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Instructions for Border Crossers: Migrant Routes of the Academic Day Laborer

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“The unbearable lightness of being *fronterizo*”—this is a complicated term, but one that accurately describes the sometimes precarious, sometimes adventurous position of those who labor in interdisciplinary fields, crossing the border between them at the end of day to return to the *tierra nativa* (home land). How does this affect the academic who seeks understanding, not only from their primary area of focus, but from that of other areas that intersect with their own? And what about the academic day laborer who transgresses the normal boundaries of acceptability in favor of expression found in poetry, art, music, performance, and other non-related interests?

While interdisciplinarity is consistently touted as necessary in the 21st century university market, we forget how it may tax the mind, the heart, and the soul of academic research. We may even forget that there are certain unspoken limits to interdisciplinarity as well—that we can only stray so far from our primary focus before we have committed a cardinal sin in academia. But without it, opportunities for discovery, expansion, and innovation dwindle. This is Anzaldúa’s “thin barbed wire” of borderland reimagined in the university context.

Dr. Vaquera-Vásquez offers a way to think like a border crosser in the academy in what he describes as *pensamiento fronterizo* (borderland thinking). Through intersectional, linguistic, and genre-mixing actions, the academic day laborer asserts himself as an active agent in the development of an aesthetics of migration within the academy. This opens the university as the condition of possibility for sustainable and meaningful change. Dr. Vaquera-Vásquez will reflect on just how far these borders can be transgressed as an academician, drawing on his own experience as an unrepentant border crosser throughout his life.

