

## **All Our Relations: The Border, a Material Site of Pure War**

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### **I. The Border: A Material Site of Pure War**

*I* am a pacifist and the daughter of a minister. I am an ex-activist currently living in the U.S.-Mexico border, who is attempting to gain a deeper understanding of the border, my own theoretical model of the border, the border machine, the Deleuzo-Guattarian war machine, the Virilian concept of pure war and resistance, specifically resistance in border regions.<sup>1</sup> In the following discussion of the militarized city, human-landscape interactions in border regions, the role of the state, and agency, I will refer to marxism, anarchism, and New Labour in the UK. Over a decade ago, in 1996, Benjamin Bratton, who now teaches at UC San Diego and SCI-Arc, the Southern Cali-

ifornia Institute of Architecture, posted the following online about my work: "In her work, the border becomes a material site of pure war, wherein the technological production of boundaries and the dromological politics of the seen and the not seen are synthesized as a local theatre of violence" (Dromo: Virilio and Borders/Time). I read this, envying Bratton's lucidity about my work, a lucidity that has surpassed my own.

Frankly, I am still trying to figure out precisely how the border becomes a material site of pure war and how this may be related to Deleuzo-Guattarian categories, border consciousness, the border subject, the cyborg and the post-human. Technology, according to Virilio, can both destroy and enhance the body. My attempt to use holography as a way to understand border perception may overlap to some degree with Virilio's interest in the *gestalt*. In one case, there is a concern with multiple perspectives; in the other, it is understood that different viewers interpret and make sense of patterns in individual ways. In Spinoza's terms, we do not all perceive the object in the same way. I put forward a two part model of the border in my book *Border Writing*, published in 1991 but begun in the mid-1980s, that consisted of, first, a Deleuzo-Guattarian inspired border machine, and second, a border holographic model. I am currently testing these models using techniques of computer simulation research, specifically, agent-based modelling.

The technological production of boundaries and the dromological politics of the seen and the unseen are, I agree, synthesized as a local theatre of violence in the U.S.-Mexico border, and, I would now add, the urban, autonomous zones in which The Black Panther Party organized prostitutes, drug addicts, the homeless and what Marxists might call the *lumpenproletariat*. Anarchists have taken a more positive view of this group than have Marxists.<sup>2</sup> Other local theatres of violence can be found in areas with multi-ethnic populations in the UK. In San Diego, some inner city churches, such as those in City Heights, are related to these zones. The Black Panther Party Breakfast Program was born in an Episcopal church. The current state of the drug war brings a sense of urgency to this discussion, as does discussion within the media and in the international community, of Mexico as a "failed state," spoken in the same breath with Pakistan. To declare that Mexico is a

failed state is a rhetorical strategy that can lead to a justification for further militarization of the border.

## I.2

In this paper, I will delineate, in an assemblage-like method, my autobiographical relationship with anarchist theory within the context of a discussion of the state, resistance and complexity science.<sup>3</sup> I am inspired by the work of the organization Anarchist People of Color and of ex-Black Panther Party member Ashanti Alston.<sup>4</sup> I wish to bring together a response to Bratton's comments with a recent book chapter that I have written on the "nanny state" and The Black Panther Party. This analysis of the use of space by The Black Panther Party in political organizing in Oakland, California, is being published in an article entitled "The Moral Bases of the Black Panther Party's Breakfast Program, Johnson's Head Start and Blair's Sure Start: A Critical Comparison," a collection of essays with a preface by Anthony Giddens, entitled *Remoralizing Britain? Political, Ethical and Theological Perspectives on New Labour*. The book, published by Continuum Press in the UK, was released on March 31 of this year. Bratton, usefully for my purposes here, referred to Anthony Giddens in his 1996 comments about my work. Bratton continues:

There are, I believe, tremendous similarities between Virilio's construction of space/time and Foucault's, and some major, if not irreconcilable, differences. Both are concerned with the technological construction of space/time as a basic problem from which all other issues flow. For Foucault, however, language is the irreducible first technology, while for Virilio it is militarized space: the city (Dromo).

In my analysis of the autonomous zones in which the Black Panther Party organized in the 1960s in Oakland, both Virilio's and Foucault's construction of space/time are useful. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, in some parts of Oakland, roles were reversed. Members of The Black Panther Party perceived themselves, the police and the community differently: they moni-

tored the police. In addition, I refer in my anthologized article on The Black Panther Party's Breakfast Program to Bergson.

### I.3

I will oversimplify and appropriate Bratton's view here by referring to Foucault's position as one in which there is attention to space/time and discourse while in Virilio's construction, the city is a militarized space. In Virilio's view of history, the fortified city has been replaced by constantly shifting fortifications and weaponry.

In the U.S.-Mexico border region, the militarized space can be modelled, using an extension of Deleuze's work as read by Manuel De Landa. That is, the Deleuzian concepts being applied in the field of geography by Mark Bonta and John Protevi, such as smooth and striated space, can inform modelling and complexity research. Virilio's negative views of technology can be tempered with some Chicana-inflected Donna Haraway and her cyborg manifesto, some Chela Sandoval without her facile dismissal of Deleuze. Virilio perhaps is best served up with a nice bed of N. Katherine Hayles. An example of how Virilio's work can be viewed in relation to Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts can be seen in the smooth/striated opposition. If striated space is equated with the fortified city and smooth space with the pre or non-fortified city, we can view San Diego and Tijuana in the following way. San Diego is a naval base, and is striated, while Tijuana, while not a naval base, is involved in a drug war, and is also striated. We can use different time scales, ranging from years to centuries, view the processes of stratification. The militarization of the border, with its shift from concern with documentation, then security, and now drugs, has resulted in a process of stratification on both sides of the border. Anarchist no-border camps, using technology, create smooth, or temporarily smooth, spaces. The most recent no-border camp in the U.S.-Mexico border was disrupted by police violence.

I am currently engaged in a project, with geomorphologist B.T. Werner, at The Complexity Lab at IGGP, Scripps Institute of Oceanography. I direct the Border Institute for Advanced Studies in Nonlinear Events and Structures, which is also a research entity that studies complexity. We are using Octave, an open source alternative to MatLAB, to develop an agent-

based model of the U.S.-Mexico border. We are considering how crossers with and without documentation make decisions about crossing the border both at recognized border crossings and in the desert to the east of San Ysidro. The larger context for our work is the study of resistance in human-landscape coupling and attention to indigenous knowledge. We hope to share computer-based modelling using open source with those who are interested both inside and outside of academic communities. At this early stage, we are simply looking at predictions about wait time and the decisions about crossing in relation to Brian Arthur's El Farol Bar research.<sup>5</sup> Arthur studied the comfort level of patrons of a bar in Santa Fe, New Mexico. It was agreed upon by patrons that sixty minutes was the ideal number. In our project, we are looking at the various ways that border dwellers make decisions, including heuristics ("I only cross during weekdays") and projections based on publicized wait times (reported by the government and on the radio and television).

We are also studying aversion to wait time in relation to social class. A maid may have to wait longer than she would like no matter how long the line is, while a tourist can choose when to cross. The El Farol Bar problem is being studied by many researchers, along with The Minority Game and The Prisoner's Dilemma, within multiple contexts, including game theory. We are developing our research within the context of poststructuralist, post-modernist and anarchist thought, along with debates about political organizing, and we hope to publish our findings in a cultural studies journal, such as the on line journal in the UK, *Turbulence*. A conference associated with the journal was held in March of 2009 and included an impressive lineup of speakers: Alain Badiou, Terry Eagleton, Peter Hallward, Michael Hardt, Jean-Luc Nancy, Toni Negri, Jacques Ranciere, Gianni Vattimo and Slavoj Žižek. We will also publish our findings in a scientific journal.

#### I.4

I will now return to the theorist and design strategist Bratton. I should have mentioned earlier that he works at CalIT2. CalIT2 brings together artists, designers, nanotechnologists, scientists and others at UCSD and UC Irvine. Another CalIT2 researcher, hactivist Ricardo Dominguez, has collaborated with local anarchists. In fact, he and I participated in a performance event

at a no border camp. The transgender artist Micha Cardenas, whose Second Life-based work on gender transformation in "Becoming Dragon" is influenced by Deleuzo-guattarian concepts, also works with local anarchists and at CalIT2. Bratton sees Giddens' work as a bridge between Foucault's and Virilio's perspectives on space/time, and I agree, although as he explains below, Giddens himself does not agree with this use of his work. Bratton writes, and we must remember that this was in 1996, before Giddens became a baron and before he was Blair's advisor. Bratton writes:

Though when I mentioned this to him he was not at all in agreement, Anthony Giddens' work on globalization and space/time production (and how that is structurally linked to everyday life) is a bridge between Foucault's and Virilio's emphasis, and provides for a more conventional understanding of the role of 'action' in the scenario (Dromo).

Giddens went on to develop the "third way," in relation to the British Labour Party, New Labour, and to provide intellectual respect for the project of globalization. He did note that not all countries benefitted equally. However, one suspects that he was not present at the January 18, 1999 Carnival Against Capitalism in London or the protests against the WTO in Seattle in the same year. He had already published *Beyond Right and Left* in 1994 and he would publish *The Third Way* in 1998. By 1999, he was writing about how globalization was "shaping" our lives; he did not share a rejection of globalization with activists throughout the world. So what could Bratton have found in his work that could be of value for those who are able to see the underbelly of globalization? For example, some of us can see its negative effects in the gestalt image, however we create it internally, in the over four hundred deaths of women in Juarez.

It is the role of "action" that intrigued Bratton. In his earlier work, Giddens had discussed "the patterning of social relations across space-time." This role is linked to the problem of agency. For Giddens, we are neither wholly determined nor fully free in our actions.

In 1986, I crossed the U.S.-Mexico border wearing a wrestling mask, followed by Berta Jottar, who was carrying a hidden video camera.<sup>6</sup> When I was asked to remove my mask, I explained that I was on my way to Los Angeles to see the G.L.O.W., the gorgeous ladies of wrestling, and that I could not reveal my identity. I was carrying a portable altar, a sunglasses

case filled with magical powders from a *botanica* in Tijuana, *Botanica Ochun*, coins, a plastic baby and other items. The gestalt that was created by the juxtaposition of these items, for one of the customs or immigration officers, was that I was a witch. He began shouting that I was a “*bruja*,” and he and the other officer, somewhat confused, let me pass. In the mid-1980s, artists were able to engage in performances that brought the rights of immigrants to world attention. Today, tactics such as the one I have just described would not be possible. I am grateful to the collective in Paris that will be showing the video at the Pompidou in the summer of 2010.

### I.5

I will now introduce some of Virilio's concepts that are especially useful for looking at the security/immigration/drug war nexus that characterizes the ever-transforming physical boundaries of the 2,000 miles of the US.-Mexico border. Armitage, a commentator on Virilio, has written that in the late 1950s, Virilio began a “phenomenological inquiry into military space and the organization of territory” in his study of the ‘Atlantic Wall,’ 15,000 Nazi bunkers that had been built during World War II along the coastline of France. He and an architect designed a “bunker church.” Armitage writes:

Later, Virilio broadened his theoretical sweep, arguing in the 1970s, for example, that the relentless militarization of the contemporary cityscape was prompting what Deleuze and Guattari (1988: 453) call the ‘deterritorialization’ of capitalist urban space and what Virilio terms the arrival of speed or chronopolitics. Reviewing the frightening dromological fall-out from the communications technology revolution in information transmission, Virilio investigated the prospects for ‘revolutionary resistance’ to ‘pure power’ and began probing the connections between military technologies and the organization of cultural space. Consequently, during the 1980s, Virilio cultivated the next significant phase of his theoretical work through aesthetically derived notions of ‘disappearance’, the ‘fractalization’ of physical space, war, cinema, logistics, and perception (Beyond Postmodernism?).

Virilio argues that justice cannot be fractalized. Marxist critic Douglas Kellner calls Virilio a religious humanist (Virilio, War and Technology).

## II. An Analysis of Three Programs

I will now offer an analysis of three programs, the Black Panther Party Breakfast Program, the US program Head Start and the UK program Sure Start in order to develop and clarify an argument concerning social justice. In "The Moral Bases," I argue that the operations of the "nanny state" when founded upon "moralism" do little to advance the cause of social justice. These three social programs encompass over four decades of transformations within the welfare state and immigration law.

In "The Moral Bases," I explain the way in which The Black Party, unlike Johnson and Blair, were able to discern Third World zones within the borders of the United States:

These three programs emerged from very different views of colonialism, the nation-state, critiques of the metropolis, attitudes towards assimilation and positions on the political compass. Head Start and the breakfast program of the Black Panther Party began in the 1970s. Blair's Sure Start program was begun over three decades later in 1999. While Blair put too much emphasis on the responsibilities of the socially excluded, Johnson placed the blame for the plight of African Americans on the dysfunctionality of the black family. It was the Black Panther Party that saw capitalism in a global context as the center of the problem of the exclusion of African Americans from mainstream American life. Paying attention first, to the postnational critique of the state implicit within the Black Panther Party's commitment to the inhabitants of colonized zones within U.S. cities, and second, to their anti-colonial stance and support for Third World oppressed populations, they provide progressives with the opportunity to re-frame nanny state debates, whose terms have been set by conservatives. (Hicks, *The Moral Bases*, 156).

In the US, the role of the state is being debated within the context of stimulus packages, and concerns with the nanny state have given way, for many, to concern with economic survival (Hicks, *The Moral Bases*, 156).

### III. A Brief Discussion of Bergson and Grosz

In my book *Border Writing*, I privilege to some degree the inhabitants in border regions, and those who negotiate cultural boundaries, border subjects (Hicks, 1991). Nevertheless, I agree with Avtar Brah (Brah, 1996, p. 204) that “diasporic or border positionality does not in itself assure a vantage point of privileged insight” (Brah, 1996, p. 204). Mignolo puts forward his view on decolonization in a manifesto (Mignolo, 2007). I refer to his manifesto in the book I am completing on Magna Carta. I put forward the model of the border machine, based on the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (Deleuze and Guattari, Hicks, 1991, xxxi-xxiv). This machine included *la migra* (the immigration officer), *los pollos* (border crossers), helicopters (surveillance) and those who assist *los pollos* in crossing the border (*los polleros*) (Hicks, 1991). I also discussed *el cholo* as being bicultural, that is having cultural knowledge of both sides of the border (Hicks, 1991). In the U.S.-Mexico border region, *cholo* culture is associated with gang culture or the culture of the *lumpen* proletariat.

In “The Moral Bases,” I write that I wish to expand the model of the border machine, in which state actors and border crossers were presented as a machine that produced border crossings. The figure is that of the monitor. The monitor reverses the gaze; rather than being under surveillance by the state, the monitor observes the state. The monitor may emerge within autonomous zones that are created in the interstices of institutional purview. An example could be a teacher in the prisons. The teacher is subjected, to some degree, to abuse from the same carceral institution that controls the life of the prisoner. The relationship of the teacher in the prisons to educational institutions is somewhat marginal. All of this creates uncertainty. New forms of subjectivity may occur in the the interaction between teacher and student in the relatively autonomous zone of teacher-student interaction during class time.<sup>7</sup> The monitor can be any non-state actor who monitors human rights abuses against border crossers. Examples of this role are Roberto Martinez and Victor Clark-Alfaro. Some anarchists who are attempting to bring environmentalists together with immigrant rights activists may also function as monitors. Some of these monitors comment on media coverage of border issues.

This activity may be distinguished from direct action. Non-state actors have an important role to play within debates about immigration and the welfare state in both the US and the UK. The boundary of the color line is crossed on a daily basis by some but not others. The Black Panther Party fought state actors, the police, with guns and law books; its members monitored the behavior of the police. Today, inhabitants of the US and the UK who live within the Third World zones of these countries are well-situated to act as monitors of rights abuses and to continue one part of the legacy left to the world community by the Black Panther Party. These zones can be seen in Bergsonian terms as “zones of indetermination,” zones discussed by Elizabeth Grosz (Grosz, 2004, p. 169). Only art can reach those in these zones, according to Deleuze in *What is Philosophy?*

Jenny Edbauer, in her article discusses “zones of indetermination,” referring to Bergson’s *Matter and Memory*, in relation to affect and music. She writes:

Here we might recall the experience of listening to music or seeing art that thrives in harmony or dissonance. During the event of hearing a song that jives with your body, you enter into a zone of permeability with other elements that are 'properly' outside your own sense. Concerts illustrate this zone of indetermination to an even greater extent. Musicians often describe 'feeding' on a crowd's energy and vice-versa. Commonly perceived delimitations--proper borders of identity and substance--break down in these instances, disclosing the affective sensation of peripheral relations at work. This is not to say that the sensual experience of affect marks a return to a primal scene of origination. As Deleuze and Guattari write, it is a question only of ourselves, here and now; but what is animal, vegetable, mineral, or human in us is now indistinct' (What 174).

We already exist in zones of indetermination; particular events emphasize the sensual reality of such indiscernibility (Executive Overspill).

The decision of The Black Panther Party to organize in the poorest neighborhoods in Oakland, and specifically, the activity of feeding breakfast to poor, inner city children, resulted in a cultural and political entrance into the creation of new rituals, namely the feeding of children within the formation of communities. The activity was born in a church; rather than communion taking place inside of the church, in the meals provided by The Black Panther Breakfast Program, the breaking of bread and fruit juice took place in the community outside of the church.

In "The Moral Bases," I discuss Blairism and Sure Start, Johnson and Head Start and The Black Panther Party's Breakfast Program in relation to nine zones of indetermination: 1) social class, ethnicity and inequality; 2) civil rights and immigration; 3) performativity and the role of the state; 4) social cohesion, exclusion and social/cultural capital; 5) work and employment (affective labor); 6) family and community and 7) the *chola/o*, 8) the monitor (*el monitor*) and 9) the border machine.

I note that The Black Panther Party located inequality not in the dysfunctionality of the black family of the culture of poverty, but rather in the deep structural contradictions of urgent capitalism and its color-class-caste system,' which would later be called "the black economy" (Self, 2006, p. 4). The Black Panther Party emerged from what Self has called the "long" Civil Rights era (Self, 2006). While immigration was not a focus of The Black Panther Party, there were ties between the group and various Latina/o groups including the United Farmworkers and The Brown Berets. I explain that the postnational theory of the state suggested by the Black Panther Party is linked to monitoring state actors, the police, armed with law books, and to solidarity with the Third World. Robert O. Self writes writes:

Unlike most black intellectuals in the 1930s, both radical and liberal, who saw the nation-state as the horizon of class struggle, the Panthers inherited the legacy of those black radical internationalists who, in the 1940s and 1950s, began to see beyond the limits of the nation-state to the capitalist foundations of a global color line. (Self, 2006, pl 37)

The ability to see beyond the limits of the nation-state was shared by most black intellectuals and Johnson (Self, 2006, p. 37). The Black Panther Party Breakfast Program was started in 1969 at St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, and like Head Start, it functioned within a cultural capital framework. The cultural capital that accrued within Johnson's Great Society and related post-Great Society programs led to the creation of countless projects often forgotten in attacks on the program. Major alternative cultural centers in the United States, including the Centro Cultural de la Raza in San Diego, began with the support of a post-Great Society Program, CETA (Comprehensive Employment and training Act). The eradication of poverty was not the work of families in the analysis of the Black Panther Party. More than supply-side actions were thought to be required. In the current economic crisis, many churches are involved in food programs. Can intellectuals of color, anarchists and others with shared concerns see beyond the limits of the nation-state, specifically in relation to the U.S.-Mexico border? Can liberals go beyond condemning those who take up weapons, and attempt to understand why some make the predictions they do about their futures (based in some cases on the colonial past endured by their ancestors) and make the decisions they do? Can people of faith do the same?

### III.2

In conclusion, I want to return to the topics with which I began, the border, the border machine, the war machine and resistance. The history of The Black Panther Party, the work of Bergson and the theoretical model of the border machine can help us to better understand one of Blair's program's, Sure Start, and can inform our analysis of Obama's response to the economic crisis in the US in the future. The emphasis on social cohesion and inclusion in scholarship on Blair should not obscure Bergsonian "zones of indetermination" within the contemporary cultural landscape of the contemporary, multicultural UK. These multicultural "zones of indetermination" can be studied in relation to border zones and to anarchist theory. Further research on how predictions about the future are made by various actors in border regions and how these predictions lead to decision-making that occur may help us to better understand resistance.

Moreover, the Black Panther Party's attention to and perception while functioning within inner city zones can be viewed in relation to Bergsonian "zones of indetermination." By focussing on the *lumpenproletariat*, defined as including the unemployed, the Black Panther Party moved leftist political discourse away from an emphasis on the proletariat and towards the poorest urban neighborhoods and inhabitants of the margins. This shift can be understood in relation to both anarchism and marxism. I am not alone in my view that some of The Black Panther Party's legacy can be built upon by anarchists. Two examples of related perspectives can be found in the views of Ashanti Alston and organization The Anarchist People of Color. The accomplishments of The Black Panther Party, including The Black Panther Party Breakfast Program, and the Party's focus on inner city neighborhoods, could not be more relevant to the challenges currently faced by the underemployed and the unemployed, those in homes fearing foreclosure and those who are homeless, those sleeping in tents and without tents in tent cities, the homeless with and without children, and those sleeping or unable to sleep, in doorways and under bridges, in parks and in canyons, under the stars, but often, with diminishing hope.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Part of the title of this essay, “all our relations,” was inspired by a conversation about indigenous knowledge and complexity science with Linda Holler on 13 May 2009 in San Diego. Some parts of this essay appeared, in a slightly altered form, in “The Moral Bases of the Black Panther Party’s Breakfast Program, Johnson’s Head Start and Blair’s Sure Start: A Critical Comparison,” published in *Remoralizing Britain*.

<sup>2</sup> See *Introduction to Anarchism*

<sup>3</sup> My exposure to anarchist debates began in childhood. My aunt and uncle, Barbara Ann Hicks and Moe Moskowitz, co-founded Walden School in Berkeley with several other anarchist families. Other co-founders included Audrey Goodfriend and David Koven. Goodfriend and Koven came to the Bay Area from New York. Along with David Wieck and Diva, Goodfriend and Koven had worked on the anarchist journal *Why?* My aunt and uncle co-founders of Moe’s Books in Berkeley, were pacifist anarchists and during WWII; my mother and father were pacifists. The story of Moe’s Books is told in Aaron Cometbus’s graphic novel *The Loneliness of the Electric Menorah*. Through my mother’s side of the family, I am Melungeon. My great-grandfather was an atheist and a socialist; he attended *Truth Seeker* meetings. My great-great grandfather was a healer who worked with white and Indian (including Cherokee) communities and a friend of Quanah Parker’s.

<sup>4</sup> I had the opportunity to meet Alston at a no border camp at the Sherman Heights Community Center in San Diego, California.

<sup>5</sup> See Brian Arthur’s famous article “Inductive Reasoning and Bounded Rationality.”

<sup>6</sup> See “I Couldn’t Reveal My Identity.” Dir. D. Emily Hicks. Videotape. Color. 9 mins. 1986. The videographer was Berta Jottar.

<sup>7</sup> I am currently writing an article with Jerry Flores, a graduate student completing his MA at San Diego State University and entering a Ph.D. Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara, on this topic. Flores’s MA thesis is on teaching in the prisons.