



## **Purple Mountains**

—Heather Snell

My earliest memory of the negative side of borders is vivid. I remember sitting in a classroom using crayon to add colour to what was otherwise a fairly bland, colouring-book-standard drawing of a valley, which, if the mountains in the background were any indication, belonged more to the westerly province of British Columbia, Canada, than it did to the southern Ontario home in which I lived at that time. Lucky for me, my family had recently moved from British Columbia to Ontario, and so I knew what colour the mountains in the background should be: a luminous purple. Anyone who has spent time in Kelowna, British Columbia, knows that unless they are obscured by mist, the mountains that ring the Okanagan Valley often appear this colour at a distance even though if one were to see them up close they might actually be a motley of grey, green, yellow, amber, copper, black, beige, bronze, and brown. Even among these mountains, the colours of each would differ from one another when seen up close. Not all mountains look the same, even when they are ringing the same valley. When one considers the plethora of mountains around the world, the number of colours mountains wear multiply further. Depending on who is doing the looking, mountains can be *any* colour. Just imagine how they might appear to a bee! And who's to say that the colouring-book-standard valley drawing we were given is a deliberate

attempt to represent the precise valley I had inhabited just months before? The valley on that piece of paper could have been anywhere, and so the possibilities for the array of colours the mountains in the background could be were infinite.

The reason I remember putting colour into this drawing so vividly is that my luminous purple did not satisfy my teacher, who proclaimed in a tone that discouraged any argumentation that “mountains are brown.” I’ve never forgotten that decisive statement, uttered with such authority, as if some law had been laid down about what colour mountains are. I guess one of the reasons I remember this incident so well is that I knew in my heart of hearts that my teacher was wrong. Just plain WRONG. I knew what colour mountains should be, because I had lived among them. From my vantage point in the Okanagan Valley, I had grown up in their shadow. They had protected me from adverse weather as well as the pterosaurs who, wary, perhaps, of those intimidating peaks, would merely glide over, rather than swoop down into, the valley. I looked at the mountains often for this reason, and that’s why I also knew that on a good day, my mountainous friends shimmered in a luminous purple. Who was this teacher, insisting that mountains are brown? I still wonder why the teacher was so certain that brown was the colour of mountains. Did they see mountains as so much dirt, brown being the dominant colour of the earth in Newmarket, Ontario? Did they think that all rocks are brown? Had they never seen white clays, red hematites, or pink andalusites? Did they not know that green plants and wildflowers of many colours can thrive on mountains, altering further their appearance when seen from a distance? Did they not know that depending on the amount of water or ice in the air, and depending on who is doing the looking and from what vantage point, that mountains can look just about any colour regardless of what they are made of and what kinds of flora and fauna dwell on them? Had they never learned the lesson of perspective? I was less bothered by the “colour within the lines” rule than I was by the demand to colour in those mountains brown. It felt like a betrayal of my own memory. Looking back with the benefit of hindsight, I am less outraged by the rejection of the colour purple than I am unsettled by the fact that my early education was so invested in encouraging an uncritical acceptance of the classificatory systems that characterize the settler colonial society in which I live.

Moving from purple mountains to settler colonialism may appear to some to be a giant and implausible leap. Yet putting colour into a drawing that already sets the boundaries of what can be and how it should look is undeniably one of the first lessons in the kinds of borders on which a settler colonial society is founded and on which it continues to rely in the twenty-first century. The fact that both settler colonialism and early childhood lessons in borders begin with such a seemingly innocuous subject—a landscape—is telling. To claim a landscape by labelling it was an important element of the colonizing mission. What I was meant to absorb in that stuffy classroom so many years ago was not that mountains are brown, but that everything and everyone has its place. While my place in Canadian society was fairly privileged as a result of my whiteness and lack of poverty, I too had *my* place as a child in that classroom. If the teacher says the mountains are brown, then the mountains are brown. It did not matter what the mountains had looked like in my memory; in that classroom, on that day, everyone’s mountains were to look the same. We were to look the same, even and perhaps especially when we did not. That was the point. The teacher themselves may have been oblivious about what they were really teaching, for they too had no doubt been indoctrinated in the importance of borders during their own early childhood education. In instructing me to recolour my mountains brown, they were simply preparing me to fit myself into a world where everything and everyone is sorted, and they were doing so largely along the same lines they themselves had been indoctrinated.

If the many exercises involving classifying naturally occurring things throughout my childhood is any indication, nature proved an ideal ground on which to indoctrinate young people into the classification systems that permeate the adult settler colonial world. Not only were we invited to put the “right” colours into drawings of landscapes, but we were also thereby encouraged to think of the planet earth as an entity that is perfectly ordered. Dividing the earth’s climatic cycles into four different seasons was part of this enculturation: at one point we were given four sheets of paper and told to draw a different scene for each season. We had to use the “right” colours and iconography for each: winter is blue, white, and snowflakey; spring is all yellows, greens, and tulips; summer is cool pastels and beaches; and autumn is earth tones and the maple leaf, which, not coincidentally, also happens to be at the centre of the Canadian flag. It’s a short step from the four seasons to nationalism. Slick. Later we had

to memorize the names of planets and the order by which they should be listed depending on the orbit they trace in relation to the sun; this exercise too emphasized order while also cultivating in us an awareness of the larger universe we inhabit. We were not told about the ongoing debates about what could be classified as a planet and what could not, or would not, be classified because it defied the classificatory system. Anomalies and ambiguities were not part of our education. I realize now that the adults in charge of us may have feared that those things that did not fit would point to weaknesses in the classificatory system and, by extension, in the social order itself. Since their job was to ensure that we inserted ourselves into this order as quickly and smoothly as possible, the last thing they may have wanted to do is expose the contradictions at its heart.

In her famous 1966 social anthropological study *Purity and Danger*, however, Mary Douglas argues that, far from weakening our confidence in classificatory systems, anomalies and ambiguities actually enhance it. She elaborates that these can, after all, be ignored, condemned, or incorporated (Douglas 48). Anomalies and ambiguities are, moreover, inevitable since ordering practices actually *produce* disorder: one cannot create a classificatory system that contains categories for everything; the world is way too messy for that. One could go further to argue that if the anomalies and ambiguities that classificatory systems inevitably produce exploded those very systems, then no one would develop such systems in the first place. The whole point of classification is to create the illusion of order in a world that is essentially disordered, and what better than a little disorder to enhance the value of order? One of Douglas's central theses is that there is no such thing as dirt, meaning that what counts as dirt depends on "the classifications in use" (Douglas xviii), and these in turn depend on culture. Douglas sees this trend as applying not just to "primitive cultures" but modern European ones as well:

<sup>1</sup> Later in her preface, Douglas remarks that "[t]heories of primitive mentality are not very current now" (xx).

Earlier writings on primitive religion found taboos alien and irrational. The concept of dirt makes a bridge between our contemporary culture and those other cultures where behaviour that blurs the great classifications of the universe is tabooed. We denounce it by calling it dirty and dangerous; they taboo it. (xi)<sup>1</sup>

Both primitive and modern systems are symbolic, as that which makes something dirty has nothing to do with its intrinsic properties and everything to do with its relationship to the borders that separate one category from another. Notwithstanding the influence that science has had on modern European attitudes toward dirt, it is what dirt symbolizes rather than its containment of dangerous bacteria that is key to understanding pollution beliefs and behaviour in modern European societies (Douglas 44). Something becomes dirty in these societies only when it defies norms or can be included in more than one category that comprises the system in use.

*Purity and Danger* remains a key text for anyone thinking about the boundaries humans draw between purity and impurity and, in accordance with these boundaries, the adoption of pollution beliefs and behaviour. Remarkably, Douglas's book has been influential not just in anthropological circles but in non-anthropological ones as well. Many critics have noted the extent to which it has been brought into conversation with social realms in which purity and danger are particularly salient; these include, but are not limited to, architecture, urban sanitation, and public administration and politics.<sup>2</sup> In his essay on how Douglas's work might be useful for thinking about urban architecture, Ben Campkin asserts that *Purity and Danger* "went on to become an exemplar of the power of theory to cut across disciplines, methodological approaches, and intellectual positions . . ." (47). There are, of course, problems with Douglas's often contradictory theorization of dirt, as Campkin himself notes, and these problems also necessarily permeate the work of others who have built on her work. With some revision, *Purity and Danger* is nevertheless useful for thinking about how the seemingly innocuous borders imposed on young people are connected to the much larger borders that divide any given society. A case in point is what Robbie Duschinsky calls a "regime of enculturation," which can be seen as a training in innocence ("Childhood" 766). Although Duschinsky characterizes enculturation as such in an analysis of Frank Wedekind's 1903 *Mine-Haha*—a text that "gives an account of the education received by a group of affluent girls at a boarding school from the perspective of one of the girls . . ." (765)—it captures the subtle ways in which young people are encouraged to see the world through the classificatory systems in operation in their societies. An education in borders can be seen as a training in innocence because the idea is

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Duschinsky, "Politics"; Patterson; and Campkin.

to see borders as natural and to abide by them. Yet when one considers the way in which the figure of the child is constructed as always already innocent in modern European societies, a contradiction arises at the heart of the enculturating process, or at least in the one that appears in Wedekind's text, namely that innocence is not simply there, in the child, but rather, it is produced within the child since "[o]nly those forms and processes that will contribute to the embodiment of an ideal modern adulthood—socially, ethnically, morally, economically, sexually, culturally—are treated as unmarked characteristics of innocence" (Duschinsky, "Childhood" 768). In this context, dirt can be seen as that which is most distant from "a natural purity that has been placed—performatively—as the intrinsic property of a subject or of reality" (Duschinsky, "Childhood" 777). Echoing the popularization of the German word "Kindergarten"—meaning "children's garden" in English—enculturation itself can be compared to a protective and "natural" enclosure in which the adult is the embodiment of the culture the child is expected to cultivate within itself so as to be seen as one who belongs. Duschinsky's argument is far more complex than I have room to do justice to here, but it points to the importance of interrogating borders as a means of training young people to take up their allotted places in the social order. On the one hand, the borders that make up classificatory systems can be viewed as useful tools through which to understand a complex world; on the other, they can be extremely dangerous. What if to belong, one feels pressured to accept the borders drawn between people on the basis of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sex, gender, sexual orientation, or culture? To agree with these borders means condoning the negative affect directed at the margins and those who are stuck there. What happens when one refuses to abide by such borders? Depending on one's identity, the consequences can be severe. The borders that separate the pure from the impure are profoundly political even as they may appear to be entirely natural.

Not surprisingly, given the role that borders play in human societies, we received several submissions in response to our call for papers for this issue. We include eleven articles and six reviews that to us represent a wide range of approaches to borders as these pertain to young people and their cultures. Moving from the border that separates the child from the adult to young migrants' difficult encounters with immigration law, this issue explores the role that both real and symbolic borders play in the lives of young people internationally.

Tran Nguyen Templeton and Chris Moffett examine thirty political cartoons that render Trump as a child in “Kid President: The Aesthetics of Childhood in Political Cartoons.” They argue that the cartoonish infantilization of the 45th president of the United States reveals much about the ways in which children are stereotyped in American culture. In their rush to satirize Trump, cartoonists revert to a construction of the child that is dependent on the linear temporality that Madeleine Hunter critiques next in this issue, reifying it as savage and deficient in the process. Templeton and Moffett explore the child/adult binary but go on to connect this binary to the one that separates humans and animals, arguing that a radical rethinking of the borders on which we tend to rely is an urgent task.

Madeleine Hunter’s “Only Connect: Children’s Literature and Its Theory in the Extended Present” explores the borders separating past and present and, concomitantly, child and adult. The very construction of the child relies on a notion of time as linear. The various points along the age chain, moreover, are imbued with meaning. Hunter reflects on the trend in children’s literature scholarship toward a notion of time grounded in simultaneity and a kinship model that emphasizes similarities rather than radical differences between children and adults. She argues that such a model promises a departure from constructions of children as disempowered while also allowing for insights into broader transformations in approaches to time as the world becomes more tightly connected as a result of technological, economic, social, and cultural change. It also allows scholars to privilege “presentness” between children and adults as opposed to the temporal gap that yawns between them in a difference model heavily reliant on linearity. Hunter interrogates the kinship model, weighing its limitations against its potential to invite a productive examination of the relationship between the constructed figures of child and adult.

Emily Bent’s “Unfiltered and Unapologetic: March for Our Lives and the Political Boundaries of Age” also reflects on the border that separates children from adults. Bent analyzes the speeches, reflections, and protest signs authored by young people who participated in the March for Our Lives movement. This movement emerged in the wake of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on 14 February 2018. Bent argues that despite, or perhaps because of, the problems it engenders, the child–adult border contains the possibility of political empowerment for young people who are aware of how it has traditionally

rendered them politically invisible. The March for Our Lives activists used age-based politics to simultaneously exert agency and highlight the failure of adults to protect them. In the process, they demonstrated the limitations of borders.

In “‘I See Nothing but a Fence of Tears’: The Impact of Australia’s Immigration Detention and Border Protection Policies on the Asylum Seeker Child’s Geographies of Hope and Hopelessness,” Dani McAlister, Harriot Beazley, and Wynonna Raha examine child-authored materials, including poems, letters, and drawings, to explore how asylum-seeking children detained in Nauru cope with Australia’s controversial border protection policy. While the Australia Human Rights Commission has conducted two national inquiries into the effects of how the horrific conditions of the country’s detention centres affect the children living in them, scant attention has been paid to the strategies that these children use to survive difficult circumstances. McAlister, Beazley, and Raha redress this gap, showing how attention to children’s emotional geographies offers insight into their experiences of offshore immigration detention.

In “Coming of Age in the Rio Grande Valley: Race, Class, Gender, and Generations in Narco Culture,” Rosalynn A. Vega brings together border studies and theories of intersectionality to understand the complexity of social borders in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, an area known for trade in illegal drugs. Here it is not just the United States–Mexico border that affects young people but the borders that arise as a result of narco culture. While there is much attention given to the international border that separates Mexico from the United States, fewer scholars address the role that social borders play in an area that has long been defined by Mexican heritage: the valley was part of Mexico until 2 February 1848, when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo divided the United States and Mexico at the Rio Grande and Gila rivers. On the basis of an ethnographic project conducted in Hidalgo County, Texas, Vega studies the effects of social borders on young people, concluding that their narratives offer a valuable lens through which to understand the unique asymmetrical social relations that have come to characterize the valley.

Gabriel Duckels and Zoe Jaques explore representations of the migrant crisis in several wordless picturebooks in “Visualizing the Voiceless and Seeing the Unspeakable:



Understanding International Wordless Picturebooks about Refugees.” They point out that not all of these books are successful in their attempts to invite young people to develop a culturally sensitive and socially responsible awareness of the plight of migrants. Duckels and Jaques identify two different approaches to rendering this plight in the form of wordless picturebooks that emphasize the unspeakability of trauma even as they attempt to represent it visually: in one approach, the refugee is seen as an object of pity, and in another they are seen as a subject in their own right, with an identity and a history. The authors emphasize that representations of refugee experience in children’s literature do not exist in a vacuum but in relation to a wider circulation of images and stories. Accordingly, they engage in close, formalist readings of the books and connect these to an emerging global iconography around twenty-first-century migration.

In “Reforming Borders of the Imagination: Diversity, Adaptation, Transmediation, and Incorporation in the Global Disney Film Landscape,” Michelle Anya Anjirbag makes a case for the Disney Company’s newfound attentiveness to cultural diversity in films such as *Moana*, *Black Panther*, and *Coco*, at the same time that she problematizes such forays into cultural diversity. Ultimately, Disney incorporates cultures, folding them into both a Magic Kingdom that has come to stand in for childhood itself and a transmedia Disney landscape that ensures maximum profits for every foray into a new imaginary space. When one considers the amount of influence Disney has over their young audience’s view of the world beyond their own backyard, it becomes clear that interrogating its treatment of culture is an important task. Attesting to the care she takes with her subject, Anjirbag gives Disney its due while also troubling the levelling effect its seemingly innocuous engagements have on culture.

Maria Chatzianastasi takes us to the Green Line in “The Role of Borders in the Lives of Greek-Cypriot Enclaved Children in Ira Genakritou’s *Beyond the Barbed Wire*.” The appellation “Green Line” has come to denote the United Nations Buffer Zone that separates Turkish Cypriots in Occupied Cyprus in the north and Greek Cypriots in the Republic of Cyprus in the south. The line was originally drawn in 1964 to bisect Nicosia and select Turkish Cypriot communities in the wake of armed conflict between the two sides, but was expanded significantly in 1974 after the Turkish invasion to include much more than the land

encompassed by the capital and Turkish Cypriot communities. Named after the colour of pencil used to draw it in 1964, the Green Line cuts the island of Cyprus in half. On the ground, the dividing line is marked by a metal fence topped by barbed wire, contributing to a sense of the island as one that is irrevocably wounded. Through an analysis of Ira Genakritou's collection of short stories, *Beyond the Barbed Wire*, Chatzianastasi examines the effect of division on enclaved children, that is, children who belong to Greek-Cypriot families that refused to leave their homes in the north following the ceasefire in 1974.

Christine Singer, Jeanette Steemers, and Naomi Sakr navigate the complex terrain of European film and televisual media that feature recently displaced children, second-generation immigrant children, and children without migration backgrounds in "Representing Childhood and Forced Migration: Narratives of Borders and Belonging in European Screen Content for Children." As with Duckels and Jaques, they take issue with a politics of pity that tends to govern how newly arrived children are constructed in European documentaries and other examples of factual content that engage children's encounters with borders. Using texts featured in the Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project "Collaborative Development of Children's Screen Content in an Era of Forced Migration Flows: Facilitating Arab-European Dialogue," they discuss European screen representations that unsettle rigidly defined borders between displaced children and White European-born children. One of the strategies employed by producers, to which the authors turn near the end of their article, is the depiction of the former as agentic and resourceful subjects. They conclude with a discussion of the struggle for belonging among migrant children and children who were born in Europe, but who have parents with migration backgrounds.

Aneesh Barai examines aerial perspectives in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince* and its film adaptations in "'It's Such a Small Planet, Why Do You Need Borders?': Seeing Flying in *Le Petit Prince* and Its Screen Adaptations." Barai argues that these texts invite young people to see beyond the borders that striate the world. Because Saint-Exupéry enjoyed a career as a mail pilot in the 1920s and 1930s and again as a reconnaissance pilot during the Second World War, all of his novellas are preoccupied with flying. Many of the characters in these novellas are pilots who become used to seeing the earth from above. Rather than

reinforcing the notion of a “god trick” that Donna Haraway argues often accompanies views from on high, Saint-Exupéry’s work uses aerial perspectives to emphasize the importance of connectedness, responsibility, and environmentalism.

In “Good, Mad, or ‘Incurably Bad’: The Borders of Normalcy and Deviance in Film Representations of Sociopathic White Schoolgirls,” Caroline Hamilton-McKenna, Elizabeth Marshall, and Theresa Rogers make a strong argument for a rather conservative treatment of borders in three audiovisual texts that one might expect to trouble them, namely Peter Jackson’s film *Heavenly Creatures*, the HBO TV series *Sharp Objects*, and Cory Finley’s film *Thoroughbreds*. On the surface, these texts may appear to be boundary breaking in their eagerness to depict young female characters who refuse to stay in their allotted place, especially in terms of gender. A reading of these texts that draws on feminist cultural geography, however, suggests that they affirm the disciplining of girls in accordance with norms around girlhood. Hamilton-McKenna, Marshall, and Rogers pay close attention to registers of class and race as well as gender in their incisive analysis of these three provocative texts.

In our Reviews section, Maria José Botelho and Marsha Jing-Ji Liaw take a very different approach to the border separating life and death in children’s literature in their review of four children’s texts that depict characters who in one way or another are forced to deal with death. They remark on the texts’ groundbreaking approaches to death and grieving and position them within a much larger body of children’s texts about death. Perry Nodelman draws on his experience as a children’s literary theorist and grandfather to explore the relationship between utopia and grandparents in five different picture books. Nodelman identifies a number of tropes, issues, and themes that tend to emerge in such books and, as with the previous review, deftly places them within a larger body of children’s texts. Emily R. Aguiló-Pérez considers five children’s books about migration. Some of these books are more powerful than others, but they all employ different strategies to encourage young readers to become more interested in migration and diaspora. Paige Gray assesses two books about migration that critique national borders. Neither *The Night Diary* nor *Front Desk* present the nation as a safe, happy haven; rather, they demonstrate just how difficult it is to navigate national spaces as a newly displaced

person. Writing is represented in both books as a means of empowerment. Christina Fawcett thinks beyond digital borders in her review of four young adult novels. Across disparate spaces and genres, the novels Fawcett considers explore the implications of technology for how we negotiate interpersonal relationships. Last but not least, Catherine Appleton reviews Deborah A. Boehm and Susan J. Terrio's *Illegal Encounters: The Effect of Detention and Deportation on Young People*, a collection of essays that also includes personal stories that demonstrate the difficulties of young migrant encounters with immigration law. Appleton makes a strong argument for this book's significance in the multidisciplinary treatment it gives to the lived experiences of young people and in the way it draws attention to the treatment of migrants and refugees.

All of the pieces that comprise this issue ask us to think about the borders we live by and cherish. I borrow this last word from Mary Douglas, who uses it to describe human attitudes toward the classifications that inform their pollution behaviour. She writes: "In short, our [modern European] pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications" (45). Humans cherish classifications because they make the world seem much more neat and tidy than it actually is. By extension, this neatness and tidiness functions as a ground on which they can build their identities all the better to delude themselves into thinking that they are whole selves. Seen naked, that is, in the absence of any cultural lens, the world is an overwhelming "chaos of shifting impressions . . ." (Douglas 45). As many children instinctively know, the confidence engendered by sorting is built on shaky ground—in the section of *Purity and Danger* in which she discusses viscosity, Douglas highlights that our earliest childhood memories reveal that the categories into which we sort things do not hold. Children may know that mountains, and many other things besides, can be any colour; the adult who has had time to build up "a greater and greater investment in our system of labels" (Douglas 46) insists on the classificatory system designed to place limits on what things can and should be, concluding that they can only be one colour. Of course, children too are susceptible to the systems by which they are expected to abide and into which they themselves are sorted, a fact that complicates easy distinctions between children and adults. It is also true that not all adults are equally attached to a system of labels. What perhaps is most valuable about our

collection of pieces about borders is the way in which, collectively, they attend both to those who unsettle oppressive classificatory systems and those who attempt to either reinforce or challenge these systems. We hope that this issue provides a springboard for more discussions about the relationship between borders and young people, especially at this time as more and more borders are being erected, reinforced, and proclaimed. It may be time to disengage from some of the lines we draw in a desperate attempt to hide from the chaos of shifting impressions that (we think) threaten to undo us. Perhaps then we will be able to welcome strange and wonderful and difficult-to-classify things such as purple mountains into our lives.

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