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INTRODUCTION: BOUNDARIES IN THEORY AND HISTORY

By Regenia Gagnier

> [The philosopher Dugald Stewart], wrote Carlyle, "does not enter on the field to till it; he only encompasses it with fences, invites cultivators, and drives away intruders; often . . . he is reduced to long arguments with the passsers-by, to prove that it *is* a field, that this so highly prized domain of his is, in truth, soil and substance, not clouds and shadow."[1] (qtd. in Beer 2)

I. Theory of Boundaries

WHEN ANGELIQUE RICHARDSON AND I began collecting the essays included here, we were interested to see how recent theorists of boundaries like Audre Lorde (hyphenated identities), Gloria Anzaldua (borderlands), Donna Haraway (cyborg), J-F Lyotard (the in-between), or Jacques Derrida (deconstruction) fared in relation to classic theorists of boundaries like Aristotle, Hegel, Marx, and Darwin. We found that while the field of Victorian Studies has absorbed the theory, current practitioners may refer little to past or present theoretical masters. Rather they describe which boundaries were salient to the Victorians and why; when they were permeable and how; and who enforced them and to what ends. The essays in this volume focus on specific boundaries and amass a wealth of detailed knowledge about them. They include the boundaries or boundlessness of London and her suburbs (Parrinder, Cunningham); transnational or deterritorialized boundaries of empire (Spear and Meduri); psychological boundaries (Rylance, Trotter); boundaries between body and soul (Moran) and living and dead (Robson); generic boundaries (Barzilai, Howsam, Small, Toker); boundaries of popular representation between art and politics (Ledger, Livesey); and boundaries between humans, animals, and machines (Joseph and Sussman). The essays here interrogate boundaries historically and pragmatically, with a high tolerance of the in-between or queer, to which I shall return below.

Yet merely listing the kinds of boundaries that scholars seize upon when asked how the Victorians divided or partitioned their world exposes the danger of such a collection as this one. The boundaries are physical/geographical and conceptual, clear and blurred, hard and permeable, conventional and defined by essential differences. While it seems both unnecessary and unwise to attempt to summarize the individual essays focusing in detail on specific boundaries, an introduction such as this can attempt to situate the study of

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Victorian boundaries in a larger contemporary discussion of boundaries, to ask how the salient Victorian boundaries compare with salient twenty-first century boundaries, and to interrogate the concept of boundary itself.

In 1991, I summarized the then state-of-the-art discourse on boundary construction (Gagnier, 1991 55–98). Donna Haraway had signaled three boundary breakdowns causing considerable stress in late twentieth-century life, in which the meaning of life – that is, of the word *life* – was part of the stress. Those boundary breakdowns were between the human and the animal, the human/animal and machine, and, more generally, the physical and the non-physical. Biology and evolutionary theory had claimed that human and nonhuman animals shared not only ancestry but also language, tool use, and social behavior, and animal rightists repudiated the need for a separation between them. The distinction between organism and machine had been challenged by Artificial Intelligence and the mechanical prolongation of life by medicine. The distinction between physical and nonphysical had been further eroded by modern microelectronics. This boundary breakdown, one of the material sources of what was called the *postmodern condition*, had made scholars sensitive to cultural variation in boundary construction.

Also in the 1990s, California published *The Boundaries of Humanity* (Sheehan and Sosna 1991) on humans, animals, and machines, just as transgenics were beginning to press on the boundaries between species. Since 1991, biological techno-science has gained ascendency over physics as the sexy science in providing figures for modern or postmodern life, with concepts of recombinance[2] (from DNA) and genomics or geno-semantics (from the genome) influencing the way we think about crops, individuals, social life, and the global market (Egenis, Gagnier 2003, Haraway). Fantasies of the customized meal ("Have it your way"), the customized self ("Be all that you can be"), the GenRich Society ("designer babies") culminate in what is evidently the mother of all biological fantasies: the virtual sex or auto-romance that is the grail at the end of virtual reality's quest. The wealth fueling the web began with war or defense funding and now grows with the sex industry. The dream is the opposite of the Victorian flaneur's, who walked the streets and watched the world around him. Now, the environment is in the head of the artificial lover, immobile but no longer bounded by location. Tourists need not travel, but the holiday comes to them. With virtual reality we can experience the obliteration of geographical boundaries, an Ibiza of the mind. After Darwin, species that were thought to be distinct in genus and difference became connected and indistinct when we extended their profiles through space and time. Just as Darwinian evolution was thought to disrupt boundaries irreparably between species and between the past and present (Richardson), so current technology is thought to disrupt natural boundaries. Such that some postmodernists think that nature's boundaries are obsolescent.

The collapse of boundaries between humans, animals, and machines that Haraway has claimed to characterize postmodern life is premised on the broadly modern concept of natural kinds. Traditional natural kinds were bounded by essential differences. It is the loss of such essential differences that for Haraway signals the boundary breakdowns of postmodernity, and indeed rarely can one find boundaries discussed without discussion of kinds. In the genealogy of classification that precedes Plato and continues through Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689, e.g., II.i.6), Ian Hacking locates William Whewell's *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* (1840, esp. Book VIII, ch. i, sec. 4) and John Stuart Mill's *A System of Logic* (1843, esp. Book I, vii, sec. 4) as fixed points that distinguished natural from conventional kinds (Hacking). Whewell made "kind" into a technical term of English

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philosophy. Mill put it that differences were made by nature while the recognition of those differences as grounds of classification and of naming was the work of "man." Hacking's work shows that the history is not merely academic or philosophical but also institutional: Whewell, who gave us the technical stand-alone usage of the word *kind*, also invented the word *scientist*, the species that increasingly came to claim authority to determine what kinds were natural. While Hacking inclines toward the view that the work of natural kinds that absorbed British philosophy from the 1840s is coming to an end, other philosophers of science (esp. Dupré 1993, 2002) find that many natural distinctions remain useful, often and perhaps especially when they are "folk" or "commonsensical," and Dupré typically uses commonsense natural boundaries and kinds to deflate the pretensions of science to a monopoly on truth or to celebrate the plurality of ways there are to describe or divide the world.

In "Is 'Natural Kind' a Natural Kind Term?" Dupré opts for a nontraditional, i.e., non-essentialist, retention of the term natural kind that is primarily methodological: a

> Factors of many kinds may be needed to explain the path that a scientific research programme follows through erotetic [question-driven] space. . . . Relative to a sufficiently well-articulated set of aims of enquiry there may very well be, and often is, a best way of classifying the phenomena within a domain. Relative to such a specific enquiry, it seems sensible to say that such a best classification distinguishes natural kinds. The pluralism . . . implies that there will usually be no unique set of natural kinds, and different natural classifications may often overlap and cross-cut one another. The natural kinds of ecology, say, may not coincide with the natural kinds of phylogeny. But natural kinds in this sense will necessarily fail to meet traditional desiderata. They will not point towards the essence of a thing, and they will only tell how a thing should be classified for a certain purpose, not how it should be classified, period. . . .
>
> The classifications I have discussed . . . are grounded in factors as diverse as physical structure, historical origin, role in a system of interdependent entities, and so on. These share nothing but the bare methodological essence of playing the important roles they do in the theories that they inform. (Dupré 2002 105, 122–23)

Whatever professional philosophy finally decides about the status of natural or essential boundaries, genealogists of taxonomy have shown that the nineteenth century was exercised about boundaries that seemed self-evidently natural but were nonetheless threatened as if they were merely conventional: gender, racial, ethnic or religious, class, and species boundaries. "Language is our Rubicon," the German philologist F. Max Muller optimistically announced, "which no brute will dare to cross" (Navarette 185), making speech the *differentia specifica* of humans. Today the concept of boundary like that of natural kind or essence ceases to be a Rubicon that divides definitively. We are often less interested in what the boundary *is* than in what being on or near the boundary entails (Levy 2002).[3] The political theorist William Connolly has written of "the ambiguity of boundaries" in contemporary politics.

> In a world experienced by many to be without a natural design to which they might conform, the function of boundaries becomes highly ambiguous. Boundaries form indispensable protections against violation and violence; but the divisions they sustain also carry cruelty and violence. Boundaries provide pre-conditions of identity, individual agency, and collective action; but they also close off possibilities of being that might otherwise flourish. Boundaries both foster and inhibit freedom; they both protect and violate life.

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> The political question is how to come to terms with the ambiguity of boundaries, how to fight against their sacrifices and violences without sacrificing their advantages altogether. (1995 163)

Connolly discusses the power it takes to impose boundaries, the formation of rough peoples into polises through their establishment, and the complexities that enmesh a state when mobile media like money, goods, labor, capital, and entrepreneurial activity flow across its boundaries.

Moving from geographical boundaries of the state to the boundaries of identity, Connolly considers a pluralized culture's most sensitive political crux as "the tendency by established identities to fundamentalize what they are by demonizing or rendering needy what they are not" (1985 194), highlighting the ambiguity of boundaries, that they bond and make intelligible but they also divide and enforce enmity. He concludes that "Boundaries abound. So do the ambiguities traversing them. . . . Once you acknowledge the difficulty of defining in advance precisely when, where, and how democratic exclusions must be enforced, the foremost challenge today becomes to multiply boundaries in imperfect correspondence with one another – so that lines of division across one dimension do not correspond too closely with those across others" (1995 198). In Connolly's most recent work (2003), he has used the figure of "porous membrane" to conceptualize boundaries, which suggests not a firm obstacle but something that allows us to situate ourselves in relation to it, on either side, or even passing to and fro through it.

From Plato's Forms and Aristotle's Categories, to Locke's distinctions between real and nominal essences, to Whewell's and Mill's natural kinds, and finally to Connolly's, Dupré's, and Hacking's work on the permeability, construction, and usefulness of boundaries, we can move from the absoluteness of boundaries that divide natural kinds demarcated by essences to the function of the boundary, or what it means to inhabit the bounded space. In the boundary between the disabled and the able-bodied, we can only be disabled in relation to a certain function. The lame are disabled in vertical buildings only until we have access to elevators. We are all disabled from flying like birds until we gain access to the skies through flying machines. We are mentally disabled without access to information technology. The boundaries between the able and disabled may be more about access than kind or essence (see Dupré 1998 and Joseph and Sussman below). The same could also be said of the boundaries between genders, races, classes, and religions. They may be more about access than essence.

II. Victorian Social Boundaries from Taxonomy to Statistics

HAVING BRIEFLY CONSIDERED where we are in contemporary thought about boundaries, we might return to the Victorians. The Victorians were obsessed with mapping, charting, categorizing, and Beatrice Webb attributed it to anxieties about access. "Detailed descriptions of the life and labour of the people in all its various aspects," wrote Webb of the 1880s,

> sensational or scientific, derived from personal observation or statistical calculation, become a characteristic feature of the publications of the [1880s], whether newspapers or magazines, plays or novels, the reports of philanthropic organisations or the proceedings of learned societies. It may be said that this novel concentration of attention on the social condition of the people was due neither to intellectual curiosity nor to the spirit of philanthropy, but rather to a panic fear of the newly enfranchised democracy. (Webb 150)

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Charles Frederick Gurney Masterman's *From the Abyss: Of the Inhabitants by One of Them* (1902) posited that urban population growth had caused the panic. The wide perception of an unintelligible "abyss" had caused the liberal Victorians to analyze, categorize, and map as a way to buttress the individual and space around him: "This, then, is the first thing to note of us, not our virtue or vices, beauty, apathy, or knowledge; but our overwhelming, inconceivable number" (Keating 66). In 1851, the population of England and Wales was nearly 18 million; by 1901, 32.5 million (Scotland: 2.8 million in 1851 and 4.4 million in 1901) (Mitchell 8).[4] London grew from a population of 2,685,000 in 1851 to 6,586,000 in 1901, with Britain's next largest city, Manchester, at 303,000 and 645,000, respectively (Mitchell 75). If one compares London's 6.5 million at the fin de siècle to Leningrad's 1.2 million or Paris's 2.7 million (Mitchell 75), one gets some sense of the magnitude that led to perceptions of boundlessness described in the urban (geography), urbane (psychology), and suburban (lifestyle) essays by Parrinder, Trotter, and Cunningham below.

Statistics was the technology for coping with these numbers, and its development in the course of the nineteenth century reformed conceptual boundaries. Taxonomies tried to fit people into kinds. Taxonomic statistics quantified taxonomic information, as in Henry Mayhew's calculations of people in different trades. Purer statistics developed with arbitrary categories, such as income or age distributions. From the 1830s, the establishment of statistical societies and city police departments accompanied discourse on transgression of boundaries through crime, prostitution, infectious disease, and degeneracy. Mayhew's studies of the trades in the *Morning Chronicle* from 1849–50 and their sequel *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861–62) on metropolitan streetfolk providing goods and services to the very poor followed three decades of investigation of population growth: statistical societies, Royal Commissions, Select Committees on the administration of Poor Laws and the Health of Towns. Scientific taxonomies of the working population had been constructed as early as the 1830s by Charles Babbage and Andrew Ure, then by Prince Albert for the Great Exhibition, and finally the Census. Friedrich Engels divided workers between skilled (unionized) and unskilled. John Stuart Mill had divided labor between 1) producers of material objects, 2) educators, who conferred on human beings qualitites that rendered them serviceable to themselves and others and 3) servitors, or those who gave pleasure or averted pain without leaving a permanent acquisition. Mayhew added "auxiliaries," or those who assisted the producers, and settled on boundaries between Enrichers, Auxiliaries, Benefactors, and Servitors.

Mayhew's childhood aspiration was to be a research chemist, the taxonomer par excellence dividing the world into its composite elements, which aspiration resulted in a lifelong pursuit of scientific induction. But as his ethnographic studies increased, he came to see that the boundary between needlewoman and prostitute was but a porous membrane frequently traversed when wages dropped below subsistence. Just as there was no essential boundary that kept the cholera out of the rich employer's home, there was no essential boundary between the women, for they could be one and the same; the boundary was only between her roles or status. Only the weather divided a worker's status among the Unemployed, Dependent, or Residuum (Charles Booth's Class B [see below], casual earners or the very poor). A frozen river could put builders out of work and force their wives to glut the market, causing large-scale movement downwards: a piano-maker could be demoted to cabinet-making, to street-selling, and finally to the docks, warehouse, and whorehouse, where it was crowded at the bottom.

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The Enlightenment practices of classification analyzed in Michel Foucault's *Order of Things* did not culminate in Mayhew's case in a predictable power-knowledge but in the final obliteration of class boundaries: distinctions multiplied until all that remained were not the abstract categories of the political economists or charity organizations but the unique "character" singularly embedded in its world, i.e., a narrative something like literature. The first volume of *London Labour and the London Poor*, "Of the London Streetfolk," offered "six distinct genera or kinds" of streetsellers, streetbuyers, streetfinders, streetperformers, street artizans and street laborers. In volume 2, Mayhew provided a chart showing their environment, "Showing the Quantity of Refuse Bought, Collected, or Found, in the Streets of London" representing the monumental circulation and recycling of everything from horsedung and cattle-droppings to copper to women's stays to fishskins in tabular form. Was he a taxonomist gone mad, like Foucault's description of the aphasiac: "and so the sick mind continues to infinity, creating groups then dispersing them again . . . teetering finally on the brink of anxiety" (xviii)? Or was Mayhew the deepest of historians carefully placing the makers and their manufacture in the densest of worlds?

By the end of the century Mayhew's successor Charles Booth produced the Poverty Maps (1889–99), hand-colored to show seven classes in the metropolis, street by street: the lowest class, vicious, semi-criminal; the very poor, casual employment; the poor; the mixed, some comfortable, others poor; the fairly comfortable, good ordinary wages; the middle-class, well-to-do; and upper-middle and upper classes, wealthy. Booth's investigators – including the young Beatrice Potter (later Webb) – accompanied School Board Visitors and policemen on their beats, visiting what they perceived as naturally bounded workplaces, homes, and places of worship. Booth equated qualitative evidence with sensationalism and insisted that he "would make use of no fact to which I cannot give a quantitative value" (Booth 1: 6). The survey data were used to generate statistical evidence. After Booth's survey the poor came to be represented as statistical tables, poverty cycles, and subsistence levels. The sociologist ceased to be a slumming social explorer navigating an abyss and became the disinterested interpreter of abstract data.

Karl Marx did not categorize people, even workers and capitalists, with boundaries between them so much as show the social processes that threw them on one side or the other of the boundary. Labor could be creative or alienated; labor power could be a capacity or a commodity. The producer who could not sell a product of his labor must sell his power to labor. An object could be a use-value or exchange value depending on what you did with it. Money could be cash or capital. Capitalism transformed natural capacities and essence into something else and broke down boundaries hitherto firm: "All that is solid melts into air" (Marx and Engels 476), or "Do not I, who thanks to money am capable of all that the human heart longs for, possess all human capacities? Does not my money therefore transform all my incapacities into their contrary?" (Marx and Engels 103–4). With Marx we are in the modern or postmodern arena where the boundary ceases to be a natural Rubicon that divides definitively and becomes a product of history.

III. The Boyhood of Raleigh

IN JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS'S THE BOYHOOD OF RALEIGH (1870), the salient boundaries are between the exotic man-sailor and the aristocratic English boys; between the parrot (nature) on one side and the toy ship (culture) on the other; between the land and the sea, and

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Figure 5. Sir John Everett Millais, *The Boyhood of Raleigh*. Oil on canvas, 1870. Courtesy of the Tate Gallery. © Tate, London 2004.

the sea and the skies beyond; and between the representation and the real as emphasized by the broken frame (Figure 5). The boundary that is most likely to represent a real or "natural" one, that between land and sea in the form of a coastline, illustrates our point. A coast is a real or natural boundary in that it is made by nature and you can fall off it and drown. It is indeterminate and conventional in that its length depends on how it is measured. The Cornish coastline is 258 miles to circumambulate; measured in fractals it is indefinitely long, for each little bay or inlet has gorges and rivulets that augment the length ad infinitum.

What might have been in the minds of the Victorians who viewed *The Boyhood of Raleigh* from 1870? Perhaps the sailor's pointing finger indicated that emigration from the UK and Ireland increased from 1.3 million to 3.1 million between 1850 and 1901 (Mitchell 129)? That imports rose during that period from £103m to £485m and exports from £71m to £255m (Mitchell 575)? That in 1850 Britain's main trading partners were Germany, India, and the United States; but whereas in 1850 the USA received £15m of export and in 1900 £20m, by 1900 Britain imported from the US £139m (Mitchell 661–63)?

Wolfgang Schivelbusch has argued that with the railway and its passengers came a world-historical world-view, the panorama. In 1850, there were 9,797 kilometres of open railway line in Great Britain with 67.4 million passengers (Mitchell 674); in 1900, 30,079 kilometres with 1 billion, 114 million passengers (Mitchell 702). Yet the power of steam in the cultural imaginary was also linked to seafaring and empire, hence the boys' own sea-yarns, and

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the spectacular horrors of the *Lusitania* and the *Titanic*. The romantic Sir Walter Raleigh (1552–1618) was the naval Queen Elizabeth I's courtier, navigator, and poet, who suppressed Ireland and despoiled Trinidad and Orinoco, lands "beyond" of some interest to Queen Victoria's subjects. In 1850, the UK registered 24,797 merchant sail ships with a net capacity of 3,397,000 tons and 1,187 steamships, and by 1899, sail had diminished to 11,566 and steam increased to 8,838 (Mitchell 714, 720). Viewers might have been vaguely conscious that transport had become the second largest employer of men after manufacturing, with a labor force in transport in 1851 of 433,000 males and 13,000 females and in 1901 1,409,000 males and 27,000 females (Mitchell 160).

Looking at the boys and the sailor, viewers may also have been vaguely conscious that in 1850 there were 250,000 children and teachers in schools and by 1900 4,754,000 (Mitchell 872, 879). Millais himself, born in the port of Southampton was at eleven the youngest student ever at the Royal Academy, and exhibited his first painting, *Pizarro Seizing the Inca of Peru*, at seventeen. Millais's own life, like Raleigh's and the conquistadors he painted, shattered many boundaries: artistic (with the revolutionary Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood), social (with his marriage to John Ruskin's ex-wife Euphemia), and economic (with the popularity of his late painting *Bubbles* [1886], which came to advertise soap throughout the empire). *Bubbles*, with its commercialism, by Millais, President of the Royal Academy, also shattered the boundaries of taste and access. Art with its aura had entered the age of mechanical reproduction, and would never be bound to the museum again.

Boundaries seem inevitably to point beyond themselves, as in the image of masses flowing over London Bridge, or the growth of the suburbs, or the sublimity of the national debt in trade. The sailor's straight finger pointing Beyond has stayed in the memory of a restaurateur in Edinburgh. On a brilliant white card advertising The Apartment Restaurant only the pointing sailor is extracted, nothing left of the boys, or boat, or land and sea, only the sailor pointing with the caption "A sudden Manhattan of the mind." For imaginative culture, one of the most profound meanings of boundary is that it points beyond itself. In Edinburgh, "a sudden Manhattan of the mind."

Postscript: Queerness, or Toward a Phenomenology of Fuzzy Boundaries

THE FIRST THING that we tend to notice about people is whether they are male or female, hence the feeling of "queerness" that goes back at least to late Victorian literature when we are confronted by persons whose gender is obscure. That is, historically, queerness is an affective reaction of one person to another rather than an essence of the person reacted to. In the early 1980s some of my students in the San Francisco Bay Area insisted that they preferred the term *queer* to Gay or Lesbian precisely because they enjoyed the liminality of not identifying their gender or sexuality. This is the way the term was used in late Victorian literature: one's unidentifiability makes others feel "queer." The 1890s, like the 1990s, took pleasure in the in-between and the ambiguous, that which did not map onto identifiable categories, even when they called it degeneration, devolution, or abjection (Hurley 1996). Instances of morphing characters in Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1890) or "protoplasmic reversion" in *The Three Imposters* (1895) evoked "queerness," which described how one felt when the sight before one could not be identified within one's conceptual frame. The instances of queerness in late Victorian Gothic were explained thereafter by Freud in terms of the Uncanny or

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unheimlich, which Freud also located as a dis-ease in the subject rather than the object: what is familiar and old – established in the mind – and has become alienated from it through the power of repression (Navarette 198).

Yet when I observed this common thought-experiment, that the first thing we notice about a person is gender, I was contradicted by an economist who told me that the first thing she noted about another was whether she could kill it, or it kill her – a throwback, I thought, to a Hobbesian war of all against all. We divide people into groups for diverse purposes and functions.

A toleration or awareness of the pluralism of reality, or our constructedness of systems of categorization and boundary, is characteristic of the discipline of literary and cultural criticism. In a thought-provoking collection on disciplines at the Victorian fin de siècle, Amanda Anderson and Joseph Valente (2002) have shown that the boundaries between the disciplines were always porous membranes through which specialized knowledge, institutional practice, and social status passed. Rather than police firm boundaries, we should claim this tolerance, flexibility, and critique as the cherished state of the arts.

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NOTES

1. I am grateful to David Amigoni for drawing my attention to Carlyle's description in connection with the concept of boundaries.
2. Recombinance is a figure taken from genetics emphasizing rearrangement of parts rather than mutational change. Biotechnologists design new forms by recombining DNA.
3. Levy has posed the question thus, using theory of organizational behavior.
4. All statistics in this Introduction are from Mitchell.

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