



The boundaries of property: lessons from Beatrix Potter

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One time there was a picket fence / With space to gaze
from boxes to the sea / An architect who saw this sight /

(Blomley 1994). Yet, sociolegal scholarship has
examined new legal forms for the housing of the poor.

Property and Its Boundaries

The boundary, precisely because it is simultaneously a legal and spatial construct, is one useful

Mrs Rabbit one morning, 'you may go into the fields or down the lane, but don't go into Mr McGregor's garden. Your father had an accident there: he was put in a pie by Mrs. McGregor.... Flopsy, Mopsy and

ambiguity is said to be one of the advantages of also seen as determinative—a fence signals that

the boundaries of property? Singer argues that the dominant conception of property, while immensely powerful, 'misdescribes the way private property systems normally function' (1996, p. 1454). I also suggest that the McGregor model does not perform well. The gap, however, is instructive.

In 2000, with the help of several research assist-

of property. However, gardening is also said to have a particular relation to property. As both a metaphor and practice, gardening is closely linked to Anglo-American conceptions of property (Seed 1995; Williamson 1995). This research hopes to explore a number of questions, including people's attitudes and practices to more public forms of

McGregor model. Some respondents saw marked boundaries as quieting title and reducing the chance of conflict. When asked if he had decided

he termed 'aesthetic' regulation—notably relating to garden upkeep—was seen to compromise the

much pain in their heart, they're just desperate

Linda: Would you ask first?

[REDACTED]

sign to them saying, "yes, this is our own private property. Please...keep out, kind a thing, right?"

ary was not exclusively an edge but was rather a point of connection. It was not simply a line but

as part of the distinctive appeal of Strathcona. Perhaps, the countercultural ethic of the place shaped people's responses. In turn, maybe the nature of the landscape—diverse gardens and close houses—also fostered a relaxed boundary ethic. The bound-

synonymous with private property. Even the latter is open to diverse and often contradictory possibilities. This is important: If we cannot step outside property, or law more generally, the challenge becomes that of exploring its potential, as well as its appropriations. An exploration of the lived under

constitute that place. The local mediations of law can prove consequential.

But, there is also a third insight that comes from a rearticulation of law. In recognising the local can

standings and practices of property and their geographies seems critical here (Blomley 1998, 2004).

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