positions herself in the social space and how she makes sense of social encounters and conflicts in her experience of deterritorialization and relocation. Theoretical underpinnings and data analysis are grounded on the reflections developed in the field of Bordering Studies (Anzaldúa, 1987; Szary & Giraut, 2015; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss & Cassidy, 2019) about how bordering has redefined contemporary notions of citizenship and belonging by involving specific discourses and practices in different multiscalar and complex ways that can't be understood according to essentializing identities, nor just to binary categories based exclusively on class, gender, or geographical origin. For this same reason, the study will adopt an intersectional approach by analysing the agency and the resources to navigate between different and complex borders in the narrative of a transnational Latin American transgender woman. Through her discursive production regarding back-and-forth displacement between the centres and peripheries of the globe, I will discuss how, in spite of an idealistic construction of emerging and cross-border linguistic and discursive communities, people are not equally mobile.

Keywords: bordering, discourse analysis, Latin American migration, agency, transgender subjectivity

> Because I am in all cultures at the same time,
> alma entre dos mundos,
> tres cuatro, me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio.
> Estoy norteada por las voces que me hablan simultáneamente
> (Gloria Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 77)

1 Introduction

With these words, the Chicana feminist writer and activist Gloria Anzaldúa describes what she calls a 'struggle of borders', that is, *border identities* that cannot be enclosed within the essentialist categories of culture, gender, nation, or lan-

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guage but rather find themselves between the blurred borders of such categorisations. Starting from her own experience, Anzaldúa depicts the condition of all those subjects living among different geographical identities and cultural boundaries. These subjects constitute an array of social actors who, despite representing the majority of a late modern and global world, still have to face the *contradictions* of their condition ('me zumba la cabeza con lo *contradictorio*') and feel disorientated by the multiple voices that speak to them simultaneously ('*estoy norteda*[1] por las voces que me hablan *simultáneamente*'). From a poststructuralist perspective, complexity rules all human knowledge systems and social structures, and this is even more valid in the case of displaced subjectivities, that is, all those subjects who live mobility and transnationalism as founding experiences of their existence and whose lives float through borders of race, citizenship, gender, and language, as in the case of the subject of this contribution.

With this premise in mind, this chapter aims to explore the transnational Spanish-speaking Latin Americans' reflective construction of *bordering* by analysing the different forms of boundaries crossed by a Peruvian transgender woman who experienced back-and-forth migration to and from Italy in order to reveal the way she positions herself in the social space and how she makes sense of social encounters and conflicts in her experience of deterritorialization and relocation.

In the following sections, I will describe the Latin American diaspora in Italy, focusing on the circular dimension that migratory processes often take on, not only as one-way trips but also as back-and-forth routes. Physical mobility in space will be framed broadly considering the different forms of everyday boundaries enclosed in discourses and imaginaries that have redefined contemporary notions of citizenship and belonging. In line with this view, I will adopt an intersectional perspective. Such a perspective can be particularly clarifying in analysing, on the one hand, how crossing different kinds of borders in contemporary societies is a process subject to social inequality for those actors involved in migration processes, which can lead to more accentuated kinds of discrimination, and, on the other, the dynamics of agency and the construction of empowering identities that the social agents address by crossing different forms of bordering.

After pointing out the ethical and methodological aspects underpinning this research, the second part of the chapter is focused on analysing the reflective construction of bordering emerging from the narrative of the protagonist of the study. Finally, the conclusions summarise the most significant findings of the investigation.

1 To lose the north, being disoriented.

2 The Social Context

Milan and its surroundings are among the places with the highest concentration of citizens of Latin American origin in Europe, with registered populations of approximately 140,000 at the regional level and approximately 80,000 in the metropolitan area (ISTAT, 2022). The pull factors for Latin American migration to the area, and to Italy in general, include the new demand for skilled and less-skilled labours within a global-level restructuring economy since the dawn of the new millennium, as is the case of cleaning and domestic care for an increasing elderly population, or other forms of work, such as agriculture or construction, no longer filled by a local native population increasingly educated and wealthy. To this must be added a traditional presence in Italy of an informal economy, which has gradually become organised around irregular immigration; last but not least, the linguistic and cultural proximity that makes Italy feel much closer to the original context than other Northern European countries must be considered.

Peruvians and Ecuadorians are the most prevalent groups. More than 40,000 Peruvians are in the metropolitan area, 30,000 Peruvians are in the inner city, whereas there are approximately 32,000 Ecuadorians in the entire region and 21,000 Ecuadorians in Milan proper. Other prominent Latin American groups include Salvadorians (approximately 15,000 in the metropolitan area), Bolivians (approximately 11,000), Dominicans (approximately 7,000), Colombians (approximately 4,200), and Cubans (approximately 5,000). These figures, however, do not account for those migrants not enrolled in the official registers or those holding an EU passport as descendants of Italians, which is the case for many Argentinians and Uruguayans. Thus, the size of the Latin American population is expected to be higher than that indicated in the official figures.

An aspect to be noted is the fact that 62.1% of the Latin American population in Italy are women (ISTAT, 2022). As with many other minority groups, such as Ukrainians or Romanians, the feminisation of Latin American migration has to do with an increased demand for care work (Bettio, Simonazzi & Villa, 2006; Scrinzi, 2013). As suggested by many scholars (Marchetti & Scrinzi, 2011), this feminisation of care work uncovers how the interplay of gender and ethnic stereotypes often shapes the social and economic construction of migrant care labour. While on the one hand, the feminisation of migration seems to offer better opportunities for Latin American women to embark on autonomous migratory projects and to easily access the Italian labour market, on the other hand, their social mobility can be hindered precisely by the fixation of an essentialist representation of their presumed 'natural' and 'cultural' skills of caring otherness, derived from specific gendered and racialised features. The role of domestic caregivers of foreign origin who are easing the 'care deficit' in wealthy Global North countries is currently a

crucial social phenomenon (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2004). This is particularly evident in countries such as Italy or Spain, which a familistic welfare model characterises. As a matter of fact, the Italian term *badante* (from the Italian verb *badare*, i.e., 'to take care', 'to look after') refers to a reductionist view of caregivers of foreign origin who are required to perform paramedical attention as well as housekeeping tasks traditionally covered by Italian women at no cost, often in exchange for low wages and out of the social security system.

A reductionist and essential representation for several Latin American transgender women is also represented by the link between migration processes and the so-called 'sex industry' (Chimenti, 2010) in the Global North. It is no coincidence that the working identity of the protagonist of this story has been first articulated as a *badante* and then as a sex worker, despite the fact her ambitions were others.

The second aspect concerning the feminisation of Latin American immigration has to do with the development of 'transnational families', separated by boundaries and distances but tenaciously committed to keeping alive emotional ties and parental responsibilities. In particular, it is crucial to refer to the 'transnational mothering' identity (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Ávila, 1997) that characterises many Latin American women in Italy (Boccagni, 2012) as an experience that defines the cross-border and cross-time relationships between mothers who work and live in a foreign country while their children live in their country of origin, as in the case of the mother of the protagonist of the study.

Activating transnational family networks may imply foreshadowing a return to a 'natural' co-residential family arrangement, which, in practical terms, for many Latin American migrants, is equivalent to a return to the country of origin. Social relations and family changes are, in fact, key in migrants' return decisions, along with improved economic conditions in the host country and the country of origin (Koser & Kushminder, 2015).

The Latin American migratory experience in Italy must therefore be considered as a condition that is not always permanent, in which mobility and immobility plans must always be analysed in the light of an intersection of changing economic, social, personal, and emotional variables, such as wages, transnational family ties, age, and status. Moreover, while many migrants return voluntarily when their situations change, thousands of migrants can be subject to forced deportation, whether found to be illegally present in the EU. In 2019, there were 491,200 deportations, of which 23,000 were in Italy (EUROSTAT, 2020). For every case in question, it is also important to remember that even return migration is not always definitive. Returns to the country of origin may, in fact, cause difficulties in (re)adapting and (re)integrating since both the context of departure and the identity of those who return may have changed.

In the following sections, after presenting some theoretical underpinnings, I will focus on the narrative of a transnational Peruvian transgender woman in order to explore the types of borders she deals with in her experience of displacement between Latin America and Italy.

3 Theoretical Underpinnings

As stated in the introduction, the subject of this chapter is part of that category of displaced people whose lives are strongly delineated by borders of race, citizenship, gender, and language. Since its beginnings, the research agenda based on transnationalism has focused on the multiple cross-border links and interactions of individuals and groups in a new global space conceptually no longer marked by nation-state boundaries (cf Appadurai, 1997; Robinson, 2004, among others). In line with this perspective, scholars have focused mainly on the transformation from a world structured around the borders of the nation-state to a borderless system of free trade, financial transactions, transnational industrial production, and worldwide flow of goods, information, and investments, driven mainly by neoliberal policies (Sassen, 1998, Castells, 2000, among others). Nevertheless, this 'de-bordering' dynamic is contrasted by processes of 're-bordering' (Balibar, 2009) through the consolidation of territorial and legal boundaries enhanced to keep the Global South separated from the Global North. This dynamic is indeed contributing to making contemporary European borders increasingly differentiated. Alongside the diminution in the importance of physical frontiers within a supranational entity such as the EU is the awareness that securitized re-bordering still exists at the edge of national territories to better control flows of *external* people into the *internal* territories, leading whole countries to themselves become 'borderlands', especially those at the margins of the EU. As hinted by Balibar (1998), once countries had borders; now they are borders.

As a matter of fact, in recent years, specific literature in border studies, or 'borderities' (Szary & Giraut, 2015), has developed in the attempt to contrast the traditional construction of 'borders' as fixed lines with that of 'bordering' as a mobile and multifaceted dynamic which involves a wide range of 'ordering' and 'othering' processes that constitute not only particular projects of governance but also particular forms of belonging (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss & Cassidy, 2019). In this sense, bordering has redefined contemporary notions of citizenship and belonging by involving specific discourses and practices in different multiscalar and complex ways that must be analysed through an interdisciplinary perspective that goes beyond mere geo-political relations.

Indeed, we can observe how the processes of 'de-bordering' and 're-bordering' have also affected the sociolinguistic sphere, constituting an essential contradiction, especially for European language policies, ideally based on notions such as 'multilingualism' and 'language diversity' (Gal, 2012). This dynamic is particularly noticeable for that category of bilingual and multilingual transnational speakers, such as refugees, migrants, etc., for whom the regulation of citizenship is strongly tied to language ideologies grounded on homogeneity and standardisation categories in which subjects are placed 'inside' or 'outside' the ability to master the ideal linguistic and citizenship performance. As evidence of this, many scholars in the past few years have observed the extent to which late modern societies are perpetuating modern reactions to postmodern language phenomenology (cf Heller, 2007; Blommaert, 2009, among others). As such, the notion of the *border* has mainly been addressed in the field of poststructuralist sociolinguistics as a vital tool in investigating the blurred boundaries between 'named languages' such as English, Spanish, etc., especially in late modern times when mobility is more diverse and complex, and speakers are more likely to move dynamically across linguistic systems.

The notion of the border is also at the core of the relationship between transnationalism and sociolinguistic identity since the place *where* we are inevitably conditions *who* we are, our habitus, our forms of agency as individuals, as well as our behaviours in a set of social constraints. Through transnational mobility and border-crossing processes, the sociolinguistic identity is subject to change across space and time but still within dynamics embedded in a global arena. In this regard, by moving and changing across space and time, indexical orders, namely all these ideological and semiotic processes that link specific linguistic patterns to social categories (Silverstein, 2003; Eckert, 2008), are part of this dynamic of de-bordering and re-bordering insofar as what is accepted in one sociolinguistic context may not be accepted in another or can even be used as an ideological tool in political and economic processes for self-legitimising, de-legitimising or racialising the other (Urciuoli, 1996; Rosa & Flores, 2017). Despite this, as we will see through the analysis, what remains unchanged is that the stratification in which the orders of indexicality are organised is always linked to a hierarchy and to power relations that can shift from one context to another.

As border-crossing is more diverse and complex, so is the identity of displaced subjects (Anzaldúa, 1987). This same approach implies adopting an intersectional situated gaze to study human mobility and its linguistic implications (Yuval-Davis, 2015). By keeping the focus on the different distribution of material and symbolic capital between the Global North and Global South, an intersectional perspective allows us to consider the multiple-dimensional categorisation of the lived experience of the subject involved in this study. In this sense, the no-

tion of coloniality (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2010) exemplifies how the boundaries between the Global South and the Global North are constantly de-territorialised and re-bordered through global migration processes.

In other words, adopting an intersectional situated perspective allows us to consider alternative epistemologies for macro social categories and the role that agency, framed as the ability to navigate between different and complex identities and social meanings, can play as a consciousness and awareness of a non-dualistic perception and practice, such as theorised in Anzaldúa's concept of 'new border identity'. By analysing the internal and external bordering scapes described by the social agents involved in crossing boundary processes, we can observe how they construct and reconstruct the imagery of borders and their 'claims for belonging' or distinctions through their discursive positioning and reflexive statements.

Before moving into the analytical part, making a few remarks about the concept of agency is helpful. Although often seen as a manifestation of the individual, recent sociolinguistic literature emphasises the bidirectional nature of agency, i.e., as the result of mutual conditioning. At the same time, the agency has to be understood as situated and distributed, i.e., shared with other social actors through a network of relationships in which different subjects (human or even no human) interact rather than acting individually and autonomously (Bonnin, 2021). Crossing the borders of race, citizenship, gender, and language is a concrete and discursive manifestation of agency that cannot but be considered in the light of its collective nature (Bürki & Nandi, 2023). An example of this is the importance of the body as a site of communication from which to express one's decision to cross gender boundaries as a form of activism and self-identification, or in the use of linguistic forms of gender inclusion, the collective use of which can have a profound impact on changes in language policies (Parish & Hall, 2020).

This same argument can be applied to the concept of *voice*, which we will refer to as a recognizable discourse performed by an individual, but still rooted in a broader network of social discourses (Bonnin, 2021).

Given these theoretical considerations, in the following paragraphs, I will focus on what a transnational transgender Latin American woman factually mobilises through her mobility in the space and whether and to what extent she manages to cross the borders of race, language, and gender through her geographical displacement.

4 Methodology

The data collection for this study is grounded on the narrative analysis of the displacement and relocation experience of a Peruvian transgender woman who encountered processes of migration to Italy as well as its counterpart, the return to her country of origin. Data reported in this chapter were collected in Lima between February and March 2019. Before presenting the storyteller, a few remarks should be made about the objectives and reasons for adopting a narrative-based methodology.

According to the approach that recognises narrative both as a type of discourse and as a social and semiotic practice (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008), storytelling can be considered a remarkable meaning-making practice, especially in research focused on identifications and representations by racialised or minoritised groups, such as migrants or, as in this case, queer migrations (Luibhéid & Cantu, 2005). Indeed, storytelling can shed light on how transnational subjects and communities experience processes of uprooting and diaspora, as well as how social identities are displayed (De Fina & Baynham, 2005; De Fina & Tseng, 2017). In this light, storytelling can also be a valuable emotional device to express agentive or passive positioning through discursive and linguistic practices (Relaño Pastor & De Fina, 2005; Relaño Pastor, 2014). Language, both in its 'performance' or 'encoding' dimension (Duranti, 2004), can be, in fact, a significant indicator of agency concerning social space.

From this perspective, the narrative-based methodology is considered an excellent tool for capturing the different intersectional bordering processes that otherwise would not be possible to frame since it allows not only the exploration of the multi-layered forms of borders displaced people face but also the dynamics of empowering identities they can enable. Being at the core of the intersection of social power and language, the way action and agency are represented in discourse can help us understand how social actors position themselves in society and the roles they choose to accept or reject within given social orders.

The ethnographic data are grounded on biographical storytelling and backed up by participant observation and conversational narratives. More specifically, I drew on life history interviews (Atkinson, 1989) as an active narrative performance through which informants' personal lived experiences are made explicit and rationalised and which enables the activation of emotional devices that trigger deep subjectivation and reflexivity processes about their condition both as individuals and as speakers embedded in transnational contexts.

For this study, I chose to focus on a story that, within the research I have dedicated to transnational Latin American communities in Italy over the last few years (Bonomi, 2018, 2019), seemed to me to be significant and worth making

available to others. Specifically, I was interested in hearing the voice of a woman who, by crossing the borders of her own country to enter – like many other transnational Latin American women – the circuit of care work in the Global North, dealt with crossing many other social borders.

I came into contact with her through mutual acquaintances, and since the first moment, she has been willing to share her story with me. She also agreed to involve her family; often, the meetings took place at her home, including her sisters and mother, to create the collective story. Due to lack of space, their direct voices will not be reported, but they participate as necessary agents in the network of actions undertaken and narrated by Alexandra.

The reason why she agreed to let me into her world in Lima lies, first of all, in her spontaneous openness to sharing her story. As we will see later, despite all the odds, she shows pride and activism towards her life experience through her narrative.

Regarding my relationship with Alexandra,[2] forcibly repatriated from Italy, my identity has also been associated with that of an Italian citizen who brought her things she didn't have time to catch up due to her immediate repatriation. I also represented the one that could have helped her to unravel the labyrinth of bureaucracy to appeal against repatriation that my privilege as a white-European woman grants me. A privilege that did not, however, help her to intervene in her mobility.

This same privilege cannot be disassociated from the methodological reflexivity bound to the resources I will use in the next section to interpret the story (Ochs & Capps, 2001; Davies, 2008; Patiño Santos, 2019). This method involves not only revealing the researcher's agenda in terms of our role and positioning in the field but also recognising the dialogical and co-constructed nature of narratives, which are seen as 'storying and storied Selves' (Sabaté i Dalmau, 2018). Every research is ideologically situated, and so is the identity, the positioning, and the principles that we bring to the fore as researchers by 'drawing on the voice' of our informants in academic settings. As a matter of fact, according to the majority of studies focused on narrative and identity analysis (cf Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; De Fina & Perrino, 2011), far from being natural contexts, interviews are situated in communicative arenas in which identities assumed by all participants are interactionally co-constructed through the social encounter. In this sense, along with the importance of addressing issues of self-reflexivity as an interviewer, it is also essential to emphasize the reflexivity entailed by the protago-

2 This is a pseudonym.

nist of the paper and her strong capacity for self-examination and self-absorption regarding her own emotions and experiences.

In short, from a narrative perspective, biographical storytelling represents a privileged space from where to observe the interplay between cross-bordering and sociolinguistic processes.

5 Data Analysis

As previously mentioned, the storyteller is a 27-year-old woman of Peruvian origin who migrated to Italy in 2012, where she first worked as a *badante* – as her mother and aunt – and later devoted herself to sex work. Due to the severe discrimination she faced for this job, Alexandra also experienced a time in France where she felt that transgender policies were more advanced in terms of employment. However, things didn't go well, and she had to return to Italy.

At the time of our meetings in her house in El Agustino, Lima, at the beginning of 2019, she had returned to Peru for two months following forced repatriation because of her undocumented status in Italy.

The languages Alexandra speaks are Spanish and Italian, which are often performed through translanguaging practices.

Alexandra's migration story is a story of a family migration chain. Originally from the Ayacucho area, Alexandra's family first migrated from the Andes to Lima. Then, due to economic reasons, in the early 2000s, her mother decided to migrate to Italy, where she had the support of a sister already settled in Milan. Like many other Latin American transnational mothers who migrate to Italy, her mother left her in Lima at the age of 11 with her 7-month-old sister from a different father. In Italy, Alexandra's mother, who worked as a caregiver for older people, had another daughter from a relationship with a Peruvian man living in Milan. After five years in Italy, because of a problematic relationship, the desire to be reunited with her daughters and capitalise on the resources gained from her work in Italy, in 2008, Alexandra's mother decided to return with her youngest daughter to Peru, where she set up a small motorbike taxi business, which unfortunately did not turn out well.

Meanwhile, Alexandra, who had taken care of her younger sister together with her grandmother, despite her strong interest in continuing her studies in high school, had to interrupt them and work firstly as a waitress and then as an employee due to insufficient income. Furthermore, during her adolescence, she began to clash with her own gender, at that time masculine, and her sexuality, and she began to experience a strong sense of frustration in her relationship with

her evangelical family, which was unwilling to accept her sexual identity. The transition process had not yet begun, but at this point in 2012, the family encouraged her to travel to Italy when she was 20 to make her change and, as she described through the following words, to 'get back to normality' ('iba a regresar a la normalidad entre comillas').

Example 1
A: por eso que mi tía decidió hacerme viajar / que yo supuestamente en Europa iba a cambiar / iba a ser diferente / iba a regresar a la normalidad entre comillas // entonces yo viajé / viajé con la intención de seguir mis estudios aunque sea / ya bueno // porque yo ya sabía que no podía estudiar / por el simple motivo que allá cuando yo viajé el acceso a Europa para los peruanos no era fácil ¿no? / tener documentos no era fácil // entonces dije / bueno aunque sea un año lo perderé trabajando en lo que sea / mi tía me iba a ayudar a encontrar un trabajo como badante // entonces dije "voy a trabajar / voy a juntar el dinero que mi tía me ha prestado para el viaje" / que eran seis mil euros / "le voy a pagar la deuda / y me voy a informar para estudiar / voy a ver cómo puedo hacer para tener los documentos / hacer las cosas tranquilamente y seguir mis estudios"[3]

Alexandra's voice reveals the emotional investment of her journey in terms of both geographical and social mobility, especially concerning her aspiration to continue her studies, while revealing many aspects of solid immobility, first of all, the debt incurred to travel and cross borders, and the awareness that the same document can have a very different value when considered in one part of the world or the other: 'porque yo ya sabía que no podía estudiar [. . .] tener documentos no era fácil'. The discursive resources she deploys to evoke emotions are especially clear in utterances disclosing negative and dishearting semantics like the repetition of 'no era fácil' ('it was not easy'), the repetition of the conjunction 'aunque' to indicate a minimal expectation, and the use of the verb 'perder' fol-

3 A: That's why my aunt decided to make me travel / since I was supposed to change in Europe / I was going to be different / I was going to go back to normality in quotes // so I left Peru / I left Peru with the idea of keeping on studying even if / well // I already knew that I couldn't study there / for the simple reason that when I went to Italy entering to Europe was not easy for Peruvians right? / it was not easy getting the documents // so I said / even if I will lose one year working in whatever / my aunt was going to help me find a job as a caregiver // so I said "I'm going to work / I'm going to save the money that my aunt lent me for the journey" / six thousand euros / "I'm going to pay her back / and I'm going to gather information for my studies / I'm going to see how I can do to get documents / do things quietly and keep on studying"

lowed by 'trabajando en lo que sea', which conveys an unfavourable and compensatory framing. Through these discursive elements, Alexandra's reflexivity sheds light on the difficulties that the experience of crossing-border and mobility can acquire for those who, like her, travel from the margins to the centre. According to an intersectional and decolonised perspective, through Alexandra's testimony, we can indeed observe how in her case, the semantics of *mobility* also reveals its opposite meaning, that is, immobility for those who, going from the margins (the Global South) to the centre (the Global North), do not enjoy the same rights and symbolic capital as those who de facto 'belong' to the centre. In Italy, despite the wish to study, Alexandra, in fact, starts working as a caregiver for older people, alternating with her aunt, who, meanwhile, as she explains in the following fragment, tries to influence her transgender identity. In this fragment in which she is recounting the experience of crossing the national border, the difficulties of other stratified borders begin to arise:

Example 2

1. A: llegué a Charles de Gaulle / a París // y de allí viajé a Milano / a Linate // llegué / los controles los llevé en París / porque es en el primer país / en el primer estado al que llegas / los controles migratorios / y luego en Italia no / no hubo otros controles / al menos por mi fortuna // luego mi prima me vino a recoger después de dos horas que estaba esperándola en el aeropuerto / no se imaginaban / no se esperaban que iba a llegar / que por los documentos no iba a pasar / entonces no se imaginaban // yo llamé cuando estuve en el aeropuerto de Linate yo le dije "ya llegué" / mi tía llamó a su hija y su hija me vino a recoger a Linate / ehm / me saludó me / me / fue bonito:: cuando yo llegué a la ca- / al trabajo de mi tía porque mi tía trabaja como badante / yo llegué a su trabajo / mi tía ya estaba enterada de cómo me comportaba / del modo de vestirme mío en ese entonces y lo que hizo fue deshacerse de mi maleta / de las cosas que yo tenía
2. M.: ¿sí?
3. A: sí / de la poca ropa que yo tenía en mi maleta y quiso / me compró poco a poco ma me compró / al menos un poco de cambio / y yo la ayudaba un poco cuidando al anciano / al señor anciano donde ella trabajaba / al inicio
4. M.: ¿qué ropa te compraba?
5. A: ropa normal supuestamente[4] [risas] / ropa ancha / cosas así / que yo no me veía / pero ya me parecía un sueño haber llegado / haber llegado allá // enton-

4 Men's clothing.

ces / ¿cómo se llama? / dije / no me importa / en ese momento yo llegué / estaba en otro país / mi sueño era haber llegado bien / haber llegado a Europa y todo lo demás / entonces como que lo dejé pasar esa situación // y a los dos meses yo trabajaba cuidando ese anciano / yo le ayudaba / y ella dos días a la semana trabajaba para la hija del señor limpiándole la casa / entonces los días que se iba ella para la hija del señor / me quedaba yo cuidándole a su papá / hasta que después de tres meses una prima mía me ayudó a encontrar un trabajo como badante / de los cuales si estás sin documentos a veces te explotan / a mí me pagaban quinientos euros

6. M.: ¿al mes?
7. A: al mes[5]

As we can observe in example 2, the initial part of the narrative is mainly focused on successfully entering Europe, emphasising the experience of crossing the borderland, highlighted by the repeated use of the word 'control' three times. The journey's difficulties halt with a joyous emotional arrival at the final destination, expressed by the reminiscence of a sweet feeling when meeting her cousin at the airport ('fue bonito'), followed by a long pause.

It is noteworthy that, although the narrative primarily revolves around her arrival in Italy, Alexandra begins to discuss the imposition of clothing that contradicts her identity, introducing the gender issue at this point. As a matter of fact, there is a juxtaposition between a sense of mobility, portrayed through discursive

5 1. A: when I get to / to mum aunt's work since my aunt worked as a care giver / I reached her place of work / she already knew I how was behaving / how I was dressing at that time and what she did wast getting rid of my suitcase / of all my stuffs

2. M: did she?

3. A: yes / she get rid of the few clothes I had in my suitcase and she wanted to / she bought / step by step but she bought me a change of clothes / and I helped her caring for the old man / the old man she was working for / at the beginning

4. M: what kind of clothes did she use to buy to you?

5. A: normal stuff [laugh] / large clothes / something like that / that I didn't see myself with it / but just being there for me was a kind of dream / getting safe there // so / how can I say it? / I said / I don't mind / at that moment I arrived / I was in an other country / my dream was getting safe to Europe and so on / so I let it go // and after two months I was working for that old man / I was helping her / and twice a week she used to work for the old man'd daughter cleaning her house / so the days she was working at the daughters' home / I used to care for her dad/ until that after three months a cousin helped me finding a work as care giver / of which if you are undocumented sometimes you can be exploited / me I was paid five hundreds euros

6. M: for month?

7. A: for month

elements conveying emotions strongly exciting –oriented by the repetition of the lexical pair 'sueño' and 'haber llegado'– and the immobility experienced through the enforcement of clothing unlike her gender identity, along with reparative evaluations such as 'lo dejé pasar en ese momento'. From a discourse perspective, after briefly mentioning the topic, she effectively shifts the focus to her job details until I ask her to return to discussing her struggles with clothing or to introduce a new identity issue, precisely the challenges of being undocumented. This minimisation is reinforced through the frame underpinning the cisgender category as *normal*. The use of this frame effectively appears both in the previous example ('iba a regresar a la normalidad entre comillas') and in this fragment, where Alexandra refers to the 'normal' clothes imposed by her aunt. In both cases, the framing of normality is mitigated by the expressions 'entre comillas' or 'supuestamente', indicating a form of internalisation of the framing, although counterbalanced by the agency conveying a dissociation from the mainstream semantics.

Alexandra's voice reveals how the symbolic relation she establishes with the new place ('mi sueño era haber llegado bien'), considered by many the excellent opportunity for social mobility, also clashes with a reality discursively constructed as particularly harsh for that category of subjects identifiable as 'undocumented' ('si estás sin documentos a veces te explotan / a mí me pagaban quinientos euros'). Moreover, it's noteworthy that the category of *undocumented* is highlighted by an external embedded evaluation (Labov, 1972) in this narrative stage. However, it remains still marginal in comparison to what will emerge later regarding the intersection of undocumented and transgender identities, as we can see more clearly in the following section. In this part of the narrative, the emphasis on gender marginality begins to emerge, as displayed by internal evaluations related to her personal experience, along with the active efforts to mobilise her work situation. The topic will then be developed further in the storytelling.

Through her agentive ability to challenge difficulties, Alexandra manages to find a job as a *badante* while at the same time showing vital reflexivity, since although she knew she was going to be exploited, she still decided to be an independent woman. In this case, we can see how the agency is not entirely an individual manifestation of the self, but rather the product of a network of collective agencies made up of communicative repertoires and social practices, which enables her to fit into a working setting constructed collectively by those who have previously crossed the borders of the Global North.

While her mother, once again seeking her fortune in Europe with the whole family, is unable to leave Latin America, Alexandra in Italy ultimately defines her gender identity at the age of 23. At this point we can see clearly her agency thanks to the achievement of crossing the border of gender against all the difficulties.

The following words display the pain of trying to cross such an intricate border as that of a migrant with a new gender identity:

Example 3
A: [. . .] tuve una vida muy difícil allá y la tuve aquí / y la sigo teniendo aquí / entonces / yo quisiera de verdad que // no sé encontrar una solución para todo esto [. . .] // mira / lo de mi sexualidad ha empeorado toda mi vida / prácticamente es que ha empeorado toda mi vida // porque no he sido aceptada aquí [in Lima] por mi familia // allá [in Italy] haberme aceptado por como soy me ha traído complicaciones / porque allá sin documentos / vistiendo cómo tú eres no encuentras un trabajo / nadie te quiere ayudar / nadie te quiere dar un trabajo por lo que eres / porque vienes discriminada[6]

Through these words, Alexandra's emotions reveal how if, on the one hand, crossing the border of gender becomes a liberation, on the other hand, this same liberation becomes an obstacle as a transgender and migrant subject both in her family of origin ('no he sido aceptada aquí por mi familia'), permeated by a sexist culture, and in Italy, where having at the same time a migrant and a queer identity indexes racialised features and is thus a source of discrimination. These emotions are displayed through the repeated alternation between 'aquí' and 'allá' to make it clear how, in her case, gender immobility has not been dependent upon geographical mobility. Despite the geographical changes, crossing the gender boundary remains a complex challenge under given identity traits. As a matter of fact, it's noteworthy to observe how Alexandra's emotions about the change of gender identity are transformed across time and space: the idea of finding herself in a more accepting society than the one she comes from clashes with a reality of discrimination. In that regard, the repeated use of sentences such as 'ha empeorado toda mi vida', a lexicon with troubling semantics ('vida muy difícil', 'me ha traído complicaciones') or the reiteration of the verbal phrases 'no he sido aceptada aquí / allá haberme aceptado. . .' allow us to clearly understand the weight of intersectionality in the mobility processes for many queer subjects who try to cross the social and geographical boundaries. Through her voice, we can see how embodying a queer identity does not have the same value for everyone at the same time and in the same space; indeed, quite the opposite. Alexandra's reflex-

6 A: yes:: // look / the matter of my sexuality screwed up all my life / it basically screwed up all my life // because I havn't been accepted by my family // and there accepting me as I am It brought me problems / since there / for being undocumented / for dressing as you are you can't find any work / nobody wants to help you / nobody wants to give a work for what you are / because you are discriminated.

ive construction of undocumented transgender identity exemplifies well how for queer people, social mobility or immobility is strongly tied to the interplay of all identity features ('porque allá sin documentos / vistiendo como tú eres no encuentras un trabajo. . .vienes discriminada'), appearing closely linked to a neocolonial episteme, in which the border of gender is made more uncrossable for those who find themselves having to navigate the boundaries constantly deterritorialised and re-bordered through global migration processes between the Global South and the Global North.

The burden of intersectional issues becomes so heavy that Alexandra tries to open a new life path in France in the hope of finding better opportunities, as reflected in her words:

Example 4
A: porque sabía que allá me podían ayudar por mi estado de salud[7] / por mi situación migratoria / podía tener documentos / podía estudiar / podía hacerme una vida / como que veía una alternativa a mi / a toda mi situación que no le veía salida[8]

The following words reflect the emotions related to this new attempt to cross various kinds of borders (gender, social mobility, language) at the same time, experienced by Alexandra in France:

Example 5
A: entonces yo en Francia tenía la posibilidad de trabajar para Air France / de trabajar para esta gran compañía / participé / aparte de trabajar voluntariamente para la asociación de ayuda para las personas trans / ehm / fui a una conferencia / y en una de esas conferencias / en esta conferencia que era para la compañía Air France y para la compañía Orange se trataba sobre personas transgénero que trabajaban dentro de estas grandes compañías // yo cuando fui y vi personas como yo / como que me aumentó la autoestima / pensé "entonces lo puedo lograr" / porque yo trabajaba para una compañía aérea y ya tengo la base / justo lo que me dijeron en la otra asociación / "tú tienes la base para poder entrar tranquilamente / tienes que perfeccionar tu idioma" / el francés lo tenía que perfeccionar /

7 HIV positivity.
8 A: Because I knew that they could help me there because of my health status / because of my immigration status / I could get documents / I could study / I could get a life / I could finally see an alternative to my / to my whole situation which I hadn't ever seen before.

me inscribí al curso de francés de / del comune de París y / y ya estaba estudiando / me iba a estudiar francés en la municipalidad y estaban yendo las cosas bien hasta que sufrí estos ataques por parte de personas islámicas y africanas [. . .] hasta que quisieron crear un bulling ¿no? conmigo[9]

The narrative construction relating to the Parisian period brings out once again Alexandra's agency. Action verbs such as 'participé', 'trabajar voluntariamente', 'fui y vi', or 'me aumentó la autoestima' are used as agency markers in her attempt to carve out a worthy space for herself, allowing the hope of a victorious professional, social, and identity mobility to emerge, which only needs to be complemented by the appropriation of the local linguistic capital in order to be fully achieved. The last effort to finally achieve her mobility goal, as suggested by her association mates, is to learn French, the symbolic capital indexing the full integration. The balance between individual and external actions (such as in 'me dijeron. . .') demonstrates the collective character of agency, which must be understood not only as an expression of the self, but as the fruit of a series of previous transgender struggles that made Alexandra's individual action possible.

Alexandra reports working actively to acquire the language capital, displaying her willingness to cross what she assumes is the final border. This goal, however, is hindered by yet another border, the harassment caused by other displaced subjects that prompts her to leave France and return to Italy. This is just another demonstration of the weight that embodying many marginal identities at a time wields in queer migrants' lives.

After returning to Italy, Alexandra keeps fighting with her immobility from social, economic, and gender perspectives. Nonetheless, her narrative reveals a strong agentiveness and reflexivity on the condition of transgender migrants, leading her to even intervene during a large demonstration, as proudly stated in this excerpt, in which the use of the first-person singular stands out, followed by proactive and dynamic statements:

9 A: in France I had the opportunity to work for Air France / to work for this great company / I participated / a part from working as a volunteer for an association in support for trans people / uhm / I went to a conference / and in one of those conferences / the focus of those conferences for Air France and Orange were trans people working for those big companies // when in one of those conferences I saw people like / my self-esteem kind of grow up / I thought "I can do it" / because I was working for an airline and I have gota ll the grounds / exactly what I was told by the other association / "you have the profile for easily get in / you just need to improve the language" / I needed to improve my French / I enrolled in a French course / of Paris municipality / and I was working / I was working French in the municipality and things were going well until I got assaulted by some islamic and african guys [. . .] traying to bullying me

Example 6
A: y en ese entonces yo había hecho el discurso para el Milano Pride ¿no? / hablando y abogando por los derechos de las personas trans y todo lo demás / de la vida que me había tocado vivir / de la discriminación y todo // o sea / yo cuando me acerqué a la questura [. . .] al señor policía / yo le dije "mire / yo le voy a decir las cosas claras como son" / digo / yo soy una persona que / ehm / eso era en 2018 / diciembre 2018 / que hasta hace poco he hecho un discurso delante de 20.000 personas / delante del sindaco de Milano / y:: para tratar de ver el modo de cómo solucionar el problema de las personas trans / de que encuentren un trabajo honesto / y que no hagan un cierto tipo de vida porque simplemente son condicionados a hacer ese tipo de vida / de que puedan ser ayudadas para que puedan tener un tipo de vida normal / una reinserción laboral[10]

In the field of discourse studies, agency represents a crucial element in that language itself becomes a form of statement or representation of causality or responsibility, not only on a grammatical level through the expression of linguistic patterns such as active or passive tense or transitivity structures but also through other socio-semantic categories of exclusion or inclusion (cf Van Leeuwen, 2008). As we can see in this fragment, through the repeated use of 'yo' followed by active verbs such as 'yo había hecho el discurso', 'yo me acerqué', 'yo le dije', 'yo soy', etc., Alexandra displays deep reflexivity as a storyteller involving the ability to reflect critically and realistically on her life events, as well as acknowledging the way her personal voice can inform us about collective claims. Again, it is helpful to consider the agency's role as an interconnected network of social voices in which participants define and condition each other.

Despite this, Alexandra's physical mobility efforts are interrupted by Italy's harsh migration policies at that time. Following a legal dispute with another sex worker, she is summoned to the Milan Police Headquarters, where she is detained for her undocumented status and forcibly repatriated to Peru at the beginning of 2019, where she joins her family in El Agustino, Lima, remaining with the

10 A: in the meanwhile I made my speech at Milan Pride right? / talking about trans rights and so on / of the life I had to lived / of the discrimination and so on // so / when I reached the police headquarter I told to the policeman "look / I'll tell you the truth" / I say / I'm a person that / uhm / this was in 2018 / december 2018 / that recently made a speech in front of 20.000 people / in front of Milan major / and:: trying to see what it can be done to overcome problems affecting trans people / how to find an honest job / how preventing them from living a certain way of life just because they are affected by this kind of life / how to help them to have a normal life / a reintegration in the labour market

hope of returning someday to Europe. The repatriation to Peru implied for Alexandra the re-crossing of several borders, first and foremost sexism, transphobia, and socio-economic hardship, which she had repeatedly tried to challenge through her transnational mobility experience. Nevertheless, she did not abandon the project to start again and to keep challenging the different boundaries ahead of her.

In short, the analysis of Alexandra's narrative is illuminating as it shows the way she navigated different kinds of borders, how she managed to overcome them, and above all, how she accounted for her own moves through her own agency and reflexivity. In this sense, her narrative has proved to be a valuable voice, especially for describing the experience of crossing all those borders that mark the boundary between the margins and a supposed centre in the era of global mobility.

6 Conclusion

The chapter has aimed to explore the reflective construction of bordering described by a Peruvian transgender woman who experienced processes of displacement between Latin America and Italy in order to investigate how she, as many other Latin American speakers, navigate the experience of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, as well as the different kinds of borders established by the neoliberal order. Starting from the theoretical underpinning of *border*, I've sought to explore its intrinsic meaning, directly analysing the voice of a protagonist of contemporary diasporas whose life is strongly delineated by borders of race, ethnicity, citizenship, gender, and language. Due to her ability to rationalise the experience, Alexandra's story has proved to be particularly suitable to adopt a perspective explicitly based on the notion of 'borderities'. Her narrative has shown that boundaries go beyond mere geo-political relations, involving different forms of belonging or exclusion, delineated by the demarcation line maintaining a diverse distribution of symbolic material between the Global North and the Global South. This boundary is grounded on the interdependence of co-existing identities (race, gender, social class, linguistic capital, etc.) whose indexical meaning is related to the interlocked system of oppression and social inequality derived from the interplay of such multi-layered features. As a matter of fact, the narrative has disclosed the weight of intersectionality in the mobility processes for many queer subjects who try to cross different kinds of borders at the same time. Alexandra's reflexive construction of undocumented transgender identity exemplifies well how for queer people, the tension between a sense of social mo-

bility and immobility is strongly tied to the interplay of all identity features appearing closely linked to a neo-colonial episteme, in which the border of gender is made more uncrossable for those who find themselves having to navigate the boundaries constantly de-territorialised and re-bordered through global migration processes between the Global South and the Global North. In this sense, her story exemplifies well how the semantics of *mobility* also reveals its opposite meaning, that is, immobility for those who, going from the margins to the centre, do not enjoy the same rights and symbolic capital as those who de facto 'belong' to the centre.

In spite of everything, however, Alexandra's story also reveals a voice that yearns for change. In the attempt to overcome and reproduce a binary and marginalised dimension of oppressed identities, the choice of reporting her narrative is part of the effort to consider the resistance to macro social categories and the role played by agency, framed as the ability to navigate between different and complex identities, such as theorized in the concept of Anzaldúa's new border identity. For this same reason, the experience of crossing the borderland is analysed through the lens of agency, making it possible to highlight through her discursive production the collective, bidirectional, and situated character of this category.

By way of conclusion, Alexandra's new border voice, with her reflective construction of emotions regarding issues of border crossing processes, represents an indicator of the opportunity to adopt an intersectional and decolonising perspective in sociolinguistics as a valuable tool for rethinking old and new forms of social inequality. Her discursive production of emotions regarding back-and-forth displacement between the centres and peripheries of the globe has, in fact, disclosed how, in spite of an idealistic construction of emerging and cross-border discursive communities, people are not equally mobile.

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Transcription Conventions

/	micropause
//	pause
:	lengthening of the sound of the preceding letter
CAPS	indicating the volume of speech
[ ]	overlapping speech
-	word cut-off
“ ”	direct speech
?	question intonation