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## Fences: Physical and Socio-Cultural Boundaries

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Fences:  
Physical & Metaphorical Socio-Cultural Boundaries

Senior Project submitted to  
The Division of Social Studies  
of Bard College

by

Vanessa Baehr

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, 2018

*Dedicated to the land that I love, land I have walked away from, and land I have yet to know --  
thank you for the endless inspiration, beauty, wisdom, and bounty.*

*What would we do without you?*

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Can we imagine a world without boundaries as we know them? When you see a fence or a wall, what is it telling you? A fence cannot speak, but it does send a message and alters the behavior of whatever comes across it. Fences, walls, and lines exist around the world, across many cultures they are generally universally understood symbols of protection, inclusion, and exclusion. I wanted to explore the idea of the culture of boundaries, in particular, fences, and examine the dynamics that exist between individuality and community; the idea that there are at least two sides to each story. I was curious about the stories behind fences and how people related to land and with each other.

Physical barriers can be metaphors for social dynamics and relations. Fences act as placeholders for the owner as a claim to the land, they can serve as a guiding way or a warning. Fences don't just happen, building is a complex activity, they are created intentionally and their purposes vary. Fences can act as a tension or relief between public and private spaces. To define some boundaries for the many ways to interpret fences, walls, and lines, I use two main approaches; 1) The first approach is the physical fence, the actual upright structure, intentionally created for a specific purpose. To name a few examples: a white picket fence, a pool fence, electric fences, prison fences, dog fences, etc. These forms all serve specific purposes for the land in which they are located. 2) The second approach to the meanings of fences is in the metaphorical or metaphysical sense, such as reviewing the socio-cultural aspects of how fences make us feel about space and the people associated with that area.

The physical and the metaphysical are at times blended and fluidly understood as reflections of the inner landscape being expressed as a reaction to the outer environment. It

should be noted that the terms ‘fences’, ‘walls’, and ‘lines,’ are all used interchangeably throughout this project based on the context, but all refer to a similar set of symbolic concepts as markers of boundaries. I didn’t think too deeply or conceptually about fences until I was met with a personal dilemma.

I never gave the seemingly banal subject of fences much thought, until I became a homeowner in October 2017 (See Appendix, Fig. 1). It was only then that I began to think about fences beyond the physical form and as extension to my new community. My situation was that the majority of my land that got enough sunlight to grow a garden was in the front yard, which is very public, and I quickly discovered that the local wildlife, namely deer, loved to eat the plants in my new yard. I have been a gardener for many years both for business and pleasure and have been waiting for the opportunity to plant my dream garden on my own land someday. Having been a renter and gardener for years I have had to walk away from many gardens I have planted. The idea of permanence was my greatest desire, to literally and figuratively put down roots (Tuan 156). To become a property owner meant to create my own private world of a garden based on my own preferences. Yes, I had my own ideas and dreams for what my land would become, but without a fence, how could I ensure all of my labor would not be destroyed by some hungry animals?

My property has no fences in the front. The first time I went to see the property I was able to walk around the entire house without any effort, it is very open. There is a 6’ wooden privacy fence in the backyard that belongs to that adjoining neighbor (See Appendix, Fig. 13-14). My side neighbors have no fences, one has a garden to mark the space, the other just has continuous lawn so the boundary is arbitrarily marked by an old clothesline pole and some

stones. In thinking about aesthetics and a budget, I began to explore fence options within my framework of needs and desires. I started to think about what my neighbors would think if I put up a white picket fence compared with a chain link fence or a tall privacy fence right against the sidewalk and my front yard, the latter might raise some eyebrows.

The desire to explore the meaning of the symbols of fences came from a reflexive moment I experienced when I was considering what type of fence to get and I became hyper aware of my new position on the block. I was different; a young single mother and a person of color in a place where the demographics are mostly white, middle aged families and older people (U.S. Census). Also, there were enough conservative flags and Trump bumper stickers in the area to make me nervous. I saw two bumper stickers on trucks on my block that simply read, “Extremely right-wing.” in white lettering on a black background. I was cognizant that I may have been perceived as an outsider, a foreigner, a gentrifier, a sign of change. Near election time, I was surprised to hear from a neighbor of mine that our village was the only municipality in Greene County that was majority Democratic, a recent shift and possible indicator of a changing of cultural norms.

To give context, my new home was an old historic village along the Hudson River. It used to be a bustling river town back in the 1800s, prospering from the ferryboat service between the larger “sister city” across the river, where the railroad between Albany and NYC passed through. Once the automobile became popularized and the Rip Van Winkle Bridge was opened in 1935, the ferryboat service declined and eventually ceased. The once prosperous place slowly became a tiny rural village over the rest of the century, experiencing severe population and economic declines. It became a sort of rural ghost town where people had stayed for their entire

lives and mostly kept to themselves. With this type of isolation and lack of exposure to different ways of life can come a feeling of being threatened when something is unfamiliar and can be perceived as out of place, or wrong.

Since the September 11, 2001 attack in Manhattan, and the economic crisis in 2008, upstate New York, especially the Hudson Valley has been experiencing a re-population of people moving out of the city, looking for cheaper real estate to transform into their country house dream. Now, in 2018, old historic homes upstate, that have been left in disrepair for a number of years, are being bought up at inexpensive prices (comparatively to NYC prices) and being renovated and resold at a large profit. With these improvements come changes.

One of my previous one-bedroom apartments on the main street of a small upstate city in 2010 was \$650. per month. By 2013 the rent went up to \$800. In 2017, the rent was \$1,200. per month. Many areas in the HV are experiencing the process of gentrification, this can be perceived as good or bad, depending on who you talk to. One thing is certain, with gentrification, there is a shift in the old to the new, which is often seen in populations, economics, and land use. As a young person throughout my twenties I only lived in urban areas that were experiencing gentrification; Brooklyn, New Orleans, Hudson, NY. But my new town was the first time I saw the slow effects of gentrification impacting a rural village. This was the most rural and least diverse place I had ever decided to live long-term. Being that I was new to this type of community, I wanted to be sure I was acting within the culture's social norms. This is what led me to explore the idea of fence culture.

#### My Questions:

If good fences make good neighbors, then what is considered a **good** fence? What makes a fence



culturally appropriate? What kind of messages do different fences send to their communities?

How do fences make us feel? How do we think fences make others feel? Do people tend to think about what their neighbors think? What are the deeper messages hidden behind different types of fences? What does a certain type of fence say about a person's character? How would my choice of fence impact the real estate value of my property and the block? How could it serve my needs but also be acceptable to my neighbors? What are the tensions and social norms that already exist in this place I had just moved to but knew very little about?

#### My Predictions:

My prediction was that the style and maintenance status of a fence might reflect something about the owner based on how they maintain their property, but it won't ever be the totality of who someone is. "Culture is public because meaning is." (Geertz 12).

### Chapter 2: American History and Culture of Fences

This chapter explores boundaries and barriers theoretically, based in the studies of geography, history, anthropology, and archaeology. My main lens focuses on experiences with fences, how fences transform space and the way people interact with each other. These experiences are different based on who or what is experiencing them. This chapter gives an overview of how fences are a reflection of our interaction with nature and culture. This project is further broken down into two frameworks, 'unbounded' and 'bounded', while always keeping in mind the fluid dance of interpretation between the literal (physical) and the metaphorical (socio-cultural, relational). It is possible for examples of bounded and unbounded to be one or the other, in transition, or both statuses at once. One of the methods I used for examining fence

feeling or fence culture was through common uses of language, such as most people referred to certain keywords repeatedly throughout the interview: security, land, protect, defend, public, private, neighbor, space, ownership.

Fences delineate boundaries and serve as barriers between two sides. Generally, fences serve to keep something out or something in, human or non-human, real or even spiritual. Valuables are enclosed and kept in; intruders are blocked and kept out. Fences are about protection, the etymology of the noun 'fence' speaks to the attitude of security behind it. Before 'fence' was ever used to describe an enclosed area, it was derived from 'fend' and 'defense' in Middle English. To be "fenced" (verb) is to be angry, offended and defensive. Fencing is the name of a sport which uses sword-like weapons and quick attacks, historically used in duels to settle disputes.

Historically, fortresses and walls of protection, sometimes with moats, were some of the initial large forms of defense. Some of the earliest examples of how humans enforced walls is in eastern Europe from the Ice Age, a wall made of mammoth bones around the hunters encampment (Giblin 3). My new hometown is named after a city in Europe which famously gained its strength from building walls. Around the mid-5th century, Athens, completed construction of the Long Walls, which acted in their defense and provided them security, enabling them to engage in other activities such as philosophy, politics, theatre, science, and math. Contrast the Athenians with the Spartans, who had no walls and therefore spent most of their time defending their territory, which left them little time to engage in other activities so they kept slaves. Spartans had little freedoms and were strictly trained in all ways of life in how to think and behave from a young age (Frye 44-45).

In medieval Europe, when monarchies were in place and feudalism was the way of life, land was owned by lords and serfs and peasants were made to work the land. Towards the end of medieval times, the British Enclosure Acts began to see rapid increases in infrastructure when the purpose was to increase the pasturage available to manorial lords. The British Enclosure Acts removed prior rights to rural land of the local people, which they had used for generations. These laws ensured the consolidation of previously communally-held land for the stated purpose of making it more productive. This included arable land, such as fields, meadows, and pastures. By enclosing land with hedges and fences meant to establish ownership and control over it, which took access away from the public. Later in the 18th and 19th centuries more land was enclosed for similar reasons of agricultural efficiency and by the end of the turn of the 20th century the process of enclosing common lands in England was complete. The rest of Europe did not culturally catch on to enclosed space until the 19th century around WWI and WWII.

Like many things that are not on your radar, until they are, and then they are everywhere. The mention of fences, walls, boundaries, both physical and socially metaphorical are woven into the American psyche and language once you start to pay attention. Fences, after all, are in many ways a symbol of protecting resources and expressing individuality, freedom, and privatization, which were inherently foundational values in the creation of this nation. In essence, a fence is a social contract between these two boundaries of public and private. This determines how land is used and by whom. For private property, there is an economic component to protect. For public land, to prevent abuse of resources (i.e. tragedy of the commons), there is an ecological and economic component to protect.

Michel Foucault thought extensively on geography in terms of space, knowledge, and power and unpacks the subtleties behind the various geographical metaphors; *Territory* and *domain* refer to a juridico-political geographical area controlled by a certain kind of power; *Field* is economico-juridical; *Region* is a fiscal, administrative, militaristic notion. *Horizon* is a pictorial and strategic notion (176, 2007). Foucault looks to the origins of geography and reveals how it grew out of the shadows of the military and defense strategies.

Creating maps is a way of framing the world, reflecting and shaping what we are able to see, of showing geographic-spatial relationships, socio-cultural constructs. “Perhaps the most quintessentially geographic form of representation, the map allows us to simplify the complexities of the world and to impose organization on it” (Hanson 4). With maps, humans were able to institute order and hierarchy of social relations over multiple dimensions. Maps can be a locus of power and can show points of access or exclusive areas. Maps can often appear as objective and unbiased but are in fact usually infused with ideology. Where is the voice in the map? The emergence of the idea of uniform scale and the development of symbolic language of maps were attempts to keep the study objective. Hanson complicates the idea of sense of place between the general and the specific, by stating the irony of while a sense of place can ground us, it can also divide us from other people and places.

One of the main points and questions of this project is the question of how geography is experienced by humans, how barriers are perceived in human habitats and within conceptual frameworks. Yi-Fu Tuan speaks to this notion of coming from experience and parses out the differences between space and place. Experiences are a product of sensation, perception, conception, emotions, and thoughts (Tuan 8). Space is physical area and becomes place when it

is experienced. Spaces can be marked off and defended against intruders, and places are centers of felt value where biological needs and resources are kept. “Space and place are basic components of the lived world; we take them for granted. When we think about them, however, they may assume unexpected meanings and raise questions we have not thought to ask.” (Tuan 3), Tuan reinforces the notion that fences are seemingly innocuous personal displays that may have other attached meanings behind them. He is careful to rush to culture as the sole explanation and orients readers to assume the animal heritage of territoriality in humans as the first case, then accepting culture as an inescapable influence, while also examining how culture can emphasize or distort perceptions. He extrapolates on how space and place are both necessary to explain the other, “From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa” (Tuan 6), and how each can be experienced at different ranges (i.e. vaguely, intimately, conceptually).

Intimate space is space that protects private life of exposure from public space and has to do often with visibility. Often backyard fences are put in for privacy. Most people are not sunbathing naked, but would rather not have to look at their neighbor if they are both barbequing on a hot summer day, the idea of visible exposure as invasive. I think most people would dually not want to see their neighbor in their yard nor be seen by their neighbor while in their own yard. The fence creates a visible barrier, though both neighbors can hear each other and be in their spaces at the same time, they can be experiencing their yards in their own curated way.

In regards to the emotion of attachments to home, special places of memory, intimacy, and territory, the strength of the attachment has varied among different cultures and historical time periods. Depending on community ties, length of stay, sense of rootedness likely determines

the emotional bond and sense of attachment. Attachment can be unconscious, instinctual, with an assurance of nurture, comfort, and security, such as in the term “motherland” (Tuan 154), attachment comes from a sense of familiarity and ease. Homelands usually have landmarks, visible signs which serve to enhance the public’s sense of identity, pride, and loyalty to the place. Architecture articulates the social order and can serve as a teaching tool, they command awareness and can refine human perceptions (Tuan 102). Space is “top-down” and place is “bottom-up”; Space is indicative of a field of practice or an area where a group (i.e. state) operates, held together in popular consensus by a map or narrative as a meaningful whole (Agnew 4-6). Space becomes place through encounters with people and things within space.

Anthropologically, the idea of “place-making” is mentioned in regards to world-building a sense of place, by Keith Basso, as he puts it, “place-making is the universal tool of historical imagination” (5). In an ethnography of Western Apache, on their perspectives on landscape and language, Basso synthesizes the questions I have wondered about:

What do people make of places? The question is as old as people and places themselves, as old as human attachments to portions of the earth. As old as the idea of home, of ‘our territory’ as opposed to ‘their territory’, of entire regions and local landscapes where groups of men and women have invested themselves (their thoughts, values, and collective sensibilities) and to which they feel they belong. The question is as old as a strong sense of place---and the answer, if there is one, is every bit as complex. (Basso xiii)

Basso who points out how human attachment to places are mysterious and complex, yet we tend not to think so explicitly about them and often take them for granted. Fences, like places, are commonplace so we tend not to notice them in the background. It is not until we are without

them that we feel, what Basso describes as, “dislocated”, in unfamiliar surroundings (xiii). It is in moments of “dislocation” that we might also feel defensive, when we realize the value of our attachments to places as important and worth preservation.

Like maps, names of places are one of the ways we understand and perceive places. Land and property have been recorded on survey maps and can indicate who arrived and who got the final say. Property survey maps are legally and financially upheld through power structures. Europeans tended to name land after the people who owned it (e.g. Kingston, Queens, Hudson, Germantown, Livingston, Clermont). Sometimes streets are named after trees or other landmark features, (e.g. Water Street., River Road, Market Street). Sometimes residential communities are named for the ecological features that stood there before development (i.e. Pine Haven Assisted Living, Early Woodland Apartments, Woodstock, Bearsville). Cronon mentions that what Native Americans owned was not related to personal possession but to communal use and varied depending on the time of year and was reflected so in the names they gave places, such as Pokanoket - “at or near the cleared lands.”; Anita Ash Pond - “rotten corn” which blackened the corn to create an Indian delicacy; Wabaquasset - “flags or rushes for making mats” (65). In “Wisdom Sits in Places” Basso also takes note of how names are given to places as descriptors for what is there or what happened there.

Pierre Nora sought to locate the symbolic “memory places” of France’s national identity. Nora investigates the history of memory through imaginary representations and historic realities which occupy symbolic sites that inform social and cultural identities. In his grand work, “Realms of Memory” Pierre Nora attempted to construct a symbolic encyclopedia of values, attitudes, and belief systems of the French nation, based on memory rather than solely on history,

a symptom of cultural melancholia, as explained by Lawrence Kritzman in the Foreword (X). Memory also involves forgetting which is also worth noting. He examined collective heritage and the power of memory and national symbolism and in its ability to bind communities together and create social identities. Memory is the result of an imaginary process which codifies and represents historical consciousness. Memory is a subjective phenomenon, is imperfect, and can at times be contradictory. Collective experiences usually involve “social frames” which could involve the nation-state and the politicization of memory, such as in the national histories that are told.

In her 2009 TED Talk, Chimamanda Adichie mentions an Igbo word for ‘power’, which loosely translates to, ‘to be greater than another.’ “Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.” (“Single story” 09:50-10:05) She goes on to say our economic, political, and cultural structures of the world are all dependent on power, which can shape the story of a person’s status. When land has a fence around it, it tells a story of ownership and control, it is the story of humans claim to land. Fences send messages, communicate a story about land; stone walls speak of the past. She warns against a single defining story and quotes Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti in saying, the quickest way to dispossess someone is to start their story with, “Secondly” (“Single story” 10:20-10:30). Adichie puts it simply, “Start the story with the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have an entirely different story. How they are told, who tells them, when they’re told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power” (“Single story” 10:40-10:50). In looking at landscape and the uneasy pleasures of power, landscapes are embedded with structures which depict pictorial cultural images and codes for relating to social power structures



inextricably intertwined with material and symbolic dimensions of production (Rose 89).

When land is unbound and seemingly boundless, what can be assumed about the land and how one can use the land? As William Cronon points out in “Changes in the Land”, Native American Indians and European settlers had very different concepts of land use and ownership of property during the frontier process (Preface). How was this social contract of a fence between private and public space communicated and understood between two radically different cultures? European settlers were more individualist-minded, more private and more competitive. The ideology of conquest and of privatizing land, and claiming ownership are foundational American values. Whereas the Native American culture, was considered collectivist, where individuals would consider the larger group before their own desires. Their ideas of spirituality and power derived from entirely different worldviews. They related to land and managed it with completely different approaches.

Cronon mentions the colonial theorist John Winthrop, who posited two ways of owning land, “one natural and one civil” (56), which reflects concepts as nature and culture as divided (Ortner 10), and the separation of the pure and profane (Douglas 34-35). From the perspective of English settlers, who thought it was their right and duty in life to colonize and control nature with culture, Native Americans were squandering the resources available to them and, “declared their land to be ‘spacious and void,’ free for English taking” (Cronon 56). From the English settlers perspective, natural rights to the land were determined by how the land was occupied and used, and Native Americans were not using land the way they saw fit. “The colonists utilized this idea of ‘active use’ to provide the justification for taking the land from America’s native inhabitants. They did not understand the American natives to be using land in the European sense

of active agricultural and forest management” (Jacobs 21). When colonists began to farm the land and raise animals, which increased their productivity of the land. They recognized economic values of the potential profits to be made and they began to enclose the land and so came the superior, civil right of ownership. Cronon points out, “Here we must be careful about what we mean by ‘property,’ lest we fall into the traps English colonists have set for us. Although ordinary language seems to suggest that property is generally a simple relationship between an individual person and thing, it is actually a far more complicated social institution which varies widely between cultures” (58). In Native American cultures, gift-giving was a crucial means for establishing and reproducing one’s position in society. Contrast this with European customs of social status where conquest is the usual way to gain status and it may shed some understanding in how the American land changed hands from Indian to European colonists.

The idea of zoning came up when I asked a fence installer what made a fence culturally appropriate. There are limitations to ownership, each municipality has their own set of codes and what they deem appropriate. Property owners must often appeal to local boards and committees, apply for a permit, and await to be awarded a “Certificate of Appropriateness”. “Conceptually, land use and environmental planning, policy, and management (through devices such as zoning) are premised on the need for individual property rights to yield to a collective definition of the public interest” (Jacobs 27). Some towns have ordinances which require homeowners to face the attractive side outward, facing toward the neighbor’s side. This is an interesting detail, it identifies the social tension between aesthetic boundary lines and the opinionated forces on either side. Perhaps this comes from lessons from past experiences of disputes between neighbors and seeks to mitigate the potential social friction. Ironically, the neighbor’s side is the

side you would need to access in order to make repairs to your fence. The desire for wanting the attractive side of the fence to also face yourself offers an opportunity for the fence industry and manufacturers have since invented fence panels which feature the attractive side on *both* sides. However, my village has no such laws.

It is not uncommon for neighboring property owners to quarrel over perceptions of financial responsibility, aesthetics, and land use. Historically, “witness trees” were marked by their genus on old early American maps to delineate property lines. Today, entire insurance policies are written to cover certain aspect of neighbors fallen trees. According to All State Insurance (2017), depending on how the tree fell, if it did damage to any property, and had any pre-existing conditions which would have contributed to the demise of the tree, are all variables which would affect whether insurance companies would cover claims.

Containing pets and children is another type of consideration for a fence type. Children and pets are similar in that both are impulsive creatures without an initial sense of a boundary or ability to regulate their own safety. Often, they both require reinforcement from escaping into dangerous situations, such as being hit by cars in roads, or being taken. In containing children, one must consider climbability of the fence. Pools are required to have fences around them to discourage drownings. The reasons for having a fence are many and vary depending on individual circumstances. Overall, the reason for getting a fence is because a property owner is considering how they use the space and want to improve it. It may mean creating some privacy, a microworld within the macroworld, the feeling of having your personal exclusive space. However fences are used, they display an intended purpose and can transform space, alter behavior, and shape experiences.

The difference in public and private space is akin to the concept of danger and purity (Douglas 34-35). The concept of what makes a place sacred is based on subjective belief; humans give symbolic meaning to certain places they regard as clean or pure. How people display their boundaries is about studying symbolic systems. Douglas emphasized how context and social history of various cultural perspectives were important to take into account as they can vary widely. Sacred spaces are all around, some obviously visible (i.e. churches, cemeteries, libraries), others less obvious as they are more nuanced (i.e. gardens, places where experiences/events occurred). Throughout history, humans have regarded different spaces as sacred and displayed it so in a number of ways based on their particular set of circumstances.

Larry Shiner explores conceptions of the sacred and the profane, distinguishing what makes each space unique (426). He argues that distortions in spatial experiences are bound to occur unless sacred and profane spaces are defined by structures of human spatiality. Profane space is experienced as homogenous and neutral, without structure, and may be perceived as chaotic, unorganized. Shiner points out that historian of religion, Mircea Eliade, distinguishes sacred space by the concept he calls 'hierophany', or a break in the continuity of profane space (425). Hierophany creates a different world of organization and meaning, which can open up a channel for communication between cosmic planes. Shiner defines 'lived space', as not simply our habitat and empty vessel containing our possessions when we are not there, but as a set of experiences associated with that space; he defines lived space through the inherent phenomenon of territoriality in humans and animals (427). Lived space is a sensorily intimate spatial experience with distance, direction, and familiarities filled with meanings of possibilities of movement; centers of activity. Though he is speaking here of physical movement and

distinguished pathways, it reminded me of mobility, and owned space as a pathway towards upward social mobility. To take ‘lived space’ a step further, I would argue that rented lived space is experienced differently than owned lived space, which may be considered even more sacred or special (Shiner 427-430). Architects sometimes see the design of houses as a spiritual activity, in terms of creating a world, or a personal universe (Tuan 103-107). I would extend this ideas of world building to others such as gardeners, builders, homemakers, and the like.

Foucault wrote about his ideas of space relations in “Heterotopia” which translates to “other places” and is a rich and debated concept in architecture and urban design theory which has been interpreted in a variety of ways (14-16, 2008). Space and time are seen of a fluid nature and experienced simultaneously. Foucault distinguishes time from history and points out how the West experiences space as history, what he calls ‘medieval space’, a hierarchic ensemble of places in contrast with one another (sacred/profane, protected/open, urban/rural), or the space of localization. Galileo’s contribution of discovering that the earth revolved around the sun created the possibility for infinitely open space and in this way, extension superseded localization. Emplacement later went on to supplant extension. Emplacements are the ways in which we order relations to spaces and form grids and classifications, i.e. how space is designated. Yet, emplacements are also about our relations to time and our histories, our experiences. It is within this juxtaposition between simple givens such as public/private, family/social space, leisure/work that the nature becomes more fluid and subjective. Foucault stated, “We do not live in a void, inside which we could place individuals and things; we live inside a set of relations that delineate emplacements that cannot be equated or in any way superimposed” (16, 2008). In other words, multiple ways of relating, all relating to each other simultaneously both personally,

interpersonally, societally, historically, economically, etc. Of these complex and at times contradictory spaces, there are two main types. (1) the utopia, or fundamentally unreal places, and (2) heterotopias, or real places that are counter-emplacements existing within emplacements; a kind of place which is outside of other places, though they are in fact localizable (16-18, 2008).

To some people, nature preserves, state parks, conservation areas can serve as sacred spaces to escape the normal order of demarcated sites and society. Nature trails act as a guided pathway through the wild landscape and signage usually urges visitors to stay on the trails. The efforts to keep foot traffic to a particular area, and discourage exploration elsewhere comes from the ecological concern that wandering off-trail puts pressure on sensitive areas through soil compaction and creates potential ecological destruction in areas which are intended to be conserved. There are no dramatic visual barriers to keep people from going off the trails, so there is little enforcement of this rule.

Demarcating space is a useful tool for bringing attention to special sites, as in the case of historical markers and plaques where notable events occurred or structures once stood. Without an indication or information of past historical knowledge can be forgotten. Archaeology uses history and anthropology to discover meaning behind artifacts and explore possible lifeways as examined through material culture. An example of unbounded sacred space is the 'Pine Street Cemetery,' a large burial grounds of people who were African and African-American from the 18th and 19th centuries in Kingston, NY. Historical maps have indicated that it encompassed roughly 17 acres. When a local resident was doing some basement utility work and discovered human bones buried beneath his property, they were identified as coming from multiple people of African descent. Local archaeologist based out of New Paltz, Joe Diamond did research

regarding the site in an effort to get it officially historically recognized, marked, and preserved as sacred space. There were never any above-ground markers beyond the historical map so the modern suburban landscape made it impossible to recognize as sacred. He attributed this problem as being a result of the, “intersection of historical memory and politics of the present” (Diamond 47), which is reminiscent of Nora’s work on historical memory and identity (Nora 21-22). Without some form of demarcation to recognize and memorialize the site, it is unorganized and the space is not visibly sacred which means it may be treated as profane space with a different code of ethics and behaviors. The Kingston Land Trust's African-American History Committee sought to get State and National historic designation for the site and held a rededication ceremony in 2011, honoring some Civil War soldiers buried there. “The cemetery is the second-oldest cemetery in Kingston and ‘represents the key component of history of the African-American community in Kingston from the mid-19th century,’ the Kingston Land Trust said in a press release” (Kirby).

Another example of demarcations of sacred spaces that are not always visible or noticed to outsiders, are what Grey Gundaker calls “yard shows”, or how owners “dress” their yards through everyday materials and create their personal worlds, akin to soul work, spiritual work (59). Tuan also mentioned building and creating as a spiritual act, to impose establishment in the midst of primeval disorder (Tuan 104). “I understand “dressing the yard” as transforming the functions and meaning of objects and the whole site, not mere surface decorating.” (Gundaker 59). The focus of her study is on how tradition and innovation manifest in African-American yards in the southern United States; Gundaker documented similarities, differences, and created an organizational framework of themes, such as shared iconography based on traditions from the

Central African kingdom of Kongo, a region of which a large portion of slaves were from. She also suggests their expressive language as being influenced by multiple cultural identities, creolizing multiple traditions from both Old and New worlds.

Yard communication can be read through visual signifiers such as objects, colors, figures, and signage, but can be a complex language to understand without cultural context. Gundaker explains that when a yard has been worked and made into a distinct space, it commands a certain type of attentiveness and instructs visitors in appropriate behavior for that space. The style of yard, the materials used, imbued with spiritual significances, all point to real-world political, historical, and economic conditions. Whereas outsiders may deem a yard full of “junk”, they may be misunderstanding or overlooking cultural expressions of rights to property, power, and how to use land. To look at how yards are unique worlds within themselves, it takes looking at the owner, the land, as well as many other aspects (i.e power structures) which define their world. In central Africa, a rubbish heap is a metaphor for the grave, a point of contact with the world of the dead. Sometimes the objects belonged to someone no longer alive and were offered as a memorial. Junk heaps were associated with death, but by using the junk object, they become a symbol of rebirth, by given new life, new purpose (Gundaker 59). As one Alabama sculptor Charlie Luca’s puts it, the junk is like the marginalized people, who have also been tossed out and deemed worthless, yet find new life in the yard. He adds, “Improvisation offers a way to overcome adverse circumstances” (Gundaker 60).

Barbara Heath and Amber Bennett studied archeological African-American yards in Virginia, as well as did ethnographic work of gardeners. They thought of space as, “the most monumental aspect of material culture.” Heath and Bennett describe the enclosed yard as, “a



mediating space between the natural, public world and the constructed, private world of the dwelling” (38). Personal yard work had a distinct significance to the creator, separate from obligatory work, but rising from a deeper sense of connection to land and the power to manifest from it, as well as associations with connection to the spiritual plane.

A common theme throughout the gardens is the use of color white used as a protective measure against evil. White rocks, lime powder, white figurines, white shells, white vessels, fence posts painted white, were all commonly found within African-American yards found by Gundaker. White paint was used by many people from Africa to spiritually protect spaces, particularly outdoors, but much of the importance of the design and orientation is only evident to the initiated, those in the know (Sobel 72). At the Maple Avenue Parsonage in Germantown, New York, where people who were African-American slaves lived, and later their free descendants, there is evidence of what appear to be 8-10 painted white posts in the front yard of the parsonage from an old photograph. There does not appear to be a connection between the posts, rather they seem to be standing alone, unconnected. I questioned their purpose when I first saw the photograph (See Appendix, Fig. 17).

Being a former analog film camera fan, I was able to use a photographic technique used for archaeological purposes of ground truthing from old photographs, as discovered by Gene Prince (112-114). In the spring of 2018, with the help of some willing classmates (Ethan Dickerson and Harrison Kroessler) and Professor Lindner, we were able to locate where the original fence posts were in the context of the present-day scene (See Appendix, Fig. 18-20). Unconnected, they appear to be a guiding pathway from the front door down towards the area

where the well used to be. The well was likely the original well from the 1700s and had been filled in by the new owner, the first freed African-American man to live there, Henry Persons.

It is impossible to know why or how the yard was used the way it was, but drawing from both traditional African customs, as well as modern examples of yard dressing, we may wonder of the possibilities of the symbolic meanings of these posts. The fence is possibly placed in a spiritual context, and could have been viewed as an active player in the yard, protecting the area leading to the old well. Water also holds spiritual significance and can be associated with travel after death. Maybe the well was filled in as a way to bring closure to the past and the posts were placed there to protect that burial. Perhaps if they were painted white, it was to keep evil energy away. Fences can act as transitional zones, conduits and portals for entering and exiting other spaces. The modern-day white posts we placed there still stand months later and mark the land as replicated from the 1900 photograph, leaving others to experience the posts three-dimensionally as opposed to simply from the flat photograph found in the hallway. After we put all of the posts in, we all immediately remarked at how interactive the experience was and walked through the space differently, now being aware of how it had been re-organized due to the posts placements. Archaeology taught me to not have assumptions about land, because there is so much underground that would give us clues to the past, often there is no way to tell from above ground without doing historical research and digging test plots.

Culturally, experiences with walls and barriers around the world are similar yet vary depending on who is experiencing them and which side of the wall they are on. To explore global trends in barriers, examples are used from an episode entitled '*The Walls*' of the popular radio program, '*This American Life*,' hosted by Ira Glass. In one story the audience is given the

perspective of walls from a refugee's point-of-view, Mohammed Salem from Morocco (00:38-03:40). He talks about the 1,700 miles long wall across the Sahara Desert. The barrier consists of several walls of piled-up sand and barbed wire, with ditches in between the walls, millions of landmines, and 120,000 soldiers. Mohammed Salem was born and still lives in a massive refugee settlement with an estimated 165,000 people within the wall. He has relatives who he has never met who live on the other side of the wall. Mohamed Salem talks about his desire to swim, but the ocean is far away on the other side of the wall. He remembers swimming a few times as a child and quickly dismisses the fond recollection, confronted with his reality. "When somebody builds a wall, we re-adjust our lives around that wall." (03:39-03:42). Walls can separate families and lifestyles, barriers block access to experiences and opportunity.

Sometimes fences reinforce ideological boundaries, such as in Belfast, Northern Ireland. It's been a couple decades since peace was declared between Catholics and Protestants, however, many very tall walls still exist and segregate neighborhoods. A security guard is interviewed for 'This American Life' as he closes the Northumberland Gate, a large heavy steel gate with big spikes on top. The gate is closed for the night at 6:30PM until the following morning when it reopens at 6:30AM. Traffic and pedestrian access between gates is difficult, demanding, and punishing. There is mention that people there had been so used to the walls that there was a nervous tension that violence that might break out if they were torn down. It took 18 months for residents to agree to finally change the sheet metal on the gate to transparent bars for visibility. Someone behind those efforts to change the gate reported the challenges of change, "It was a very long and drawn-out process because you have to take into account people's fears. The vast majority of deaths which occurred during the conflict occurred where these structures were built"

(05:00-05:15). He talks about older neighbors being traumatized, “I think you have to realize, in people's mindsets, if you have lived in the same neighborhood for 40 years, and every single day when you're waking up, the first thing you see when you draw your blinds is this structure at the bottom of your garden or your alleyway. If you're waking up one morning and that structure's gone, how would you feel? (05:50-06:07).

It is this question of how fences make us feel that I was curious about. Fences can create a sense of security or a sense of imprisonment or exclusion. Once a wall is built, it seems hard to tear down. There are walls and fences being put up around the world today; India is putting up a border with Bangladesh; Kenya is building on the Somalia border; Israel has walls at the West Bank and also Egypt. The main reason many of these walls are going up is to stop unwanted immigrants from entering and to block terrorist attempts triggered in part by the Syrian refugee crisis. Just because a wall is built does not mean it will always be effective.

An ironic example of border security against immigrant is the Norwegian wall put in near the Russian border, though construction efforts were troublesome and futile. They built their fence a year after migrants ceased to cross that particular border, their timing rendered the wall ineffective. Also, they accidentally began construction too close to the Russian border, they had to tear it down and begin again further back from the line. On top of all of this, they were building a 650 ft long wall besides a far more effective 120 mile-long fence that Russia had in place. Refugees would easily be able to walk around the Norwegian wall. When asked what the point of this wall was, Mayor Rune Rafaelsen of Kirkenes, the bordertown in Norway said, “I don't know, it's just a symbol. It has no effect regarding protecting Norway from refugees at all,

so people are laughing about it...Ask the new prime minister. I don't understand the reason for it, it is very odd, very comic." (Glass 09:00-09:30).

These increases in defensive behavior and border-building in response to globalization are worth investigating as they unfold. It seems the urge to push outsiders and foreigners away and shut down borders is becoming more and more prevalent, as seen with the case of the 2016 BREXIT vote in which Britain decided to withdraw from the European Union in large part to immigration policies. In 2018 Hungary, the prime minister Viktor Orban won a third term. Orban won using nationalistic tones, anti-immigrant platforms, and playing into the fear that the outsiders were going to alter national Hungarian culture and identity (Kelly). The government controls the media in Hungary, so there was a lot of racist, anti-immigration, xenophobic, propaganda which people had been consuming out of a lack of choice in media. A national billboard campaign, which cost Hungary around \$3 million, crudely discouraged immigrants from entering or staying. Some were critical of the use of this funds, which instead could have gone to provide some relief to refugees (Kelly). The nationalistic ideals arising globally are indicators of fear, anger, and contempt of the other.

Whenever one group is protected by a fence, there is another group left out of it, the fence is a symbol of an "inclusion/exclusion dichotomy" (Wierzbicki 58). The symbol of fences is about the self and others, it is about where one stands, on which side. In this way, a fence can actively instigate an "othering" process. Barriers can be ideological, fences segregate attitudes, ideas, values, and traditions. "Drawing a line in the sand," this is meant either literally or metaphorically. It is to say someone has chosen to take a firm stance on an issue and is creating a

visual boundary on the land to mark the two sides and which space is designated for who. Crossing the line violates the peace.

According to a review of borders around the globe (Deutinger & Filippas), the most popular (18 out of 22) purpose for the barriers was for anti-illegal immigration. Other purposes were classified as anti-smuggling, anti-terrorism barrier, anti-infiltration, border security, and a demilitarized zone barrier. These barriers range in scale and levels of difficulty to pass depending on their purpose. Some have a single, heavily-armed fence, while others have multiple layers, each presenting their own unique challenge to cross. Beyond the barbed wire, concrete, metal, and heavy surveillance, the feature I found most unique along a barrier was a sand strip along the passage to make footprints visible.

Different cultures display walls in different ways, across many times based on what materials were available (Tuan 104). Many foreign developing nations, such as Dominican Republic, where my extended family is from, have tall concrete walls with broken glass bottles resourcefully added to the top for extra security. Witty commentator Trevor Noah, host of the Daily Show, originally from South Africa, visits his grandmother back home in Soweto to ask her questions about her experiences during Apartheid. As he approaches her house he notes that the walls used to be much taller when he was younger (“Trevor” 01:53-01:55). He is referring to when times were more dangerous during Apartheid and his memory-history of that place had more security then. He points to the tall concrete wall with broken glass bottles at the top and proudly claims to have drunk every beverage from which the bottles came (“Trevor” 01:22-01:34). These are not typical examples of an American fence, but are common in many other parts of the world.

Boundaries can be expressed in active & passive ways. Sometimes boundaries do not need to be physical fences but other forms of protection, such as increasing surveillance. Sometimes, in residential cases, just the sign of the alarm system near the window or door can be enough to make a burglar think twice about that place. ‘No Trespassing’ signs and ‘Beware of Dog’ signs can also be ways to ward off unwanted trespassers. At the national border, increases in security that are not physical structures have been proposed, including using drones or cameras to increase and support border patrol agents. There are great divisions in the U.S. over how the Mexican border should be secured. However the land is secured sends a message, but also stands as historical monument, memorializing a particular attitude of the time, and creating its own “memory-history” (Nora 21-22).

A wall, apparently, just has its own gravitational pull that warps the logic of the world around it. And once the wall is up and is a fact on the landscape, it alters the human behavior on either side of it. At that point, it's like we accommodate the wall, and definitely not the other way around. We are the ivy that grows on it, it is the unmovable object. (Glass 09:30-09:55)

Most of the people I spoke with told me to ask Trump about what he thought about fences. Walls have been a particularly hot topic since Trump campaigned in 2016 on the promise of building a wall between the U.S. and Mexico and making Mexico pay for it. Trump has ignited a movement of anti-immigrant sentiment akin to that of populism and trumpeting constant streams of nationalistic tones. Populism is an exclusionary politics strategy for obtaining and retaining power which appeals to “the people” and involves being extremely

unwelcoming to targeted outside groups. Populists love to ignite social conflicts and illuminate socio-cultural divides, stressing an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ polarity. Trump has said various offensive statements in regard to many immigrant people of color from around the world, despite being married to a European immigrant himself, but has particularly dug in to Mexico.

Vicente Fox, Mexico’s former president, and also fellow former television actor-turned president, made a facetious video (Super Deluxe) addressing President Trump regarding the proposal for the Mexican border wall and having Mexico pay for it. Notable highlights include; “Donald, under no circumstances will we pay for this stupid, useless, racist monument.” (0:55-:1:05)... “Be honest Donald, this wall isn’t going to stop anyone who really wants to cross the border. It’s just going to make your country weaker, and poorer and less respected by the rest of the world. Now that you know that the wall won’t work, here are some things you could do,” (1:38-2:00) and he lists a number of global and national issues (e.g. clean drinking water, teachers wages, paying for college, ending world hunger). “Isn’t that a better legacy than a pointless wall of hate?” (2:15-2:18). Fox uses Trump’s own tactics of personal attacks and bullying, and takes satirical jabs at Trump throughout, likely taunting Trump more freely because he is no longer president of Mexico. He brings up the idea that the wall is a monument, a way of marking and remembering an event and he also mentions how the wall is racialized, which echos with how many other people also feel.

In 2017, his first year of Presidency, Trump rolled back Obama-era immigrant policy Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, a program which covered about 800,000 people brought to the U.S. as children. In 2018 a caravan of immigrants from Central America began making their way towards the U.S. to seek asylum. In response, Trump ordered 5,000 American troops to



“harden the border” and support the National Border Patrol by providing reinforcements along understaffed areas of the U.S. border. Troops were unarmed but helped by increasing personnel, surveillance and the renovation of existing border walls; they are legally barred from physically detaining individuals at the border. Also in 2018 was the news that came out about U.S. Customs and Border Protection that were separating children from their parents at the border. Images of children behind bars and in cages came out about a detaining facility known by the immigrants as “La Perrera”, meaning dog kennel in Spanish, in reference to the cages used to hold people.

Trump has highly criticized trade deals from the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and signed the new trade deal, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) at the end of November 2018. On December 13, 2018 Trump tweeted on social media platform Twitter, @realDonaldTrump: “I often stated, ‘One way or the other, Mexico is going to pay for the wall.’ This has never changed. Our new deal with Mexico (and Canada), the USMCA, is so much better than than the old, very costly & anti-USA FAFTA deal, that just by the money we save, MEXICO IS PAYING FOR THE WALL!” At midnight on December 22, 2018, after numerous previous threats, Trump officially called for a government shutdown, he wanted Congress to approve \$5.7 million to build the U.S.-Mexico border barrier. Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi has repeatedly called a barrier “immoral”. In his first ever prime-time Oval Office address to the nation on January 8, 2019 he spoke for under ten minutes about the immigrant crisis and urgent need for border security. He stressed drug trafficking, violent criminals and how illegal immigrants, “strain public resources and wages.” He challenges the accusation that borders are immoral and asks, “Then why do wealthy politicians build walls, fences and gates around their homes? They don't build walls because they

hate the people on the outside, but because they love the people on the inside.” (06:20-06:32). By Monday, January 14, 2019, Trump had broken the record for the longest U.S. government shutdown in history. He directly blames Democrats for passing the spending bill to build the barrier. The government shutdown has impacted about 800,000 government workers, many who are required to show up for work but do not receive pay during the shutdown.

Would Trump’s proposed barrier, the wall became a tall steel fence, be enough to stop the flow of immigrants? People will continue to attempt to cross the border any way they can, often because they are escaping worse situations and feel they have nothing left to lose. Immigrants today come for the same reasons immigrants came years ago, opportunity. Though life as an undocumented immigrant in the States is fraught with struggle and uncertainty, the risk often feels worth it to them, as there are more securities here than where they came from, particularly in terms of economic, education and health opportunities. It’s a precarious situation. Trump and his supporters see outsiders, others, as taking their opportunities and resources, which makes them feel threatened, defensive, and angry and want to put up a wall. Claiming land is about a claim to the resources on the land; different lands have different values, depending on what resources are available. Feelings of defending resources bring up notions of territoriality.

The United States is a country founded by and made up of immigrants with goals in mind to own land, “It was the promise of land that lured people to risk crossing the ocean and to leave the communities and people that were so dear to them. America was the land of opportunity, ideas of ownership and democracy. Democracy required liberty (and vice versa) and both required ownership and control of property” (Jacobs 20). Jacobs discusses the rights and responsibilities of the property owner and focuses on two main ideas, 1) that an isolatable site is

owned, and that ownership is identifiable, and 2) that the owner has a set of rights that may be freely exercised as a function of their ownership (i.e. the right to keep others off the site). There's a certain amount of accountability associated with permanence. Owning property is an active process which requires organization, effort, and care. Due to the energy invested and resources gathered, there is an inclination to protect and defend what belongs to you, to mark your claim.

The classic definition of private property ownership still taught to many law students comes from a Latin phrase which translates to, "whoever owns the soil owns all the way up to the heavens and all the way down to the depths" (Jacobs 24). This is where the idea of mineral rights and water rights comes from. Ultimately, the government reserves the right to carry out necessary social functions and has the ability enter onto property and seize it if necessary, for example it is in the way of a new major highway, airport, building. The idea that the government can take property away and offer compensation, on their terms, also known as eminent domain is threatening to the private homeowner.

I had a personal experience with this as the director of the Hudson Community Garden in 2013-2014. The garden had reached its twentieth anniversary and we had just revitalized and rebuilt the garden. The land had been loaned to the 401(c)3 non-profit garden for \$1 annually. Then the Hudson Community Development & Planning Agency (HCDPA) and Habitat for Humanity told the garden the land was needed to build affordable houses in the neighborhood. The garden's land had been threatened twice before in the past, both times defeating the threats, but it took enormous community effort to put pressure on local elected officials. Despite petitions, overpacked meetings, and an outpouring of community effort, HCDPA decided to give half of the garden's land to Habitat for Humanity. Simultaneously, the garden's rent increased

from \$1 to \$1,000 annually and the city refused to offer a lease longer than a year, which didn't give us much security or incentive to invest in infrastructure.

Houses were built where my garden plot once was, the one I inherited from the original pioneer director of the garden, Christina Malisoff, when it was just a burned out lot. She was one of my first friends when I moved to town. A house sits where the garden bed where I learned to grow garlic was, bed I inherited from Christina because she fell ill with cancer. I took the loss personally as that space was imbued with fond memories. Another larger garden did open up a couple blocks away to help mitigate the loss of land to the gardeners, primarily low-income families. The opening day of the new garden was also the day Christina lost her battle to cancer; the irony of the original community gardener's death on the birth day of the public opening of the new garden space. The new community garden, Rivertown Gardens, still exists and thrives on Front St. in Hudson, next to the old Furgary Houses, which happen to be another area seized by the local government. HCDPA had support from a SWAT team and evicted people who had lived there for generations, the former Furgary Boat Club.

Another local example of how complicated social relations can be on publicly held is an example of Tragedy of the Commons to my summer campers in July 2018. For the last 5 years I have brought campers to a special spot in the woods to pick the wild edible wineberries that grow there. It is not a secret spot, many locals know about it and pick from it, but there is a foragers code of ethics that is usually understood. When being taught to forage or wildcraft, it is important to only take  $\frac{1}{3}$  of what you see, to ensure some is left for the wildlife and for next year. However, with trends in local farm-to-table food in the area, foragers have been profiting but the risk of overharvesting is real. When I went to scout the spot to see if the berries were ripe, I was

horrified to see them picked practically clean. When I asked someone else who knew the spot they asked if I had seen the local post on Facebook where someone was selling wineberries for \$10 a quart. I was upset but did not want to cause a public scene so I privately messaged the seller, someone who was new to foraging. I asked them to consider how overpicking might affect other communities and to consider not selling wineberries picked from public lands, as it was a fineable offense. They responded neutrally, admitted the wineberries were picked from public lands but continued business online. I took the campers to the spot the following day anyway, because the woods were still beautiful to walk in, but I wanted them to see the effects of human impacts. Many campers who had picked in summer's past told stories of the days when the canes were loaded with berries to the new campers. Some of them created songs to bring the wineberries back the following year.

Fences can act as a proxy for guarding space, even when the owner is not immediately present, is an act of exercising power in claiming land. In essence, a fence is a social contract, an acknowledgement of the possible legally-binding implications of crossing the line between these two boundaries of public and private space. Major cities across the U.S. are making-over thousands of vacant lots by clearing, grading, and seeding land. The idea is that by maintaining the land and removing scrubby weeds and debris, it reduces excellent hiding places for guns, drugs, and criminal activity. Perceptions of land, and what it ought to look like can have impacts on how they are treated and used go along with the criminology theory of the 'broken window effect' in which visible signs of neglect and civil disorder, with antisocial behavior in urban environments encourage further disorder. This has been a debated theory but seems to be the logic behind the initiative discussed in the article, "Remaking Vacant Lots to Cut Crime"

(Moore). In this case, the concept of mess and waste is viewed in conjunction with a lawless and disorderly environment for activities which go against society's accepted behavior. Moore reports, "Installing a fence around the vacant lot can make a huge difference by signaling that although a lot is vacant, it isn't abandoned" (par 2). The installation of a social structure such as a fence in the case of reducing crime, in a way displays a holding of land, a display of presence, an imposition of ownership, an assertion of dominance and control, even in the absence of the owner.

A 2016 study by the University of Pennsylvania's Urban Health Lab showed the cost effectiveness of investing in remaking lots resulting in 5% reduced nearby gun violence. For every dollar spent in Philadelphia on fixing up vacant lots, taxpayers save \$26 in reduced costs from gun violence (Moore par 7). The concept of a fence and land ownership is so socially strong and understood, that in an unspoken way, this seemingly passive structure asserts its power in having a behavioral and economic benefit to society in this instance of reducing violence and costs. Once lots are cleared, there is a reduction in loitering and criminal activity, "because there is a clear path to see them," one neighbor reports (Moore par 16). This brings up the idea of transparency and visibility. In one respect, fences are a way to become invisible, for example with backyard solid wooden privacy fences. In another sense, fences indicate a human presence, as they need to be placed intentionally, which in a way reveals, or makes visible, existence, and ownership intentions or values. Fences are a visible means of understanding protection and boundaries. It sends the signal that someone was there and may be watching. Without the protection of invisibility of the disorderly weeds, it took away the criminal's sense of security and replaced it with the community's sense of security through visibility.

Physically, there are a variety of types of fencing to choose from depending on your budget, need, and design. The primary considerations in deciding which fence to install that I thought of are: (1) **Reason**--what are your needs for enclosure or exclusion, the purpose of the barrier. The difference between groundhogs, birds, cattle, children, intruders or prisoners all change the way a fence's design will be need to be considered and adjusted accordingly. (2) **Economic**--are you on a tight budget or do you have boundless potential. How much property you own and how much of it can you afford to keep private. How much area is necessary to fence? (3) **Aesthetic** preferences and styles can reflect character and at times, social status. For example, a white picket fence compared with a chain link fence compared with a historic cast-iron fence. Wierzbicki states the three formal traits associated with enclosure are scale, setting, and style (57). Fences are structural and functional, as well as aesthetic. Different types of fences and how they are expressed can create different visual environments by framing space or sometimes they can be associated with social status. The white picket fence was a status symbol directly related to 'the American Dream' of after WWII; one of promise of a steady job, a perfect family, a car, and homeownership.

In the how-to guide, "Easy Split-Rail Fence" by Theresa Breen, her use of language is interesting, "My home was in desperate need of discipline. Didn't need special tools or a hefty budget to install this beautifully chunky American classic." She describes neighbors neat property lines, marked by picket fences and boxwood shrubs to give context of what might be expected of her, "Mine lacked physical boundaries and seemed exposed, vulnerable--even unruly." Her goal was to, "install a modest fence that would help contain my home and also improve curb appeal" (par 1), describes well the societal pressures of maintaining private

property, while including notions of status and economics, and the underlying desire to make a statement to her neighbors and tame the wild and unruly nature of her yard, the classic struggle between culture and nature. A notion echoed by Wierzbicki, “And for Jewett, the most important ingredient of a garden, more important than any flower, is the garden fence.” (56)

Contrasted with Michael Pollan, who wrote about fences from a gardener’s perspective and had mixed feelings about putting in a fence, saying that to choose a fence type depends largely on economy and competence (39). Our perceptions of nature and what it should produce or look like, determines the ideas for the boundaries. Pollan writes from his experiences in gardening and expresses confusion in regard to fences. He bluntly states, “The idea that a garden might actually require protection from nature seemed absurd” (39). He felt a garden should be continuous with the landscape, in harmony with its surroundings. The concept of a fence comes up for him, in the same way it did for me, he wanted to keep the wildlife from devouring his laborious efforts of horticulture.

His idea of the continuous landscape is nothing novel. I would argue that many people living in rural areas would agree with him. They chose to live somewhat remotely to be able to enjoy the landscapes and nature abound. If you drive around the Hudson Valley through the rural areas, you will notice the overwhelming majority of private properties do not have fences surrounding their yards. At most, you may see corner accent fences, perhaps leading to the driveway or a small temporary fence around young tree plantings, until they become large enough to survive grazing mammals. A vegetable garden will likely be fenced in, but this area is small in comparison to the total property. To fence in an area so large would incur an enormous expense, and with no real reason for the fence, it is hard to justify the cost and effort. The rural



properties that do have fences are most likely keeping in animals, or perhaps children. In the winter, it is common to see seasonal snow fences along roadsides, to reduce wind and prevent snow from drifting and accumulating in inappropriate places. It is important to ask the question of “protection” but according to what perspective? The idea of seeing nature and culture as irreconcilably opposed are deeply ingrained foundational American values (Pollan 4). For his ideals of a continuous landscape, a fence represented disharmony and alienation from nature.

American culture loves to use fences as metaphors in a variety of mediums of art and expression. Without thinking deeply about it, fences are potent symbols. There have been blatant references to fences by many American singers and songwriters, artists, authors, poets, playwrights, and politicians. “Literary art draws attention to areas of experience that we may otherwise fail to notice” (Tuan 162). The most common reference I heard from others was, “Good fences make good neighbors,” from the poem “Mending Wall” written by Robert Frost in 1914. The poem is from the perspective of one neighbor in regards to the other neighbor, when they meet once a year to maintain the rock wall which delineates their properties. Frost spent much of his life in Massachusetts, which, like much of New England and New York, has an abundance of old rock walls. He describes the spring as the mending time between the two neighbors. This may be a reference to what is regionally referred to as “New England potatoes”, otherwise known as rocks that sprout from the ground in abundance after the freezing, thawing, and shifting of the ground. Removing rocks also contributes to more rocks shifting and “sprouting”. Spring would have been the time to collect the rocks and keep adding them to the wall. There is also reference to the freedom of managing one’s own property as they saw fit, different perspectives of managing and using private property according to personal taste and

identity, “He is all pine and I am apple orchard.” Fences can maintain boundaries between ideological lines and can act as a mediator of space between ideas or values. Along with the sense of individualism, can come a feeling of detachment or isolation from the community,

“He only says, ‘Good fences make good neighbours.’/  
 Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder /  
 If I could put a notion in his head: /  
 ‘Why do they make good neighbours?’ / ...  
 ... Before I built a wall I'd ask to know /  
 What I was walling in or walling out, /  
 And to whom I was like to give offence.” (Frost)

Sometimes isolation is desired and welcome, other times it is not, it is a subjective experience. Sometime these perspectives can be based on culture. Security can be a double-edged sword; While a fence may protect the fenced, it also simultaneously imprisons the protected. Frost spins the physical and social tensions of the fence as a metaphor with ease. It is difficult to detach the social aspects from the physical fence, as they are inherently intertwined.

Other common American expressions and their basic meanings include:

<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<i>Good fences make good neighbors</i>	Respecting and maintaining healthy boundaries
<i>Mending fences</i>	Making amends, resolving problems
<i>Sitting on the fence</i>	Indecision

<i>Same/other side of the fence</i>	Taking a stand; solidarity or division on an issue
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Beyond figurative speech in literature and poetry, there are references to fences, walls, and crossing boundaries in countless songs, especially in the genre of country music. Notably, “Don’t Fence Me In,” is a classic 20th century American country song, written by Cole Porter in 1934, performed by artists such as Bing Crosby & the Andrews Sisters, Ella Fitzgerald, Roy Rogers, and many more. The lyrics are rife with iconic rugged pioneer notions of yearning for free, wide open spaces; a desire for access to the open and unrestricted free land. The opening line, “Oh, give me land, lots of land under starry skies above / Don't fence me in / Let me ride through the wide open country that I love,” later claiming, “I can’t stand fences.” Garth Brooks, a contemporary country music star, named one of his album “No Fences”. Bob Dylan references a wall when describing a social misunderstanding and complication over abuse of resources, “Now there’s a wall between us, somethin' there's been lost / I took too much for granted, I got my signals crossed,” in his song from 1974, “Shelter from the Storm.” Later in the song refers to feeling like a foreigner who is bound to cross the line.

Fences can also bring up issues of race and boundaries. Some examples include, “Fences”, the play, written by August Wilson in 1983, is a theatrical example which uses the fluid nature of the physical and symbolic metaphor of fences on many levels. The story is set in 1950s suburban Pennsylvania, the main character is Troy, a middle-aged man, African-American, with a secure but dissatisfying job as a sanitation worker which securely allows him to provide for his family. He struggles with his own concepts of success and failure, and his relationship with boundaries. He almost became a professional baseball player, but his

race and age played a major influence in determining his unsuccessful outcome, despite his stellar talents. The play is rich with representations of relational and racial tensions and is related through Troy's journey of building a fence in his yard. The play was later adapted to film in 2016, starring Denzel Washington and Viola Davis, which won multiple awards.

In film, there are walls usually whenever there is a castle battle scene in the form of forts, walls, and moats. More specifically though is the 2002 film, "Rabbit-Proof Fence," based on a true story of three little girls of mixed race in Australia, torn from their Aboriginal mother and as a part of a government policy and sent to training camp for domestic workers in an effort to eradicate indigenous culture and integrate them into white society. They escape and traversed thousands of miles across the continent on foot, outsmarting professional trackers and the government search efforts the entire way, using the skills their mother taught them about surviving in the outback. There is a wire rabbit-proof fence that was built across the continent, which the girls use as a guide to get back home to their mother. A gripping and epic story which the fence is representative of the enforcer but it also serves as the liberation path back home.

In the 2018 popular film, Black Panther, a Marvel comic book superhero character which undoubtedly addresses issues of race, the imaginative nature of sci-fi fantasy creates a vast world of potential to traverse boundaries between race, time, space, economics, politics, and societies. In very last scene, featured post-credits, the King of Wakanda, King T'Challa gives a lecture and publically addresses the press regarding political and social tensions between boundaries and states and says, "The wise build bridges, while the foolish build walls," which is derived from a similar variation of an African proverb (Cavna) and one must wonder if this was not an message of unity intentionally aimed at this timely moment of wall-building across the world.

Other artforms and mediums have used fences, walls, lines, and barriers as symbolic of boundaries. In the Fall 2018 semester at Bard College, I personally witnessed three student art projects displayed in the Fischer Studio Arts Building public galleries which employed the visual use of fences in their work. Locally, in the Hudson Valley, the renowned sculpture park Storm King, features noteworthy fence commentaries. First, there is “Mirror Fence” by Alyson Shotz, American artist born in 1964, “Shotz has commented on the irony of the acceptance of the picket fence—it is an innocuous, everyday element in American life, but it serves a protective purpose: each picket is topped with a spike.” (Shotz; see Appendix, Fig. 21).

Also featured at Storm King is Andy Goldsworthy, British artist, born in 1956, known for making ephemeral nature-based art captured by photographs. For one of his permanent pieces, he did “Storm King Wall” in 1997-1998 (See Appendix, Fig. 22) . It was originally intended to be a couple hundred feet long but grew to lengths totalling 2,278 feet overall. “Goldsworthy calls the stone walls of the British countryside ‘a living part of the landscape.’ Stone walls connect people to the history of any place where they happen to be” (Goldsworthy). Wendell Berry resonates with this tone in his foreword letter to Mariana Cook on her 2011 photographic series, “Stone Walls: Personal Boundaries” when he writes about the material, of stones, referring to them as artifacts of the landscape. Wendell points to stone walls as products equally of art (culture) and nature, human and natural, blending both by means of the stone being a product of nature and the construction of the stone wall as culture (Cook xiii). Stone walls were often used as fence-like enclosures in New England by colonists (Wessels 41-42, 48, 58-59).

In sum, Chapter 2 presents an overview of historical, theoretical, and cultural background information on barriers to give contextual understanding to the various ways fences can be

perceived. Humans have been protecting themselves from nature and each other since the beginning, our relationships to land have always been about survival and defense. Examples have been given from the perspectives of multiple disciplines of study stretching from artifacts and militaristic maps to poets and playwrights. Fences are symbolically simple enough to understand, yet can be complex to maintain socially.

### Chapter 3: Methods

To better understand what type of fence was considered culturally acceptable in my neighborhood, I thought it would be interesting to see what my neighbors had to say about the matter. I was interested in a ‘thick description’ for interpreting fence culture, meaning not just superficially observing fences and asking why, but considering the other contexts which would influence the subject (Geertz 6, 9). This project gave me an excuse to meet my neighbors and get a sense of the community. I based interviews on how open or not people were to answer my questions and what type of fencing they had at home. I intended to create a balance between objectivism (the fence) and subjectivism (the interview), which both need each other to exist and also to illustrate the use of the metaphor as a matter of “imaginative reality” (Lakoff 189, 235).

The majority of this project is composed of ethnographic work, mainly based in and around the Hudson Valley in New York. I mostly interviewed property owners of different regional types (i.e. rural, suburb, urban) as well as on various expressions of boundaries. I included perspectives from other people who interact closely with fences or boundary lines such a code enforcer, field surveyor, stone mason, gardeners, renters, and homeowners. Those interviewed signed informed consent documents which are ethical disclosures on the project and

ensuring an effort of confidentiality by being given pseudonyms. Interviews were conducted in-person and over the phone and either audio-recorded or took written notes.

#### Chapter 4: Ethnographic Results

Soon into interviewing my neighbors, I found out that my property originally used to belong to a neighboring property and was subdivided years ago and a mobile home sat there for a long time. In 1997, the mobile home was removed and the current house I live in was built. It is a double-wide modular ranch on a quarter acre of land. Very simple layout, typical suburban allotment situation; what I like to call, “a very normal average American house”. I bought my house when it was twenty years old in 2017 from a couple who bought it in 2016. They bought it when it was in poor condition and renovated it themselves to sell at a profit.

Before they bought it in 2016, it had been left unoccupied for many years, the previous owners were foreclosed on in 2009. According to many neighbors who unanimously said the people who built and lived in my home were not desirable neighbors. No one had anything positive to note about them and their relationship to the community. His name contains the word “thorn”, which I seem to remember because metaphorically he seemed to be a thorn in all of the neighbors sides. Everyone had crude remarks about him. He was described as sort of slimey and shady. Ironically, he was a car salesman, a career not known for their honor. He stole bluestone sidewalk slabs from a nearby neighbor when he went away on a trip. He was described repeatedly as very rude to others and hard to interact with, often agitated, recalcitrant, defensive, selfish, dishonest, and inconsiderate. He had a wife and some children, at some point they separated and he left the house to her and the kids for many years. The kids grew up and got into

trouble. Neighbors reported that many people lived in the house at a time, many came and went and therefore did not maintain the house or property. It didn't take long before it fell into disarray. Neighbors who saw the house inside and out at different stages have said the people who inhabited the house were heavy in-door smokers, with many animals such as a pack of dogs, cats, rabbits, and little regard for cleanliness or maintenance. The sellers who renovated the house said they needed to take up the floorboards and the plywood layers underneath as well as half of the sheetrock walls to be able to remove the odor as it was so strong.

Once I found out all of this information about my home's past owners, I felt that I better understood my neighbor's possible hesitations in getting to know me. My house symbolized a past trauma for them who had experienced 'Thorn' and the others who didn't treat the space or neighbors with care. I felt in some like I also had to take this into consideration when designing my property. I wanted to get a sense of the cultural aesthetic around my new neighborhood so I walked around my block and observed what my neighbors had put up, or not, in their yards. I wanted to get a general idea of the different personalities in my surroundings to see my neighborhood and other local fence encounters.

#### Charlie / Chain link

Charlie works at a gardening center I frequent often and helps me load materials into the back of my car. I always ask him his opinion on different products and methods he uses in his garden and we often talk shop in our interactions. I knew he had a garden so I asked to interview him. He didn't really understand why but was open and willing. I caught him one day after work while he was waiting for his ride. He lives in a pretty rural wooded area, most of his neighbors don't have fences unless it is for a specific purpose. He has 2 acres of property, all enclosed with



a chain link fence that has been there since before he owned the property, it came with the fence. He likes it because it keeps his dogs in. He has a pack of 8 dogs of various sizes and breeds, most are large and strong. When I asked him about invisible fences, if he liked the way his fence looked, he said he didn't think an invisible fence setup would work for him and his dogs, they were too strong-willed and stubborn. The second they saw a squirrel run into the road, they would be determined to chase it and likely just ignore any sounds and zaps and just plow through. He didn't mind the way the fence looked, thought it was fine. Didn't seem to care what neighbors thought but also didn't have bad relations with neighbors.

Since Charlie has a big dog pack, he has no problems with garden pests trying to get into his garden such as groundhogs, deer, rabbits, etc. He does set up seasonally temporary fences within the chain link fenced area, for 8-9 flower and vegetable beds. They are meant to keep the dogs from running over and destroying them and are very practically made from galvanized wire, staked in place with green metal U-posts, 28 inches tall. They are set up from Spring-Fall and taken down in the winter.

I asked him what he thought made a fence culturally appropriate, for example what he thought about white picket fences. He made a funny face, like white picket fences weren't for him. He said he thought it depended where the property was, such as rural versus suburb or city. He thought a white picket fence only made sense in certain situations and would work in a suburban setup where neighbors are closeby. His neighbors are not so close, there is a nice buffer between their main yards and so aesthetics don't matter as much. His fence serves its practical purpose and that is all he expects from it; as long as it keeps his dogs in, he is satisfied.

Peter / Invisible Fence

Peter and I were speaking informally before the interview on the subject of interviewing, reporting, and transparency. Peter is a well-known journalist and writer, he is also one of my garden clients. After four years of working with him, he feels more like a friend and I enjoy our banter. We have interesting discussions and often debate over issues. He can be perceived as brash because he speaks boldly and is strongly opinionated but he also happens to be very smart and can often back it up with evidence. He's appreciates objectivity, science, facts; he is interested in technology and the future, among other things. Admittedly, at first when I met him years ago, I didn't like him very much. We disagreed on a lot of issues and I was initially defensive. Turned out that I was wrong, I soon learned it was fine to disagree and respected his ability to be unapologetically and authentically himself. As he put it, "I don't care if you like me. I want you to read my story and know my opinion, but I also want you to have all of the facts necessary to think I'm not an idiot."

Peter recently got an adorable and well-behaved medium-sized puppy. This is important to note because animals inherently are impulsive, especially when they are young, playful, and energetic. Compounded with a high cuteness factor, the risk for rotten behavior is high, as they are likely to get away with misbehaving. Peter has his dog well-trained. However, even with a well-trained dog, it's hard to have a dog without fences, the risk of danger is high. The training has been supported by the Invisible Fence® system that Peter had put in.

The way the Invisible Fence® works is a small trench is dug, about 6-8 inches deep, creating the perimeter of the area you desire to enclose. A line of wire is placed in the perimeter trench as well as fed into a central depository system that is in the basement. The wire is then buried and becomes 'invisible' because it is underground. The perimeter wire is sends a signal to

an electronic collar that the dog wears while at home. If the dog gets to the perimeter wire, an electronic signal is sent to the collar which emits a high-pitched sound frequency to the dog, warning them to turn back. If the dog crosses the boundary then they are given a warning electric shock; levels are adjusted to each dog according to size and temperament. After the first shock, there is a 20-second grace period when the fence is disabled, allowing the dog to come back without being shocked as it re-enters. If they do not respond and get back within that 20-sec. timeframe they get shocked again as they cross the boundary back home. I tried the collar on myself to test the ethics of this and it is definitely uncomfortable and unsettling like an electric shock, but it is not painful. When the dog leaves the property with the owner to go out, the Invisible Fence® collar is removed and switched out with a regular collar with identification and tags.

An Invisible Fence® brochure I picked up at my veterinarian's office described the product as, "Vet-recommended exclusive technology protects your pets, while giving them more freedom, in and around your home...The combination of innovative technology and scientifically-based training will forever change how you live with your pets." The idea of more protection allowing for more freedom is an interesting concept in that ensuring the security of your resources (pets) allows you to have the peace of mind that they can roam free safely within your yard. In this way the fence creates a specific micro-world within the macro-world, like a security net or a safety blanket. Peter was skeptical at first whether it would actually work but he has had no issues with escape attempts. He did say it was most effective based on two things, that the dog was well-trained and the type of dog (e.g. breed, temperament, intelligence). Apparently, certain dogs don't respond well to the Invisible Fence® method.

I asked Peter why he chose to put an Invisible Fence® in instead of a physical fence. He said it was mainly for aesthetic reasons, “Physical fences would look hideous here. It’s a rural area along a fast road, my property is an odd shape. I didn’t want my dog running all over my entire property and I didn't really want to put in fences all over the yard. I didn't see the point of a physical barrier as necessary.” He spent less money on installing the Invisible Fence® than he would have on physical fences, though he said the expense and savings were not a main factor in his decision. The Invisible Fence® also comes with a money-back guarantee and manufacturer’s warranty that also maintains the fence for you, whereas maintaining a physical fence would be entirely up to the owner and would require diligent observation for any breaches. Whereas, when Peter did have one incident where the Invisible Fence® malfunctioned, an alarm went off in his house which alerted him immediately that the system was down. He was home when it happened as knew right away because the in-home base of the security system in the basement began beeping. The line had not been buried deep enough by a new installer in one area and was cut when the lawn was being mown.

We talked about how dogs mark their territory, which then led to a discussion on garden-related pest issues we had experienced in the past. Peter said this was the first year ever that he hasn’t put any Have-a-Heart traps out for groundhogs and he thought it was due to his dog’s presence. In the past, he had tried applying coyote urine to the perimeter of his garden to deter the pests but to no avail. I’ve never used this method but have mostly heard unsuccessful stories.

Peter’s garden fence is about 4’ tall, a wooden post-and-beam fence with chicken-wire on the lower half to keep animals out, with a low dry stacked wall underneath the fence all around.

It's a classic country garden fence with simplicity and charm that he had put in, along with the garden, 6-7 years ago. We talked about repairing some of the chicken wire next season. There were no groundhogs this year but there was a pesky something nibbling all season. I suspect rabbits. His Invisible Fence® does not include the fenced vegetable garden, which lies just past it's perimeter, so the dog is nearby having an influence on the space but is unable to actually go after any animal inside of the garden. He would have to breach the Invisible Fence® while simultaneously jumping the fence.

Peter's dog doesn't dare cross the boundary and is well-trained, but having a cute dog in public presents its challenges when interacting with others who engage the dog. We talked about boundaries in dog culture and how it's not about training the dog, it's about training the people. We talked about how dogs often can mirror their owners. He may be strict with his dog's training, but that doesn't mean that other people won't cross boundaries. The dog is not aggressive towards people, kids, or other dogs, but he is worried that if not trained, his dog could jump on people and knock them over. Peter gets a lot of packages delivered and asked if he had put up a "Beware of Dog" sign or some indicator for people who make deliveries. Peter said he made sure to let them know about the dog to tell them that he was friendly. One of the deliverymen said, "Every person says their dog is friendly." Peter has had no issues.

#### Bruno & Iris / Post & Beam

Bruno and Iris are garden clients of mine, they have been married forever, mostly live in the city but have been coming up to their country house on the weekends for the last 30 years. I adore them both and their respective gardens. I ask Bruno to tell me about his fences, "I have a couple of fences," he tells me. Wendy pipes in in the background and says, "it's collaborative."

Bruno says to her, “You need to leave. You need to leave. My first fence is in between my wife and I, I wish it was that easy.” He composes himself and proceeds, “ I have a fence around my one-time vegetable garden which is now more of a flower garden. I have a fence between my property and my neighbor’s property, and the world, which is a 30 foot high white pine treeline, like a fence, but it's like 25 trees that once were 5 feet tall. That was put in by the former owner here and I didn't really see the need for it, but as it grew bigger and bigger and gave me more privacy and I liked it very much.” He said he put in his garden fence to provide protection against animals out, “So it was more that, but I've used it now as a boundary, I've used it as a backdrop for the flowers, I've used it on the inside as a wall to put flowers up against, like a trellis.” I ask if his fence is effective against animal pests, “It seems to have kept the bigger critters out the fence. It consists of many levels and layers of chicken wire and higher and bigger wire that I've put together over the years. I did something very clever with the bottom part where I made an outside ‘U’ so that they couldn’t dig under it. It used to work, except now the fence is 30 years old.” He tells me about when he first put the fence in, he had help from his neighbor, “He was a sweet man, and he had an auger on the back of his tractor and so that auger dug the holes and then I stuck in a post every 10 feet and I've expanded that garden, an extra 12 feet, maybe twice. It could be 36 x by 20' by now, it's a good sized garden.”

He talked about what he had planted in his garden, particularly his prolific raspberry and blueberry bushes, which benefit when he remembers to prune, fertilize, and put up bird netting. He also had a lovely grape trellis separating his prized flowers from his vegetables. “I made a beautiful decorative fence within my garden. I like to work with wood and I saw beautiful fences in Central Park and so I said copied them. I use them as my grapevine fence in my garden, I

grow the grapes as an homage to my father, who loved grapes and always had them in his garden. After the dislocation of World War I and II, since he was Italian and his family was uprooted, and lots of dislocation, he decided to buy a working farm in Brewster NY, in 1946 after World War II so that his family would never be hungry again.”

One of the reason I adore working for Bruno is he hires me to work alongside him to help with projects and weeding he cannot stand. My point is, he is a fellow passionate gardener--you should hear him talk about his dahlias, you'd think there is nothing more precious on earth. We speak a similar language, a love of plants and being in the sun and the soil. People like us find any reason to putter around outside all year, much like the yard work as a spiritual practice of creation and doing. Bruno said, “I work all winter, I ‘make work.’ It's a meditative kind of thing and physically, gets me out.”

I ask him to describe the perimeter garden around his fence, a particular area he constantly battles but doesn't care to put in a ton of work, far more interested in other projects. “Weeds would grow terribly, and then it obscured the fact that I had vegetables in the garden and it's saved me from more animals coming into the fence. They would just see weeds, which would give the visual appearance of a meadow. The animals would think that this is just a field so--what do you call the plane you can't see in the air? Oh, I'm calling it a ‘Stealth’ garden.” (See Appendix, Fig. 23). His wife Iris would discard and divide her plants in her garden and Bruno didn't have the heart to let them die, so he started planted them around the border of his garden, which helped it look like a meadow, “That idea was inspired by my father in-law, who did a similar thing to his garden, making it look like a field to disguise it, so it's an homage to his gardening too.”

I remarked on how so much of his gardening practices involve memorials to other gardeners who came before him, either directly planting heirloom flowers transplanted from their original gardens where they lived for decades or in planting certain crops (Bruno doesn't even like grapes, he just grows them to remember his father). "Fences help delineate space and experiences of the garden. For example it keeps my garden separate from my wife's garden and that keeps us sane." I ask, "Can you tell me how your gardens are different because Iris also has a fence but it's different." "Yes, which I built. Her fence is more of a backdrop, a boundary. It's not enclosed. Her garden is beautiful, manicured, very thought-out. And mine is refreshingly spontaneous and just frolicking and rolicking and just, where things end up, and it gets a little thought out but it's nowhere near Iris's." At the sound of her name, Iris' interested piqued and she took it as a cue to chime in, "I don't know what he said about my garden, I know this is his interview, but I just want to say that when he built that fence in my garden, to me it felt like he was contributing to my garden and it felt great." Bruno says, "And what about my stone fence?" "Yes, and his stone walls. Not a fence, but it creates a division," she agrees, but also has to disagree in some way. They both make me laugh every time, their marriage is that of a stereotypical older couple love to constantly bicker and have this argumentative banter, but know they really love each other; they love to give each other a hard time, it's their "thing" as a couple, tough love. They are both generous and supportive with me, sometimes I almost feel like an adoptive daughter to them at times. I honestly love their company and conversation and working on their land. I have to alter how I work for each of them depending on which one of them I am working for that day or that hour; sometimes they ask me to come for 6 hours but they will each get me for 3 hours each in their garden or other personal garden project on the property. The way



they keep the peace in on their is by keeping things separate; they are both avid and knowledgeable gardeners, both completely obsessed with flowers. Bruno is more practical and Iris, a former art therapist, seems to have used a paint brush when creating her perennial flower garden. She attributes it to taking one class, but mostly it was trial and error over the years, things are constantly shifting. Also see Appendix Fig. 24-25 for additional small deer fences in their yard.

### Bobby / Stonemason with a Plastic Fence

Bobby is an interesting character. He currently makes a living reading tarot cards and teaching martial arts, and giving massages, but he used to be a stonemason when his kids were younger; he is also an avid gardener and has studied Traditional Chinese Medicine. He lives in a wooded rural neighborhood through winding roads and no sidewalks, though houses feel close together for such a forested setting. He and his family live on a rounded corner in a beautiful house where he and his wife work from. She is a registered nurse and herbalist and teaches locally through her herbalism school. Together, they have two large garden plots in their front yard. One is older and more established, the other Bobby just put in this year in 2018. The new garden has a regular sized screen door as the entrance which is quirky because it just looks like a free-standing door in the middle of the yard while driving by on the road. I asked him why he chose that door for the gate. “Well it clearly delineates the space, and white doors were cheap. And I thought it would be funny also, because I left it there all winter as a portal to set the intention for the space. There’s really practical stuff too, I’m also working with the land. I’m thinking about where the water is, what wants to grow there, how everything is linked together, it’s interdependent. So I’m always conscious when I’m co-creating with the land, on some lands

I let the land let me know what it wants me to grow. If I want to grow potatoes, I'm don't fight the land too much, if potatoes don't grow here, I'm not growing them." I bring up the idea of nature and culture and am interested in his approach of coexisting with his land rather than resisting it. He tells me, "There's nothing natural about a garden. This is what kills me, gardens are artificial, it's society. Tribes become civilizations when they merge and there's things that don't always go together. I try to grow things that go together but there is some understanding that you're controlling it. I try to get out of the way as much as possible and not to conflict, especially with the herbal gardens. Most of the stuff in the herbal gardens grows here, I prefer to use stuff that grows in the area, so that your body resonates with it." He reminds me the main reason for his fence is for keeping all kinds of animals out. "I'm not gonna fight them too hard. We had a woodchuck come and it used to live under one place here and instead of fighting it or blowing it's head off, my wife did a meditation and she asked what the woodchuck wanted and I was like okay, cool, and it told her, 'I want echinacea and I won't touch your garden.' It sounds crazy but she planted some off the the side and he never touched the garden again, no fence, no nothing. He got what he needed, he had a family there and then they moved away. The land will tell you what it needs." I love this anecdote because as a fellow gardener, I'd rather use means of protection that don't cause much harm, cost much money, or take much effort. I have heard of planting "bait gardens" off to the side of your main garden, almost as an offering to the animals so they stay distracted and satisfied and ignore your garden. Working with animal behavior and psychology can be a means of altering their behavior known to gardeners and farmers.

I notice he has some beehives behind his garden. His area is notorious for having bears in the neighborhood, which love to eat bee pupae and honey. He tells me, "I definitely have bears

because I have bees. I have an electric solar fence just around the hives. I don't want it all around the plants." We are sitting on his front steps looking out at his yard and we both watch a chipmunk go through the fence with some food in its mouth. He chuckles and says, "Yeah, I'm okay if the critters have some things. The bees are great because they make the garden thrive and there are a lot of medicinal plants that they love in there."

I ask him about his garden fences, which he installed himself. I asked him if it was difficult because the west side of the Hudson River tends to be very rocky and clayey soil. "It was, but once again it's kind of like listening to the soil and that's just from getting older, you get experience. I saw the soil. I saw that I didn't want to go too deep. I didn't want a permanent structure for this fence for this property cause I change the gardens. I just expanded it this year, planted a bunch of raspberries over there. It's just cedar posts and I just like this light material, just enough so the deer-the deer don't want a solid fence. They want a fence that moves, because if its solid, they can jump 7-8 feet." The light material he refers to is a thin black plastic gridded mesh, almost chain link pattern but a flowy looser plastic material. He tells me, "It's only about 5 feet, but it moves in the wind." "So it messes with the deer's depth perception?" I ask. He replies, "Yeah, and I made the raised beds so I can control the moisture around it, I made the paths wide enough for a mower to pass but I didn't leave a lot of open space inside. If you give them a lot of open space, they like to jump in. And then they also find somethings at the perimeter of the garden that they like to eat and because I understand the nature of the big trees nearby, this is where they like to hide out if its windy and they sleep here. So, I plant them some things out there for them to chew on and then its okay, they don't bother the garden."

As a fellow gardener and herbalist, I am tuned in to certain plants. Elder is one of those plants, a native shrub with beautiful white umbel flowers in spring and dark black berries in summer. I have been foraging elder for years, one of my favorite allies for immune health in winter. This year I managed to propagate a handful of cuttings and planted them in my garden, though deer notoriously eat it while it is young. There is a lot of old folklore behind the protective powers of the elder bushes and I notice a gigantic bush taking up a large corner area of his old garden and ask him about it. He tells me, “Well elder is the guardian spirit right there, and watches over the whole herbal garden.” He tells me about when he planted it only a couple years ago. I comment on its immense size for its young age. She grins to himself and remarks, “It’s unusual. We had a record harvest this year, my entire freezer chest is filled with it. Other people told us they got no berries this year. That’s a little garden magic. Some good planting and soil tricks but that plant is happy there. We got tuned in and figured out where we wanted to put it and that’s where it wanted to go.” He tells me about planting it under a full moon full of intention.

I switch the subject and ask him about his time spent as a stonemason. “Rock walls do hold soil. Sometimes I’d go in and solve a problem, someone would have spent \$30 grand on a drainage system, and I go, ‘Well let’s do this the farmer way.’ They say, ‘How are you going to do that?’ I say, ‘Go the path of least resistance.’ Water’s only vice is gravity. You put up a stone wall with some drainage, the old way, and it works really well and costs a third of the money. But sometimes the client, is like the garden, you need to look at the land and what does it need?” I love his use of the metaphor of understanding the needs of both the land and the clients. He drifts into a memory, “One of my favorite stories is of a woman who put in a fake creek bed

along her French drain and they were spending all this money to put in pumps, and she didn't know what she wanted. I said, 'Listen, let's take it out. You're spending all this money every year trying to solve this problem. Let's get rid of the bed. This little fake pond thing you got going on, let's do something different.' So we took it out, that's not what the land wanted. So I drew a picture and I said, 'Trust me.' I put something up, no more water issues, no more struggles she was having, this thing, this problem with this property. She didn't know what she wanted and she tried to control the land, instead of looking at it a different way. I said, 'Look how beautiful your land is. The water doesn't want to be here. How do you work with it and also make it work with your house?' When we finished she said she felt freed. She didn't realize how much of her life was being taken over by this thing, this symbol she had." I am delighted by this story and think about what water symbolizes in tarot's cups, emotions and intuition. I mention the idea of water being stuck, of emotions being stuck, the client didn't know what she wanted. He nods and says, "That's right, and I knew that was in a way a kind of spiritual healing work for her as well. It's not just I put rock up, it's that I help people understand what it is they want and they don't always know. They don't know how to hold proper boundaries. Boundaries help you articulate what you want. Sometimes they want put one up and realize, 'That's too much.'"

I ask him what makes a fence culturally appropriate? He comments, "Sometimes no fence is also a boundary. That's a type of fence, because sometimes people see more than they want. There's different ways to hold your boundaries. And you know, people tend to overdo it if it's a status symbol. Then they become imprisoned by them, like this woman and her pond and fake river bed, we took it out and it was such a great relief for her." I asked him what he put in to better curate her experience of her space, he responded, "I put in a retaining wall to prevent the

soil erosion, she put up a little fountain in the garden, and she did more gardening and enjoyed her property a lot more instead of this idea with this status symbol that she wanted, that had nothing to do with the property. She brought it with her when she bought the property and she didn't need that boundary or that symbol. It was a release for her, so the fence was not to contain, it was to free her, it was a liberating tool. Sometimes people spend too much money on things that don't do the job but they *look* like they do. Sometimes I had to simplify the job for them. There's an aesthetic to the property line, you want to define things, but not imprison. The wall is a mixture between form and function. Rock is a choice that is a humble material. Sometimes people wanted to impose their will on something and I come in and explain why that won't work with the land and offer an alternative solution. I felt like I was doing healing work that way. ”

Thinking about how hard a material like stone is, in contrast with his light and breezy garden deer fence and I asked him about his choice for such a temporary fence over a more permanent one. He told me, “Oh sure, for one I wanted a beautiful garden, but something I can take out. It's all temporary anyway. I wanted something that didn't impose itself too heavily on the land. In case I want to sell the house, I could take it out easily. Just some simple stakes, it's not too expensive. I put the fence up in about 25 minutes. I picked the spot where I wanted to do them. I put them in by hand, I didn't get a machine. Steel metal, put down a couple feet. Hammering them down. I like the simplicity of it too, it doesn't demand too much attention over the garden. They both have door frames because I had to bless the new garden new space and I let it sit out for four seasons before I did anything. And the neighbors were like, ‘OK what is this door in your front lawn?’ For one, it was funny, and two, I wanted to let it be clear to watch that area and watch where and how the water flowed naturally, so it gave me an idea where I wanted

to lay down my garden beds, and what I wanted to plant there. I have a couple trees that I had to take out to get some more sun. They became part of the pathways in my garden.”

We have established the issue of the animals in his area, but what effect did his garden fences with doors have on people, his neighbors? He said to me, “It contains it in a way that I know people appreciate. I know that people use my property and when they walk by they ask me how the bees are, how's the garden. and I'm like ‘Hi. Who are you?’ and they tell me, ‘Oh, I just live a mile up the road, I make sure to walk by your house on my route, your house is so beautiful.’ It's nice that my garden is an extension beyond my space it's influencing the neighbors. It opens up a social invitation.” I love the idea of his garden as a means of connecting with his community.

I ask Bobby about what the fences were like where he grew up, what he remembers. “Where I grew up, in the city, the role of fences was to keep you either out of a place or it was supposed to protect you. If you have less space, people are very protective of it, not always inviting. Although sometimes you see a city garden that is great and feels very inviting. Fences are what you make them. It's the intent, not the fence itself, it's the intent behind it. The doorway is a portal, a way to create a different space A different mindset, a different world.” I smile at his mention of creating a different imagined reality. I ask him if he thinks his fences represent him well to his community. He looks up and thinks about it, “Maybe in the way that I garden, I'm not too fussy. It's orderly and neat, it's functional, its aesthetic, and I sometimes let things go. I like that it doesn't set a permanent border. It's malleable, it's moveable, and flexible, like me. I'm not too worried about what other people think. I wasn't trying to impress anyone, I'm too old for that. I like to keep it nice and clean others seem to appreciate that. Who could get upset? My

neighbors moved in, their second home, the house is not really close and they were worried at first about who the neighbors might be but the wife came over and said, ‘Look at these gardens, who can worry, it tells you everything you need to know about these people.’ This property doesn't demand a privacy fence. It goes back to both what I want but also with the property demands. You get out what you put in to a fence. It is what you make it. Prisoner is prison but it's also how you choose to respond to that environment. You make decisions. You still have agency. Fences give you agency. My fence says that it is not to shut people out, but they are aware of it. It draws attention, when people come to my house, they always first go to the garden. They always say they just feel good there. The garden holds space and allows them to get better acquainted with themselves. It's like a piece of artwork. You go to it and you get out of it what you bring to it. Not only what the artist intends, you're also supposed to have your own experience. That's why I decided to make my fences liberating. They define spaces but they also liberate them. They are not fixed and not made to imprison. They are multipurpose.”

#### Hector & Maria Angelise / Adding a Hedge

Hector and Maria are friends of mine. They recently bought a home in the country. They both work remotely at home upstate and also commute into NYC. We often get together at talk about culture, as we all have parents who are immigrants and come from different backgrounds. We also all come from more densely and diversely populated areas. Now that we have children we have found ourselves wanting to raise them in wide open spaces. We found each other through a play group with an emphasis on environmental education. We were both living in a small upstate city (Hudson) at the time. In the past year we both bought houses in more rural areas than we were previously used to, and especially as people of color, we have been



confronted with our sense of place and belonging by way of representation of demographics in our new neighborhoods. I am grateful to have them to decompress about this as allies. This somehow has instinctually triggered the same response in all of us, the questions of- *what kind of fence do we put up?* We can be sensitive to how we can be perceived, because we notice how people notice us as different. Thus, we don't want to appear closed-off, but we do want some sense of privacy.

When I mentioned my project topic to my friends, they asked me to come over and see their property to get my opinion on improving their fence situation.. I came over and gave some options and things to consider about working with the land given the current conditions. Their property is located right off of a high-speed back country road, right along a curve across from an apple orchard. An opening in the wrought-iron fence guides your turn. You pull into their driveway and front lawn, along the road. They have a beautiful house with a pool in the back, which is really just parallel next to the road. The wrought iron fence runs along the entire length of the property along the road. There are some lovely large evergreen trees planted parallel along the fenceline, and a couple accent bushes. There are some wild weed trees (i.e. mulberry, sumac) growing in along the fenceline. The town is responsible for maintaining the property from the fence to the road, but they get to it once, maybe twice a year.

We all agree the existing 4' high wrought iron fence that runs between the house and their land is beautiful. They think the previous owner had the fence put in because of the pool and she also had children. They emphasize their desire for a visual barrier to enhance their privacy and experience, as their front and backyard pool area are only separated by a transparent fence and the close proximity to the road makes them feel exposed. They feel secure enough in it

that it can contain their child. I like that the fence guides me when I visit and I don't know which place to turn, the fence lets me know. Not many of their neighbor's properties have a fences, especially none quite like theirs. Most of the other houses are set further back on the property, away from the road, and thus might not feel the need to install a boundary. Hector expressed, "grappling with this idea of maintaining the style and aesthetic of the country house look and keeping the fence, but also wanting more privacy." When I looked at their current fence and desires, I suggested a some plantings and a hedge. They had also gotten other landscape consultations which suggested the same. We both suggested privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*), a hardy bush which is commonly used as a hedge along roads in this area. This would be a compliment to with the existing fence, while filling in some of the visual gaps. Hector said it was an exercise of his patience, to wait for the hedges to grow and fill in the space. He wanted instant privacy but came to understand the value of waiting for a good thing. He said, "That's the trade-off, is if we just put up a solid wooden fence, it would be fast but it wouldn't look as good." Not to mention removing a wrought iron fence and then installing a wooden fence would be very costly. Maria Angelise pointed out too that a solid wooden fence would be a very hard edge, which she found to be harsh, "it's not like we're across from a high-rise building, we're across from an apple orchard." She wanted a softer look and was willing to wait for the hedge. We talked about being new homeowners and all of the expensive decisions we made and lessons we learned already. We talked about tests of patience, experienced gained, wisdom accrued. Upon first moving to our places, we each had racial ideas about what we wanted to change, we wanted to make our marks on our spaces, to make it known they were our places. We had to learn how we use our land and space in order to make informed decisions and not waste time and money. Somethings

we didn't get to and they ended up being some of the best features about the place. Some things we changed and wished we hadn't. Home ownership, responsibility, dreams, and decisions. are all an interesting experience. Everyone's first year is intense. "Once you adjust, and you settle, you realize you don't need as much as your first thought." said Hector.

They both especially wanted to have more privacy by the pool. There is also a hot tub, which they use occasionally while nude, but under the cover of night and there are some bushes planted nearby which also give some privacy. Maria said, "When you're in the pool, you feel like you're on vacation, but when a car drives by all of a sudden you are reminded that you are near the road and feel exposed." I asked if it was because they were in birthday or bathing suits. She said, "I'm not even concerned with what they see, it's more of my own desire to be away. I want to know that I am securely away."

I then asked them what the fences were like of their childhood, where they grew up. Maria Angelise grew up in another country, behind 10' high unscalable concrete walls with a 24-hr security guard at the gate. "So there was no question that there would ever be anyone who could get in," she said. Hector grew up in suburban homes in upstate NY with 1-2 acres. He said there was no fence culture where he grew up. His parents didn't use the outdoor space much. He went to boarding school and wasn't around much to use the space. He grew up without knowing many fences, yet he felt a strong need for privacy on his new home. He reflected on his on was curious why that was, he explained how it has been a process for him, at first he felt very exposed but he has backed off on his initial ideas and became more open to what the land wanted. Maria was impartial to the barrier project and let Hector take it on, he who felt stronger about getting it done.

We explored and discussed ways people mark their territory and claim land, and Hector said, “Maybe it’s this. If I’ve lived here my whole life, and I bought a place, and it’s a community, and I know and maybe have, trust is the wrong word, but just know, and I’m comfortable with it, then maybe I wouldn’t want the fence. Maybe it’s the fact that we’re sort of outsiders and we’re still just getting used to it. I don’t know these people, they don’t know me. You can come in defensive. As you begin to claim your land and live there, you get used to it.” We talked about other ways to enhance privacy other than fences. A couple weeks later they had some hedge bushes planted along the fence, hopefully establishing roots over the winter for strong spring growth.

#### Louise / Stone Wall Repair

Louise has half an acre that was subdivided from an old farm property. She thinks around the 1970s the town went through a transition from rural to include some suburban areas, which is how her property and her side neighbor’s property came to be. At the rear of her property is an old stone wall and just beyond that are a historic barn and chicken coop. Louise loves these landmarks in her viewshed and hopes they remain standing for some time. There are old stone walls that are on the neighbors side of the property that just go through the woods that have nothing to do with the property lines, she thinks they have been there much longer. At the front of the property, next to the road, there is a low stone wall created of the same material as the wall to nowhere in the woods, she doesn’t know when it was built but said it had more of a decorative element to it to frame the house and create a boundary between the property and the road.

I asked her how she is able to tell the difference between their neighbor’s space and their own space. “Mostly we can’t. The children, maybe even grandchildren, of the original farmer

next door, none of them live here. They live across the country in big cities. So they come in about once a year and survey the perimeter, just to make sure that we're not creeping over the property line. Every once in a while we'll catch them outside putting in little orange flags to mark the line. So we actually had a conversation with them last summer about maybe moving one of the stone rows to actually be on the property line because we just want them to stop it already. We're not trying to do anything. They were worried that if we even used just a little bit of their land to back up our car or something that we could claim squatter's rights, [eminent domain] and take it eventually. I think the new owner in the 1970s used to park his boat there and had an agreement with the farmer, but that was a different relationship between them. So we just ended up signing an agreement with the neighbors that we had no intent to take over their little piece of property, because we just didn't want to talk about it anymore. I think it's dealt with for now. ”

Louise plans to have repairs done to an area of tumbled stone wall in the front in the spring. She's going for a, “natural style, not looking for a machine-cut look.” We talked about finding a good stonemason and how it was a dying artform. Her stone wall is about 1 ½' wide and 2' high, fairly low and traversable, though it has begun to sink down, spread out, and requires re-stacking. Louise thinks it has fallen over time due to a combination of the snow plow coming by and the chipmunks and snakes that crawl through. Her walls are not to keep anything in or out necessarily, she is after the aesthetic framing aspect, “as an echo of the farm that used to be there.” She thinks the original farmhouse, which has a fireplace in each room, was originally built in the 1840s. Her neighbor to her side is a renter, an older man she doesn't see often. A family is now renting the farmhouse. She has no issues with either of them. There had been a

land surveyor who lived there for 30 years but then the landlords wanted to do renovations and raise the rent higher to market value and so he moved out. It is interesting that the children, or grandchildren of this farmer, who do not live there and do not seem very attached to the land beyond business are also very defensive, protective, and precise about it. Perhaps it is because they are not rooted in the community and present enough to form relationships with their neighbors that they are able to be so objectively cold and unwelcoming in handling their social encounters. "It felt like an accusation." Louise said. I asked if they had made any effort to get to know them in any way. She said, "A little bit, she is anxious as a person, every conversation has that feeling of being uncomfortable, she is socially anxious. Her brother is more relaxed, we have a better relationship with him. He's a trumpet player and I've heard him play across the fields in the summer, so I feel like I have a relationship with his music." Louise is a professional musician so it makes sense that she would feel a connection to him through this medium which crosses many boundaries.

Louise is a mother to a young child so teaching him boundaries has been important as they use their front yard more, which is longer than their backyard. The front yard has the road and, "teaching him not to go past the stones has been a good mental marker for him to know where he is safe and allowed." She and her husband don't have enough time to set up their dream garden and don't have pets so there is no real need for a fence. If she did put a fence up it would be to keep the deer out to reduce the tick problem, which is especially concerning as a parent of a young child. She grew up in cities and urban areas so to be confronted with the intense tick-Lymes disease issue in the area has been terrifying. People have been known to move away from the area because the tick populations have been a risk of major health concerns.

Part of what Louise and her husband enjoy about the property is, “that we cannot really feel the property boundaries and it feels much more expansive. We probably feel like we have more like an acre or two because it’s so open.” At one point before the agreement with the neighbor, they had proposed putting in a fence. She was worried about what type of fence they would have chosen and how it would impact her view and experience of the property. “We imagined they would choose something horrible.” Which is when Louise suggested just moving the stones over to keep it low and natural, “so you don’t feel the same type of...wall,” meaning the social wall between them. We talked about how putting in a modern fence would recreate the history of the land also, not only how land is used but also how they got higher and more secure over time. I asked her if she had to choose a fence to put up, what style would it be, she said a horse fence, split-rail type of wooden, open, visibly transparent fence. I had only met her that day, but I felt like this fence she would have chosen represented her accurately, she was very open when speaking with me, very transparent.

I asked her about her childhood experiences of fences, if her parents kept any on their property. She has lived mostly in urban areas in apartment blocks, very tightly built. She lived in NYC and Germany for a number of years, but also spent time in Vancouver in a suburban area with a yard. “We certainly had a fence there, I don’t think there was one when we moved in but my parents figured they had these kids running around and they’d better keep them out of the neighbor’s yards. Come to think of it, my dad is just really into fences. They have a summer cabin in the woods where he put up a fence when there was really no need. He put it in himself, about 5-6’ tall. I think he just likes enclosed spaces. It’s not that there were neighbors closeby enough that he could see, I think he just likes to go out there, sit and read a book and feel utterly

alone.” I mentioned the idea of fences creating little worlds of feeling protected and also the idea of isolation as comforting for some to not have to worry about anything on the outside.

I asked her about fences in Germany, she said it was very urban where she was, lots of hardscapes and buildings. Many of the walls were old, some historic sites still had moats. She said because people were so densely packed they were more protective and private about their space, as it was a scarce resource. “The way society is ordered there, all of their rigorous structures, their rules, are very strict in certain ways. All of that stuff is actually about society saying, ‘This is your lot in it and you may not have more than that.’ and that is culturally understood. It’s all quite organized and if you break those rules then they’ll call you a foreigner. Like if you park your car incorrectly, they’ll say to you, ‘This is public domain, you can’t leave your car like that sticking out 3 inches.’ We talked about differences in how cultural express their values and boundaries and I asked her how she thought it manifested itself in America. “I mean, I’m speaking as a Canadian citizen, but I feel it is the American spirit to say something like, ‘This is my truck and I’m going to park it here and it’s blocking you, not my problem,’ like that kind of attitude. Not everyone is inconsiderate that way, but I’d say it is far more common to encounter it here in the States, an entitlement to space. Also in terms of being noisy and ownership of things, how that is expressed.” Canada is different because it has tons of space and the population is stretched out along the southern border. And because it is much colder, and harder to survive, there is a strong sense of helping your neighbor. Their mannerisms are a bit more quiet and kind, that is more knit into the fabric of their culture than it is here. They also allow for others to be themselves and have their privacy, they do not like to impose.”

Isabella / Pickett & Privacy



Isabella lives in a small upstate city. A few years ago when doing renovations to her historic brick house they decided to update the front yard fence and put in an unpainted wooden front picket fence 3 ½' high, with a gate to replace the, “ugly, chintzy aluminum cage-looking thing that was there when we bought the place”. They had to take the old fence down for construction access, but were glad to have an excuse to replace it. She didn't have a lot of time to think about the decision, but wanted something that looked good, was simple, and also affordable. There are also standard 6' solid wooden privacy fences along the sides between neighbors that were there when they bought the property about a decade ago. There used to be a garage for a parking spot in back of her property, which is on an alleyway, but they had that demolished a few years ago. They replaced that barrier with a continuation of the 6' solid wooden privacy fences, with a gate for access between the alley and their yard.

One of the side fences is in pretty bad shape. The neighbor's yard had many weedy vines that have not been maintained and have started to take down the old fence, which is flopped over and curved over from all of the weight and some strong storms. It's tough to say who is responsible for fixing it as Isabella doesn't know who the fence belongs to, it was there when she moved in. The neighbor is a renter so Isabella doesn't know if they or their landlord is responsible for maintaining the land. She is hesitant to investigate as she is friendly with her neighbor, the renter, and wants to maintain a comfortable social climate between them. I see from her body language that it is a tense situation for her, she doesn't want to trouble the waters.

I asked her why she had fences, why she felt she needed them. She replied, “Most definitely for privacy and security.” “Security against what?” I asked. “ I just feel like people are less inclined to walk through a fence when we can't see what's behind it. So in the back where

people would most likely sneak in, it's completely solid. I mean it could be a false of security, but I just feel like if you can't see what you're walking into compared to if it's completely open, you won't have as many people traversing through your yard and whatnot." She adds that the fences also help to keep her dogs and young child in. Though it doesn't keep neighbors cats, racoons, opossums, or groundhogs from getting into her gardens. There used to be a problem down the street in the alley of people doing drugs, she had seen tiny baggies there, though she never experienced any intrusions in her space.

We discussed the false sense of security concept of fences just being these illusionary barriers that make one space distinct from the other, but it was not real, but just a construct of society. "A literal manifestation of a boundary," as Isabella put it, "just like we can speak our boundaries, we can put up fences which also speak for us. Both, in a way, are social contracts that say, 'I do or do not give you permission to cross this line.'

"You know what really makes me mad though? The parking in the alley has gotten crazy lately, it's a mess. A lot of times people will park right next to my back gate and it's hard to get in and out. I just feel like it's a rude invasion of myspace! Why do they think that space belongs to them? How inconsiderate." She explained how she has left multiple notes to people asking them not to park there but it's a never-ending saga.

### Gnome King / Garden Gnomes

This past summer, my young son had a gnome and fairy themed birthday party, so we were very aware of gnomes in the area. As we were walking down the street one day my son pointed out the gnomes in this particular yard. We stopped to admire them and didn't notice the

owner sitting on the porch. He chimed in, “They’re there to protect the place. There’s more around on the side.” I knew I needed to come back and talk to him.

A few months later on Mid-Term Election Day, it was a rainy and gray Tuesday. I went to vote in my new neighborhood for the first time and I spotted the man watering his sidewalk to wash away the leaves. I saw my opportunity. I introduced myself, complimented his garden and gnomes and asked him about his fence choices. He started by saying he was a “keep to himself kinda guy” but then proceeded to tell me all about his property and fences.

He has a tall 6’ wooden privacy fence, painted a handsome natural color (to compliment the accents on the house) with white cross hatch lattice on top, set back about 3 feet from the edge of the sidewalk with a neat mulched simple edge garden, a tasteful choice (See Appendix Fig. 27). It was well-maintained with a detail to neatness clearly were taken into consideration. You could tell he cared about their place very much. There was an archway trellis in the fence, which seems to have had a working low gate for yard-street access at some point, but had been closed with an addition of garden lattice to block visual access. Along the trellis archway and latticing are bountiful perennial hops (See Appendix, Fig. 28). Above the fence is a classic black “Don’t Tread on Me” flag waving in the background. The front steps of the house are pretty much right on the main street and the front garden is small and sweet with a fountain and many garden gnomes. The side yard is open along an alley.

He told me he would build his fence higher if he could. He laughed and pointed to a sign on his front door, visible from the sidewalk, which read, “NO SOLICITING: We are too broke to buy anything. We know who we are voting for. We have found Jesus. Seriously, unless you are

giving away beer PLEASE GO AWAY!” as well as an American Flag, NRA, Cold War Veteran, and “Don’t Tread on Me” stickers on the door (See Appendix, Fig. 26).

He presented as guarded but was actually displayed open and generous behavior. He is known at the Gnome King by his friends; he also happens to resemble a gnome--he is bearded, older, tough and jolly all at once, but he is also the keeper of many gnomes. They are all over his yard, all kinds of styles, some of which he made, some were gifts, modern and vintage, local and one very old one from Germany holding an old hunting muskett. There are some Snow White and Seven Dwarves in there. He told me a story about how he packed up a set of musician gnomes and brought them to different events, setting them up and telling everyone he brought the band. They are all set up around entryways, doorways, basement Bilco doors, garden gate, anywhere there was a portal entrypoint, there was a gnome standing guard. He was very proud of them.

We talked on the sidewalk in the drizzle for about 20 minutes about gardening, fences, gnomes and the town. He said he’d seen the town change a lot over the years and now he would prefer more land and space. He said most people in town were private. Just as I was about to leave he asked me if I liked squash and then insisted that I take home a butternut squash that he grew in his yard. It was a large a beautiful squash, I was grateful and not expecting a gift. He showed me his garden on the side yard and I was surprised to see no fence. I asked him about exposure to pests but he said most left it alone except for a groundhog. I wanted to reciprocate and offered some apples my son and I had just picked and had an abundance of. He accepted my offer but then as soon as I dropped them off he then asked me if I enjoyed libations and offered me the last bottle of hard cider that he had made from last year. I tried to tell him he should save

it for himself as I don't drink much and that he was too generous but he insisted I take it home. He told me about making cider from crab apples and how he brewed his own beer from his own hops. He pointed to the yeasty sediment which had settled on the bottom and instructed me to, "Leave the bottom, on the bottom, when you get to the last bit you need to pour it out into the garden for the gnomes as an offering." I thought this was an interesting comment coming from him and asked what he meant about those beliefs, if they had origins in old world European history or a family tradition. He told me his family has been in the area for centuries, old American family history. We walked out to the sidewalk together as I was preparing to leave, I thanked him for his gifts and his time in the rain talking to me. He welcomed me to the village and said he didn't mind talking to me in the rain, he was going to be out there anyway cleaning the sidewalk of leaves. He pointed to the street tree in front of his house which the village planted and he did not choose, which he seemed disgruntled about because he had to clean up after it. He dismissively said, "This dumb tree is some kind of ginkgo or something foreign, not from around here and it makes a mess," as if there were nationalistic undertones of his perception to the environment. Note: The tree was not a ginkgo.

Gnomes are traditionally European mythical creatures, very small people, often older men who live in dark places such as forests and gardens and are thought to be symbols of good luck and protection, particularly of buried treasure. They are associated with being earth-based, often living underground, and are private and reclusive. The Gnome King in this case not only looks like a gnome and collects gnomes, but also perhaps views himself akin to gnomes, valuing his privacy and wanting to keep to himself, and being protective, defensive. His spontaneous generosity of gifts, time, and stories were counter to his initial statement of keeping to himself.

This was not an uncommon occurrence for interlocutors to have their own ideas and self-perceptions of openness one way but have their physical fences manifest in the opposite way, but the Gnome King was one of the few who had it his way. Most people I interviewed wanted to think of themselves in theory as welcoming but in practice built strong boundaries, but Gnome King presented tough but was actually very open in the end in his behavior

#### Frederyk / Wooden Privacy

It was a year before I met him face to face without a fence between us. We had only ever spoken through the broken holes between the fence we shared at the back of both of our properties. The first time he introduced himself to me he had asked if he could come over to my yard to do some repairs to the fence and I gave him permission, I have no fences so he could just come over. I had just begun thinking about this fence project so I was thrilled at the idea that this literal metaphor of mending fences had just landed in my lap. He seemed kind. My kitchen window looks out into his backyard, it's raised higher and so I unintentionally have full visual access to his yard from inside my house. It's had seen him earlier tending to his yard. I could tell that he was passionate about his garden work and as a fellow gardener, I felt a connection to him, and I wanted to tour his garden and ask him about the land.

However, he was hard to track down. I asked him through the fence for an interview, he agreed and gave me a time. When I went to meet him that day he was not home, so I left him a note in his mailbox. A few days later I got a call from him apologizing for forgetting about our meeting. He had been out of town longer for work than expected. We made loose plans to meet again that never followed through. Soon after that, I had a major sewer issue in my new basement and needed to excavate and replace the pipe, which led to a main village sewer line

through his yard. At one point before we figured out an alternative solution, there was discussion of possibly needing to replace the entire mainline and dig up his yard and garden. I was terrified of spoiling our new relationship by being the reason his garden might be uprooted. Thankfully, that didn't need to end up happening. Later, one of the local workers who was on the job pointed my neighbor out as a famous actor. I was shocked when he showed me the list of all the films he's been in. I tend to have bad facial recognition and also don't watch many movies so I would have never known. His job didn't change the way I felt about him. In fact, I was impressed that someone in his position would be carefully sifting compost, digging, sweating. I garden for people like him. Over the next year I would see him in his garden, I'd say hello, offer extra plants I had leftover, or bumper crops. He always refused everything, politely. I'd ask if he was still open to being interviewed, he would laugh and say yes but was loose on making solid plans. He never ended up repairing the fence and more slats kept falling off, so the gaps became more obvious. I got the sense that he wanted to be left alone, perhaps this second home of his in our town was his private getaway where he recharged between jobs on set, away from the busy city where he could hide away much like the movie stars of the 1920s who escaped to the Malibu coastline, when all of the land was still all extremely exclusive private property and just starting to be made available for rent (Frye 231-233).

Exactly a year from when I first met him through the fence, I finally was able to interview him at the cafe on the corner of our mutual block. I asked him about the wooden privacy fence between our yard, the courtesy side is facing me so I assumed it was he who installed it. He said he put it up 20 years ago, he has been in the village for 21 years. The first fence he put up was the front fence, he said it was, "sad and sagging, a bent and broken chain

link fence that did not go with the house style.” It was one of the first things he did when he moved in because it made him so sad when he pulled up to his new house and saw the old neglected fence. He chose cedar for its durability and picket style to match the historic house. He thinks his house used to belong to an old sea merchant who built the house in 19th century.

His south neighbor and good old friend, Nina, had fences in her yard that came with the house when she bought it almost 25 years ago. He then continued the fence around his yard until it was fully enclosed. He proposed to the previous owner who built my house, Thorn, to put up a fence together but the man was a grouch and wanted nothing to do with it. All of the neighbors I spoke with who knew Thorn said he was the worst. I felt like Frederyk was scarred from the experience with him and it left a thorn in his side about maintaining boundaries with neighbors. When he lived there 20 years ago they were doing construction and Thorn dumped sheetrock along the back fence, which made its way into Frederyk's yard. He mentioned it to them but, “They didn’t seem to care and shrugged it off saying, ‘It would just disintegrate over time,’ but you know it really says a lot about a person, how they maintain their boundaries, their yard, how it impacts others. They should have kept it clean or at least closer to their side, closer to the house, then maybe they would have done something about it, but they put it close to the fence and forgot about it and I had to clean it up a lot over time.” When my lot went up for sale last year, Frederyk thought about buying it to extend his property but is glad he didn’t, “It is a lot to manage,” he says.

He spoke about, “the unspoken comfort of a fence.” His fencing went up in stages, it is a unique shape (L-shaped) and took him over a year to finish. He mentioned a recent willow branch from our neighbor’s yard which came down on his fence and did some damage. We both



expressed love for the willow's presence but fear the path if it comes down. He was thinking of having the village speak to the owner directly so he didn't have to deal with the neighbor directly. He didn't want to cause friction or even open that possibility, he wanted to remain as neutral and objective as possible. There used to be a large spruce tree, maybe 140 years old, located between his house and south neighbor/friend, Nina. When the tree came down a couple years ago, it didn't damage any buildings, though it did cause damage to some fence panels between the two of them (See Appendix, Fig. 29). However, there is no rush between either of them to fix the fence, they have a good relationship. He doesn't feel the need to keep his fences up with her, they feel open and comfortable with each other.

His north neighbor however, is a different story. He makes sure those fences along that property are strongest, ensuring the most protection to keep from the damage that is caused and to avoid any and all contact. "I wish to never have to interact with them. I see my fences as protection of property. I do not want to get involved with them ever again." His north neighbor is an older couple, "very aggressive, disturbed people, like Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde" with two yappy dachshunds, who feeds squirrels near his fence which leave lots of nut shell debris. That neighbor also throws garbage and rocks over the fence into his yard. They curse at him from over the fence in that uncomfortable indirect and very passive-aggressive way, flipping the bird and yelling insults and being completely unapproachable.

How did he get interested in gardening? He comes from a couple generations of farmers. He said most people were farmers until the Industrial Revolution, which changed Poland's landscape in a big way, due to coal mining. His great grandfather was friends with a duke's head gardener and learned by watching him, and he taught his children. Frederyk then told me about

his father, who was 17 years old, a soldier, fighting in Norway, he had to runaway to Romania and he was always struck by how there were no fences there. He tells me how his father returned from the war and kept a garden, which is where Frederyk learned a lot of his love for tending to land. Frederyk grew up on the outskirts of an urban city in eastern Europe, he spent a lot of time outdoors as a kid. He talked about Poland's mountains and sea as natural defensive boundaries, though they were later invaded. He's also had a place on the upper west side in Manhattan for the last 15 years, says he feels more comfortable in the city than he does upstate. Our small village makes him feel defensive, he has a few friends but mostly keeps to himself and stays busy in the garden.

The weather was unusually agreeable, an opportunistic fall day to work in the yard and get those last-minute tasks done before winter. We each showed up to the cafe wearing cozy sweaters and mud boots, each secretly wishing we were raking leaves instead, later each admitting it. We talked extensively about how gardening is therapy and yet we both lamented over not going on more hikes and enjoying the local landscapes as much as we thought we would because we both are obsessed with our gardens. This was, after all, the real reason I wanted to meet him, to geek out about gardening. Plant people are few and far between and it's nice to speak with someone who shares similar interests. Gardeners share tips, experiences, cuttings of plants. It's a special bond over the love of the land and the sacred labor and care that it takes. On that note, we suddenly became aware of the urgent call of waning sunlight and our mental lists of yard tasks. We had been chatting for far longer than either of us had intended to, but after a year of talking between broken holes in a fence, it was nice to be able to finally meet him in an open setting. He joked that, "Our fence might be seen as a metaphor of decaying relationship, but

really it is not so.” He generously came to the interview bearing gifts, an offering of three useful garden books he no longer needed. In the end, he insisted and gave me a tour of his garden. It was incredible to see it from his side out in the open, not through a tiny hole in the fence in the back. He is truly a land artist, his garden is beautiful, well-orchestrated, and curated carefully over time. He said he wish he spent more time upstate in his garden but his work keeps him away for stretches at a time. Shortly after our interview I was watching a movie on Netflix when I happened to see my neighbor starring in the film. It caught me off guard and made me chuckle, it’s kind of funny to meet an actor in real life and see what they are actually like before seeing them on screen acting.

#### Steve / Pickett Fence

Steve is my neighbor across the street and down a bit. He is a business owner and moved up from NYC 4 years ago. He has a clean and classic style, tasteful and intentional. His property is attractive and well-kept, clearly he loves taking care of his home. His white picket fence came with the house, which he has maintained it as he likes the way it looks. Within the fence is the backyard, a pool, and a small garden (See Appendix, Fig. 30). The fence is meant to keep deer out, but they have been seen inside the fenced yard, so they also have a “fence within a fence”, another white picket fence around the garden bed, inside the fenced yard. “I don’t like solid fences that you cannot see through, I prefer something semi-transparent.”

Steve’s girlfriend wants to take out the current garden and, “put in this new type of bathtub-looking, metal tub, it’s very chic and we just want a small herb garden. We never had much success with the vegetables. The locust tree in our yard grew big so big that it shaded out

the garden. Also, the tree covered the pool so the water never got very warm and the tiny leaves would fall into the water. I hate that tree.”

I mentioned that I had noticed they had taken their above ground pool down recently. He and his partner want to buy the empty lot next door to their house and install an in-ground pool with a pool house. We talked about fence plans and village codes as pools are required to have fences, he said he thought he might continue the white picket fence style. I asked if he was concerned about privacy, but he said even though their fence gave them no real visual privacy, they have no houses directly on either side of them, so they actually have great privacy. He said his partner sunbathes topless all the time without any problems.

Steve also considered a living-fence, a hedge, he’s a fan of privet bushes. “I’ve always hated chain-link fences, just something too industrial about them, they don’t look good. Also, why would you need that much fencing here?” he said. “If I had ton of money and a better house, I’d probably have a better fence, even just for protection maybe, or deterrence. ” He does have security cameras on his house as he has had issues in the past when he put out an American flag and rainbow flag on his porch. His porch flower planters had been torn down and smashed in the street and later someone stole his American flag twice. “That’s when I called the police, because come on, you can’t mess with a flag on a guy’s house.” He responded by fixing everything and installing security cameras, one is always active and linked to his phone, another camera is fake.

I asked if he ever found out who did it, he mentioned that he had also received some nasty emails from customers in regards to the rainbow flag at his establishment, raising homophobic sentiments, “They said, ‘How dare you, we have children. You ruined our Father’s Day. We can never come back here again,’ but he used a fake name and a fake phone number.

Lot of people in this town feel that way.” and thought they may have been connected. Despite this, his girlfriend then handed out rainbow pride flags to the other local establishments for solidarity, which they gladly accepted. I know from one other business nearby that also received homophobic nasty emails by fake names. His girlfriend thought it might be the boys across the street. I said that would be a bold move to attack so close to home, then again, they didn’t strike me as especially clever. After Steve put in the camera, one of them came over and angrily remarked that that Steve had installed cameras right on the front of their house, to which Steve denied and also wondered why they cared so much. He suspected they are up to no good as based on previous experiences and observations.

Steve is openly not a fan of the neighbors directly across the street from him. Those neighbors, who I refer to as ‘the boys’, have a very disorganized yard, the household seems to consist of a few young men who do not appear to consider how their actions affect the community. There are piles of broken and random junk (i.e. a soiled couch, old tires) that have been sitting on the porch outside for months. Their fence was amateurly spray-painted and brought a different aesthetic aspect to the neighborhood because none of their mess is hidden, everything is visible to the public (See Appendix, Fig. 32-33). The neighbors are also pretty reckless, in the summer especially, they engage in irresponsible behavior such as starting fires under low tree branches, throwing lit road flares at each other, and playing games that involve throwing axes in the air while blindfolded. Steve and his girlfriend have considered moving away because of them, it affects their experience of their home; it takes away from the reason they moved upstate, to be in a beautiful place. They call the police whenever an incident occurs

but report nothing ever comes from it, so they encourage other neighbors to also support the effort. The house is on foreclosure, so it's a waiting game.

I wanted to know about his restaurant's fences that I had noticed in the summer when there were tables outside. Steve responded, "That's required by the state liquor authority to have a separation from the sidewalk area to a contained area where I have to always have a staff member over-seeing any alcohol being served, so it's not being handed off to a kid walking, it has to be supervised by an employee. So you need a physical barrier but also surveillance, that's why a lot of people put their hostess stands outside during the season so someone would be out there." He would still be able to serve food outside, the reasons for the fences were because alcohol was involved. I asked him about his choice in barrier. "The word they use is 'stanchion,' so it could be anything that divides the sidewalk in the café area. I wanted to do flower planters but I couldn't figure out how to build it in time, I like to make all my own stuff. Even the fences, I bought the fence railings and then added heavy metal feet to keep it upright for stability. I painted it a pretty light green color scheme to match the building." (See Appendix, Fig. 31). They were indeed stylish fences, simple, with a twist on stately; I complimented him on them, "Thanks, yeah we were going for a softer look but didn't want to just be all willy-nilly on the sidewalk. Parisian cafes don't usually have fences, just little tables and chairs outside. But in New York City the fences can kind of keep you protected from, you know, vagrants, pan-handlers. You feel little safer inside the fence even though it doesn't really mean anything, it's an illusion, but it works." I asked him to tell me more about the flower box idea and thought he meant a solid wall of potted plants but he clarified, "I wanted to do flower boxes that were transparent underneath, raised up with the flower boxes on the top, not like a solid wall. That

would not look good to me, I like something a little more see-through and open, airy and breezy. Solid sends a different kind of message. It's less casual and more snooty. People already think we are a fancy place and call asking if we have a dress code, and we're like no, just come. We're fighting that image of appearing snooty. We are open."

It happens to be election day when I interview Steve and I mention how difficult it is to know how people are feeling in town, as most people are very private. I told him how I had heard that our town was the only Democratic municipality in Greene County but I don't necessarily see that reflected in lawn signs or bumper stickers. I would have assumed most people were Republican like most of rural upstate. I've known Steve as a neighbor for a year at that point and we don't talk politics, the few times it has come up we have both remained neutral and changed the subject. Though this time he tells me, "In all honesty, I'm a conservative and I keep my mouth shut. I don't want to say anything. Nor would I put a sign in my lawn." To be honest, I am caught a little off-guard, my assumptions became the better of me and I was convinced he was liberal based on many of our previous neighborly chats. What really convinced me was his display of a pride rainbow flag. He feels the need to remain neutral politically in a small town but especially as a business owner. He is careful to never post anything political on social media, knowing the importance of image management. He said he was happy to host the Democratic Committee meeting at his restaurant, but mentioned that they did not tip well. They sat for 2 hours, took up a large area, didn't order much, and only left \$3. As a former food server, I shook my head, knowing what it was like to serve those parties. He emphasized his desire to remain neutral with the public, "Socially, I'm completely liberal, whatever people want to do is fine with me. I just prefer a smaller government than a big government telling me what I can and

cannot do. It's kind of what I love about this little village, it's kind of Libertarian in a way where you can do things on your property and people leave you alone."

I asked him if he had any closing thoughts on fences, to which he replied, "Good fences make good neighbors," then I respond, "But what makes a good fence? Like what if your neighbor put up a chain link fence?" He makes a face of disgust and said, "Well, we'd have to counter with something more pleasing on our side." We both remark on how expensive fences can be, even if doing it yourself, the cost of materials can add up. He said once he digs down about 8" he hits water and can just pour in cement mix straight in when putting in fence posts. He also said he found a lot of pottery sherds and blue and green small bottles when digging in his yard but did not save them.

#### Colleen / Frontyard Meadow

Colleen manages a large private estate, hundreds of acres. She's a horticulturalist and I wanted her input on fences and borders while managing land for work and at her private residence. The large multi-hundred acre property she manages for work is privately owned but used by thousands of people, including the public. She looks for vegetation to be safe and aesthetic, usually framing buildings and walkways. She doesn't have much input at work on installing fences, that's a different department's decision, but does put in her two cents. It's mostly an open campus with rolling landscapes, but one area where fences are usually wanted are near outdoor mechanical boxes, (e.g. chillers and propane tanks) for visual screening as they are usually not attractive and can be an eyesore "No one ever wants to see it," she tells me, "Rather than trying to keep screening these visually, it feels more like a design issue. Why not make these things better looking? A fence then feels like a band-aid, I don't like to use fences as



fix-alls, they tend to be reactionary.” She mentioned the mechanical’s functionality depended on air flow and ventilation so they were only ever intentionally screened in on 2-3 sides, the back left open also for accessibility to do any repairs. She noted how different styles of these screens are popping up all over and asked, “Why they don’t just stick to one cohesive style?” She mentioned that their regular vendor recently went out of business and they switched to another local vendor but the styles available were different.

Colleen mentioned different areas where people were not using the designated path and instead often cut across a lawn in front of a residential area, disturbing the people living there and creating a path in the lawn. The buildings have since become offices so it is less critical for privacy but the path was not good for the lawn. A fence was installed to deter foot traffic and was effective. She said it was both a visible barrier and enough of an inconvenience that people didn’t want to hop it.

Colleen also referred to another area on the property that had a problem which fencing recently resolved. This other area is a historic site and thus fragile, an old dirt carriage path, now dirt road, which leads to the main buildings. The problem is it is far from the main parking lot and in order to be able to drive your car to the main buildings directly, you needed permission (i.e. employee) and needed to pass through a chained area. This required people to park at the chain, get out of their car to open the chain, drive through and park again to get out and put the chain back on the hook. This may seem like an inconvenience, but being able to drive to the main buildings was a privilege, the alternative being to park in the main lot and walking outside 10-15 minutes to the buildings. She said sometimes employees would open the chain and leave it down for the day but then a lot of other people who would visit would see themselves as invited

in. People were making a habit of driving around the chained entrance and destroying the lawn they drove on repeatedly. They tried putting in boulders to block access from driving around, but that didn't work. The decision was then made to install a very low wooden split-rail fence, one that could easily be stepped over and seemed friendly, but enough of a deterrent to keep cars from crossing. The fence has been an effective correction and people have altered their behavior by using the chain once again. One thing Colleen mused about was how the people who had broken the code about using the chain were the same people who had asked to put the chain in, for their own security purposes.

Colleen knows a lot of other botanists, horticulturalists, designers in her line of work. We talk about deer fencing and trying to keep them out when she remembers someone who mentioned to her that deer will stay out of a garden if it is small enough that they have no place to land when they get in, so keeping plots small and pathways narrow. I've heard this from other gardeners myself, but have also heard of cases which contradict that idea. Colleen and I are chatty and all over the place with our connections, we can follow a seemingly tangential streamline of ideas with ease.

Somehow we get on the subject of horse fencing, I ask why they are often painted or stained black, she thinks its a status symbol of wealth. When I looked it up online, I found an answer which said it hid the wear better over time, which also seems plausible. Colleen remembers when she lived in Charlottesville, Virginia, where there are a number of horse farms with black fences, and said when she would drive around there and see all of that fencing and land, she just knew that there was money. It's true that keeping horses is an expensive endeavor

which requires fencing to some extent, painting the hundreds of feet of fencing would incur another cost both in materials and labor.

She brings it back to the point and says deer won't go into the horse fences because of the tight horse path guides in between the wider field areas. She used to live near a horse farm and said she never saw deer in there. This brings up the issue of deer and depth perception, which is an interesting trick. I have heard that just by placing two lines of string across a boundary at two different depths, say 3'-4' apart, this tricks the deer's visual sense of depth and they are less inclined to attempt to jump it. She responded by saying this trick had worked for her with protecting the tulip display and hanging one line of electric fencing around it, but she needed flagging on the line, saying the movement from the wind created another visual barrier to reinforce the line and seemed necessary to be effective with the deer, "Otherwise they just run right into it."

We talk about the purpose of visibility in fences and how that purpose is different depending on where the garden is and what one is trying to keep out. The mention of fences shifts from animals to people as we compare country gardens to urban community gardens. Fences for people invites the concept of privacy and the creation of exclusive worlds; the idea that a fence, even if you can see through it, creates the illusion of protection and a sense of security. Collen mentions how most urban community gardens are chain link that can have that added wattle plastic strip woven through to add a visual barrier element, but also says that people usually don't like the idea that they cannot see in to the garden so often if a visual barrier is put up, it is not unusual for it to be punctured and broken for visual access.

Colleen's brings up her private residence which has 8' tall mesh fencing with tall posts around the boundary, because it keeps deer out and blends in with the landscape. "Me and my kids alike, even though it's wide open and flat, and there's nothing but this thing plastic mesh fence, we feel like we are in a protected space for some reason," she begins to laugh at herself, "It makes no sense because literally all of our surrounding neighbors can see into our backyard, but we feel like we are in this little world. These fences really define our space."

Her property is in a rural area, but she built her house on a 1 acre lot with the house basically in the middle so equal sized front and back yards. I asked if she had a front fence to which she smiled and said "No, we have something else that our neighbors don't like." She explained how her neighbors all maintained perfectly green mowed lawns but didn't have much else in their yards. She described them all as "inside people" but they kept up with their lawns. "We don't do that. We mow, but half of our front lawn we leave as meadow. Basically, from the road until the edge of our septic field, which is also in our front lawn, we aren't going to use all of that space. We don't want to spend the time and effort mowing it, adding a half hour to the already 2 hour mowing job, why would we spend that extra time? So we just let it grow until about 4' tall every season and mow it once a year." She described it as mostly weeds, but every year is a little different. Mind you, Colleen and I both have interests in the uses of wild plants so weeds in this context are not perceived as troublesome. She has planted some native flowers and grasses in that area but describes it as mostly wild. She likes the fact that the meadow also hides their propane tank which is slightly buried underground there and stops her kids from running into the road. Aside from practicality and aesthetic screening, she says another reason she kept the meadow there was because that is what was there before they arrived, when it was just a lot,

so it was her way of continuing the past. She honestly thought that her neighbors would like her front yard meadow but they came up to her outside and asked her if she was going to mow it. She would explain that it was a meadow but there seemed to be a disconnect in aesthetic preferences. She said the only neighbor who did compliment the meadow was also a fellow gardener. Colleen has big hopes for the meadow, of plans to put in bulbs for the spring.

Most of Colleen's neighbors do not have fences, the yards just bleed into each other. Just one neighbor has a long stand-alone stockade fence between their property and the adjoining trailer park. An interesting dynamic in Colleen's neighborhood is that they all share a common driveway. The way the land was subdivided years ago was that neighbors would all have to share driveways, as required in the seller's conditions. There is one commonly held road that leads in and then the houses are paired off, so each pair shares the driveway road connecting them from the commonly held road to their individual parking garages. She thought it was an interesting condition given that so much joint maintenance of the road was required of both neighbors, she this was intentional on the seller's behalf to have neighbors interact and work together. He told her he was, "socially-engineering the place". Colleen said, "Hence, no fence. My mother lives in a similar subdivided lot situation but everyone has their own individual driveway and each person also has their fence all around."

I asked Colleen how they divide up work for snow removal. She said it has mostly been her husband to get out there first with the snowblower because the neighbors next door couldn't get to it, though she didn't say it as if she was annoyed. "The husband had been away for two years enrolled in police training and the wife had a baby during that time. He came back and hurt his knee, meanwhile she had another baby. So, we have just been taking care of things for the

last couple years. But you know, they do what they can, for years they filled in the potholes with gravel.” The shared responsibility can be a fine balancing act, she attributed this to the fact that they are of a similar generation and are both young families so they can relate on these common issues. She wraps up her thoughts on fences by saying, “Fences create two worlds, because you’re showing yourself to the public but then how do you want to be when you’re at home, you want to be more private, that’s your sanctuary.”

### Trent & Phil / Remembering Childhood Fences

Trent and Phil moved to the Hudson Valley a little over a year ago to a suburban town. Their rental apartment is in a strange location, they live off of a busy road, at the end of a commercial strip. Behind a small business are two other apartments, one is theirs. There’s a large gate between the business and the residential side, to delineate rental units. Their largest fence is in the backyard and along the sides to keep neighbors out, a standard 6’ wooden solid privacy fence. “I think it establishes the boundary of the property for one and two I think it's to make everybody feel safe and private,” said Phil. Trent also noted that, “The neighboring tenant has loose boundaries and has wandered into the backyard before, a couple times this past summer. She doesn’t have access to the yard, she lives below the store, but she would say, ‘Oh it’s a communal space,’ if there wasn’t a fence there.” Phil added, “It’s nice to have a private space behind your house, otherwise it would just get really complicated if we didn’t have a fence there. We can keep our stuff back there and now have to worry about it being broken or anything.

However, they do get raccoons in their yard, which get into the garbage and leave a mess. Phil bought some vice-grips to clamp the lid onto the trashcan and said the next day when we went out to check on it, the entire lid rim was scratched up and bloody. The raccoon had found

an easy source of food and the vice-grips took access to that resource away. They would also climb onto the bedroom balcony, where Phil grew some potted vegetables, and steal cherry tomatoes as they became ripe.

Phil and Trent are renters so they have no real input into how their property is managed aesthetically. They would like to paint their bedroom balcony but their landlord would not allow it. The landlords live in another state and manage the property from afar. They renovated it a few years ago, intending to live there themselves but for health reasons needed to live somewhere else. The landlords seem to be very attached personally to the property as they had invested resources and had dreams about how it would be used, only to have plans change and not be able to stay. They can be a bit rigid about any alterations and like to keep things their way, in their style. “He would let us paint the door but it would have to be a solidly masculine color. He would not let us paint it pink.” Trent and Phil are excellent tenants, the place is kept clean and is cared for. They have a fine dynamic with the landlords, but it can be annoying to have your choices limited. They don’t have the freedom to do what we want with the space, to put their personal mark on it and have control over being able to fully express themselves aesthetically. Having been a renter until recently, I could identify. Landlord tensions were one of the reasons I wanted to leave my last apartment, I did not feel like I could really use the space as I would if I owned it. Renting can feel like you aren’t really fully settled in. There is a different sense of rootedness that comes with ownership; the power of private property and ability to do as you wish with your space. Then authority above ownership are local codes and laws.

I asked them if they had fences where they grew up. Trent grew up in Nebraska and there was a fence at his dad’s house. He tries to recall the other houses in the neighborhood, describing

it as “upper-middle class, white, suburban family neighborhood.” He thought his dad’s was one of the few houses there that did have a fence. It came with the house when they bought it and Trent mused, “I don’t know why they put in a fence, it might’ve been for pets, given that so few houses in the neighborhood had fences. I assume there must’ve been a reason they built it.

Unless they were just a private couple. We ended up later using it for our dogs. That house was also one of few in the neighborhood with a low front fence.” I brought up the question of what makes a fence culturally appropriate, given what the rest of the neighborhood looks like, what do fences say about people? “Well, the interesting story is about my mom’s house. She moved to a house like a block away from my dad’s house after the divorce. Then ten years later she moved to a house in a classy-rich neighborhood in Omaha, where everyone had fences. She had a fancy house with a very tall, black wrought-iron fence, with a motorized driveway and camera security system set-up. So that’s a very symbolic fence. Most of the fences in her neighborhood are regular fences and you wouldn’t think anything about them, but the one at my mom’s house is making a statement. She loves her fence, she’s into security.” Phil remarks, “Your mom’s fence is very stately.”

I segue and ask Phil about his childhood fences. “I didn’t grow up with stately.” His father was in the military so they moved around and he grew up on military bases. He had standard backyard wooden privacy fences as a kid, when they lived in the desert. “It was to keep people and animals out, sure, but it was really to show the boundary of your home. It wasn’t to keep out crime, it just marked the space, just to say, ‘This is yours.’ They felt very temporary, illusionary, none of the fences felt like they were solid. They would fall apart all the time



because the winds would blow so hard and the material was just really bad quality, it wasn't a very strong type of situation. But they'd just come and put a new one up."

I asked about the outer perimeter of security of the base, he said there were gates where you had to present the appropriate identification. We talked about identification as another type of barrier to restricting access and not being allowed in an area, much like what immigrants and refugees experience. Phil sums it up with, "If you don't have I.D. it's like, 'It's none of your business or concern in the matter.'" I asked what the gates were attached to, but he said there weren't always walls or fences, it was more just that the surroundings were just heavily surveilled. "If you came onto the base, people would know. They would know, and they would know very quickly and people would get in trouble." Phil told me a story about when he lived in Germany where they had to show I.D. for residential areas and places you were allowed to shop as an American. "As a teenager I would forget my I.D. all the time and it was always a big ordeal to get in, where they had to call your parents and really vet you on the spot." "Even if they knew you?" I asked. "Yes," he replied, "it was very strict and to them, you were just someone's kid, they had only maybe seen you once or twice before. But how much do they really *know* you, you know? That's their job." I asked about the idea of the outsider in a tight-knit community with a penchant for defensive thinking. "Right, so to avoid the ordeal at the gate when they forgot their I.D.s, people would just try to find a spot where they could just jump over, but they would get in trouble. Someone would know right away. They would send over the military police." I asked if he had ever gone through this, he said, "I've never done it because first of all, you have to climb over, it's tall. Then there's razor wire and barbed wire. That's just ridiculous."

I asked them if they had any last thoughts on fences. Phil reflects, “Well, now I’m just thinking about my relations to fences are extensions of social boundaries.” “Yeah, now I’m just thinking about my parents fences,” says Trent. “Oh! There’s a funny fence thing at my dad’s house, near the driveway, on the left where the fence that separates my dad’s house from the neighbor’s yard. It was a 6’ tall white vinyl fence. We had a basketball hoop there and a lot of times you’d shoot the ball and miss and go over the fence. So the neighbors actually built a door in the fence that we could limb through when the ball would go over there. The neighbors were the ones who put in the door for us. He was just the nicest guy and he had a beautiful garden in his yard.” I was astonished at this symbolic gesture, like an olive branch or a bridge, a portal or personal entryway. It was such a friendly and neighborly extension of access to space. By giving permission, the neighbors displayed trust in Trent’s family enough to build a convenient opening between the boundary. Phil remarks, “Maybe fences were a preemptive thing, the setting of clear boundaries saying, ‘Hey, we’re going to put up this thing here so you and I both have privacy, and you know what’s your and what’s mine and it’s just an unspoken way of keeping the peace.’” I asked if the fence was still there, now years later. He said Probably not, I imagine the new neighbors who moved in would’ve taken it out. Also, by then, us kids had moved out, there was no real reason to have it. When the kids weren’t there any more I don’t think my dad had to interact with the neighbors very much so there was no need for the door in the fence.” Phil and I were imagining the neighbor, Mr Ferguson, as the nicest man ever then Trent told us that he ended up killing himself, turned out he was severely depressed. We were both shocked. This reminded me of successful people, seemingly carefree, who end up committing suicide; the image management compared with the inner reality and isolation.

In an attempt to end on a lighter note, I asked them, “If you could be any type of fence, regardless of money or any restraints, what kind of fence do you think you would be? In essence, what is your spirit fence?” It was sort of a ridiculous question, but these are my friends and they understand me but hesitate at first. They look at each other and smile in the way partners understand each other and can say a lot with their eyes, the majority of communication is nonverbal. Trent speaks first, “Do you have something in mind?” Phil replies, “Well, I know what kind of fence you would be, I just don’t know what kind of fence I would be.” “Oh?” says Trent, interested and slightly sassily, “What kind of fence would I be?” At this point I was thinking this was not the high note I was looking for. I am silently regretting my question, not wishing to cause tension between them. “You would be one of those baby/doggy gates, because you can just climb right over it.” I say in his defense, “Those gates are transparent, secure and sometimes unassumingly kind of complicated to open up.” In fairness, I then ask Trent what kind of fence he thinks Phil is. Trent responds cheekily, “A kids playpen.” It is all in jest and we laugh heartily together. I apologize for starting trouble, Phil clarified that those were not meant to be insults and checked in with Trent to see if he was offended. Trent laughed and said he wasn’t sure if it was meant to be an insult, but the more he thought about it he really did think Phil was like a playpen and saw it as a compliment. We talked about how it was easier to pick someone else’s fence, than it was to pick our own. Just like it is easier to find solutions to objective situations, because there is no emotional involvement, no risk to have to change yourself, just fix others. To examine your own boundaries is a different process, it becomes subjective, based on experience and emotional involvement of time and space, memory. In this way it can seem messier and more difficult to sort out.

Phil had an answer to what his spirit fence was, a combination of inspiration from our discussion. “It’s more stately, it’s wrought-iron and nice, but it’s not for protection, it’s for display. And it’s all white. No, wait, in a perfect world, it’s pink. It has those pointed spires at the top that curve downward outward, but at the end they have spheres and some have crystals dangling, like a chandelier. And when you drive up, I’d have a real fancy gate that just opens up and lets you in.” I’m in awe of his spirit fence and compliment him on his ability to dream. Trent says he feels like he would just be columns in front of a library. “They’re not actually preventing anyone from entering. They serve as a perimeter but that aren’t actually keeping anyone out. You can just walk through them but they just represent something, like bushes.” We discuss how columns can be a status marker; they typically represent an important place, usually in front of buildings that hold knowledge or information. Phil points out the utilitarian uses of columns for supporting structures as well. The last question of spirit fences was a question I would only ask someone I felt close with as it is a bit ridiculous. Though I believe it proved to be revealing conversation on social boundaries for us all.

#### Bill / Anarchist Field Surveyor

I met Bill a couple years ago at one of my garden work sites, he was surveying something for the property owner. I overheard him talking about his garden and foraging and we have stayed in touch over social media since. He told me about his work as a field surveyor, he is not licensed, it is a very hard job to get into, there are many years of experience and schooling required. Bill has spent 14 years in the field and enjoys it but wants more office work.

Part of his job entails measuring and marking invisible boundary lines, going to the local clerk’s office, getting the historical deeds of the property and surrounding properties. Sometimes

they need to find old pipes, huge stones, some land monuments. They begin measuring from an arbitrary point within the light of sight of all the points and angles, putting in a stake or ground nail to mark it as a point of reference. Then he coordinates the geometry points and angles with all of his surveyor tools and references property corners, plots all of the coordinates on graph paper, creates a survey map of the property lines.

I asked why people usually needed surveys? Bill said sometimes it is two people settling disputes over property lines, sometimes it is title companies for title insurance to make sure there are no liens on the mortgage. Surveys are needed to ensure buildings are set back the proper distance from the sidewalk or when properties are subdivided, those are Bill's least favorite type of survey to do. Ironically, Bill is an anarchist, yet his work is about maintaining property lines and upholding capitalism. He said even anarchists could respect the space of others and everyone needs a degree of privacy.

Bill is not a fan of privacy fences but as a renter, it's what he is stuck with in his backyard. He doesn't think it's good for the garden, the solid wooden fence prevents air from flowing easily through the garden space. He thinks the garden would be healthier with a breathable fence. He doesn't get deer in his vegetable garden, probably because of the fence, but he does have a woodchuck family. He doesn't want to kill or relocate it, so he just fills in their holes and said it just takes diligence and a stronger will than the groundhog. He's offered it a side garden to distract it but said it didn't work. Bill eats a plant-based diet and prefers to stay away from the term vegan, but he has strong ethical values around animal welfare. He used to rent a property from a landlord who lived next door and was a trapper. You can imagine this was

an uncomfortable situation. He said that man didn't need fences, no animals went near him, they just knew he meant death. All of the neighbors hated them.

Bill and I talked about different types of boundary disputes and he told me a story about a survey job he did where a new house was built in the wrong place just over the property line. The contractor said when he knocked down the original house he built the new house exactly in the same place and he blamed the survey map. Bill's boss was the surveyor and was called into question. Turns out a surveyor can be sued at any point in their life until they die if the survey was not done right. There is a lot of liability in that line of work. They had to look up when the parcel was originally surveyed, what was it created from and all of the history. Turned out, the contractor was wrong and had built the house 3 feet to the right of where it was and it crossed the property line. The engineers had to work with the code enforcers and the contractor got sued. The homeowner had to buy the extra subdivided parcel from the neighbor at whatever price the neighbor set it at. It was a bad situation to be in.

Another neighbor dispute was between property owners of an old local quarry. One neighbor wanted to cut some old trees to open up his view and he sought permission from his neighbor on one side, but not the other side. When he cut the trees on the adjoining property, the neighbor sued as they did not give permission. Every tree cut had to be identified because each type of tree has a different monetary value for its lumber qualities. Bill happens to be an expert naturalist and knows how to identify many trees so he could offer a specialized skill in that particular case, which he thought was pretty fun.

I asked him if he came across any 'witness trees' in his findings of old deed maps. I first heard about 'witness trees' in a plant ecology class and have asked around to see if anyone else

had heard of them, but most people had not. Bill was one of the first to know what a witness tree was. He described them as an old method to delineate properties, “Where two guys, they were most likely, probably, well they had to be two white guys who owned the land, since women and people who weren’t white couldn’t own land when these old maps were made. And those two white guys would walk the property boundary to where there were some old trees and mark the trees genus as the line between both spaces. Sometimes there are ‘tree blazes’ marked in the trees, where there are cuts made into the side of the trunk to distinguish the spaces. They made 3 cuts on the side of the trunk and it forms this scar, like it’s been blazed. This was supposed to be evidence of witnessing the monument. Other times property owners used stacks of stones to mark property corners.”

We talked about how trees could be a way to mark space but sometimes they could also be a source of tension between neighbors, such as when a tree on one side reaches over the property line and affects the neighbors experience. Or if a tree from one side falls on a neighboring property and causes damage. Bill mentioned property rights use language such as the owner owns everything on the property from underground and to the heavens, so any branches which cross over are within the right of the property owner to cut and maintain if they do not like them intruding into their space.

Bill also talked about how native people to this land treated the land and expressed boundaries differently. He talked about their relationship with the forest and trees and boundaries, how they would manage the land with controlled fires to clear land. Bill said the way we have managed our forests in the last couple of centuries is part of the reason we have massive wildfires now and also enables invasive species of plants to thrive when not managed. “A lot of

the issues we have today would be solved if we had used controlled burning instead of suppressing wildfires.” Bill mentions ‘marker trees’ or ‘trail trees’ have been found across the U.S. and are an old method for native people to delineate boundaries or mark trails or camp sites. These trees were bent and cut so they would grow in a particular shape, which could communicate different messages to people passing by.

#### Jamie / Barred from Fences in an Urban Garden

My friend Jamie told me she had been thinking about fences for a while. She works for a well-funded non-profit group who started a learning garden for inner city youth, similar to Edible Schoolyard and community gardens where children learn how to grow their own food, cook it and eat it together while also learning a variety of other subjects and life skills. The board and stakeholders have a strong policy of not having fences in their program gardens. I asked why and Jamie said, “They want to maintain the idea of public accessibility, for everyone to feel welcome, feel free to educate themselves, to be fair, not exclusive, not to discriminate about who can use the space.”

The problem she is faced with is the increasing heroin epidemic in the neighborhood. Everyday Jamie needs to go and pick up multiple dirty needles, bloody alcohol swabs and general trash, she has almost stepped on them multiple times. She has to kick out people who are using in the garden. She doesn’t want to have to call the cops and throw them into that system, but they tell her to her face, “Oh we’re not doing anything, we’re watching out for you guys.” She said, “They are shitting on us, like actually literally shitting on us.” They are defecating and urinating in the garden and there is a completely blatant lack of respect.



There is a house directly across the street from the garden, which Jamie called the “heroin house”, it’s where people go to get drugs. The house is falling part, has cockroaches spewing from it. All of the users are white, most of them are not from the area, she said they come from further away. They come specifically to that house, it has a reputation. Jamie has encountered the owner of the house multiple times, and he always just says, ‘Oh sorry to hear about that, I’ll keep an eye out.’ Every time she encounters the users she says she feels their intense shame, she sees how addiction ruins lives and how people struggle, but she is dealing with irrational behavior that doesn’t see that changing anytime soon. Jamie has put locks on the lower power outlets, but they repeatedly get broken off. The worst part, she says, “Is they just lie straight to your face and say they have no idea what you’re talking about, saying, ‘Oh, it wasn’t us.’” Without a fence, the garden is facilitating the addicts behavior in a number of ways. They have unscrewed light bulbs and inserted adapters, ran wires across the street to their heroin house to run the air conditioner.

Jamie says with a deep sigh, “So it becomes this ethical question of - what do we do? The no fence policy is a barrier in and of itself.” Meanwhile, a portion of the public is disrespecting the public space and Jamie says desperately, “I’m just tryin’ to run a kids gardening program! I didn’t know I’d have to take this whole other issue head on.” She has suggested to her board to put in fences while also offering open hours to the public. She contacted a needle exchange service and they suggested putting up a biohazard box, but the chances of them being used are questionable to slim, not to mention the message this might send to the kids in the program of facilitation. Jamie says the kids are fully aware of the issue and some talk openly about it, they not only see it in the garden but in their communities as well. She said the kids take ownership of

the garden, “They like to care for and maintain the space, the first thing they do when they arrive is pick up litter,” after Jamie has already collected all of the needles.

The garden has been there for about 2 years. The heroin problem superseded the garden, but it has gotten increasingly worse to, “truly epidemic proportions,” over the years according to what Jamie said from talking with neighbors. She has encountered many people with needles hanging from their arms, apologizing profusely as she made threats to call the cops, empty threats to scare them away, but she said they just don’t care. It is in a recently gentrifying neighborhood, it is the last blighted area within the neighborhood. Jamie thinks eventually someone will call the cops.

Jamie has been asking for fences since she started in the summer and says others before her had also advocated for fences. Her first day on the job she said, “I walked up to the garden and first thing I wondered was why there weren’t any fences?” She has a background in gardening, so this is not an uncommon thought for a gardener to have. The open access in a rough part of a city with little green space is a tempting sanctuary space from the harshness of the street. Something so available and desirable in an public area is bound to be disrespected. “Having no fences is robbing us of infrastructure, it’s this never-ending saga.” When she encounters someone shooting-up in the garden, she’s said, “Don’t use in here, this is where a kids program happens!,” they reply with, “But you told us it was public space!” By not having a fence, the message is one of open access. The garden has had multiple incidents occur there such as multiple overdoses, a violent rape, general shady activity; not a good place to share with a children’s garden.

The other day as Jamie was in a public parking lot, going through some things from the garden she had put in the back of her car--straps, zip-ties, string--when all of a sudden two used needles fell out onto the ground. She was shocked and had no idea they were there, stuck inside of the bunch of string. She was furious that if she had been found with the needles by authorities, she would have been involved in a police investigation. She reported having regular nightmares about orange-capped needles. She feels strongly about creating a physical boundary, "Nothing else will work."

The non-profit board appears not willing or able to understand the gravity of the situation. They are not the ones picking up needles everyday. To one of the member's credit, they went to meet and speak with some of the heroin users in the garden once and when reporting back to the board, said nonchalantly, "They're nice people, they're just addicted. What if we made a map of other places they could use instead?" Jamie could hardly believe her ears. The board quickly dismissed this proposal. Jamie has two big boundary issues, physically needing a fence to keep addicts out and socially needing to cross the social boundary of explaining to her board members why this garden needs an exception to the no fence policy. She wanted to find ways to really broaden the dialogue with the shareholders. She said she felt like she has banging her head against a wall, "How many times does it need to happen before someone calls the cops? I don't want to be the one to call, they'll know it was me. The addicts are lying to my face, they show a complete lack of respect for everything. I've asked repeatedly for fences from the investors for this particular site, but they maintain a firm 'no fences' policy. Fences or no fences, it's a statement either way."

We discussed alternative solutions such as planting bamboo, but Jamie was worried to try it. Bamboo is invasive by nature, she said, “I don’t want a bamboo forest growing there, that could easily happen within a few years if it’s not diligently managed, and even so, it is hard to eradicate.” I asked her about putting up signs, then immediately laughed at my own suggestion, given the gravity of the situation. She kindly laughed with me and said they had already tried signs but they had been ripped down and vandalized. They also had motion-detecting lights, security cameras, and internet modems installed, which were all promptly and repeatedly ripped down. Even after they had been replaced with plexiglass cases. “This is a real struggle. I don’t know what else to do. It’s weird who I like to think of myself as being the opposite of private and I try to maintain this idea of being welcoming but then I get caught in this situation and it has made me realize that I can’t live up to those ideals in reality and maybe I’m not actually very open.”

Her dream creative solution would be to design their own fence and said funding wouldn’t be an issue. She stressed the need for it to be very tall, at least 8’, she wanted it to be metal and wanted it to appear very open. “Small enough spaces for a person to not be able to get through, but still have full visual access to the garden. Very tall, not a fence that was able to be climbed or scaled easily.” She wanted this fence to look unclimbable, not dangerous or sharp, but the message was it would not be easily crossed.

#### Francesca / Urban Community Garden Fence Standards

Francesca is a gardener and organizer of some community garden spaces in a large metropolitan city. She tells me that currently the most common type of fence in the public (city-owned) community gardens are 8 feet tall standard galvanized chain link fences,

specifically black in the front and metal silver for the side fences; they also include a 12 foot wide gate which can receive deliveries of materials from trucks. She did not know why specifically the standard was set for the front to be black, said those were upper management decisions of which the rationale was not necessarily always communicated to the lower level community. There was an emphasis from the heads of the department to set a standard for the fences to create a unified look, like branding. “Before the standard was set, there was a hodgepodge of fencing types. Wood, chicken wire and metal post, old gates, whatever.” We talked about how fence material type can be linked to economic status and wrought iron fences came up. Francesca said there were a bunch of wrought iron fences around some gardens, many were in nicer neighborhoods with more money, but not all of them and sometimes their origins were mysterious. The new regulations were implemented to upgrade fences in especially poor conditions, to create a cohesive and consistent appearance of organization.

The gardeners are required to hold 20 “open hours” per week from April 1st to October 31st every year, where the general public can access the gardens. This is part of the agreement with the city who own the land, the land is to be treated as a public park, as green space available to the general public. They figure if the minimum members to join a garden is 10, each person would be at the garden for 2 hours each week and be able to facilitate open hours. Sometimes people from the public call 311 to report not enough open hours, these are sometimes repeat people who have personal problems with the gardeners but do not address the issues themselves. There was mention of a new city-wide initiative called “Parks Without Borders” whose goal is to remove or lower existing fences in public parks and there's a chance this influence could trickle down to the community gardens if they are treated as public parks during their open hours. She

said, “The gardens are treated like public parks but their differences are nuanced, they’re used differently. The community gardens are entirely volunteer-driven, people who invest their personal time and money, it’s different than Prospect Park. Gardens are nuanced enough to warrant a fence. Even with fences people still break in.”

I asked what the purpose of the fences was? She said to protect the gardeners space when not in use. I asked her if there were any gardens without fences? She said, “No. In some parts of the country having no fence might work, but not in NYC where everything needs to be locked up and protected.” I asked, “To be protected from what?” She said, “To prevent people from entering when the garden is closed. The garden is closed when there are no gardeners there to open it. It’s not a fence to keep animals out, it’s a fence for people.” Sometimes the fences do not work and there are intruders. The gardeners are the first to take notice. Evidence of vandalism, stolen property, damaged crops. “Sometimes they just come in and destroy just to destroy, they aren’t just stealing food. You’ll see plants ripped up and just thrown to the ground with ripening fruit still on it, the place get trashed, flipped over furniture, it can be a mess.”

She didn’t know what people’s motives were. She expressed frustration and said it was complicated. “Maybe they wanted to be a part of the garden but they weren’t allowed, maybe they have a problem with one of the gardeners. We’ve had people break in by cutting the fence and then cutting the lock on the shed to steal tools. Most gardens keep a lock on the front gate and a lock on the communal tool shed. Some gardens get targeted multiple times a season. It’s not just one reason, it’s a complex issue right? There are real issues like drugs, gangs, intense poverty, racism, racism within people of color - these are bigger systemic issues that play into why people break-in, to sleep, do drugs, steal, just to sell it down a couple blocks. It is the reality

of the rougher traumatized spaces in the city, and it becomes part of the gardening experience there. The borderline that fences create between community and garden is really real in some neighborhoods.”

Francesca talked about how, “Fences can create a sense of home, or comfort, like a world apart from the chaos of the street. It depends on the area. Some parts of Brooklyn that are still pretty rough, when you step out of the garden space past the fence, the reality of those streets can really pack a punch. But in Manhattan, like in Chelsea, where it’s nicer, the transition between the garden and street can blend into itself more fluidly, it’s less drastic a difference.”

She then goes to explain how there are even smaller fenced off worlds within the larger garden fenced world. Many community gardeners put in their own fences around their plots within the gardens. “They’re made of whatever, some chicken wire, a broken handle of a broom, a bough small pickett. They put them up for different reasons, around their personal raised bed to stand out. Some to keep people away, or squirrels and racoons. Some use fences to break up the space, to separate the common space within the community garden, or commonly maintained spice or flower plots.”

Maintaining boundaries, physical or social, can be an intimidating process. In the case of one garden in Brooklyn, Francesca was checking in on some gardens in a rough part of town during the summer. In front of the garden gate was a huge crowd of people, playing dominos or dice, drinking, smoking crack, in broad daylight in public. She was shocked and called a local gardener from the site on the phone to check and see if this was a reoccurring event. The gardener asked which side she was on? There were 2 entrances to this block-wide garden and apparently Francesca had entered through the bad side. The gardener reported that the community garden

members did not use that side at all because of the shady activities that went on there. The police did nothing, the neighborhood has other things going on.

She ended with, “The fence of a garden is also a border space for the reality of the community, it creates different spaces, there’s that sense of home in the garden, of caring, then you step out onto that street and the feeling changes. The fence separates the garden from the community, and sometimes that’s good and sometimes that’s bad. I guess it depends which side your on.”

#### Frank / Local Code Enforcer

I had been meaning to meet Frank for a long time. His office hours are obscure so it was challenging, but I finally got a hold of him for an interview. I’d mentioned wanting to interview code enforcers to some of my other interlocutors, many of my neighbors had had experiences with Frank and most reported that he was a nice man, strongly conservative, and he would likely be willing to talk to me and get a kick out of my project. When I met him, I told him where I lived, just down the hill from the office. He did laugh when I told him my topic and was very friendly and open about his thoughts on fences. He did begin with a suggestion to ask the President. I mentioned the root of the word ‘fence’ came from ‘defense’ and the idea of forts and walls protecting resources. “That’s exactly it, why can’t other people see it that way?” Someone had already mentioned to me that Frank was staunchly Republican and I didn’t want to talk politics with him. I often find I get along with people better when I avoid that topic, there a number of other topics to discuss and relate about, why not start there. I changed the subject by asking about him about his job. He’s a good story-teller.



He gave me a general summary of fences; they keep something in or out, mark boundaries between properties; and like most people said, “*Good fences make good neighbors.*” (Frost, 1914). Then he went into a story about the neighboring village, for which he is also the code enforcer, as they are both very small in population. The neighboring village has slightly more people, most of it is rural, but the center feels like dense suburbia with a historic district and bustling main street. In Section 4.8. ‘Fences’ of their Zoning Regulations it states, “If a fence or other structure is deemed by the Code Enforcement Officer to be designed primarily to cause annoyance or damage to an adjoining owner, in no case will it be permitted” (Catskill Code Enforcement). Frank gave me an example of when he used his authority to say no to a fence that was used to annoy the neighbor. It was a quarrelsome pair of neighbors who had a tight property situation. One man only had 3 feet of property that came away from his house, a small strip of access to his side door. The land was open and adjoining his property was the neighbor who had a driveway there and didn’t like that he could see the neighbor going in and out of his side door, sometimes walking over the imaginary line. He wanted to put up a 6’ wooden privacy fence up along his property line. A building permit is required in order to put in a fence, it costs \$25.00 and Frank needs to approve the plans. When he saw this situation, he deemed it unsafe and denied the permit, using Section 4.8 of the local codebook. He said the only reason the man wanted the fence was because he didn’t like the other guy, but a fence that high would be a safety issue. If the neighbor with the sidedoor needed to escape in the event of a fire, and he opened his door with a fence right against the pathway, it would be too difficult to get fire access in and out.

This brought up the idea of safety, which is what Frank said codes were meant to be for, such as pool fences. He said the reason front yard fences could not be tall or solid was due to the fact that it could obscure the vision of the house for the fire department or other emergency personnel, such as when looking for the right house number. He said for me to put up a fence, even though my house is only 20 years old, I would need to go through a design review process with the Planning and Historic Committees since I am within the historic district. He kind of rolled his eyes at the mention of the Historic Committee, clearly not a fan of how they operate.

He explained that it's not that he didn't appreciate what they do, it's just sometimes they went too far and caused people grief and ridiculous expense. He said it was all about control and power. Sometimes people just wanted to oversee and manage situations exclusively and sometimes they went after each other instead of the issues at hand. Having seen these types of dynamics in my former town's local politics and also at the larger levels of government, this was not surprising news, especially in a small town. To note, the Historic Committee is a part of the Planning Committee, though they cover slightly different areas. There is no Historic Review Committee as there are not enough people willing to fill the seats and Frank thinks this is a problem as they don't have any real oversight when they cross the line.

Planning codes dictate building codes which reinforce energy codes. He explained one reason the Historic Committee could be so scrutinizing was because by the village maintaining its historic codes it could receive grant funding from the State Historic Parks Office. Frank talked about a local landmark, a historic hotel-restaurant business which was recently bought by a new owner. The new owner wanted to replace the historic tall single pane glass windows as they were drafty, not energy-efficient, and hotel clients had complained. Someone on the Historic

Committee insisted that the windows remain the same and should be stored not replaced. The owner disputed this with an outrageous price estimate of \$3k per window to have the restored. Then the person from the Historic Committee said they could be replaced, but must fit the historic design, which was expensive and still energy inefficient. Another person from the Planning Committee had recently vacationed in Amsterdam and took pictures of a building's historic facade which was in the process of being restored. They walked around the building only to find that the facade was supported by beams and scaffolding and was in fact just a standing wall, the remains of the historic building. Modern, energy-efficient construction of the new building was being done behind it and would later be attached. A way to upgrade to current standards while maintaining the historic front. Supporting the facade approach is what they settled on in my town with the hotel-restaurant, replacing the front windows in the historic fashion and upgrading the side windows to be more energy efficient.

Another example of when the Historic Committee went too far, according to Frank, was when a man needed to replace his slate roof. Frank described this man as someone who maintained his yard and property very well, someone who cared. The mayor at the time found out about it, and didn't like that person and made a stink about it to the Historic Committee, who then made the replacement of this roof a nightmare for the owner. They insisted that his house needed to keep the shingles slate, which is an enormous cost. Meanwhile, the surrounding neighbors all have had their roofs replaced earlier and were asphalt shingles, before the new codes had been established. The new code book now claimed that he needed to maintain the historic aesthetic and suggested synthetic slate look-alikes, which are also expensive, but they do last up to 50 years instead of 20-25 with asphalt. Still, Frank thought this was absurd seeing as

everyone else around the owner had a different style now, but the new codes were upheld. He fought it in court. He was very upset because he was unaware of the new code book that had just been issued. He suspected the mayor had something to do with him not receiving it on his desk.

Frank has been in his position for about 15 years. I would guess he is in his early-mid sixties. Before this job, he did construction, went to school for it back in the day. He worked on a lot of huge projects in Manhattan. Originally from the Bronx, he grew up coming to the Catskills during the summers. He tells me, "I know the actual Catskills better than I know the Catskill locals." He lives out in the country, he has no fences, just woods at the edge of his yard. I think what he means is he is content to keep to himself and is here because he loves the land.

I think because he is originally from a very densely urban area, the Bronx in NYC, he has his boundaries up in the way most people from the Bronx do, with sass and attitude, a kind of "Eh, whatever, I don't care what you think." It's very direct and matter-of-fact and to some can be perceived as brash. But I'm from New Jersey, across from Staten Island, and I have lots of family in the Bronx, so this demeanor is familiar and in fact comforting to me. I may not agree with him politically, but I still appreciate his ability to be authentically himself. Both Frank's general character and experience with safety and construction make him an excellent candidate for his position as code enforcer. He knows what to look for.

Nonetheless, it is not an easy position to maintain, his job is to enforce rules about property. Sometimes he issues permits, other times fines. Many people don't like to be told what to do on their property, especially Americans. I asked him how he thought he was received by people, based on his job, did he think people liked him or not. He said he thought it was probably

50/50. He didn't seem to care whether people liked him or not. He looked at each person and situation objectively and he did his job to ensure safety and effectiveness.

## Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusions

### Discussion: Ethnography

There were some common themes that emerged from the interviews. Most interlocutors didn't mind transparency and using their real name and didn't see the point of a pseudonym, so I chose most of the names. The majority of people I spoke with all used similar terms to define fences or the idea of them: protection, property, barrier, delineate, marks space, good fences make good neighbors, defense. Many ended the interviews with something along the lines of, "I'm not sure I said anything about fences or if what I said was helpful" when in reality it usually was, just nuanced in how open or closed they were about answering certain issues, their styles and perceptions of culturally appropriate. A number of people mentioned the idea that fences can create micro-worlds of comfort of space by marking space as different, particularly in areas where space was tighter, populations more densely populated. Gardeners often mentioned their work as meditative, spiritual, and ecological, world-building yard work, as Gundaker and Tuan spoke of. A bunch of people brought up fences as facades or illusions of protection and as mostly symbolic gestures.

It was interesting to see how so many people's fences represented them, mirrored them in some way, their general attitude or essence. Peter appreciating transparency as a science journalist and his techy invisible dog fence. Tommy's straightforward simplicity and primary interest in practicality and his 2 acre chain link fence for his big dog pack. Joe and his stylish green metal fences for his restaurant and his white picket fence for his house. People in rural

areas were more selective about what they fenced off. Fences were used mostly for keeping animals in or out, such as a garden or dog yard. People in suburbs and urban areas wanted fences for privacy or protection from other people, a way to mark space in a region where space could be a rare commodity.

However, not everyone's fence represented their character. One thing that struck me in particular was the contrast between theory and practice in terms of how some people viewed themselves and how they actually presented themselves and expressed their boundaries. They could be both bounded and unbounded at the same time, one physically, the other metaphorically. For example, the Gnome King told me he was a "keep-to-himself" type of guy but then proceeded to be open in conversation and generously giving me gifts homemade gifts. Another one was my friend Jamie, the city kids garden program leader who was dealing with the heroin users in her garden and her board's no-fence policy. I know her to be a free, flowy, artistic, non-judgemental, welcoming person, she presents as open; but in her scenario she is feeling a strong need for high fences for security to protect her garden and her student's experience and safety. Then there's Bill, the anarchist field surveyor, a man who opposes government but his chosen line of work has been to find the invisible lines that help uphold parts of these institutions. These oxymorons were baffling to me at first but sometimes, that's just how life works, sometimes it just doesn't make sense. When something so subjective is studied, there is no rulebook and many approaches and perspectives need to be considered. Communication and expressing boundaries is challenging, confusing, and complicated work. Some people I interviewed were bounded against their choice, in the case of renters having other wishes for their fences (Trent, Phil, and Bill) and others chose to be bound. Some people were unbound

against their choice (Jamie), others wanted boundaries and had agency in the decision-making process (Maria Angelise, Hector). Effective boundaries really depend on who they serve.

### Conclusions: My Living Border Fence

Fences are expensive, and until I had an urgent need for a fence, it was going to wait because there were other pressing projects that required funding. I decided soon after moving there, whether I eventually installed a fence or not, that I would have border gardens and plant a living fence. I started to set it up by “lasagna gardening”, which is a no-till gardening method where you build up the soil, essentially creating soil by laying layers of compostable materials such as leaves, newspaper, cardboard, manure, straw, etc., like a lasagna. The main ingredient required is time, so I raked up piles of leaves into my initial border design on my birthday in late October (See Appendix Fig. 2). 2018 was my first full year in my new home and the first year I was able to learn the lay of the land and test out my border garden’s effectiveness (See Appendix Fig. 3-14). I planted it because I love plants, but also I felt exposed and vulnerable without any delineation between the sidewalk and my yard. I wanted the border garden to serve as a human and animal deterrent, or “guide”. I wanted it to be a soft boundary for people. I thought it showed that I cared about my property and hoped people would not destroy or damage it. Over the first winter I was able to observe animal tracks in the snow to make note of what pathways they used.

I wonder what my neighbors think about me. As a landscaper, I spend the primetime hours of work on other people’s land, by the time I get to my own garden it is almost dark. I spent many dusks watering my young garden, desperately sticking new transplants into the ground. I come across a lot of plants from work, from dividing perennials or plants that went to

seed so I tried to take advantage and salvage most of those plants from ending up as compost. My ideal plant criteria trio is 1) deer-proof 2) perennial 3) beneficial to pollinators and/or human uses. If a plant has these three qualities, I will add it to my garden. I also planted lots of herbs and flowers which I use in my personal apothecary. I couldn't resist planting an edible garden with raspberries, blackberries, black-capped raspberries, wineberries, goji berries, strawberries, and blueberries (See Appendix Fig. 11). I intended to put in cedar fence posts and a mesh deer fence around it but never got around to digging in the dreaded rocky soil. I did have deer eat some of the ripe vegetables there such as the okra flowers, but they left the kale and berries alone. They did however, eat my prized heirloom tulips and most of my lilies, I didn't know deer adore them. I saw a groundhog living under my shed for a while but I filled in its hole and I didn't see it anymore. Some animal would climb up onto my porch and mess with my stuff.

As a little joke to myself I kept a pot of stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*), a medicinal and edible plant, on my deck right near the stairs, before the vegetable and herb pots. In the plant spirit world, this plant is meant to be provide powerful protection with its stinging quality. It was meant to warn anything that came up the stairs trying to eat my garden that it better turn around. I kept it there for the majority of the season, when towards the end, I was cleaning up outside and decided to plant the nettle in my garden, thinking it wasn't really doing anything on my deck. The next morning I was shocked to see some of my potted vegetables on my deck had been entirely eaten! The tomatoes that were right behind the stinging nettles were completely done for after that (See Appendix Fig. 15-16).

The border fence did end up deterring the deer in some way. In the fall of 2017 the deer ate all of the hostas in the front yard. The following year, in fall of 2018, the hostas were left



standing so long that I ended up cutting them down. The deer only gave me a problem in the spring and again when the crabapple trees in the front yard bloomed. I plan to have an arborist give them a good pruning so they remain healthier, stronger. Truth be told I don't love those trees, they are not my first choice, but I see their beauty in spring blossoms and their food value to the wildlife.

Planting my fence was a great way to meet my community (See Appendix Fig. 2-9). I have developed many acquaintances with neighbors from working in my garden; particularly older women, they love my garden and always stop by to say something to me about it. In July and August I had countless people especially compliment my mammoth sunflowers, over 8' high, multi-stemmed (See Appendix Fig. 9-10). They were quite a statement, people would stop, point them out, and admire them. One woman said she makes it a point to walk down past my garden to see what is blooming or what I'm up to now. I had people tell me I had a very "unique" and "different" garden. These are two words that have been used to describe me since my first report cards in grade school, maybe my living fence does represent me accurately? I described my border garden to a friend over the phone as "beautiful and slightly chaotic," to which they said sounded like me.

I have a small decorative pillow a fellow community gardener once gave to me years ago, it reads, "Gardeners know the best dirt." There is definitely an element of gossip in gardens, people don't always notice gardeners quietly weeding behind the bushes and sometimes things are overheard. It's always an entertainingly awkward moment when people walk past the bushes and look over and see me, realizing that I probably heard what they just said. They usually just keep looking forward, get quiet, and walk faster. My favorite, is when people's dogs stop to pee

on my bushes and the dog owner is fine with it, until they notice me in the garden crouched down weeding, they suddenly begin to pull their dog away and scold them.

Besides the border garden, I also put in motion sensor flood lights on all four corners of the house for the night as well as LED automatic evening lights on the front and side porch entrances. The lights were my mother's idea and insistence. She loves security and can be a little too into it sometimes. In this case she was right, the lights were a good idea, I do feel more alerted to presences outside now, though sometimes it can be annoying if its a windy night and tree branches constantly set them off. I also hope I haven't annoyed any neighbors as they are bright.

In accordance with local building codes, I could not have a fence in my front yard that is taller than 4 feet; Deer have been known to jump as high as 8 feet high, so I could not ensure protection from them in my front yard. If my main reason for having a fence was for deer, then it turned out I did not need a fence afterall. As for my way of holding a boundary on my land as an expression to my community, I think planting my border was an effective way of doing so, with added benefits than fencing would have. For one, my garden is a conversation starter with people, a way of me actively reaching out to my community, an extension. Two, it benefits the local ecology by providing habitat and food for pollinators and other wildlife. Lastly, it brought me immense joy and a form of horticultural therapy.

As for the deer, I'm taking an, 'if you can't beat 'em, join 'em' type of attitude. They were there before I was, and so were the two crab apple trees in my front yard, which they cannot resist. So who am I to say no? I could cut down the trees, but they provide shade for my house in the summer, which keeps my energy costs low and pollen in the spring for the bees. I

think by just planting plants that deer historically do not like is my best bet. It limits my choices, but does not dampen my spirit. In fact it presents a unique challenge to solve which will give me a certain type of experience for the future.

The best part about owning private property is that my garden, unlike my clients gardens, is my own personal laboratory to experiment and learn from. Maybe I should take a tip from Isabella and the Gnome King and make cider with my crab apples, similar to making lemonade out of lemons, or making the best out of an undesirable situation. If I collect my crab apples to make cider I might outcompete the deer, while simultaneously increasing the productivity of my land value. Simply by shifting my approach and tactics, I may be able to resolve my issues. On the topic of the world as a human home, the story of humans and earth is as old as time and it is the story of human adjustment and adaptation; the message is one of human coexistence with nature is often more effective than human dominance over it (Hanson 6, 12).

After talking to many people in my village, it seems that it has been a socially strange place for a while, and many others have expressed feeling isolated here. It seems people are looking for that lifestyle in some way, to be tucked away and quiet, minding their own business. During the last blizzard, I had a conversation with my neighbor across the street, the only one I had not met since I'd moved in. I thought he was the grumpiest man in the world and that he must've hated me for some reason I could not figure out. I had been making an effort all year to say hello to him, to wave every time I saw him, but he never once acknowledged me. Other neighbors on either side of his house said he was very grumpy and kept to himself. However, efforts such as snow removal can bring the community out and I had noticed he was parked on

my side of the street, on my grass median by my sidewalk. Once the street had been plowed, he used his snow blower to clear around his cars to move them back to in front of his house, but in clearing around his cars, he extended his snow clearing to half of my sidewalk. I was shocked, not expecting this favor, and when I saw him I gestured a thank you. At some point we both heard a strange sound coming from up the hill and we both listened incase it was someone who needed help. It was just a snowmobile but it got us in proximity enough to each other to have a conversation. Out of nowhere he said to me, "I've been here 30 years and still feel like an outsider here. No one talks to each other." We proceeded to talk for 20 minutes in the snow and biting wind and he seemed happy to be sharing his story. I was glad to be wrong about him.

Overall, I think this fence project came from a personal place of an exploration of my own boundaries. I think waiting a year has given me perspective on the land and the people in the area. I don't feel the same vulnerability and urgency for fences like I did when I first arrived. Now that I know the people around me, I feel safer, more established here. My neighbors and I have exchanged stories and gifts. I feel like I'm a part of the community more now and I would attribute that, in part, due to this project; it was a great excuse to meet my neighbors and cross normal social boundaries. In sum, I think though I may have caused some social faux pas by asking to interview people about fences in a small town where most people mind their business, but I have no regrets. I learned a lot about my community dynamics and made some friends along the way. Examining physical boundaries as an extension of ourselves to our communities boils down to preferences, agency, and perceptions.

Appendix



Figure 1: Photo of the front yard from zillow.com listing, early Summer 2017.



Figure 2: My new front yard, late Fall 2017, freshly-laid lasagna garden along edge of sidewalk.





Figure 3: My front yard, early Spring 2018.



Figure 4: My front yard, late Spring 2018.



Figure 5: My front yard, Summer 2018.



Figure 6: My front garden, Summer 2018, walking down the road.





Figure 7: My front yard, Summer 2018, sidewalk border garden.



Figure 8: My front garden close-up, Summer 2018, friendly cat included.





Figure 9 (left): Front yard sunflower.



Figure 10 (right): Side yard garden sunflower.



Figure 11: My side garden (berry / veggie patch), view facing my house and side deck, standing from neighbor's lawn, Spring 2018. Rain garden bottom left triangle with white stone.





Figure 12: Early Spring 2018, early stages of garden bed and rain garden. Red pole in top-right corner is an old clothesline which arbitrarily marks property line.



Figure 13: My backyard fences, old pallet-picket fence, formerly for dogs, now my compost area



Figure 14: My garden shed in the corner of my property, next to compost area, shows Frederyk's odd garden shape along back and side of his neighbor. Broken large willow branch from another neighbor can be seen just above shed roof, defined by snowline, leaning against his fence.





Figure 15: Potted herbs and vegetables kept on my deck to deter pests. The arrow points to where stinging nettles were in a pot the previous day that this photo was taken.



Figure 16: Close-up of eaten tomato plant next to where nettles were previously.

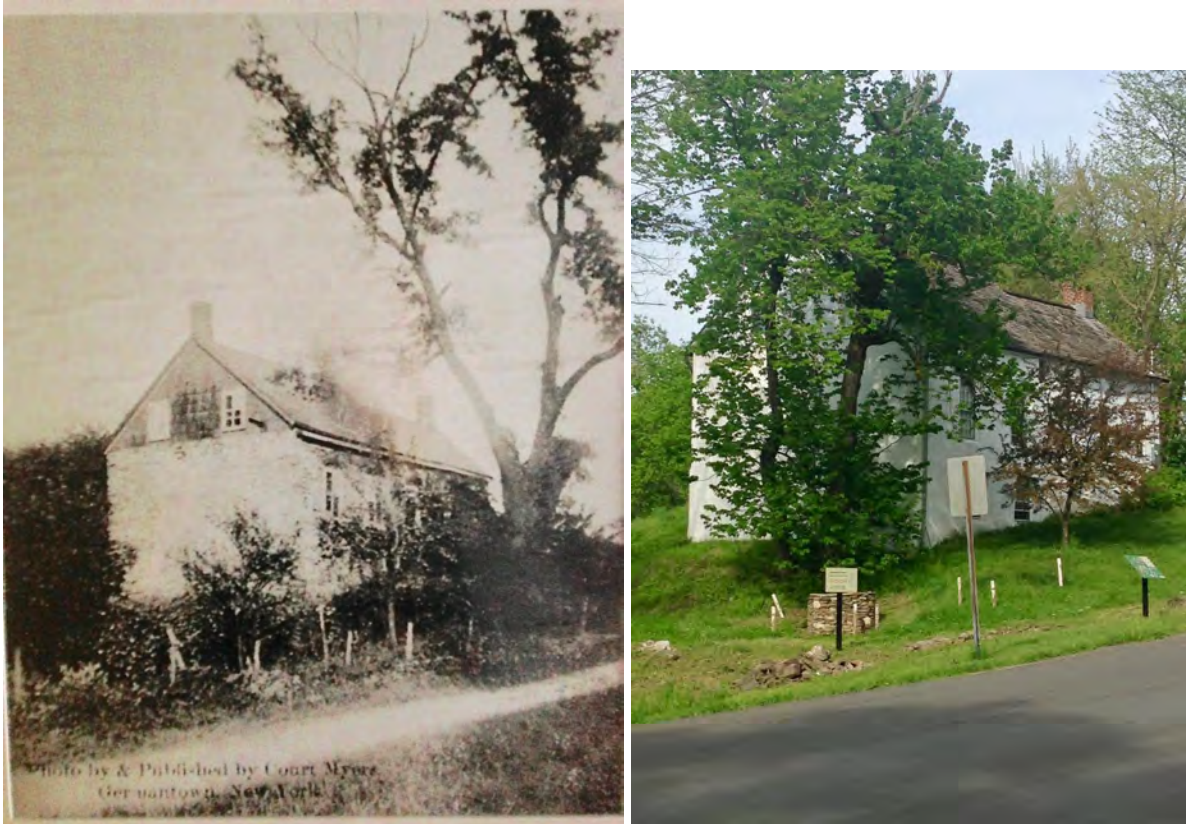


Figure 17 (left): Maple Avenue Parsonage, 1900.

Inscription reads, "Photo by & Published by Court Myers, Germantown, NY"

Figure 18 (right): Present-day fence posts in place from site of original photographer.



Figure 19: Closer view of posts around well, from bottom of slope, looking up.





Figure 20 (bottom): From top of hill in front yard, looking down through posts to well.



Figure 21: “*Mirror Fence*” by Alyson Shotz, 2003, permanent piece at Storm King





Figure 22: “Storm King Wall” by Andy Goldsworthy 1997-1998



Figure 23: Bruno’s country post-beam garden



Figure 24: Bruno's peach tree, protected from deer.



Figure 25: Bruno and Iris' new anniversary garden bench, fenced due to deer rubbing antlers on it.





Figure 26: Sign on door reads, “NO SOLICITING. We are too broke to buy anything. We know who we are voting for. We have found Jesus. Seriously, unless you are giving away beer PLEASE GO AWAY!”



Figure 27 (left): Gnome King's corner fence.

Figure 28 (right): Gnome King's sealed gate  
hops trellis.



Figure 29: Frederyk's broken fence adjoining neighbor-friend Nina.





Figure 30: Steve's picket backyard fence.



Figure 31: Steve's cafe stanchions.



Figure 32: Neighbor's driveway across from Steve's house, Fall 2017



Figure 33: Neighbors directly across from Steve's house, Winter 2018, view of spray-painted "Wall" and "Life" on back fence.



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