



# Politics, Poetics and Policy: Borders, Bordering and Humanities<sup>1</sup>

» JOSEPH LO BIANCO



ABOVE

Detail of *A New Map of Texas, Oregon and California with the Regions Adjoining*, by S.A. Mitchell, 1846. Geographicus Rare Antique Maps.

SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

## BUILD YOUR CITIES ON THE SLOPES OF VESUVIUS!

*Send your ships into uncharted seas!*

So urged Friedrich Nietzsche, calling ‘the greatest fruitfulness and greatest enjoyment in life’ the courage to ‘live dangerously’! In *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* his view of those who are ‘seekers of knowledge’ was that we/they should cast aside timidity and ‘[B]e robbers and conquerors as long as you cannot be rulers and possessors’.<sup>2</sup> I have always found Nietzsche a little scary, even once found myself reading him in full daylight in the garden, and yet, for this paper, I have taken his advice to heart, intending to range wide and wild. My aim is to relate stories about borders, aspects of border theory and effects of bordering, the borders of the concrete divisions of space as metaphors and predictors of mental borders and as reflections on the humanities.

## HOLDING THE LINE

Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa was born and grew up in the 1940s on ranches in the borderlands of South Texas, where the United States thrusts deep south into arid land called the Free and Sovereign State of Tamaulipas,<sup>3</sup> its adjectives more hopeful than accurate, indexing its long and troubled

connections with the thirty-one territories that not always fraternally constitute Mexico.

This part of South Texas was established by the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, in which most of Tamaulipas was ceded to the US and which designated the border along the middle of the Rio Grande, or, as the Mexicans call it, Río Grande del Norte, the great river of the north, specifically designating the deepest part of its channel. The Treaty declares the border, which bits of hill, water and desert plains it divides; a mostly liquid 3169 kilometre line. But liquid lines have a habit of moving, and the river moved south more than north, and hapless Mexico steadily lost land to the US, expanding by every means possible; after a century of land and water disputes due to the flowing boundary, Presidents John F. Kennedy and Adolfo López Mateos resolved matters in 1963 with the Chamizal Convention. Although officially an ‘open border’, large parts are fortified and patrolled, and in places surveyors, geographers and meteorologists have determined in which stretches unforgiving nature can be left to do the state’s patrolling work. One of Barack Obama’s presidential headaches has been the border fence being erected near Anzaldúa’s birthplace. On 10 May 2011 he visited (the ironically named) El Paso and the Chamizal National Memorial (Fig. 1).

Obama reassured the locals on border policing and reflected on how the US is ‘wrestling with the politics of who is and who isn’t allowed to enter this country’. His speech is remarkable for how

it references discourse about making the drawn lines count, what he calls the common refrain of 'borders first, borders first'. He wants to be seen as tough on borders, or at least not weak, so 'we have strengthened border security beyond what many believed was possible'. The rest is worth quoting from the White House press site, for it shows the verbal struggle to hold the drawn line:

THE PRESIDENT: They wanted more agents at the border. Well, we now have more boots on the ground on the southwest border than at any time in our history.

(Applause.)

The Border Patrol has 20,000 agents – more than twice as many as there were in 2004 ... I had a chance to meet some of these outstanding agents, and actually saw some of them on horseback who looked pretty tough.

(Laughter.)

So we put the agents here.

Then they wanted a fence. Well, the fence is –

AUDIENCE: Booo!

THE PRESIDENT: The fence is now basically complete.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Tear it down!

Obama delivers even more surveillance than his critics were seeking. 'We tripled the number of intelligence analysts working the border. I've deployed unmanned aerial vehicles to patrol the skies from Texas to California.' But '[T]hey'll say we need to triple the border patrol. Or quadruple the border patrol. They'll say we need a higher fence to support reform. Maybe they'll say we need a moat. Or alligators in the moat.'

The job of the 'agents' is to look 'pretty tough' and so determine which bodies are permitted to inhabit which side of the line.<sup>4</sup> So, technically, El Paso means what is no longer possible, unlike in 1598 when Juan de Oñate claimed the area for Phillip II of Spain, naming it the place where it is possible to pass to the other side of the watery line. Despite these fences and border agents El Paso is tied, by commerce, culture and history, with its south-side sister city, Ciudad Juárez, the two joined as a metroplex of interdependency.

The governor of neighbouring south-side Coahuila called the fence a 'wall of hate', but it goes on being relentlessly constructed and many on the north side clamour for it to be made higher and more effective, doubled, moated and alarmed, stretching 1078 kilometres where Texan parts of the US and the former Texan parts of Mexico will always be joined. Three north-side named 'Operations' function in the fortified zones of this long and troubled line: Operation Gatekeeper in California, Operation Safeguard in Arizona, and, most suggestively, Operation Hold-The-Line in Texas.



LEFT

[Fig. 1] President Barack Obama waves to the crowd during his address at Chamizal National Memorial in El Paso, Texas, 10 May 2011.

Photograph by Lt. Col. Deanna Bague, Fort Bliss Public Affairs Office.

SOURCE: [HTTP://WWW.FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/DVIDS/5710634315/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/dvids/5710634315/)

## INTERPRETING THE LINE

What is this line and what does it mean to 'hold it'?

In his 1903 structuralist reflections on the metropolis and its operations German philosopher Georg Simmel argued that borders impose requirements on both strangers and the community of insiders. A sense of community is forged on the basis of prior identification of the stranger as the excluded, so that forms of association between people within metropolises are differentiated other than in their collective



ABOVE

[Fig. 2] People walking past the Berlin Wall, 1989. Photograph by Raphaël Thiémarc.

SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

relation to the outsider. Simmel's conception of space is replete with ambiguity, all is interconnected but separated, there are walls but they have bridges and doors, and it is possible to telephone others beyond the walls, meaning that the exclusive hold of the metropolis on 'mental life' is dissipated, even as culture and space interact more intensively inside than out.

Thinking about the symbolic and practical function of borderlines, and how people are constructed sociologically in their relation to lines, Simmel invokes a dynamic view of relations, of the role of strangers in and for a community. In his conception, distance is

crucial to a stranger's relationship with a group: if they are too close they cease to be a stranger, too far and they are no longer in a relationship. This excluding character of the municipality relies on the line, the boundary, which 'is not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact that forms itself spatially'.<sup>5</sup>

It is ironic that it was Berlin, the city of Simmel's birth, that played host to the world's most well known drama of rising and falling walls, making strangers of past neighbours, in brick and in mind (Fig. 2). But the demolition of Berlin's physical wall, seventy-one years after Simmel's death, suggests a modification to his

points of view and points from which to view, and our naming of borders and walls reflects our status as observers and participants.

Like academic disciplines, physical borders symbolise the positions they actually create. Borders may be visible lines and physical spaces, but they are also processes of mind and collective activities of groups, and their sides are unequal so that we inhabit unequally desirable sides of the boundaries they create. The term 'seeking asylum' implies exactly this, it involves escape from danger to protection afforded by borders, and most attempts at escape provoke sympathy and scorn, support and condemnation, apathy or engagement,

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dictum since that wall remained erect in the mind long after the sociological realities producing it were overcome politically. Walls may begin in the mind, before being bricked up, but mind walls are not dissolved when the masonry has been removed; instead they become hardened by the mortar of time and remain in place when the physical boundary is reduced to a memory.

In other words, we only know borders from standpoints, from north or south of the Texas line, east or west of the Berlin wall. These are vantage points with regard to lines,

assistance and treachery, largely on the basis of which side we inhabit. Walls and boundaries are usually built by only one of the affected sides.

It is these properties of borders, their motivated construction, that make authoritarian regimes and individuals suspicious and would-be escapers vulnerable. Borders and lines and walls do not deny vision of the other side, but access. We can see across borders, remember the time before they were built, or imagine the life lived there, well before we can cross over. This foreknowledge, in Simmel's terms, the 'mental life' associated with living with borders, is how they become compelling in cultural terms and problematical politically.

Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck powerfully evokes this precise idea in his 2006 award winning film, *The Lives of Others*.<sup>6</sup> East German agents are engaged in every-moment-of-the-day wire-tapping of a writer and his lover on the more unfortunate side of the world's most famous wall. Through the tedium of endless surveillance they develop a perverse intimacy with the lives of those whose privacy they abuse, become an unseen presence within boundaries they violate, and ultimately feel a kind of shame and sympathy for the victims of their intrusive authority. They start to see what the writer sees. He wants what people on the other side of the border take for granted, inadequately conveyed by one of history's most struggled-over words: freedom.

The vantage points of the arts and philosophy, language and geography, offer us creative ways to think about the multiple dimensions of lines and borders, their physical existence and the processes

**RIGHT**  
[Fig. 3] Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Ritratto di nonno con nipote* [c. 1490].

SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.





LEFT

[Fig. 4] United States border at Naco, Mexico. Photograph by Phillip Capper, 1990.

SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

they give rise to, and attempts to remove them.

Within a metropolis we live lives governed by lines: political, social, emotional and conceptual lines. Imposition of the authority of those lines, and the bordered zones they produce, is a complex process of shifting and switching, according to notions of insiderness and outsidersness. For example, we permit the violation of boundaries to intimates and deny them to strangers. This critical role of intimacy is perfectly expressed by Domenico Ghirlandaio in his (c. 1490) depiction of a patrician grandfather and his grandson, who is allowed to cross the line of decorum which would be denied to a stranger (Fig. 3).

## CONTESTING THE LINE

When physical walls are erected the material and mental lives of those living nearby are affected differentially. Proximity and involvement influence the depth and severity of effects and produce the unique life of border zones. In these marginal spaces special kinds of life emerge, subject to the patrol and interest of the powerful and the subversion and resistance of the subalterns. In this way the boundary zones, borderlines and Operations of South Texas and North Mexico are over-determined for the law but indeterminate spaces for popular culture. Everyone sees something there. Bruce Springsteen's heartland rock comes from well north of the border, in urban and post-industrial New Jersey, but with his E Street Band 'Americana' sentiments are fostered by the never-distant place of the southern

border in American popular culture. Whether it is 'Down to Mexico' or 'Born to Run', Springsteen invokes and ironises the privileges and problems of being 'Born in the USA', mistaken as a patriotic affirmation when it criticises the extended ideological boundary of the Vietnam War.

Other artists have more directly inscribed today's most famous border into popular culture, the badlands and lawless zone, in a wider fusing of natural boundaries and political borders, fences and rivers.<sup>7</sup> Cultural production occurs in this tense space. Border zones and lawlessness induce political interests to raise and protect national flags, inviting transgressive artists to violate flags and their display, making the artist into a 'criminal'.<sup>8</sup> During the 1980s and 1990s many artists came to this particular river as border, to perform at the border, so that when a twenty-kilometre section of fence was constructed along the border in 1991, artist activists assembled to challenge the militarisation of the space.<sup>9</sup>

Artists and musicians are 'shattering' the border, as Isabela Raygoza puts it:

[T]o most people, the conflict on the US-Mexico border is just a series of depressing newspaper clippings ... the war on drugs, human smuggling, and immigrants dying in the desert ... For decades, musicians in and out of Mexico have come together to demand social change – Fronterizos – people living by the border, people in sympathy with border life – are leading the charge ... bands who write about immigration, drugs, violence, desert crossing, working on maquiladoras ('sweatshops'), and

everything US-Mexico border related.<sup>10</sup> (Fig. 4)

The politics and the arts of place in this zone are highly concentrated and intense, most dramatically when an infant takes its first breath, as the place of this first breath functions like a trip-wire, activating citizenship rights. Where you breathe first, which side of the line, invokes ancient laws of blood and ancestry, soil and borders, and can decide life's fortunes.

In these zones of cultural intensity, Anzaldúa, in politics and in poetry, changed how we think

In her replies, she demands respect for *mestizos*, the mixed people who lived in the place she came from before the borders arrived, when El Paso still meant what its name says. In asking for this specific kind of respect for individual *mestizos*, she made a wider claim for *mestizaje*, for in-betweenness in general, insisting that those who inhabit insecure categories and unapproved formations are not lacking culture, form or presence. The flag raising on either side of the border is the work of nation-making, fostering conformity to authorised cultural forms from places far

THE FLAG RAISING ON EITHER SIDE OF THE BORDER IS THE WORK OF NATION-MAKING, FOSTERING CONFORMITY TO AUTHORISED CULTURAL FORMS

about the meaning of borders and lines. The work that made her fame, from cultural studies to queer theory, was the experimental autobiography *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (Fig. 5).<sup>11</sup> This take-no-prisoners account, oscillating between poem and polemic, tells of growing up in marginalisation, at the edges of health and disability, America and Mexico, Spanish and Basque, Indigenous and Immigrant, male and female, gay and straight, grown up yet very short. For Anzaldúa border zones are always plural and troublesome. *La Frontera* discusses the identities

such borders forge, the problems they cause, and some cultural and linguistic possibilities they supply.

Peering through the cracks provided by her many marginalities Anzaldúa not only found anger and injustice, fragmentation, partiality and ill-formedness, she also saw potential, integrated spaces, completeness, and new lines. In these new formations she invented an audience, initially only among those secure in their cultural footings and inhabiting better named or less differentiated worlds, but over time among those well beyond border zones,

willing to imaginatively reside there too. Suffering an endocrine condition that arrested her physical growth at early adolescence, she matured into a short and sometimes angry woman who moved, physically and imaginatively, into cities, English literature, feminism, Chicano/Chicana studies and creative writing, continually to be asked: 'Where do you come from? Which borders define you? Within which domain do you belong?'

removed from the world of local mixing.

She was not of course the first to refuse to be discursively hemmed into identity binaries, but her multi-genre refusal, documented in short stories, children's books, poetry, narratives of autobiography and theoretical essays, helped constitute a new way to interpret people living physically and culturally at the border. In the decades since, many ethnographies, much politics, occasional policy making and extensive creative writing have concentrated minds on the border's processes. This has revealed the cultural and mental work involved in maintaining the physical presence of a border, on how making it higher, stronger, wider and more exclusionary is preceded by legitimating talk and followed by justificatory rhetoric, all of which requires the ongoing effort of naturalisation. A disfiguring wall that uglifies the surroundings and divides people needs a lot of words to remain in place. Borders that lack legitimation are vulnerable to collapse. But as defenders seek to naturalise a wall's presence they expose themselves to questioning about alternative possibilities.

By force of personality and talent, and a felicitous politics, Anzaldúa has come to represent the new *mestiza* consciousness she advocated; contributing words and concepts to a burgeoning new language about the unique role and function of border zones, with its now familiar lexicon of crossing and transgressing, but also playing with possibilities, rejecting all too easy characterisation of marginal spaces as inevitable badlands, and proposing them as places where it is possible to deny binary choices, and sometimes to make a binary choice.



ABOVE

[Fig. 5] Gloria Anzaldúa. Photograph by K. Kendall.

SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

## WILD TONGUES AT LA FRONTERA

In chapter 5 of *La Frontera*, entitled 'How to Tame a Wild Tongue', Anzaldúa recalls 'being caught speaking Spanish at recess – that was good for three licks on the knuckles with a sharp ruler'. On the dentist's chair it was once demanded she control her wayward tongue, prompting a much quoted reflection about what tongues say: 'How do you tame a wild tongue, train it to be quiet, how do you bridle and saddle it? How do you make it lie down?'



and national identity, of 'equality' and 'liberty'. Expressing these sentiments perfectly at the National Assembly on 10 September 1791 nobleman and diplomat, Baron Talleyrand, made a decisive announcement that aimed to invent a new political entity conceived as radically unlike all preceding forms of state. Concerned that standard French was spreading abroad through colonial expansion but, in regional areas and among the urban poor, non-standard varieties persisted: 'Elementary education will put an end to this strange inequality' he fulminated. 'In school all will be taught in the language of the Constitution and the Law and this mass of corrupt dialects, these last vestiges of feudalism will be forced to disappear'.<sup>12</sup> In this pursuit of the revolutionary obligation to replace tradition with modernity, large parts of the overturning of the past were entrusted to the language politics of primary school teachers. In policing the borders of dialects and standards, they were in turn policed by a prescriptive curriculum, lest they should fail in their revolutionary duty.

All modern states have engaged in such 'linguistic consolidation', placing the state's teachers not *in loco parentis* but *in loco publico* to conduct this socialisation. The aim is to align the physical space the nation's borders enclose with prescribed modes of verbal expression, speech to realise community, symmetry between nation and tongue. Talleyrand would have approved of the three licks on the knuckles because policing talking in schools was designed to do no less than produce a new state of science and reason, and banish the bonds of sentiment and locality to the

LEFT

[Fig. 6] *Bilingual Aesthetics*, by Doris Sommer.

FOR CENTURIES, AND EVEN TODAY, CHILDREN IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD GET THE CUTS FOR WRONG TALK

For centuries, and even today, children in many parts of the world get the cuts for wrong talk, not because they speak too loudly or say impermissible things, but because we have determined that schools and their playgrounds are society's sand pits, the zone for lingual socialisation of the young.

Much of the modern manifestation of this was set in train in Revolutionary France, where national unity was to be fostered against the entrenched privileges of various social orders but also to be imposed in central and authorised culture. Since the fourteenth century, literate French had been promoted for publication and administration but it was now also the sole code of citizenship

private margins. He would have been horrified by the indeterminacy of South Texas/North Mexico.

Through her code-switching postcolonial poetry Anzaldúa demanded that all her languages expand to accommodate her presence in social spaces still struggling to be named, and which history determined can only be named multi-lingually. So *La Frontera* appears in six varieties of Spanish, including Spanglish, and not any old Spanglish, but local Spanglish, a language of a specific place, making meanings unique to its experiences. In *Bilingual Aesthetics* Harvard Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures Doris Sommer (Fig. 6)

has studied the unique perspective of play and nuance that bilingual discourse provides and has studied relations between Spanish and English in the Americas, what she once called the ‘univocal complacency’ of English, disrupted by Spanish, and how, elsewhere in the Americas, indigenous languages are effecting a similarly disruptive move onto the once total domination by Spanish of public domains.<sup>13</sup> But even this only describes a battle between giants, the huge entities of nation-named forms of speech. English and Spanish, recalling faraway England and Spain, are sustained by industries of standardisation, dictionary writing, canonical literature, prescribed curriculum and schoolteachers. Anzaldúa’s *mestizaje* and Sommer’s bilingual aesthetics involve the crevices between and within the industries of English and Spanish, in small and local places at the borders. How else could multilingual communities communicate when all their languages inhabit the

border crossers, a vast population of people on the move across national, class, ethnic and linguistic lines. A mode of talk for border moving emerges as *Transfronterizo* talk, used by people who can move over the border line and sing ‘Jose, Can You See...’.

Those who live in politically ambiguous spaces can’t help make mischief with languages too, and we know that many Americans don’t take kindly to humour about flags and anthems if they consider it disrespectful. I have tracked, as far as you can from online blogs, deducing from what people say, the avatars they use and what they disclose about themselves, those who find it funny to play with national anthems and flags, and those who find it a provocation, and there is a link to their standpoint on the border. It is more complex than which side of the border they inhabit, but this line does predict many points people make and do not make. State-side bloggers often know the lyrics, capitalise the name, dispute that it can be sung in Spanish or

JOINING THEM IN THIS BORDER DEMOLITION WORK ARE OTHERS WITH ENTIRELY DIFFERENT AGENDAS: MANAGEMENT GURUS, AIMING NOT TO ADVANCE CULTURAL HYBRIDITY BUT TO CREATE A SEAMLESS SPACE FOR GLOBAL COMMERCE

same space and overlapping conceptual worlds?

Much of *La Frontera* is neither political nor polemical, nor does it transfer the politics and polemics to the personal, it is simply the sociolinguistic map made communicative. Its code switching is not particularly to make points, or not always, but mostly because hybrid multilingual communities hardly ever separate their languages; communicatively, they operate with merged and overlapping systems, of communication, of identity and of social practices. Multiple codes become available for play and creativity as much as for expression. Particularly good at this are New York’s Puerto Ricans, and among the best is Ana Celia Zentella, now at University of California San Diego, who brings the immigrant alien, like Simmel’s stranger, into relation with the community. In her vigorous defence of Spanglish, Zentella shows how children are ‘doing being bilingual’ in the Nuyorican way.<sup>14</sup> She is intrigued by the southern border, and all the movement that is publicly disclaimed but privately supported, a line that does and does not exist. Focusing on talk, movement and inter-dependency at the Tijuana-San Diego line, claimed to be the largest border crossing in the world, she documents the communication of

interpret attempts to do so as badly intentioned or disrespectful. Some tell everyone that it is from a poem by Francis Scott Key commemorating the bombardment of Fort McHenry by ships of the British Royal Navy in Chesapeake Bay during the War of 1812, when Britain tried to unravel the revolution. South side, many laugh, or think it is clever, and a poke in the eye, too. In a post on a Cape Cod website on 6 December 2006 at 12:46 pm, Opinionator argued that ‘No one wants to sing “a la luz de la aurora” in place of “the dawn’s early light” at a ball game’; but in other places it is okay, audience and context matter.<sup>15</sup>

*Transfronterizo* talk, like all marginal identity, involves bilingual play more than mere play. *La Frontera* is breached all the time and everywhere, in talk and in walk, and, ironically, even as the line is breached its existence is confirmed. All this identity talk is not just academic prattle in small seminar rooms.

## CABLINASIAN AND COMMERCE

In 1997 a twenty-one year old golfer caused a daytime TV sensation when he ‘outed’ himself on the Oprah Winfrey Show. What provoked Tiger



LEFT  
 [Fig. 7] Golfer Tiger Woods, the Cablinesian.  
 SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

Woods was the limited identity menu required by schools, universities and the US Census Bureau. At school Tiger didn't 'check the African-American box'; he wanted to check a box reading 'Cablinasian', his unique fusion of 'Caucasian', 'Black', 'American Indian' and 'Asian', but there was no Cablinasian available for checking (Fig. 7).

In October of that year the White House Office of Management and Budget had issued Statistical Policy Directive Number 15, entitled

important to preserve comparability over the almost 230 years of its documenting the races and ethnicities of America and how they are all faring. If identities don't stay stable – controlled and fixed by unchanging names – how could we know if those belonging to each category were more schooled, better fed and housed than their parents?

Tiger told Oprah he didn't want to be labelled 'African American', because, in a Gloria Anzaldúa moment, his father was half African American, a quarter Chinese and a quarter Native American, and his mother was half Thai, a quarter Chinese and a quarter Dutch. By his estimation all these halves and quarters equalled a single Cablinasian, not a hyphenated administrative option. By repudiating the African American label, however, he irritated not only the Census geeks but also some community activists and social commentators. In the event, administration was unmoved, the Bureau reaffirmed the categories and the rolling process of official survey work proceeded as it had always done, though more recently respondents have been permitted to check more than one box.

So far in these stories of borders, talk and identities we have minority activists, cultural theorists and good golfers all contesting borders and imposed identities, or making science, bilingual play or poems about lines and bordering. But joining them in this border demolition work are others with entirely different agendas: management gurus, aiming not to advance cultural hybridity but to create a seamless space for global commerce.

The perfect and persistent representative of this corporate strategising is Kenichi Ohmae,

AT SCHOOL TIGER DIDN'T 'CHECK THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN BOX'; HE WANTED TO CHECK A BOX READING 'CABLINASIAN', HIS UNIQUE FUSION OF 'CAUCASIAN', 'BLACK', 'AMERICAN INDIAN' AND 'ASIAN'

*Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting.* The Directive stipulated the four racial (American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black and White) and two ethnicity (Hispanic origin and Not of Hispanic origin) categories permitted to US citizens; these races and ethnicities were the only 'Check the Box' options the Census made available and schools and universities used for administration purposes. The Directive explained that it was

1990s inventor of the 3-C Business Model, a triangular strategy for commercial success. The 3-C requires business managers to attend to the Corporation, the Customer and the Competition, though Ohmae later added three more C's: Capability, Consistency and Cultivation, and later still expanded alphabetically to include Environment, Community and Firm, the entire aim to focus planners on the Japanese injunction of *hito-kane-mono*, i.e. money, things and people.

In his stream of writings about making the world efficient for the corporation, Ohmae almost always manages to insert the term 'borderless world' in titles or subtitles or first lines: *The Next Global Stage: Challenges and Opportunities in Our Borderless World*; *The End of the Nation State: The Rise of Regional Economics*; *The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy and Evolving Global Economy: Making Sense of the New World Order*.

These volumes, like Nietzsche, announce the death of national borders, or predict the imminent arrival of a new world efficiency-based commercial order, or advocate a fetter-free environment for the movement of goods and services.

In Ohmae's reasoning it is nations and national economies which disrupt the liberation of capital from the elemental error of protectionism. He is not lacking an orientation to community and ethics but this serves the ultimate goal of greater efficiency, competitiveness and niche positioning of companies in a cutthroat world

natural lines, fought over and revealing history's outcomes. By contrast, his favourite childhood map depicts north-eastern Belgium, a place which positively bristles with the demarcation lines of history. On this 'real world' map there are the contested boundaries of countries, regions, towns and languages, all plotted and known to exist precisely where they belong according to the map maker and the map maker's political standpoint.

The drama of history and the spatial distribution of its accommodations provide what he startlingly calls 'boundaries to insulate ... from the big bad world'.<sup>17</sup> This strikes me as a depiction from well within the border, not at its edge. But, as if by poetic disclosure, smack in the middle of Jacobs' bordered woods, in north-eastern Belgium there lurks a counter place: a now defunct nation that was dedicated to dissolving nations and their borders, whose sad history confirms Jacobs' pessimism.

This place is now called Kelmis, or rather it is a part of the city of Kelmis, but it used to be

**BOTH STALIN AND HITLER DESPISED ESPERANTO AND ESPERANTISTS, AS REPRESENTING ENTIRELY THE WRONG KIND OF INTERNATIONALISM**

of unfettered trade. In this particular utopia, atomistic individuals constituted through their professional and occupational identities displace the identities of tradition, and are set free to accumulate wealth. Like Anzaldúa and Woods, Kenichi Ohmae wants to eliminate the nation line.

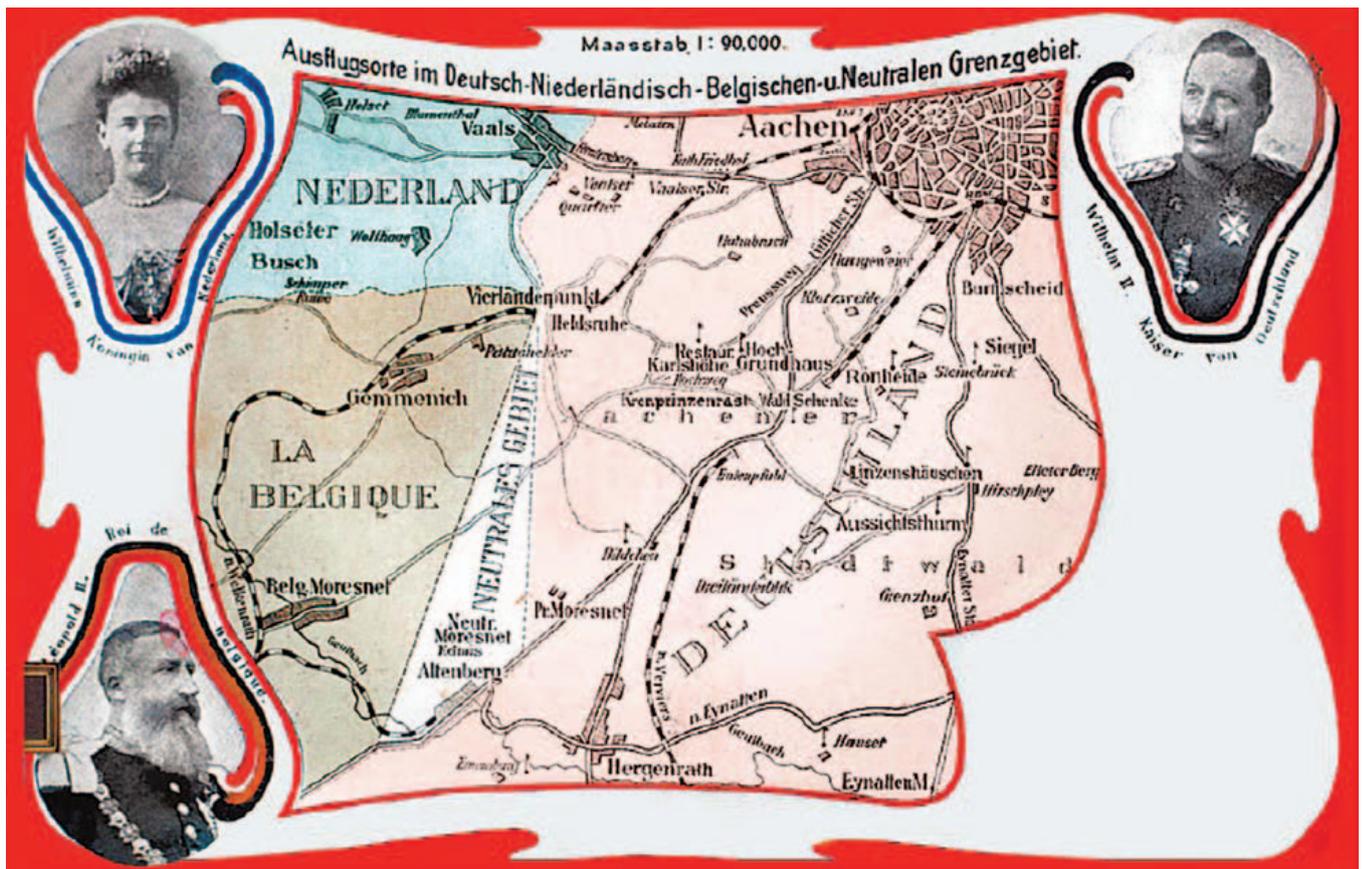
## PRAISING THE LINE

But while these people come to bury borders, others come to praise them. In October 2011 the *New York Times* launched 'Borderlines': 'a series devoted to the history, appearance and significance of borders', with a first contribution by Frank Jacobs entitled 'In Praise of Borders'. The description of the 'Opinionator' states that 'Countries are defined by the lines that divide them. But how are those lines decided – and why are some of them so strange? Borderlines explores the stories behind the global map, one line at a time'.<sup>16</sup>

Jacobs notes that his favourite map, Tolkien's Middle-earth, while cartographically attractive, only shows mountains, lakes and rivers and so lacks the real-world drama of proper borders, human not

called Neutral Moresnet and then Esperantists went to live there and called it Amikejo, the place of friendship (Fig. 8). The ever idealistic Esperantists, inventing neutral languages, neutral religions, neutral flags and neutrality in general, in 1908, with appalling timing, installed within this tiny Belgian-Prussian condominium an officially Esperanto-speaking state, complete with unique flag and bounded space.<sup>18</sup> This all happened in one of the several wrong decades of the wrong century, and in entirely the wrong place. Both Stalin and Hitler despised Esperanto and Esperantists, as representing entirely the wrong kind of internationalism. Amikejo's attempt to do away with national languages, flags and divisions, by substituting universal neutral alternatives, was obliterated by aggressive border-expanding nationalism, Hitler and Stalin's preferred kind of internationalism, and is now consigned to a small room in the municipal museum.

Jacobs cites another who praises borders; surprisingly, the French radical Régis Debray who might be expected to support hybridity



and multiple identities is scathing about *sans-frontièreisme*, a ‘stupid idea’ which has ‘the West’ in its thrall. Advocacy of borderlessness is for Debray mere ‘illusion, escapism, cowardice’; rather strangely, he decides that the border is a ‘vaccine against the epidemic of walls, a remedy to indifference, a rescue for the living’.<sup>19</sup>

Borders, in Jacobs’ view and, possibly, in the view of the *New York Times*, ‘reflect humanity’s need for obstacles, for a line in the sand between Them and Us’.<sup>20</sup>

## DRAWING THE LINE

The lines comprising borders are written mostly on maps, which are our theories of spatiality and spatial arrangements. Our particular geographical ideology relies on maps to display the arrangements of geo-politics and to prepare our conceptual systems for navigating the depicted physical space when we encounter it. Like most people’s, my geographic ideology began in primary school, facilitated by the twinned tools of timeline and map. I became used to maps not just as spatial depictions, but as temporal ones too; often a timeline was linked to a map, showing dynasties, periods of empire, expansion of religious affiliation,

exploration or commerce tied to physical space. These were explanations about the past and how the present came to be, the distribution effects of activity. My continuing affection for both map and timeline comes from this linking; the timeline is someone’s selection of the bits of the past that count formatively and the map is the end result of that formation in the present time. Historical maps are of course part of historical memory themselves, and therefore temporal snapshots. The end result of a timeline is the present map, explained. With a more critical adult eye we can see maps and timelines as efforts of socialisation, inducing us into a preferred story and interpretation of the world. Together they unify time and space, are the equivalent of what Talleyrand sought for the expressive identity of the French, i.e. the collective geographic and temporal imagination of citizens.

One of the most powerful stories of the conceptual formation and mental effects of mapping comes from Old Siam. Thai historian Thongchai Winichakul traces the nineteenth-century transition from Siam to Thailand, from a vaguely determined geographic space threatened by European colonial incursion, to a bounded and bordered nation. His compelling

ABOVE

[Fig. 8] Postcard of the Neutral Territory of Moresnet/Altenberg, c.1900. Author: Unknown.

SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

volume *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (1994) takes the timeline and map a step further, underscoring the nation-forming potency of drawn borders and their associated narratives, so that people and place form a legitimising geo-body (Fig.9).

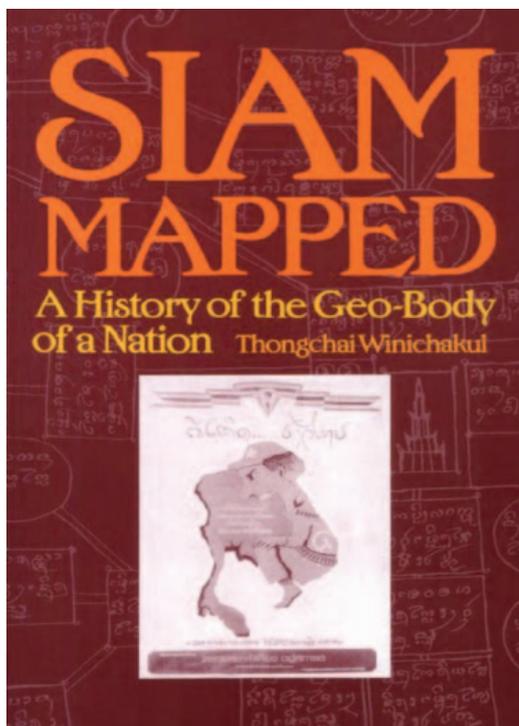
In the broad geographic expanse of the Siam that predated Thailand, chiefdoms often served several overlords and local tributary kingdoms paid fluctuating deference to Siam's rulers as well as neighbouring states such as Laos or Burma. Siam's rulers derived their political system from the Buddhist 'Mandala model'; conceptual relation to space and to border demarcations were of minor importance to the ruling elites and their political orientations. As a result, acceptance of shifting boundaries, overlapping

classes of Siam operated with a border theory like Anzaldúa's preference for fluidity and lack of demarcation. But from these conceptions of space, simultaneously cosmographic, religious, political and mundane, they were jolted into taking seriously the politics of geography and mapmaking to protect themselves from the designs of French and British imperialism.

As they made maps Siam/Thailand's leaders shifted towards explicit delimitation of space, giving borders a more conceptual presence. Mapping, which Thongchai calls geography's 'prime technology of knowing',<sup>21</sup> therefore forged both the physical and the conceptual reality, and helped construct national sentiment and ultimately the Thai Kingdom's nation-state. As we can see in the image, *Wake Up Thai People*,

RIGHT

[Fig. 9] *Siam Mapped*, by Thongchai Winichakul.



FAR RIGHT

[Fig. 10] *Wake Up Thai People!*



Figure 20. "Wake Up, Thai People" (By permission of Central Taylor)

zones and double sovereignty suited and fostered the indigenous tradition of spatial orientation and political influence, with its orientation to exercising influence. When political push came to imperial shove, however, Siam's rulers had great difficulty coping with even basic aspects of political geography because these were derived conceptually from alien ideas of governance through exclusive political jurisdiction over autonomous and bounded spaces, so different from exercising influence in a crowded space.

Without the guidance of secure boundaries and lacking conviction in their utility, the ruling

maps began to speak (Fig. 10). This map, giving a political warning about the threat of communism, is an excellent example of the geo-body that not only represents 'what is there' but also naturalises its ownership and warns of infiltration 'inside' the very body of geography. The threatening communist is not only occupying Thai political space but converting himself into the map, a kind of geographic insinuation. The evolving Thai geographic ideologies discovered the techniques and political power of explicit charting, fostering the mind map that is at the centre of the geo-body, which over time came to organise a sense of imagined community, the Thai-political self.



LEFT

[Fig. 11] Thomas Gainsborough, *Mr and Mrs Andrews*, 1750.

SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

How different is this explicit charting, this classical mapmaking, from more radical and more ancient conceptions of space which are not about ‘them’ and ‘us’, but permitting of overlapping identities and multiform interpretations of space? An artistic return to older notions of space as dynamic, ironically using the explicit techniques of mapmaking, can be found in the

## BEHIND THE LINE

Far away from borderlands, well behind the lines, these collusions we see in Old Siam, between space and mind, and in South Texas, between talk and place, become established.

I want to discuss this by reference to a picture and a book about English and about England, and then English and the World, English within its

WIERZBICKA TELLS US THAT LANDS AND PEOPLE, THROUGH LANGUAGE, CONTINUE TO BELONG TOGETHER

work of the conceptual artist originally called Alighiero Boetti, who separated himself into two and gave each of his halves one of his original names, joined by an ‘and’ (‘e’ in Italian). Alighiero e Boetti conducted a radical experiment in public participatory mapmaking over twenty years in Kabul, Afghanistan, and Peshawar, over the border in Pakistan, commissioning refugees and artisans to produce maps of flag-formed national boundaries. Over the twenty years, changing flags and changing borders have come to show the ‘real world’ dissolution of the Soviet Union, unification of Germany, reconfiguration of territory in the Middle East and re-shaping of Central Asia.<sup>22</sup> Alighiero e Boetti neither praise nor declaim lines, but set in motion a long-term public art project of border and map observation documenting both resilience and transience.

old borders, and English in the borderless space it now inhabits, reproducing a small section of a longer discussion about global English.<sup>23</sup> The front cover of Anna Wierzbicka’s *English: Meaning and Culture* (2006) reproduces Thomas Gainsborough’s *Mr and Mrs Andrews*, often ironically called a conversation piece since there is clearly nothing being said (Fig. 11). The genteel Suffolk couple are pictured incongruously dressed up against a scene of rustic fecundity, the solid oak invoking the comfort of continuous presence and regeneration in this place. All the borders are far away here, not visible and unimaginable.

This is a display of association, ownership and prosperity, a rural idyll of cultural continuity between lands and the Andrews, eighteenth-century English people and English place. Just like Gainsborough, Wierzbicka tells us that lands and people, through language, continue to belong

together. Her work is about how the Anglo in English persists, despite it being spoken now more often by people called Peng and Rajiv to people called Takahashi, ibn Wahid and Santi-Biondi. Wierzbicka's grammatical study uncovers cultural scripts, so that the English, those people, and the England, that place, continue centuries later in English, the language. In Wierzbicka's analysis the mental and cultural worlds of Mr and Mrs Andrews are revealed in their English and how they use it.

She detects the influences of Puritanism, enlightenment thinking about reason and individualism, and notes that these percolate

language, if it still carries its origins inside its grammar, for people who have never and likely will never visit that Sussex farm? This is one of the most important questions in education today. How do we reconcile the global and local in English? What are its features and functions, when its borders are overlapped, code-switched and played with, and when the majority of the world's apparently English conversations involve no native speakers? The old native speaker varieties of English: ours, the British, the American, nourish identity and attachment, but new varieties also increasingly do, in India and Nigeria, even as the

WHAT IS THE FATE OF A LANGUAGE WHICH RETAINS THE CULTURAL RESIDUES OF ITS ORIGINATING ANGLO CONTEXT WHEN IT LODGES IN THE LIVES OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE IN FARAWAY PLACES?

into everyday discourse from their origins in philosophy, religion and social conditions. According to this approach the particularly English way to use words like *fair*, *right* and *wrong* suggests a 'procedural morality',<sup>24</sup> and widespread use of epistemic phrases like *I think*, *I consider*, *I suspect*, *I imagine*, *I suppose*, and epistemic adverbs like *evidently*, *arguably*, *presumably*, *advisedly*, *probably*, distil into ordinary conversation the social ideologies of dominant philosophical schools of English liberalism. Unlike the code-switching borderlands in South Texas, where six Spanishes and two Englishes make sense, on the farm in Sussex there is an uncontested one, a standard literate and authentic code.

But English today is actually *Englishes today*, the world's language is a series of overlapping codes, which Indians and Maltese have localised. It is used all along the border Mr Obama is fortifying and both north and south it is mixed with *Transfronterizo* talk; it is now compulsory in the schools of China and Thailand, found in the mouths of people not at all like the Andrews.

Today English is a key medium of higher education in Stockholm and Kuala Lumpur. There are more Chinese learning English than there are Americans. It is the language that Kenichi Ohmae uses to write his borderless world books, that lubricates global capital and its movement as well as processes of globalisation and their spread.

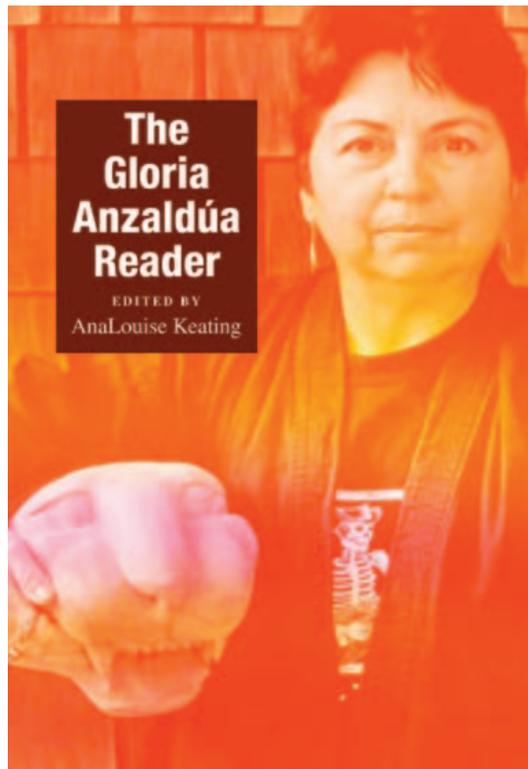
What is the fate of a language which retains the cultural residues of its originating Anglo context when it lodges in the lives of millions of people in faraway places? And what is the place of that

particular cultures are so radically different.

To reconcile these divergences we must distinguish the resources available *in* language, what we inherit from past users and past usages, from what speakers *do* with these resources, essentially distinguish between linguistic signifiers and the signs that users make from the code they are working with. *Language comes to us, but we make discourse*. Languages are bounded and bordered. Authorities and nations have created themselves through such bordering in maps of terrain. Similarly, languages and cultures have created themselves through dictionaries and grammars, maps of language. But discourse is far less bounded and bordered.

Those who praise lines describe themselves as realists, recognising that boundaries are protective; physical technologies and mental representations have been engineered to foster community premised on keeping the stranger at bay. Behind the line the work of mental and cultural production of community is fostered and discourse is its key tool. But all lines have far away and close up zones, and these borderlands and their unique practices are infecting how we talk and think today. In cultural terms border zones operate like unplanned versions of a Special Economic Zone, Industrial Park or Estate, Free Trade Zone or Free Port. These are geographic areas removed from the normal operation of laws in a given country to experimentally introduce new practices in a controlled environment or to attract but control foreign direct investment. Usually they are for free market-oriented production in a socialist centrally planned economy. China created

Special Economic Zones under Deng Xiaoping during the 1980s. Border zones allow the presence of the other, the outsider, behind the line, and their hybridity makes them appear like culturally experimental zones, paving the way for the rapid and deep trans-nationalism that is irresistibly upon us. The cultural code-switching required of us is already challenging, but it will deepen and expand. Code-switching marks the trans-nationalism of the world today, and increasingly *mestizo* lives are the likely destiny of most of those at school, making redundant Talleyrand's prescription that equal citizenship depends on cultural sameness. Ironically, as Gloria Anzaldúa perceived, *La Frontera* has spread everywhere, our ways of talking are increasingly marked by the local in its proliferating multilingualism even as we are linked inexorably to the global. Border zones have had this incubating effect, pioneering forms of social pluralism that then ooze into the hinterland spaces well behind boundary lines, where there is anxiety and patrolling, for fear of their contamination (Fig. 12).



LEFT

[Fig. 12] *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader.*

BORDER ZONES ALLOW THE PRESENCE OF THE OTHER, THE OUTSIDER, BEHIND THE LINE, AND THEIR HYBRIDITY MAKES THEM APPEAR LIKE CULTURALLY EXPERIMENTAL ZONES

## THE HUMANITIES LINE

The Australian Academy of the Humanities has been called upon in recent years to defend its turf, to defend the humanities line. A dispassionate look at the past twenty years shows the Academy was open to the 'new humanities' in the late 1980s, to the 'studies' and 'schools' approach of the 1990s that seemed to so seriously challenge its disciplinary basis, to inter-disciplinarity, trans-disciplinarity and multi-disciplinarity in the past decade, and all along to critique, both fair and foul.

Our next challenge comes from the border merging of globalisation, the trans-nationalism galloping across all the spaces once thought to be securely bound and structured by borders. Gloria Anzaldúa offers one way to re-conceive border zones, reinterpreting their lawlessness as the genesis of new formulations, some of which prosper and others die.

Like the rulers of Old Siam, we need to prepare maps to depict and help navigate the new conceptual and activity spaces that are upon us. For Western scholars operating in institutions

steeped in Western epistemological practices this will involve new knowledge practices and discipline combinations that arise when the inexorable and immense multiculturalism our disciplines have kept at bay is no longer resistible. We will not then require mere technical skills of cartography and design, since the merged world that is emerging will impose a bigger adjustment than any we have prepared for.

My stories about South Texas, about Thailand, about Tiger Woods or Gloria Anzaldúa, about *Transfronterizo* and Mr and Mrs Andrews, can be replicated everywhere, and applied to our disciplines, their boundaries and relations. I haven't even mentioned the fundamental dislocation to our literate bound lives as the voice retrieval of information will begin to transform for the first time in a millennium in the West the taken-for-granted hierarchy between literacy and speech, and with it every assumption on which universities flow and float. But these are the new borderlines for the humanities. What the humanities offers as a way to understand them, cannot be replicated by any other method of study.



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