

EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES



London's Early Modern Gardens and the Performance of Solitude

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In the mid-seventeenth century,¹ Andrew Marvell wrote 'The Garden', in which he praised the 'happy Garden-state' where Man has no need of others:

Fair quiet, have I found thee here,
And Innocence thy Sister dear!
Mistaken long, I sought you then
In busie Companies of Men.
Your sacred Plants, if here below,
Only among the Plants will grow.
Society is all but rude,
To this delicious Solitude.²

This juxtaposition of 'Society' with 'Solitude' was by this time a well-known trope of pastoral literature in England. The portrait of the natural world as the setting for retreat from society, where a person could experience and express his purest emotions, was central to this trope. Nature – which, through the end of the sixteenth century, usually meant the countryside – was portrayed as the place where artists received their greatest inspiration, where heartsick lovers lamented aloud the loss of their beloved, and where, if two people met, their relationship was not subject to the rules placed upon them in society. However, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England were a time of rapid

¹ Thomas Calhoun and John Matthew Potter say 'The Garden' was probably written between 1651 and 1653, while Marvell was working as a tutor in Yorkshire, though the exact date of the poem is unknown. Andrew Marvell, *The Garden*, ed. by Thomas O. Calhoun and John Matthew Potter (Columbus: Merrill, 1970), pp. 2-3.

² Marvell, p. 15. Stanza II.

urbanization,³ and the average city dweller's actual experience of green space was increasingly mediated by a growing body of print literature about horticulture and garden design, by popular dramatic productions set (and performed) in urban green spaces, and by an incipient culture of printed images which encouraged specific visual conceptions of gardens and their relationship to the city at large. This essay examines a variety of popular representations of London's urban and domestic gardens which offered the illusion of solitude or seclusion, as seen in early modern printed images, garden designs and manuals, and Restoration theatrical productions. My study culminates in an examination of the city's gardens as represented in *She Ventures, and He Wins* (1696), a comedy written under the pseudonym 'Ariadne', revealing the sociocultural and religious imbrications of these green spaces.

The image of the domestic garden which emerges throughout this period – part nature, part city; part solitary retreat, part embellished stage – reflects a complex and inherently performative image of interiority, another major trend typically located in the early modern period and culminating in the Enlightenment.⁴ The garden was a uniquely urban liminal space, in the literal sense. Neither interior nor exterior, it was a conceptual threshold between the body, the hermetically sealed home, and the city at large – and a place where one could not help but be aware of all three.

Theorizing the Spaces of Early Modern Gardens

As numerous early modern historians and literary scholars have pointed out in recent years, what we think of today as *privacy* did not exist in early modern households, or perhaps at all, in early modern London. Historian David Cressy, for instance, has argued that all aspects of life in early modern England were to some degree 'public, social, or communal'.⁵ English literary scholar Erica Longfellow has elaborated on the problem of

³ The seventeenth century, for instance, saw London's population increase from 200,000 to 500,000, with corresponding densification of building footprints. See Vanessa Harding, 'City, capital, and metropolis: the changing shape of seventeenth-century London', in *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype, 1598-1720*, ed. by J. F. Merritt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 117-143 (p. 117).

⁴ On interiority, see, for instance, Cecile M. Jagodzinski, *Privacy and Print: Reading and Writing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), and Erica Longfellow, 'Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies*, 45. 2 (2006), 313-34.

⁵ David Cressy, 'Response: Private Lives, Public Performance, and Rites of Passage', in *Attending to Women in Early Modern England*, ed. by Betty S. Travitsky and Adele F. Seeff (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), pp. 187-97 (p. 187).

using the term *privacy* in the context of early modern London – and even the ambiguities which surround the term today.⁶ Although the term is problematic, the underlying phenomenon in question – the emergence of the modern self, along with new conceptions of physical and personal boundaries – is paramount in discussions about the development of the urban household and the dichotomy between green and gray spaces. In tracing the evolution of the word *privacy*, Longfellow notes that prior to the eighteenth century, the term was defined only in negative terms: the private was ‘whatever did not pertain to the nation or community’.⁷ Furthermore, ‘the definition of *privacy* that arouses the most debate for us, “the state or condition of being alone, undisturbed, or free from public attention, as a matter of choice or right,” did not come into use until 1814’.⁸ As Marvell’s canonical poem indicates, however, *solitude* was not a new idea and was readily associated with nature, in opposition to society.

Alongside the problematizing of *private-public* constructions of early modern urban space, early modern literary scholar Mary Thomas Crane has recently problematized another traditional scholarly notion that interiority developed because of the increasing compartmentalization of internal household space. Examining early modern poems, plays, diaries, and other documentation, Crane argues instead that ‘real privacy, especially illicit activities, was, until well into the seventeenth century, most often represented as readily attainable only outdoors’, including both public spaces and gardens associated with households.⁹ The latter, she points out, were in fact not considered as being entirely outdoors, but had features of both inside and outside in early modern conceptions of the household.¹⁰ Because Crane links a trend towards interiority with the use of outdoor spaces, she proposes the alternate terms *exteriority* or *outdooriority*,¹¹ emphasizing that ‘subject formation in the period may have been more open-ended, flexible, and environmentally influenced than has previously been thought’.¹² While Crane’s argument opens up fascinating possibilities for the porosity of early modern social and physical boundaries and for the role of the natural world in the formulation of the modern self, it still assumes that a primary purpose of gardens was to provide a functionally meaningful barrier against prying eyes – displacing the role of bedroom or closet to the outdoors. While bedrooms and closets would have offered little acoustic

⁶ Longfellow, pp. 314-15.

⁷ Ibid., p. 315.

⁸ Ibid., p. 315.

⁹ Mary Thomas Crane, ‘Illicit Privacy and Outdoor Spaces in Early Modern England’, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 9, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2009), 4-22 (p. 5).

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 5.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 17.

¹² Ibid., p. 4.

isolation from the rest of the household (in any rank of household), domestic gardens were far less visually isolated, as they were designed largely for display and leisurely surveillance from the main house. One would have been always aware of the possibility of visual discovery in the garden – either as observer or observed. Accordingly, an interest in performative solitude and reflection is evident in pictorial and dramatic representations of gardens increasingly throughout the early modern period. Rather than *interiority* or even *outdooriority*, the urban garden was the site that embodied a new urban *liminality* brought on by the increasing proximity of the individual to a dense body polis. The scale of the individual was rapidly shrinking in terms of access to open space but growing in terms of gross visibility to others, generating a self-conscious ambivalence about the relationship between self and society – specifically, whether the latter threatened or benefitted the former.

London's Gardens: The Archival Evidence

Like their pastoral cousins, urban gardens, or indeed any urban green spaces, were supposed to allow reflection and pause from city and interior household life, but they were fundamentally differentiated from literary wilderness in popular culture, precisely because of the perceived near assurance of being observed therein. In public gardens, certainly, there was no promise of uninterrupted solitude, although these gardens still bore the connotation of a privileged space for human interaction. Due to the multitude of strangers in parks and the possibility of interacting with them, public gardens like St. James's Park were soon labeled dangerous spots for young ladies, and English gentlewomen were portrayed in drama as wearing masks to visit them. Tom Brown's *Amusements Serious and Comical* (1700) describes the Walks in London, including Hyde Park and the Spring Gardens, 'in some [of which] you go to see and be seen, in others neither to see nor to be seen, but like a Noun Substantive to be Felt, Heard, and Understood'.¹³ Meanwhile, the Rambler in John Dunton's *Voyage Round the World* (1691) was 'asham'd to see so many painted and patcht Creatures Squint and Ogle at me as if they'd ha' devour'd me' while visiting St. James's Park.¹⁴ The park visitor becomes an object – a 'Noun Substantive' – upon entry to the park, to be consumed in ways often beyond his control. Artists and writers famously frequented these public gardens, seeking

¹³ Tom Brown, *Amusements Serious and Comical, Calculated for the Meridian of London* (London: John Nutt, 1700), p. 54.

¹⁴ John Dunton, *A Voyage Round the World* (1691), Chapter VIII.

inspiration not in nature but in the multitudes of people.¹⁵ Restoration drama, at least, suggests that there was not a categorical difference in the Londoner's imagination between public gardens and gardens attached to households: as discussed later in this essay, similar scenes took place in both public and domestic gardens, and the frequent association of garden with theater enhanced the sense of surveillance within the bounds and walls of the garden.

It is difficult to generalize about the appearance of London's early domestic gardens, because of a lack of documentary material, although recent archaeological work and scholarship on early London surveys provide a representative sampling of at least the larger domestic gardens in the city.¹⁶ While some neighborhoods such as Covent Garden and High Holborn retained a high proportion of domestic gardens to houses even through the end of the seventeenth century,¹⁷ less affluent neighborhoods where individual rents were lower became denser and denser as gardens were built over.¹⁸ According to London historian Vanessa Harding, 'by the early seventeenth century Cheapside was so densely built up with merchants' houses, shops, and warehouses that there were very few gardens

¹⁵ Tom Brown's book *Amusements Serious and Comical* was a restyling of a French book of the previous year, Charles Dufresny's *Amusemens Sérieux et Comiques* (1699), in which the narrator laments about the Jardins Tuileries that 'one is always tormented by insects: by flies in summer, mosquitoes in autumn, and year-round by journalists [*nouvellistes*]' (my translation); (Torquay: University of Exeter, reprint, 1976), p. 68.

¹⁶ Domestic gardens were typically walled, and in late medieval London, the city's walls themselves served in certain areas like Aldgate as the rear walls for several such gardens belonging to households along the city's perimeter. The walls were often thickened and recesses carved out to create secluded seating niches. Larger gardens typically had paths and objects of interest, including so-called 'bowers' and 'cabinets', as well as fruit trees and productive beds. Much of the green space in London prior to the dissolution of monasteries in the 1530s was owned by monasteries, friaries, and convents; a good portion of this land was rented out to civilians, while the rest was used by the monks and nuns as a recreation, gardening, and communal study space which stood in stark contrast to the solitude of the monastic or conventual cell. Monastic and conventual gardens included several different types of enclosed gardens, many of which were productive. Art historian Mireille Galinou points out that even in the monks' personal gardening patches, 'this contrast of the garden as recreation to the solitude and silence of the cell must have provided a vital outlet. Infirmary gardens [...] were both essential to the efforts of the monks in healing the sick and therapeutic in a less specific way, since they could be used as recreation areas while maintaining a necessary segregation from the rest of the community. In most cases, cloister gardens – arguably the most "pure" of enclosed gardens – were designed for exercise and discussion.' After dissolution, monastic and conventual gardens were taken over by nobles. See: Teresa McLean, *Medieval English Gardens* (Dover Publications, 2014), p. 66; Crane, p. 8; and *London's Pride: The Glorious History of the Capital's Gardens*, ed. by Mireille Galinou (London: Anaya Publishers, 1990), p. 19.

¹⁷ Harding, p. 128.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

and not every house had even a yard; some used the leads or flat roofs of adjacent properties or warehouses as their only outdoor space'.¹⁹

Circulation through early modern households tended to be tree-like: instead of rooms off of hallways, they consisted of enfilades of room after room. A survey of twenty plans in the 'Christ's Hospital Evidence Book' of circa 1612, as analyzed by archaeologist Frank E. Brown, reveals that these house plans sometimes branched at a room like a great hall, but that the garden was typically the terminus of a linear progression, sometimes with access within the garden to ancillary spaces like sheds.²⁰ Perhaps because of the excessive circulation required to arrive at the garden, and because it typically had only one entrance, it was conceptualized as the 'innermost' part of the house, in both grand estates and small dwellings.²¹ In an examination of London gardens from 1500 to 1620, British archaeologist John Schofield notes the custom in medieval and Tudor houses for the gallery and the parlour to sit adjacent to and overlook the garden, although not necessarily opening onto it in terms of circulation.²²

While the garden may have been 'innermost' in patterns of daily use by household inhabitants and visitors, it was of course not hermetically sealed from those outside the household, which made it a definitively different space from the house interior in legal terms. In an essay entitled 'An Englishman's Home is His Castle?', English historian Amanda Vickery explains that this titular legal adage dates back at least to the seventeenth century, as she examines legal cases involving 'thresholds, boundaries and privacies in the eighteenth-century London house'.²³ Even if the most common modern definition of *privacy* did not come into use until the nineteenth century, as Vickery's research shows, some version of the term was already widely used in eighteenth-century courts to define and defend 'personal territories'.²⁴ She concludes that 'a concern with personal space can be found throughout the social pyramid [...] Life with no vestiges of privacy was understood to be a most sorry degradation, which stripped away the defences of the spirit'.²⁵ Through her survey of court cases, Vickery explains that breaking and entering at night or at any time when an inhabitant was afraid was an offense punishable by

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Frank E. Brown, 'Continuity and Change in the Urban House: Developments in Domestic Space in Seventeenth-Century London', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 28. 3 (1986), 558-90.

²¹ John Schofield, 'City of London Gardens, 1500–c.1620', *Garden History* 27. 1 (1999), 73-88 (p. 81).

²² Ibid.

²³ Amanda Vickery, 'An Englishman's Home is His Castle? Thresholds, Boundaries and Privacies in the Eighteenth-Century London House', *Past & Present*, 199. 1 (2008), 147-73.

²⁴ Ibid., 151.

²⁵ Ibid., 152.

hanging because the home's boundaries were considered inviolable – but at the same time, in order to pursue a burglary case, the victim had to prove that all points of access had been secured against entry. Thus, if someone in the household had left a window open, the theft would not count as a burglary or housebreaking and would constitute a categorically different (and significantly lesser) offense.²⁶ Vickery does not address the garden, and readers are left to assume that, although the garden may be an integral part of the household, it was understood in terms of security and controllability to be fundamentally different from the house as it was typically entirely porous and spatially continuous with the public street.²⁷

In an essay entitled 'Private Pleasures', Bridget Ann Henisch points out that the garden was designed largely to be viewed from above, from the staircase and from inside the home. She writes: 'To look down from a height is to receive a particularly strong impression of pattern and layout, and this experience was much enjoyed'.²⁸ Early modern buildings would have been viewed primarily in elevation, while their gardens were designed in plan, making the latter well suited to plan-based representation. The wall ensured that only the elements the gardener allowed significantly to leave the ground plane would be consumed by eyes outside the household. Prior to the rise of gardening as a gentlemanly pursuit in the second half of the sixteenth century, the domestic garden was typically associated in literature with the female domain, and the visibility of this supposedly secluded space from within the household took on gendered overtones. As art historian Marilyn Stokstad has described the generic manor house garden: 'A young

²⁶ Ibid., 155-8.

²⁷ To supplement the surviving archaeological and legal evidence about the appearance of early modern domestic gardens, artistic representations afford a portrait of the garden as imagined – and therefore often as conceived of in designs. According to medieval architectural historian John Harvey, the first precise depiction of a European garden is found in the Duke of Berry's book of hours, the *Très Riches Heures* (1409-16), in which the month of June is illustrated with 'almost a colour photograph' of the royal palace and garden located on the northwest end of the Île de la Cité. The palace garden is viewed from the other side of a wall, foregrounded by toiling peasants, drawing attention to the social status of the enclosed urban garden, its ambivalent status as secluded yet at least partially open to public view, and the all-importance of the wall in defining the garden. The balance of occlusion and revelation of what should be secluded continued as a trope in representation of gardens into the early modern period. See: John Harvey, *Medieval Gardens* (Beaverton: Timber Press, 1981), Plate IV a.

²⁸ Bridget Ann Henisch, 'Private Pleasures: Painted Gardens on the Manuscript Page', in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Senses of Place in Western Europe*, ed. by John Howe and Michael Wolfe (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), pp. 150-168 (p. 154).

woman could feel secure in this exclusive garden, foolishly perhaps, for prying eyes were everywhere'.²⁹

The advent of perspective in art changed the way people saw space and, consequently, the way they designed it.³⁰ This was true of the design of buildings to be experienced scenographically,³¹ and perhaps even truer of garden design, which is so dependent on views. Perspective, like the garden, is a framing device for the solitary self, and one imagines oneself therein from afar, as in third person. One such perspective is illustrated in the frontispiece to the popular Dutch gardening text *Hortus floridus*, published in Latin in 1614 and in English in 1615 (Figure 1). At this time, English gardens were still strongly influenced by the formal characteristics of Continental gardens, as on display in this engraving. The image exemplifies the roles of observer and observed, in the figure of a

²⁹ Stokstad is not describing painting here, but (at least a version of) reality, for she goes on to tell the tale of James I of Scotland's first view of his future wife, while he was imprisoned in a tower in Windsor and she was in her garden. Marilyn Stokstad, 'The Garden as Art', in *Medieval Gardens*, ed. by Elisabeth B. MacDougall (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1986), pp. 175-86 (p. 181). The enclosed garden is particularly important in the medieval and early modern pictorial tradition because it provides the subject matter for the ubiquitous *hortus conclusus*, the image of the Virgin Mary seated within a walled garden, or sometimes even the Virgin as a walled garden. Millard Meiss explains that the *hortus conclusus* is a variant of the Madonna of Humility, seated on the ground to emphasize her allegiance with humanity. This figure began to appear in the fourteenth century because the advent of perspectival representation revealed the ground plane as a pictorial space to be filled, as opposed to the bare ground line seen in an orthographic elevation. Millard Meiss, "'Highlands" in the Lowlands: Jan van Eyck, the Master of Flémalle and the Franco-Italian Tradition', in *The Painter's Choice: Problems in the Interpretation of Renaissance Art* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), pp. 36-59 (p. 37).

³⁰ In describing changes in garden design in early modern England, Roy Strong writes, 'Gardens also speak of the change in optical principles [...] the arrival of what John White has called "the invention of pictorial space."' The garden evolves from a series of separate, enclosed, emblematic tableaux to a sequence of interconnecting spaces whose vital link is the vista and *point de vue*'; see Roy Strong, *The Renaissance Garden in England* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1979), p. 11. If the garden is the descendant of the tableau by way of explicitly designed changes in viewpoint, to be in the garden is to imagine oneself as part of a picture from another's viewpoint. In fact, it has been argued that the modern understanding of space originated in this time period, as there was no word for this concept in any medieval Germanic or Romance language. See Karen Newman, *Cultural Capitals: Early Modern London and Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 5. Perspectival representation offered new heights of spatial understanding partially because it was itself a reduction and even a sort of enclosure, as argued by art historian Terry Comito in *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*: in aligning an infinite vanishing point with the center of the viewer's own frame of vision, early modern perspective transforms the infinite void into 'an enclosed Eden' (p. 160).

³¹ The influence of the changes in perspective views in art on building placement and design is discussed, for example, by Marvin Trachtenberg, analyzing the Piazza della Signoria, in *Dominion of the Eye: Urbanism, Art, and Power in Early Modern Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 87-147.

man outside the foregrounded low wall and his wife within the garden, not acknowledging his gaze. The man's gaze doubles the viewer's gaze, ensuring that the tableau is understood in terms of surveillance. While this image appears to be concerned mostly with revealing the design of the ground, it also includes moments of concealment which engender desire. This concealment is achieved both by choices on the part of the engraver – cropping the front corners of the garden, opening the garden door to reveal an indistinguishable shape beyond – and by choices in garden design – framing the garden with oversized urns and foliage, styling the high wall of the garden as an inhabitable tunnel.

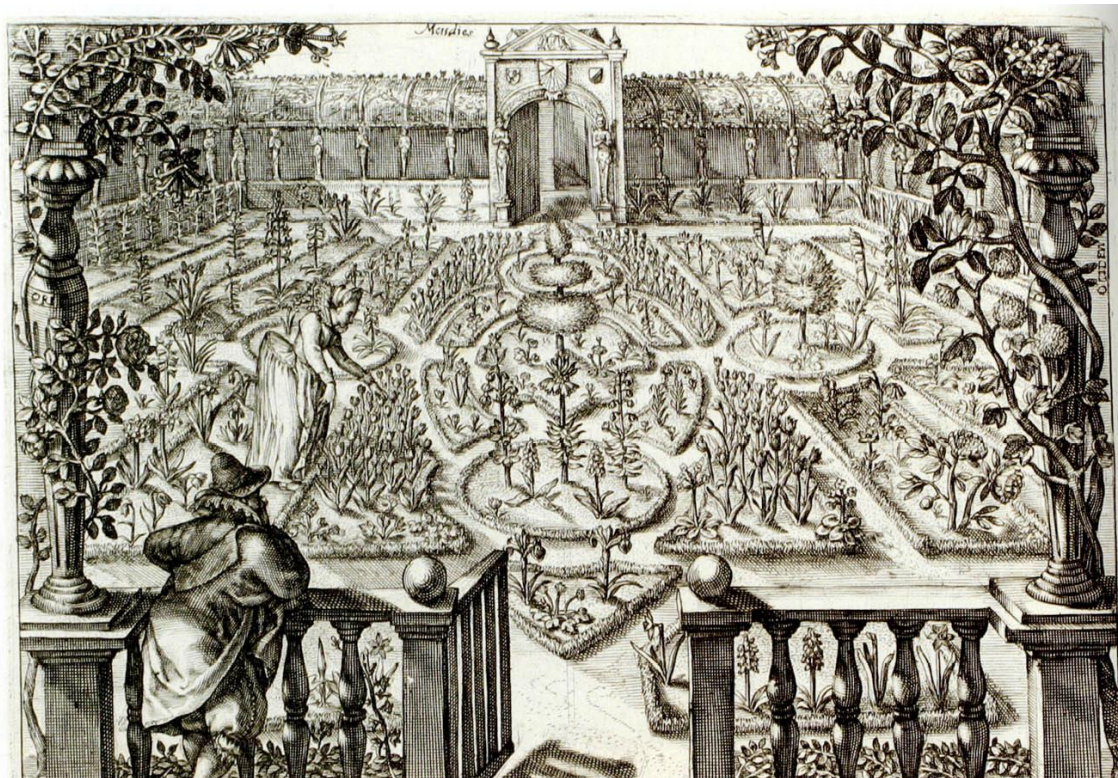


Figure 1: 'Frühling', Crispijn van de Passe, *Hortus Floridus*, 1614.

While the small flower garden in *Hortus floridus* is portrayed as flat and symmetric, in fact many of the grander London gardens leveraged topographic changes to create more viewpoints and employed only local symmetries. A contemporary English gardening treatise, William Lawson's *A New Orchard and Garden* (1618), for instance, prescribed an idealized garden composed of squares containing various gardens, knots, and plots of trees, divided by paths and stairways (Figure 2). The two garden squares adjacent to the house are separated from it by a stream and moat, while each successive pair of garden squares is set vertically lower. A mount is prescribed at each of the four corners of the whole composition; these serve as lookouts for viewing both inside and outside the garden

wall. Shortly after the publication of Lawson's book, in 1625, Francis Bacon penned an essay 'Of Gardens', in which he derided decorative elements like figurative topiary ('for children') and knots ('you may see as good sights, many times, in tarts'), but endorsed mounts 'to look abroad into the fields' and, one imagines, to survey the garden.³²

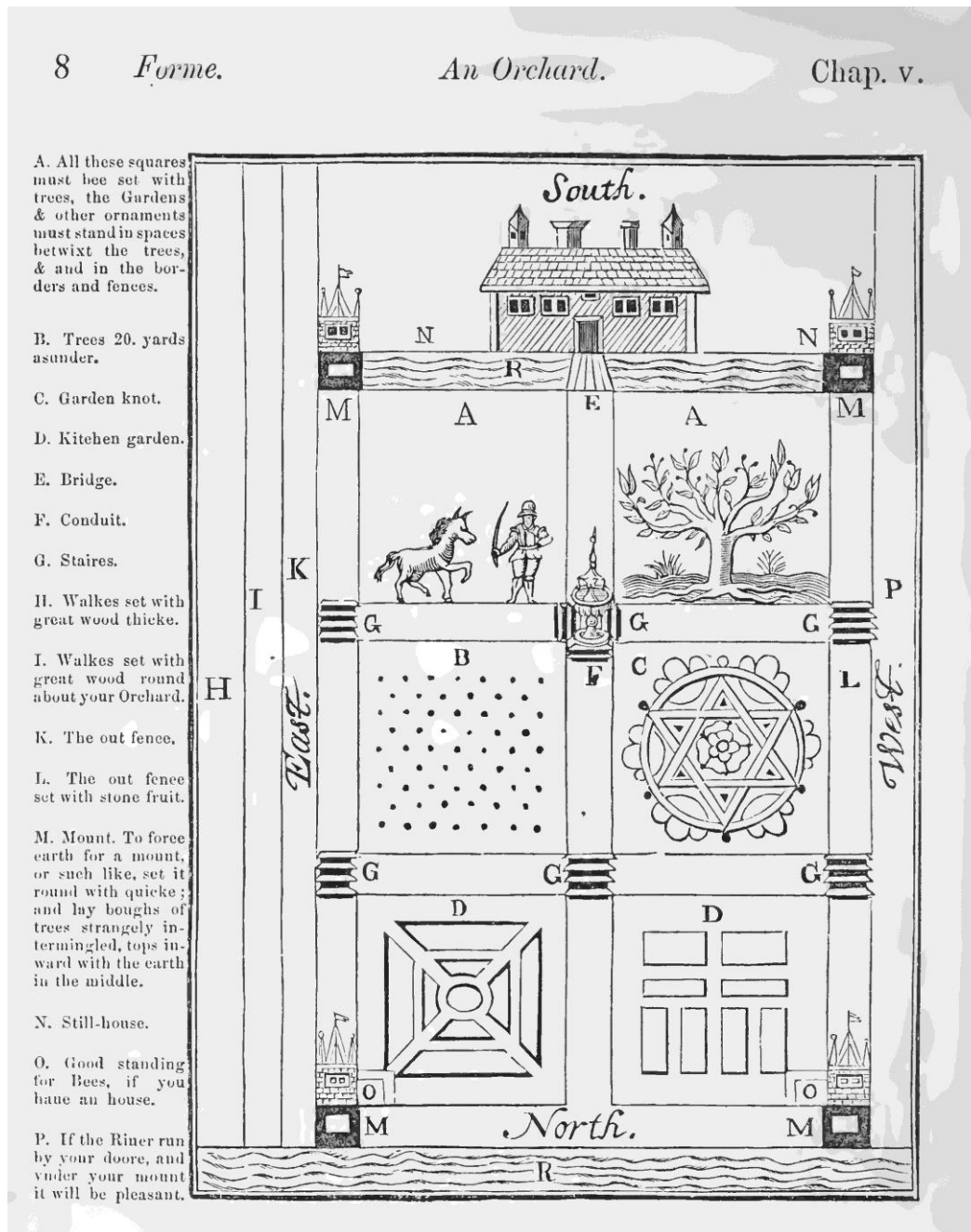


Figure 2: William Lawson's Form of a Garden; from William Lawson, *A new orchard and garden: or, The best way for planting, grafting, and to make any ground good, for a rich orchard: particularly in the North and generally for the whole kingdom of England*

³² Francis Bacon, *Of gardens; an essay* [1625] (London: Hacon & Ricketts, 1902), pp. 15, 13, 22.

([London, 1626] Philadelphia: Robert Pearsall Smith, 1858), p. 8. Scanned by North Carolina State University Libraries.

The gardening manuals which appeared in England in the second half of the sixteenth century served not only to standardize garden design, but also to help the Englishman assert order in an increasingly chaotic city and society. In the city, the maintenance of gardens was considered especially imperative to collective order and wellbeing, to the point that landlords frequently sued their tenants for insufficient attentions to the garden.³³ Garden historian Jill Francis has asserted that the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century gardening manuals reflected a belief that ‘the imposition of [...] order [on the garden] contributed to and reflected the physical and moral well-being of the nation’.³⁴ Francis examines closely five such books, beginning with the first English treatise on gardens, Thomas Hill’s *A most brief and pleasant treatise, teaching how to dresse, sow and set a garden* (1558), and ending with John Parkinson’s extravagant volume *Paradisi in Sole, Paradisus Terrestris* (1629). Among other trends, Francis notes over this time period a ‘demoralization of pleasure’: while all of the books preceding Parkinson’s use the term ‘pleasure’, they all also argue for the value of gardens in terms of the common good and society, whereas Parkinson writes of their benefit solely in terms of pleasure. Francis explains this by observing that ‘by the 1620s, in response to changing economic conditions within the country and abroad, policies had been designed to encourage individual profit’.³⁵ Thus the increasing validation of pleasure coincided with an increasing emphasis on both the individual self and the picturesque,³⁶ often idealized framing of subject – all of which interests were no longer inconsistent with an interest in greater societal order and benefit.

London’s Gardens in Restoration Drama

By the late seventeenth century, as evidenced in English Restoration theatre, urban gardens were imagined as spaces where individuals were not entirely subject to the rules of polite society – although also not totally free of them. St. James’s Park appeared frequently in these productions as a site of illicit interaction. In 1672, for example, William Wycherley wrote a comedy entitled *Love in a Wood, or, St James’s Park*. Three

³³ McLean, p. 76.

³⁴ Jill Francis, ‘Order and Disorder in the Early Modern Garden, 1558 - c. 1630’, *Garden History*, 36. 1 (2008), 22-35 (p. 22).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁶ I use the term *picturesque* here in its broadest sense, to suggest that to be in the garden was to imagine oneself the subject of pictures.

years later, he wrote *The Country Wife*, where the Park is cited as one of the places ‘where the men are to be found’ and therefore one of the places Pinchwife wants his wife to avoid at all costs.³⁷ The Park’s status as ‘a wood’ was a favorite joke, and an abundance of garden terminology took on bawdy double meanings. In Thomas Betterton’s *The Amorous Widow*, a suitor, Mr. Lovemore, inquires of the titular widow, Lady Laycock, if she likes to walk in St. James’s Park or in the Mulberry-Garden, asking, ‘Is not the Wilderness very pleasant?’, to which she responds, ‘If I like my Company, Sir, I never mislike the Place’.³⁸ Thus she reminds him that this ‘Wilderness’ has no value without society. As English literary historian Edward Tayler has explained, urbanization was a necessary precondition for the fictive garden setting (pastoral or urban): it takes a certain level of sophistication and distance from the source for people to understand what Tayler calls ‘primitive simplicity’, or the conscious cultivation of ‘nature’.³⁹ The first pastoral novel appeared in France in the first decade of the seventeenth century,⁴⁰ and already by the end of the century writers could not expect their audiences to believe in the honesty of any characters who soliloquized their feelings in a garden under the pretense of solitude. In the last decade of the seventeenth century alone, St. James’s Park provided a setting for misadventures – typically involved frustrated attempts at secrecy or seclusion – in such comedies as *A Fool’s Preferment*,⁴¹ *The Wives Excuse*,⁴² *The Maid’s Last Prayer*,⁴³ *The Old Batchelour*,⁴⁴ *The She-Gallants*,⁴⁵ *The Lost Lover*,⁴⁶ *The Innocent Mistress*,⁴⁷ *The Way of the World*,⁴⁸ and *She Ventures, and He Wins*.

This last play, published in 1696 and written by a woman playwright using the pseudonym Ariadne, is of particular interest, as many of the scenes take place in the Park and many others in a domestic garden belonging to one of the characters. In the first scene set in St. James’s Park (the third scene of the play), two of the female characters, Charlot and Juliana, have disguised themselves as men in order to seek amongst the strangers a man who will please Charlot as a husband. She soon espies one, Lovewell, who is engaged in

³⁷ William Wycherley, *The Country Wife* (1675), 2.1.62-3.

³⁸ Thomas Betterton, *The amorous widow: or, the wanton wife. A comedy.* (c. 1670), Act I.

³⁹ Edward William Tayler, *Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 5.

⁴⁰ This book was Honoré d’Urfé’s *L’Astrée*, published in three parts between 1607 and 1619.

⁴¹ Thomas D’Urfey, *A Fool’s Preferment* (1688), IV.i.

⁴² Thomas Southerne, *The Wives Excuse* (1692), III.i.

⁴³ Thomas Southerne, *The Maid’s Last Prayer* (1693), II.ii.

⁴⁴ William Congreve, *The Old Batchelour* (1693), IV.iii.

⁴⁵ George Granville, *The She-Gallants* (1696). This play is set entirely in St. James’s.

⁴⁶ Mary de la Rivière Manley, *The Lost Lover* (1696), II.i.

⁴⁷ Mary Pix, *The Innocent Mistress* (1697). Much of Act II takes place in the Park.

⁴⁸ William Congreve, *The Way of the World* (1700), II.i.

solitary ‘Meditations’.⁴⁹ As he is in a serious mood, he tries to get rid of the women, but he fails. The garden provides him with the air of seeking solitude, but of course solitude is impossible there. Instead of escaping Charlot and Juliana, Lovewell ends up agreeing to meet Charlot (he believes he is making the agreement with a male go-between) the following morning, by Rosamund’s Pond (in the Park), to accept her in marriage.

Both Charlot and Lovewell acknowledge that such a sudden marriage is imprudent, but in the garden, they are separated from their friends and family – including Charles, who is Charlot’s brother and Lovewell’s friend – and their actions seem less weighty than they should. Before Lovewell arrives at the appointed time, Juliana calls Charlot’s plan a ‘strange Resolution’ and reminds her it is ‘irrevocable’, to which Charlot replies, ‘Prithee forbear; Thy serious Notions almost spoil my design’.⁵⁰ Charlot nearly changes her mind when she sees Lovewell, but determines to ‘stand the brunt’ of the impending ‘Combat’. For his part, Lovewell is hesitant to agree to a marriage without seeing Charlot’s face, although she has already declared herself a rich heiress,⁵¹ but as soon as he sees her, he is ‘charm[ed] [...] out of [his] Liberty’ and begs to be taken at once to a church.⁵² Even as he says this, however, he expresses his concern, in an aside, that he is ‘a Woman’s Ass already’ and that he feels compelled to ‘through this Matrimonial Gulph’. This might be read as light-hearted, but Charlot is quick to call his air ‘serious’ and to ask him not to ‘consider too much, [as] I may chance to lose a Husband by it’.⁵³ Thanks to the garden setting, Charlot is able to choose her husband and to forego all intermediate societal and familial concerns, indulging her love at first sight with an immediate marriage. Without the garden, Charlot might not have met Lovewell, or if she had met him as Charles’s friend, she would not have been content to marry him, for fear that he was marrying her for her fortune.⁵⁴

If the play ended here, the garden would seem to have little to do with the normal order of things in the city, but Charlot goes on to test Lovewell, leading him to believe she is a penniless impostor. Once they are out of the garden, she cannot avoid the fear that he is after her money, nor can the couple avoid the involvement of family and friends. Charlot recruits a friend, Bellasira, to pretend to be the real Charlot and also to seek Lovewell’s hand in marriage, giving Lovewell the opportunity to deny their hasty marriage in the

⁴⁹ Ariadne, *She Ventures, and He Wins* (1696), I.iii.

⁵⁰ Ariadne, III.iii.

⁵¹ Ariadne, I.iii.

⁵² Ariadne, III.iii.

⁵³ Ariadne, III.iii.

⁵⁴ Charlot expresses this fear in Act II, scene ii: ‘Is it not better, thus to chuse for One’s self amongst a Multitude, than out of a few, whose Interest, more than Love, solicites me?’

park. When he refuses to do so, Charlot enters with Sir Roger Marwood, a mutual friend of Charles and Lovewell, and asks Lovewell to disavow her marriage to him so she can marry the wealthier Marwood. As soon as Lovewell passes this test, refusing angrily to let her go, Charles enters with Juliana and Bellasira, proclaiming, 'Here are more Witnesses to your bargain, Mr. *Lovewell*, than you are aware of; But methinks, my new Brother, you might have askt me leave'.⁵⁵ Finally the marriage is properly recognized, with Charles's consent and a sufficient number of witnesses.⁵⁶ Thus, the 'bargain' made in St. James's Park is valid only as long as Charlot and Lovewell are within its boundaries; once they leave, the bargain must be declared again, more explicitly and on different terms. After this second declaration, the marriage functions as any made in an urban setting; it blends into the other relationships in the play, though it would not have been possible without the meeting in the park.

The second romance in *She Ventures, and He Wins*, between Juliana and Charles, is developed and exposed in Charles's garden, which functions similarly to the public garden. In his garden, Charles confesses his love for Juliana to Roger, with whom he has composed a song about love and the power of women's charms. The garden seems at first to be more private than St. James's, and it is associated with intimate discussion and artistic expression. However, its role as a space for performance and surveillance soon becomes apparent, when Charles's musicians (also in the garden) perform the song and when Juliana and Charlot enter, failing to notice the men, and begin gossiping about love.

The women go to an arbor within the garden to speak intimately, but their secrecy is foiled because Sir Charles knows they will go to the arbor: 'Tis they, let's get behind this Arbour, from whence we may discover what they say; they certainly will go in there; 'tis the usual place of discoursing their Secrets in'.⁵⁷ Like the audience, Charles knows the connotations of these garden images; he knows they have become cultural capital, a mere symbol of the secrecy they were supposed to have afforded in pastoral literature. In light of this acknowledgement, the legitimacy of Charles's own privacy is thrown into question. If he knows he may learn Juliana's private thoughts by spying on her in the garden, he is not far from realizing that his thoughts are also on display, and once he realizes that, what he displays becomes performative and can no longer be honest.

⁵⁵ Ariadne, V.i.

⁵⁶ To the actual ceremony, Juliana was the only Witness, as Charlot makes clear when she says, 'Come Cozen, you must be our Witness' (III.iii).

⁵⁷ Ariadne, II.ii.

When the women learn that the men heard their secrets, including Charlot's plan for marriage and vague references to Juliana's love, they are not unnerved or angry. On the contrary, as a result of the eavesdropping, Charles consents to Charlot's plan and charges her to discover the object of Juliana's love, thus facilitating a match between Juliana and himself. It may seem that the garden was unnecessary in making this match, as the two already know and love each other, but they both have reasons (though perhaps not very convincing ones) for not divulging their love to each other or to a go-between. First of all, Charles is afraid Juliana loves someone else – and moreover will not admit to being in love until his apparently merciless sister does: 'I dare not own my being so, till she's a little tamed. She'll only make me her sport, as she does all Mankind besides'.⁵⁸ Juliana also does not want Charlot to tell Charles of her love, and when Charlot first tells her Charles loves her, she accuses her friend of 'betray[ing] to him the dearest Secret of my Life, and forc[ing] an Inclination, perhaps he ne'er had thought of'.⁵⁹ She is placated, however, when Charlot tells her Charles discovered 'the dearest Secret of [her] Life' not from Charlot, but by violating the seclusion of the garden space. Thus the garden setting facilitates another marriage, doing away with Charles's and Juliana's doubts and allowing her not to 'delay [his] Happiness [...] for the Punctilio of formal Courtship'.⁶⁰ Though the marriage, long anticipated by Charles and Juliana's friends, is not unconventional in its nature and will, like Charlot's marriage to Lovewell, be accepted in the urban sphere, it transcends the 'Punctilio' normally prescribed for such relationships.

Gardens in the city had come to be portrayed (and perceived) not as places for real seclusion and reflection, but as stages where people could display themselves – either their true emotions or an image they desired to project. The same can be said not only of fictive gardens, but also several real gardens where visitors were invited to see writers and artists at work. One of the principal garden theorists of mid-eighteenth-century London, Joseph Spence, was inspired by a visit to Parisian author Alain-René Le Sage's garden early in Spence's career (and late in the author's), in 1741. In his description of the garden, Spence focuses on the importance of the space as a place for the author to write almost as much as he does on the specific details of the design:

And an extreme pretty place to write in it was. His House is at Paris in the suburbs of St Ja[c]ques, and so, open to the country air, and the garden laid out in the

⁵⁸ Ariadne, II.ii. Earlier in this scene he says, 'I must own my fair Cozen has charm'd me; but I have of late observ'd her grown so thoughtful, I fear her Heart already is engag'd which make me fear to own any Pretensions to it'.

⁵⁹ Ariadne, IV.vi.

⁶⁰ Ariadne, V.i.

prettiest manner that ever I saw for a town garden. It was as pretty as it was small, and when he was in the study part of it he was quite retired from the noise of the street or any interruptions from his own family [...] [Two summerhouses] were joined by an open portico, the roof of which was supported with columns so that he could walk from the one to the other, all under cover, in the intervals of writing.⁶¹

Spence evokes the tradition of artistic inspiration by nature, vouching for the possibility of it in even in the city (or very near the city) with the example of an established author. However, Spence (if not Le Sage himself) is well aware of the proximity of Paris and is compelled to diminish it by saying the garden is ‘open to the country air’ and ‘retired from the noise of the street’. The public knowledge of the exact spot where Le Sage does his writing suggests the superficiality and the self-consciousness of the solitude he needs to produce his art. Whether or not he acknowledges it, the author benefits from the capital of voluntary solitude and the pastoral connotations of garden space. That Spence copied Le Sage’s garden in London for aristocrats who presumably desired similarly productive solitude further underscores the pretense of uniqueness and seclusion, even as city dwellers were in ever more conscious pursuit of apparent individuality.⁶²

On the whole, scholarship on early modern gardens has tended to focus on its ability to straddle two worlds – indoor and outdoor, public and private – but in fact the urban garden offered a distinct type of space from the outset, marked perhaps by its moments of continuity with both inside and outside, but also by strong associations of imperfect concealment, unidirectional surveillance, and picturesque framing. While the interior household became ever more hermetic with increased urban density, the garden retained a porous boundary between inhabitants and city, like the walls of London itself, which became less and less perfect containers as green and gray space appeared to seek

⁶¹ Joseph Spence, *Anecdotes, observations, and characters, of books and men* [1741] (London: J.R. Smith, 1858), p. 188.

⁶² The interest in individuality is evinced by changes in cartographic representation of London, from the first comprehensive copperplate map of 1559, which employed primarily iconographic representation of dwellings, to Richard Horwood’s ‘Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster’ from the turn of the nineteenth century. For insights into the changes throughout the eighteenth century, see Todd Longstaffe-Gowan’s *The London Town Garden: 1740-1840* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). For instance, Longstaffe-Gowan observes of Horwood’s plan that ‘the painstaking elaboration of gardens strongly reinforces the symbolic preoccupation with the individuality of premises; the city may have been comprised of a quantifiable number of physically recordable premises, but each one encapsulated a complex range of ideas and value, and as such was the site of a unique pattern of social activity played out in a unique domestic topography’ (p. 30).

equilibrium across them over the early modern period.⁶³ In arguing for her concept of ‘exteriority’ or ‘outdooriority’, Mary Thomas Crane points out that the human body was itself not conceived of as a harsh division between exterior and interior: ‘the [early modern] humoral body [has been] so aptly described by [Gail Kern] Paster as “a semipermeable, irrigated container in which humors moved sluggishly” and as “capable of absorbing and being physically altered by the world around it”’.⁶⁴ This description suggests a topological homology between body, garden, and city, which may help to account for the distinct role the garden plays in mediating between the former and the latter. Above all, the urban garden’s rapid emergence both in the city and in popular culture underscores the early modern origins of a heightened visual self-awareness and estrangement – a sense of modern liminality characterized by a tendency to consider the body of the self simultaneously from the interior and, performatively, from the exterior, often at a distance.

⁶³ McLean notes, for instance, that ‘the most dramatic and visible aspect of London’s early modern growth must have been the spread of building over green fields’ (p. 124), while Longstaffe-Gowan calls gardens at the end of the eighteenth century, as represented in Horwood’s map, ‘ubiquitous, carefully delineated and consistent spaces [that] convey a straightforward topographical statement about late eighteenth-century London: small gardens are integral and regular constituent elements of the urban fabric, and, like dwellings, they are representative of homogeneous space’ (p. 29).

⁶⁴ Crane, p. 17.