

Rus in urbe: greening the English town, 1660-1760

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Rus in urbe: greening the English town, 1660-1760

Abstract

This thesis looks at the ideas behind the weaving of greenery into the urban fabric, expressed in the form of parks, gardens and walks. It underlines just how important urban attitudes are and the urban environment has been in shaping our experience and perceptions of the natural world. In turn, the thesis traces the influence of these perceptions on the topographical and cultural landscape of the town. Representations of urban parks, gardens and walks reflect and respond to the intimacy of nature and the town meeting face to face, trading off the different images and associations that these environments summon.

This research draws the two fields of urban history and garden/landscape history together, allowing for a more holistic approach that opens up ground for the ways in which the town and the wider landscape were mutually interactive and influential. Furthermore, this thesis backdates the usual recognition of urban greening as a nineteenth and twentieth century phenomenon in tracing its significance and extent in the period 1660-1760. These sites were not just a feature of the capital, illustrated by focusing on Bath, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Nottingham, and Shrewsbury as case study towns as well as St James's Park and Vauxhall Gardens in London.

Following an introductory chapter situating the subject within contemporary issues and research, the thesis proceeds with chapters on the representation of nature in the town; the design and lay-out of town parks, gardens and walks; the bodies responsible for this lay-out and ordering; the considered importance of urban greening with regards the physical and moral welfare of the town and its residents/visitors; the contesting of access to urban parks and gardens; and gender, sexuality and nature in the town, concluding with an epilogue expanding on the central theme of boundaries within this thesis.

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Abbreviations

BCA	Bath Chamberlains Accounts
BCCP	Bristol Common Council Proceedings
BCM	Bath Council Minutes
BCRO	Bath City Records Office
BH	Bromley House, Nottingham
BRL	Bath Reference Library
BRO	Bristol Record Office
DRO	Devon Record Office
EAB	Exeter Act Book
ML	Museum of London
NCCB	Newcastle Common Council Book
NHB	Nottingham Hall Book
NRO	Nottinghamshire Record Office
PRO	Public Record Office
RO	Record Office
SCA	Shrewsbury Chamberlains Accounts
SCM	Shrewsbury Corporation Minutes
SRRC	Shropshire Records and Research Centre
TWAS	Tyne and Wear Archives Service

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Chapter 1

Introduction:an environmental history

Home ground

The roots of this thesis lie in the suburbs, a situation first absorbed from the platform of a treehouse, listening to the wood pigeons and logging the cars passing, to be superseded in later years by a window on a cul-de-sac, watching neighbours trim their lawns. Hedge End is resolutely middle ground, somewhere in between the flowing hedgerows of the rural surrounds and the stubby verges that lead into Southampton. It is from this standpoint, a compromise between city and countryside, that the outlines of this thesis have evolved, long before all this tapping at a keyboard began. Stripped of all its detail and contemporary garb, the subject is absorbed within the ageless questioning of the relationship negotiated between humankind and the natural world. As an apparent mark of detached historical perspective, it has become standard that, in the text itself, a certain academic coolness masks the personal motivations that fuel the work. But it would feel dishonest not to acknowledge that this is, after all, a very personal exercise, set up to challenge the assumptions and intellectual snobbery invested in exercising a more profound appreciation of and connection with the landscape. This struck me most forcefully one bank holiday on Hampstead Heath. I was living steps away, just beyond the Vale of Health, and the Heath was our garden. In the evenings it seemed as if the city was put back in its place, glimpsed from above between trees and whitewashed town houses. These lanes had the air of a private estate, garden oases, cottages clipping the countryside, and paths so familiar and civilised and ours. In the midst of all this, the bank holiday brought the fair, noise, and indiscriminate crowds. I remember exactly what I thought. It was all a violation of the charms of the place, the candy flossers were

oblivious to the finer points of landscape, and wasn't I turning into the neighbour who came round to complain 'this is getting like the Bronx' when her idyll was infringed by the strains of non-classical music?

The natural environment inspires a particularly potent brand of snobbery. Crediting oneself with an understanding of nature and what is natural is to claim both an innate superiority, and the ability to discern what is unnatural. Far from being neutral and seemingly benign territory, the landscape is hotly contested ground, endlessly appropriated to endorse and illustrate the sanctimony of a particular perspective. So too my vague and apparently innocuous appreciation of urban natural space was far from value-free. How much more to it was there? According to my green-tinted criteria, the quality and appeal of a town or city is measured in large part by its leafiness and airiness, its tree-lined roads, parks, gardens, walks and waterways, and these are standard judgements. The eternal dilemma, the touchpaper of the push to the edges of the town, is the search for the best of both worlds; the convenience of the town coupled with the appeal of the countryside. Is this impetus really the product of the urbanisation and industrialisation of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century onwards, as convention would have us believe? How have attitudes towards the natural world influenced the urban landscape, and coloured our mental maps of the town, and, conversely, how might these experiences of the city have shaped English perceptions of the countryside? As one of the first and most urbanised countries in the world, the evolution of an urban perspective of the natural world, and the interaction between built and natural environment is a key subject, and a massive one. In a broad and majestic sweep, Raymond Williams traces the contours of this relationship in literature in his *The Country and the City*. My concern and approach here is necessarily more specific. It deals with nature within the town, looking at the ideas behind the weaving of greenery into the

urban fabric, what form it took, and the subsequent role that attitudes towards and experiences of natural spaces played in the social and cultural life of the town.

This is a subject given contemporary resonance by the emphasis on the quality of the urban environment and the desire to preserve and develop parks, gardens and green corridors as ameliorative features. In 1995/6 the Heritage Lottery Fund allocated £50 million for the rescue and maintenance of urban parks and gardens, town squares, seaside promenade gardens, memorial gardens and historic cemeteries, in recognition of the fact that 'many councils have given up trying to maintain recreational green space'. These are, for the most part, identified as Victorian creations, fired by Victorian ideals of paternalistic edification of the masses. The chairman of the Heritage Lottery Fund, Lord Rothschild, supported the decision by saying that parks provided great environmental, social and economic benefit at low cost, 'The Victorians understood this, and their arguments are still valid'.¹ As appealing and uncontroversial as this may appear, the ideas behind the ordering of these sites ought to be fully appraised, given the substantial efforts and faith invested in their restoration. Firstly, the Victorian tag affixed to town public parks and gardens perpetuates the impression that the laying out of such sites in the town and the motivations behind them are nineteenth century innovations, and buries the previous history of the site, earlier examples of public parks and gardens, and the forming of the attitudes that inspired them. Secondly, these spaces were ordered according to specific agendas and particular notions of 'public'. To re-adopt them unquestioningly is both to take these on board and to numb responsiveness to current circumstances. Patrick Wright's iconoclastic analysis of the heritage industry, *On Living in an Old Country*, questioning the packaging of the past in 1980's Britain, sets the tone that he re-invokes in response to the news of the parks lottery funding. In a short, but, in relation to this thesis,

¹ *Guardian*, 30 January, 1996, p.8. Also see *Observer*, 21 May, 1995 on the granting of lottery funding. The allocation was made against a backdrop of local authority cutbacks and dissent raised over the deterioration of these public open spaces, see *Guardian*, 1 March, 1995, 29 February, 1996; *Heritage Today*, December, 1994, pp.14-21

germane article, Wright points out that the historic framework deferred to is a limiting one in that the original conception was often excluding or restrictive. 'History can get in the way', he writes.

We owe a lot to the Victorian campaigners who fought hard to save so many of our urban open spaces from development, but they also lumbered us with a problem. Their parks were organised around such an exclusive idea of appropriate usage ... Access of that kind may no longer be the major problem, but the polite visual aesthetics that continue to govern so much thinking about parks may still work against legitimate public interests in the present, discounting any thought of new buildings and distrusting any activity beside quiet contemplation.²

It seems that it is this kind of thinking that lies behind the laughter of the gathered local planners and councillors of Oldham at the suggestion of a pub for Alexandra Park, and the reluctance of Westminster Council to allow music concerts in Hyde Park, although we were granted Pavarotti in the Park, and the Last Night of the Proms beamed in, and a yes to the celebrations of VE day, but a no to the annual Gay Pride, apparently on the grounds that the numbers at the latter event (although fewer) were too many.³ The problem with these public open spaces appears to be that they have become hidebound by notions of appropriate usage informed by historical perceptions of the site. Ken Worpole, one of the authors of a 1995 consultation on urban parks, urges fresh thinking on management and use, 'You look at parks policies and it is all pretty flowers and picnics. Young people are considered a problem, but they are quite attached to parks...They are not doing anything wrong but there are great moral panics'.⁴ But awareness of and dispute over usage is not restricted to the pages of little read reports. In a feature on London's green space considering their use for sport, music, eating and sex, *Time Out* points up the clashes between notions of public access and conduct; 'Even today there's a constant battle between the kids on rollerblades or skateboards and the park authorities,

² *Guardian*, 3 February, 1996

³ *Guardian*, 4 January, 1997

⁴ *Guardian*, 12 May, 1995; *Observer*, 21 May, 1995

who seem to believe that everybody should walk around at a snail's pace holding a parasol. In spite of the miserable sods who try to curtail the ordinary Londoner's use of them, the Royal Parks remain our playgrounds'. London's royal parks have effectively banned roller-blading, except in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, where the money spent on gravelling the walkways was interpreted as an attempt to banish the activity.⁵ Parks and gardens are also recognised and castigated as problem sites in that these are the spaces where the homeless, alcoholics and the 'mad' are inclined to hang out. In Swansea the clearing away of the vegetation in Castle Square and restyling as a paved open area was evidently intended to clear out the undesirables and extend the regularity of the surrounding shopping area.

The whole issue of contested access and appropriation of land has taken on added fervour over the last few years, from the cordons thrown around Stonehenge to keep out the 'hippies' at solstice, to road protests, the 'Land is Ours' settlement on the vacant Guinness land at Wandsworth in London, and the Ramblers Association struggle over rights of way. Right to roam campaigners in Manchester recently vowed to fight plans to curb access in urban areas following proposals for a curfew on urban footpaths.⁶ For me, all of this forms the broader context to a study of the ethics behind urban land use, access to it, and the influence of ideas of natural environment. How have ideas of nature informed the ordering of the urbanscape, and influenced access and recreational activity? To what extent has nature in the town been deployed as a representation and implementation of different cultural perspectives, and green space shaped and regulated to be used in certain ways? Since so much of this debate has been hinged around nature in the town as a nineteenth century innovation and its subsequent development it is worthwhile taking a closer look at this emphasis.

⁵ *Time Out*, 17-24 July, 1996, pp.29, 31

⁶ *Guardian*, 9 September, 1996

Nature in the town from a nineteenth and twentieth century perspective

John Ruskin imagined that the final aim, in constructing the ideal city, was to provide it 'with a belt of beautiful garden and orchard round the walls, so that from any part of the city perfectly fresh air and grass, and sight of far horizon, might be reachable in a few minutes' walk'.⁷ Ruskin's stress on a harmony between civilisation and the natural world fed off the Romanticism of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century that had reacted against rationalism and elevated the realm of imagination and the notion of an organic relationship between humankind and nature. His advocacy of a marrying of built and natural environment was by no means unique (or new). Famously, John Nash's Regent's Park development flanked his newly created royal park with villas and terraces to fashion an area pitched at the well-heeled on the strength of its fresh air, open space and natural scenery.⁸ But, primarily, public parks and gardens are recognised as forming a key part of the Victorian urban vision, both as town planning features to offset the effects of rampant urbanisation and industrialisation, and as part of a social programme to edify the masses through sober and healthy recreation. Sites like the parks at Birkenhead, Crystal Palace and the People's Park in Halifax, designed by Joseph Paxton, are archetypal. The latter, opened in 1857, was underwritten by the northern industrialist Sir Francis Crossley, whose benefaction was dutifully spelt out on his statue in the grounds, 'As a tribute of gratitude and respect to One whose Public Benefactions and Private Virtues Deserve to be remembered'. Attempting to fix notions of virtue and social harmony, the encompassing pavilion bore the inscription, 'The rich and poor meet together-the Lord is

⁷ John Ruskin, 'The Mystery of Life and its Arts', a lecture delivered at the Exhibition Palace, Dublin, 13 May, 1868, in Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies* (London, 1871), p.168

⁸ John Summerson describes Nash's original proposal as 'a garden city for an aristocracy, supported by charming panoramas showing a composition of alluring groves and elegant architecture'. The conception was, he argues, intended as an integrated city development, clustered houses in a park setting but still very much a part of the city, and therefore more urban than suburban, *Georgian London* 1st publ. 1962 (London, 1988), pp.164, 170

the maker of them all'.⁹ As a parallel reaction to the perceived physical and moral hazards of the city, suburban expansion represents an extended manifestation of the desire to fashion a more refined habitat through a closer relationship with the natural environment.

Accounts of the relationship between nature and the town take their cue principally from these developments; the rise of suburbia, park design, and the garden city movement from the nineteenth century on. F. M. L. Thompson's collection, *The Rise of Suburbia*, locates the shift out of town and the identification of virtue in countryside from the later eighteenth century onwards.¹⁰ Chadwick's *The Park and the Town* focuses on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as does Ian Laurie's *Nature in Cities*, examining the crossover between landscape architecture and town planning.¹¹ Michael Laurie's essay within this collection, tracing the development of town parks and gardens in nineteenth century American and British cities, whilst acknowledging London's public parks and gardens in the eighteenth century, regards these as exceptional, concentrating on the development of urban green space as antidote to the character of the nineteenth century industrial city.¹² *The Greening of the Cities*, by David Nicholson Lord, is concerned primarily with the influence of environmentalism and ecology on the late twentieth century, looking to nineteenth and early twentieth antecedents to the greening of towns.¹³ The Garden History Society report, 'Public Prospects. Historic Urban Parks under Threat' was co-produced by the Victorian Society and again addresses nineteenth century examples. Hazel Conway's *People's Parks* details the design and development of Victorian municipal parks, beginning with the findings of the Select Committee on Public

⁹ *Heritage Today*, December 1994, p.16

¹⁰ F. M. L. Thompson, (ed.), *The Rise of Suburbia*, (Leicester, 1982), pp.14-17

¹¹ G. Chadwick, *The Park and the Town: Public Landscape in the nineteenth and twentieth Centuries* (New York, 1966); Ian C. Laurie (ed.), *Nature in Cities* (Chichester, 1979)

¹² Michael Laurie, 'Nature and city planning in the nineteenth century', in Laurie, *Nature in Cities*, pp.46-7, 58-9

¹³ David Nicholson Lord, *The Greening of the Cities* (London, 1987)

Walks reported to Parliament in 1833, and identifying the concern with 'rational', that is, appropriate recreation, for the social and moral improvement of urban dwellers.¹⁴ In Jan Marsh's *Back to the Land* the 'pastoral impulse' is tracked from 1880, as a response to the social and environmental effects of industrialisation and urban growth in the nineteenth century. The workers' villages constructed by Lever at Port Sunlight, near Birkenhead, and by the Cadbury's at Bournville, near Birmingham, are identified as antecedents of the Garden City in aspiring to secure the health and moral integrity of the factory employees through their being 'brought into contact with Nature', to counter a sedentary lifestyle and the attractions of the pub.¹⁵ Ann Bermingham's analysis of the English rustic tradition is centred on the landscape art of the second half of the eighteenth century and is rounded off with a consideration of nature in the town as an imaginative recovery of actual loss from the nineteenth century. Bermingham discusses the Victorian suburbs as a compromise, founded on the middle ground between urban congestion and rural isolation and answering William Hazlitt's call 'for an enlightened rusticity, admitting urban manners, amusements, and values and located, if anywhere, in the shuttle between city and country'. The suggestion is that nature was brought into the city at this time and incorporated into town planning projects using rural or suburban models.¹⁶ The point of this cursory review is not to detract from the value of these works, but rather to situate this study within the body of literature on nature in the town, highlighting where the emphasis has fallen and indicating the importance and scope for research into the influence of nature on the built environment prior to these nineteenth century manifestations.

¹⁴ Hazel Conway, *People's Parks: the development and design of Victorian Parks* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.2-3

¹⁵ Jan Marsh, *Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England, from 1880-1914* (London, 1982), pp.220-223

¹⁶ Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology. The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (Berkely, Los Angeles & London, 1986), pp.164-5, 172

In particular, two key figures are alighted on in the history of the greening of the town; Ebenezer Howard and Frederick Law Olmsted. Olmsted is the principal figure associated with the urban parks movement in America, exemplified by his involvement in the creation of New York's Central Park. Fired in part by the English model of urban greening following a visit in 1850 that saw him enthusing over Paxton's People's Garden at Birkenhead, and working alongside the English designer Calvert Vaux, Olmsted submitted a proposal for a 'Greensward' to the New York authorities based on the integration of parkland and city. Olmsted's work was crafted around concern for the spiritual well-being of the urban population. This environment engineered a dilemma;

What accommodations for recreation can we provide which shall be so agreeable and so accessible as to be efficiently attractive to the great body of citizens, and which, while giving decided gratification, shall also cause those who resort to them for pleasure to subject themselves, for the time being, to conditions strongly counteractive to the special enervating conditions of the town?

Olmsted believed that the answer lay in the administrations of nature. Parks would 'have an educative effect...a manifestly civilizing effect'. In his estimation promenades had a key role to play in humanizing the urban environment, 'the more I have seen of them, the more highly have I been led to estimate their value as means of counteracting the evils of town life'.¹⁷

Ebenezer Howard had himself spent some time in America, contributing to the range of contemporary influences that subsequently informed his proposals.¹⁸ In *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* of 1898, revised and reprinted as *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* in 1902, Howard set out his principles for the creation of an environment that welded town and country and reaped the benefits of both:

¹⁷ S. B. Sutton (ed.), *Civilizing American Cities. A Selection of Frederick Law Olmsted's Writings on City Landscapes* (Mass., 1971), pp.2-11, 72-3, 13, 75

¹⁸ See Frederick A. Aaelen, 'English Origins', in Stephen Ward (ed.), *The Garden City: Past, Present and Future* (Cambridge, 1992), pp.28-51 for the social and urban background and nineteenth century influences on Howard

There are in reality not only, as is so constantly assumed, two alternatives-town life and country life-but a third alternative, in which all the advantages of the most energetic and active town life, with all the beauty and delight of the country, may be secured in perfect combination...Human society and the beauty of nature are meant to be enjoyed together...Town and Country *must be married*, and out of this joyous union will spring a new hope, a new life, a new civilisation.

The garden city was envisaged as urban fabric set around central parkland and encircled by open countryside. This was to be a model social community as well, derived from the environment, where art and science would supplement nature to 'lead society on to a far higher destiny than it has ever yet ventured to hope for'.¹⁹ From 1903 the Garden Cities Association, founded by Howard, set about translating this design on the ground in the construction of Letchworth, followed by Welwyn in 1920. Integral to this project was the idea of a green belt of open land encircling London, the kind of utopian idealism expressed by Ruskin, limiting the further spread of the capital, giving its citizens access to green space, and ensuring the separate identity of the outlying new towns. This five to ten mile wide band was intended to be protected from building development, although it has been substantially compromised by inexorable suburban expansion. The new town developments of the post second world war era continued to be influenced by this model.²⁰

Conceptions of a garden city, wedding built and natural environment, are evidently strong and persistent in nineteenth and twentieth century urban theory and town planning. But this does not mean that the ideal of a structured harmony between town and nature, and the taste for and ordering of nature in the town are innovations born of the increasingly industrialised and urbanised post eighteenth-century landscape. In the late seventeenth and eighteenth century the desirability of incorporating nature within the town, routinely articulated as 'rus in urbe', was commonly expressed. John Evelyn asked, 'is there a more

¹⁹ Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* 1st publ. 1898 as *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (Eastbourne, 1985), pp.8-9, 11, 91-92

²⁰ Roy Porter, *London: A Social History*, (London, 1994), pp.319-20

ravishing, or delightful object then to behold some intire streets, and whole Towns planted with these Trees, in even lines before their doors, so as they seem like Cities in a Wood?'.²¹ John Worlidge repeated the sentiment in his guide to husbandry later in the decade, delighting in 'Towns planted with Trees in even lines before their doors, which skreen their habitations from the Winde and Sun, which they may sit or walk under'.²² This is a theme consistently revisited in the eighteenth century. John Macky found Epsom to be so interwoven with greenery that it appeared 'a continued Grove' and he quotes approvingly from another author lyricising over how all this rendered the town 'one of the loveliest Prospects imaginable, to view in the Vale below such an agreeable Mixture of Trees and Buildings, that the Stranger is at a loss to know...whether it be a Town in a Wood, or a Wood in a Town'.²³ Daniel Defoe was, likewise, taken with the rural air of the town, 'the pleasures of nature are so many round the town, the shady trees so every where planted, and now generally well grown, that it makes Epsom like a great park fill'd with little groves, lodges and retreats', concurring that 'the town, at a distance, looks like a great wood full of houses'.²⁴ But enthusiasm for and exploitation of natural setting was not only evident in small towns. A chronicler of 1726 observed of St James's Park that 'Its great Beauty consists in bringing (as it were) the Country into the City'.²⁵ Playing on its situation on the edge of the city, but overlooking St James's Park and open countryside, one of the inscriptions on the frieze of Buckingham House read 'Rus in Urbe'. In a work of 1728 the architect and garden writer Batty Langley thought that the capital would benefit from a programme of tree-planting, 'then might we view a city in a wood', whilst some forty years later the social reformer Jonas Hanway promoted the 'idea

²¹ John Evelyn, *Sylva, or A Discourse of Forest-Trees, and the Propagation of Timber in His Majesties Dominions* (London, 1664), p.31

²² [John Worlidge], *Systema Agriculturae, being the mystery of husbandry discovered* 1st. publ. 1669, 2nd. edn. (London, 1675), Preface

²³ John Macky, *A Journey Through England, in Familiar Letters*, 2 vols. (London, 1714-1722), vol.I, pp.102, 109

²⁴ Daniel Defoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* 1724-26, ed. G.D.H. Cole & D. Browning, 2 vols. (London, 1962), vol.I, p.162

²⁵ Béat Louis de Murault, *Letters Describing the Character and Customs of the English and French Nations* (London, 1726), p.77

of a *rural city*'.²⁶ By 1773 William Mason was putting a different spin on the concept of marrying town and country, postulating that the perfect garden 'must contain within itself all the amusements of a great city; that "urbs in rure", not "Rus in Urbe", is the thing, which an improver of true taste ought to aim at'.²⁷ Either way, the qualities of the town were represented as enhanced by and an enhancement to natural environment, if harmony could be achieved between them.

Environmental history

The greening of the town, as an academic subject, is caught between disciplines that have perpetuated the separate identities of the built and natural environments. Green space is usually visualised out of an urban context. Should the focus be on urban studies or rural studies, urban history or garden history? Any overlap between these languishes in an unclassified limbo. Urban historians have generally assumed a piecemeal approach that has parks, gardens and walks, often noted but rarely dwelt on, usually grouped as social arenas along with assemblies, theatres and so on. Garden history has generally concentrated on country estates, and addresses town gardens (mostly private examples) as an aside.²⁸ Geographers have, on the whole, focused on the wider landscape, or on the

²⁶ Batty Langley, *A Sure Method of Improving Estates by Plantations* (1728) p.143; Jonas Hanway, *Letters on the Importance of the Rising Generation* (1767) ii. pp130-1; quoted in Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World; Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* 1st publ. 1983, (Harmondsworth, 1987), pp.206, 374

²⁷ William Mason, *Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers* (London, 1773), p.4

²⁸ There are a few exceptions relevant to this period: Mark Mcdayter, 'Poetic gardens and political myths: the renewal of St James's Park in the Restoration', *Journal of Garden History*, XV, no.3, (July-Sept.,1995), pp.135-148; Robert Todd Longstaffe Gowan, 'The London Town Garden 1700-1830. The Experience of Nature in the Eighteenth Century City', (unpubl. PhD., University of London, UCL., 1989), and 'Proposal for a Georgian Town Garden in Gower Street: The Francis Douce Garden', *Garden History* XV, no.2, (Autumn, 1987), pp.136-144; Neil Burton, 'Georgian Town Gardens', *Traditional Homes*, (October 1987), pp.129-133; Mark Girouard on walks in the seventeenth and eighteenth century town in *The English Town* (New Haven & London, 1990), pp.145-154; Peter Borsay, 'The Rise of the Promenade: The Social and Cultural Use of Space in the English Provincial Town, c.1660-1800', *British Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, IX, (1986), pp.125-140, and in *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989), pp.162-172

built landscape, or on the integration of nature in the town in a later period.²⁹ As a consequence this research has felt much like jumping backwards and forwards between parallel platforms, and being mindful of the gap.

In the light of this, the relatively new field of environmental history appears to offer an alternative site in which to pitch my camp. Linda Merricks finds that this is a discipline sparsely populated by historians, and making greater strides in America than Britain in her review of the field. Expansively defined as 'the role and place of nature in human life', the approach has, unsurprisingly, been broad, with Merrick noting that few works have concentrated on the specifics of interaction between humankind and natural environment at particular times and places. Significantly, Merrick points out that consideration of 'the role of the 'natural' within history does not necessarily entail rural history', and flags urban greening in the form of parks and gardens as illustration of this.³⁰ Vito Fumagalli provides rich evidence of the potential here in *Landscapes of Fear*. Focusing on the ambiguous imagery that is used to characterise the built and natural environment, Fumagalli tracks the shaping of the natural world and its influence on and interaction with pre-modern urban society.³¹ This backdates many of the themes raised in Keith Thomas's *Man and the Natural World* and Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature* in terms of the objectification and manipulation of nature.³² Roy Porter's essay on concepts of the globe follows a similar tack in dealing with the enlightened eighteenth-century world view of the environment and its concomitant exploitation based around scientific understanding.³³ The theme of colonization as influenced by and

²⁹ Denis Cosgrove does address the issue of nature in the Georgian city in *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (London/Sydney, 1984), pp.215-222

³⁰ Linda Merricks, 'Environmental History', *Rural History*, VII, 1, (1996), pp.97-107

³¹ Vito Fumagalli, *Landscapes of Fear. Perceptions of Nature and the City in the Middle Ages* trans. Shayne Mitchell (Cambridge, 1994)

³² Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*; Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature. Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* 1st publ. 1980, (New York, 1990)

³³ Roy Porter, 'The terraqueous globe' in George Rousseau & Roy Porter (eds.), *The Ferment of Knowledge. Studies in the Historiography of Eighteenth Century Science* (Cambridge, 1980), pp.285-324

impacting on perceptions of the natural world, raised by Porter, is taken further by Richard Grove in his work, *Green Imperialism*. Within this, Grove identifies the garden as a scale structure of human interaction with nature, defining 'modes of perceiving, assessing and classifying the world'.³⁴ Clarence Glacken carries through a monumental work in *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, covering the interactions of nature and culture from the ancients to the end of the eighteenth century, concentrating on the perception of the natural world as sculpted for human consumption and in turn improvable by human intervention. Of other avowedly environmental histories, most remain the work of geographers. I. G. Simmons takes a broad sweep in *Changing the Face of the Earth and Environmental History* but, as Merrick points out, hardly peoples his landscapes.³⁵ By way of illustration of the work undertaken in this field on the American side, Thomas Detwyler and Melvin Marcus's edited volume *Urbanization and Environment*, seeks to demonstrate the impact of natural environment on city, and vice versa in the twentieth century. They justify focusing on the physical interaction between city and nature because the city is the hub of human impact on nature and 'represents the quintessence of man's capacity to inaugurate and control changes in his habitat'.³⁶ On these grounds, and against the backdrop of this body of literature, the validity of studying the perception and ordering of nature within the English town is given an added boost. If the negotiation between city and natural environment is a fundamental expression of the human role within and relating to the wider world, it is surely important to look at urban configurations of nature in one of the first and most urbanised nations in the world.

³⁴ Richard H Grove, *Green Imperialism. Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism* (Cambridge, 1995), p.13

³⁵ Clarence Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore. Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley, L.A./London, 1967); I.G. Simmons, *Changing the Face of the Earth. Culture, Environment, History* (Oxford, 1989); I.G. Simmons, *Environmental History* (Oxford, 1993). Also see John Rennie Short, *Imagined Country: Environment, Culture and Society* (London, 1991) and David Arnold, *The Problem of Nature* (Oxford, 1996)

³⁶ Thomas R Detwyler & Melvin G Marcus (eds), *Urbanization and Environment. The Physical Geography of the City* (Belmont, California, 1972), pp.vii, 3

A chronology

The above discussion has already set out pointers as to why the temporal parameters of this study have been set at 1660-1760. Although some excellent work has been done on attitudes towards the natural world in the pre-modern period, research into nature in the town has tended to focus on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and bolster the impression that the aestheticising of the natural world and conscious greening of the city only evolved in response to nineteenth century urbanisation and industrialisation. A number of factors combine in the post-Restoration era to make this a significant period in terms of the relationship between urban and natural environment. These include the shaping of attitudes towards civilisation and the natural world that formed a part of what has been collectively identified as the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment, the accelerating shift to a capitalist economy and the increasing enclosure of the countryside, and a period of relative political stability after the upheavals of the civil war and interregnum feeding into intensifying urban growth and cultural vitality that fuelled a sense of growing distinction between town and country.

The climate of scientific inquiry associated with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was an important contributory factor in generating an optimistic faith in humankind's ability to modify and improve on the environment, although it did not preclude God from the picture. The work of Bacon, Harvey, Newton and the scientists of the Royal Society, among numerous others, furthered the shift in perception of the natural world from one of chaos and threat to one of order, based on reason and pragmatic enquiry. This confidence is a key tenet in enlightened thought. John Locke's highly influential philosophy ran that ideas were formed through experience, through the impression made by environment, rather than being innate. The inference to be drawn from this was that changes to the environment might bring about different responses, and therefore that improvements in

habitat had the potential to effect a moral improvement in society. This was compounded by the conviction that nature was for the use and delight of man, as evinced in works like Pluche's *La Spectacle de la Nature* of the first half of the eighteenth century.³⁷ This was also a period of reverential regard for the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome combined with a confidence that those glories might be built upon in a new era of achievement. Manifestations of this include the stress on an Augustan sense of public office and virtue, the notion of contemplative retreat and ennoblement and the incorporation of classical motifs in garden design. Representations of nature within the town were able to play on a fusion of these elements, of enlightened improvement, by embodying the qualities of public virtue and urban sociability, and of pastoral order, 'natural' morality and contemplative space.

As important as the intellectual climate in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was in setting the ground for the ordering of nature within the English town, and I will come back to ideas of nature in the period, the economic picture is not one to overlook, both on the conceptual level of a broad shift in economic structure, and in terms of the impact on the shaping of the landscape and urban growth. Raymond Williams stresses the impact on ideas of country and city of the tensions involved in the transition to a commercialised, capitalist economy borne out by the Industrial Revolution. Denis Cosgrove also tracks this shift towards capitalist modes of production in relation to the representation and ordering of the landscape, emphasising the growing importance of urban centres. The feudal model of manor and parish was gradually replaced, he writes, by 'the integrated and structured space economy of the nation state with its' urban hierarchy and specialised agricultural and industrial regions'. In *Symbolic Landscape* Cosgrove undertakes a review of the meaning of land and nature under feudalism and in turn capitalism that recognises the city as the key market place, with land and agriculture

³⁷ Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment* 1st publ. 1968, (London, 1987), pp.36-39, 81

as dependent industries.³⁸ Simon Pugh also situates the broad significance of this shift urbanwards within his analysis of attitudes towards town and country, writing that, from the mid-eighteenth century, 'landscape, its design and its mode of representation, were part of the ideological setting for the passage from rural to metropolitan capitalism'.³⁹ In fact a good deal of work has been done to demonstrate that the cultural distinction drawn between town and country does not mean that they formed exclusive economic entities, but rather that there were significant interconnections.⁴⁰ Anthony Wrigley's work on the interaction between urbanisation and agricultural developments in early modern England fits within this as an assessment of the importance and influence of rising agricultural productivity on urban expansion, and in turn the city on wider economic growth.⁴¹ Land enclosures became an increasingly prominent demonstration of the effect of these economic developments on the ground. In practical terms, the enclosure movement involved the appropriation of land and its concentration into fewer hands for the sake of increased productivity, a process that gathered significant pace after the Restoration and its most substantial momentum after becoming a parliamentary procedure from the mid eighteenth century.⁴² This process triggered what Ann Bermingham refers to as 'a familiar pattern of actual loss and imaginative recovery. Precisely when the countryside—or at least large portions of it—was becoming unrecognizable, and dramatically marked by historical change, it was offered as the image of the homely, the stable, the ahistorical'.⁴³ Williams discusses the current of criticism of the social consequences of enclosure in the

³⁸ Cosgrove, *Social Formation*, pp.4, 41-47

³⁹ Simon Pugh, 'Stepping out into the open', in Simon Pugh (ed), *Reading Landscape: Country, City, Capital* (Manchester, 1990), p.1

⁴⁰ Philip Abrams, 'Introduction', in Philip Abrams and E. A. Wrigley (eds), *Towns in Societies-Essays in Economic History and Historical Sociology* (Cambridge, 1978), pp.2-5

⁴¹ E. Anthony Wrigley, 'A simple model of London's importance in changing English society and economy, 1650-1750', in Abrams and Wrigley, *Towns in Societies*, pp.215-243; E Anthony Wrigley, 'Urban growth and agricultural change: England and the continent in the early modern period', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XV, no.4 (1985), reprinted in Peter Borsay, (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century Town. A Reader in English Urban History, 1688-1820* (London/New York, 1990), pp.39-82

⁴² Enclosure was not an eighteenth century phenomenon, but had been going on for centuries. See W G Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* 1st publ. 1955, (London, 1985), pp.141-154, 177-195; Williams, *Country and City*, pp.96-97

⁴³ Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, p.9

late eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, building around it an intensifying mythology of lost rural innocence and liberty.⁴⁴ It is important that these economic developments and their social impact are borne in mind in assessing both the expressed desire to harmonise town and country and the ordering of open spaces within and around the town.

Urbanisation

Whilst enclosure and agricultural improvement continued to change the face of the countryside, the urban fabric was undergoing a transformation too. Urbanisation is commonly defined as de-ruralisation, to 'destroy the rural quality of' an environment.⁴⁵ The process is perceived as a rift, a growing distinction between built and natural environment. Clearly the scale of urban growth over the period forms the fundamental backdrop to the subject of this thesis, transforming the size, shape and perception of towns and in turn their relationship with the non-urban environment. Between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries England became one of the first and most urbanised countries in the world, alongside the Netherlands, with the urban population growing faster than the overall population. The pioneering statistician Gregory King thought that perhaps 25% of the population lived in towns in the 1690's. Setting the definition of a town at 5000, Wrigley has computed the urban population at 13.5% for c.1670, 17% for c.1700 and 27.5% by 1801.⁴⁶ But this is a statistic dependent on what is defined as an urban centre. Penelope Corfield works on the basis of any concentration of more than 2500 people (Peter Clark's small towns project is willing to use a lower concentration than this) and so finds 30-31% of the English population living in towns by

⁴⁴ Williams, *Country and City*, pp.99-101

⁴⁵ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 8th edn. (Oxford, 1990), p.1351

⁴⁶ Gregory King, *Natural and Political Observations upon the State and Condition of England* (1696); Wrigley, 'Urban growth and agricultural change', in Borsay, *Eighteenth Century Town*, p.45

1800, up on 18.7% at the beginning of the century.⁴⁷ This is a pattern of growth that affects provincial towns as well as the capital. Before about 1670 growth had been heavily concentrated on London, with a leap from 200 000 to 475 000 (5% to 9.5% of the urban population of the country) between c.1600 and c.1670, compared with a 0.75% increase in provincial towns' share of the urban population over the same period, according to Wrigley's formulation. After this period, London continued to grow, retaining a steady 11% of the total national population throughout the eighteenth century, but its relative growth rate was eclipsed by the expansion in the number and size of provincial towns.⁴⁸ In 1700 there were 68 towns, using the 2 500 and above benchmark, rising to 104 in 1750 and 188 by 1801.⁴⁹ This was not uniform growth, but focused primarily on larger provincial centres. Whereas only two centres (besides London) contained 20 000 people or more in 1700, fifteen provincial towns boasted such levels by 1801.⁵⁰ Some towns grew very rapidly, like Bath, Manchester and Newcastle, whilst others, including previous leaders in urban ranking such as York and Exeter, slipped back in terms of their share of the urban population as a whole.

The overriding implication of these demographic developments is that the town was playing a much more significant role in English society as a whole, and within individual lives. Many more people were experiencing and being influenced by urban life than ever before, either in passing or as inhabitants, born and bred or migratory.⁵¹ Wrigley notes the estimation that as many as one sixth of the adult English population spent some time

⁴⁷ Penelope Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns, 1700-1800* (Oxford, 1982), pp.6, 9; See Peter Clark, 'Small Towns in England, 1550-1850: national and regional population trends', in Peter Clark (ed.) *Small Towns in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.90-120

⁴⁸ Wrigley, 'Urban Growth', pp.45, 47

⁴⁹ Corfield, *Impact of English Towns*, p.8

⁵⁰ Peter Clark, 'Introduction', in Peter Clark (ed.) *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns, 1600-1800* (London, 1984), p.13

⁵¹ Migration was a very important factor in urban growth, characterised as a net flow from countryside to town. David Souden focuses on late seventeenth century provincial and market towns and finds between one half and two thirds of urban residents to be migrant, David Souden, 'Migrants and population structure' in Clark, *Transformation of English Provincial Towns*, pp.139, 151

in London during the course of their lives.⁵² But population size is by no means the only useful criterion in defining towns and the scale of their influence. To contemporaries, the urban environment was certainly distinctive, whether good or bad.⁵³ The ambiguous representation of town and country life is considered in Chapter 2. To grasp the growing importance of towns in the post Restoration cultural landscape demands qualitative as well as quantitative measures. Corfield points out that although the urban population remained in the minority throughout the eighteenth century, and the landowning classes retained their authority, the towns were becoming an increasingly prominent force within society. In *The English Urban Renaissance* Peter Borsay sets out the transformation of the urban landscape and a surge in the vitality of urban culture between 1660 and 1770. The spread of the town on the ground was both responsive to natural surrounds, as new developments sprang up along the urban periphery taking advantage of open prospect and clearer air, and had an important bearing on open space assuming a higher premium as land was claimed for building. Urban improvements were intended to civilize the streets, with the clearing away of the blood and muck associated with the animal markets. Paving, lighting, street widening, sanitation and drainage served to underline the prosperity and cultural sophistication of the built environment.⁵⁴ Increasingly, fashion and leisure took its cue from and became centred in the town as an alternative to the traditional focal point of country house and estate, catering to both the landed gentry and aristocracy as visitors and part time residents, and the thriving urban middling and professional ranks. J. H. Plumb sees the commercialisation of leisure in the eighteenth century as the product of growing affluence and sign of a nascent consumerist society. Although he concentrates on printing in the form of newspapers and the book trade, gardening is noted as affected by this commercialisation through the proliferation of

⁵² Wrigley, 'Simple model of London's importance', reprinted in Abrams & Wrigley, *Towns in Societies*, pp.220-1

⁵³ Corfield, *Impact of English Towns*, pp.2-3

⁵⁴ See E. L. Jones & M. E. Falkus, 'Urban Improvement and the English Economy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in Borsay (ed.), *Eighteenth Century Town*, pp.116-158

seedsmen, nurseries, and printed material servicing the demand.⁵⁵ The emergence of commercial gardens charging entry and/or selling provisions can be added to this picture, as a part of the styling and parcelling of nature in the town for leisured consumption. Martin Daunton recognises the town as an expansive force in creating and feeding this leisured demand and setting up patterns of consumption.⁵⁶ The identification of the town with consumerism served to intensify the distinction between built and natural environment. On the positive side, the provisions for pleasure rendered the town superior by comparison with the tedium and crudeness of the country. On the other hand, creeping consumerism fuelled the impression that the cities, notably self confident and self-serving leisure resorts like Bath and Tunbridge Wells, and the capital, were a parasitical drain on resources and mired in luxury and excess, compared with the honest labour and simplicity of the countryside. Stemming from this, the town, psychologically divorced from and increasingly oblivious to the realities of country life and the hard agricultural labour that sustained it, advanced the evolution of a sanitised and commodified notion of rurality.

Covering the ground- five case study towns

The identifying of an 'urban' consciousness and identity, whilst central to this thesis, is potentially problematic in that it suggests a generic urban experience regardless of town size, function and make-up. This is addressed in part by the stress on common urban qualities and contemporary recognition of an urban as opposed to rural physical and cultural environment.⁵⁷ But it has also been tackled by a differentiating of urban

⁵⁵ J. H. Plumb, 'The commercialisation of leisure in eighteenth century England', in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, J. H. Plumb (eds.), *The Birth of a Consumer Society. The Commercialisation of Eighteenth Century England* (London, 1982), pp.3, 10

⁵⁶ Martin Daunton, 'Towns and Economic Growth in Eighteenth Century England', in Abrams & Wrigley, *Towns in Society*, pp.254-5

⁵⁷ See Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp.313-314

settlements according to predominant characteristics and economic function. Corfield employs the categories of market and manufacturing towns, ports and dockyard towns, spas and resorts, and capital. Alternatively, a tier system is deployed, consisting of county or market town, regional centre, provincial capital, and capital.⁵⁸ It is often difficult to talk in terms of economic specialisation since many towns display multiple economic activity. Angus McInnes finds the labelling of spa towns as synonymous with leisured interest rather too narrow, and presents Shrewsbury as example of leisure town by virtue of its luxury trades, information services, recreational facilities and leisured gentry presence.⁵⁹ Borsay argues for a more wide ranging expansion of urban located luxury and recreation. The development of parks, gardens and walks in all kinds of towns across the country supports a broader expansion of leisure facilities than just within those deemed leisure towns, although this does not deny centres like Bath and Tunbridge Wells their special status as resorts. A further factor in considering the pattern of English urban growth is geographical spread. In the century after the Restoration urban expansion in the North and Midlands represented a shift away from the south as seat of the largest towns that was compounded by the sheer rate of growth of cities like Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield and Liverpool in the late eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. I have endeavoured to take these factors into account in my selection of five case study towns, to provide an even reflection of urban greening.

The first of these is Bath, England's premier spa resort. Given that its growth and reputation was so closely bound up with health and leisure, making extensive reference to green surrounds, good air and water and outdoor walks, at the same time as embodying urban civility and refinement, Bath provides a particularly rich example of the interaction between built and natural environment. Rapidly consolidating its reputation as mecca of

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.3

⁵⁹ Angus McInnes, *The English Town, 1660-1760* (London, 1980), pp.19-21; Angus McInnes, 'The Emergence of a Leisure Town: Shrewsbury 1660-1760', *Past and Present*, no.120 (August, 1988), pp.53-87

the fashionable, Bath vaulted up the urban ranking from a small cluster of 1 500 people in the 1660's to some 6 000 by the 1750's, and perhaps as high as 10 000 by the 1760's. Certainly by the beginning of the nineteenth century the resident total had reached something like 33 000.⁶⁰ And yet these figures alone do not convey the scale of the town, swelled by thousands of visitors each season, and crucial to the town's economy. The architect John Wood reckoned that the city could accommodate 12 000 visitors per season by 1749.⁶¹ The 'season' itself shifted during the course of the century. Up until the late seventeenth century visitors congregated in spring and autumn, replaced for a time by a single summer season before reverting back to the spring/autumn pattern after the 1720's. However, by the second half of the eighteenth century, and reflecting in part the development of year round recreational facilities, coinciding one's visit with the season became less important.⁶² During this period, as a result of the rate of growth and popularity, the physical fabric of the town changed considerably, from a compact town of narrow streets encircled by walls to one expanding out of its hollow and up the surrounding hills in the form of square, circus and crescent. The provisions made for health and pleasure seekers extended beyond the traditional focus of the baths to encompass promenades within and on the outskirts of the town, gardens, bowling greens, assembly rooms, a theatre, shops, libraries and coffee houses.

Newcastle upon Tyne has been selected as case study in order to look at the perception and ordering of nature in the town in quite a different context. Newcastle was one of the largest and most prosperous towns in the second half of the seventeenth century, fourth after Norwich, York and Bristol with a population of around 16 000 according to the Hearth tax returns of 1663-5. It sustained this prominence among the fast growing

⁶⁰ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p.31; Trevor Fawcett and Stephen Bird, *Bath. History and Guide* (Stroud, 1994), p.44; Wrigley, 'Urban growth and agricultural change', p.42

⁶¹ John Wood, *An Essay Towards a Description of Bath*, 1742-4, 2nd. edn., 1749, reissued 1765, repr. (Bath, 1969), p.351

⁶² Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp.141-2

northern industrial centres of the eighteenth century, the population swelling to just under 30 000 by the 1740's.⁶³ These levels of growth and prosperity were built around the coal, glass and iron industries, the shipping and trade that thronged the port, and its status as a county town. As a result of this economic activity, a migratory intake and the attraction of visitors to this regional centre, Newcastle evolved as an important marketing and consumer centre. The physical and social fabric of the town reflects these growth patterns. Up until the end of the seventeenth century building development was, for the most part, concentrated within the walls, encroaching on open space, although the town still retained Carliol Croft, the Nunns, and the grounds around Newe House on Pilgrim Street. During the course of the eighteenth century the concentration of wealthy merchants, industrialists and urban professionals shifted from the Close, Side and Sandhill areas close by the river up town and more towards the periphery to areas like Westgate Street, and the top of Pilgrim Street.⁶⁴ In spite of the pressure on land use due to Newcastle's rate of expansion, green space remained a marked factor in residential desirability, and the organisation of leisure.

Moving back down country, Nottingham was one of the Midlands' sizeable county capitals, its expansion fuelled by and compounding its status as an important regional marketing and trading centre with a wealthy mercantile class and healthy textile industry. Again, this encouraged both a urban based middling and professional sector and an influx of migrant workers and country gentlemen engaged in county administration and drawn by the social facilities.⁶⁵ Population growth was steady if not remarkable, although it picked up from the 1740's. Standing at around 4 000 in the 1670's, c.6 500 at the end of

⁶³ Joyce Ellis, 'A dynamic society: social relations in Newcastle upon Tyne, 1660-1760', in Clark, *Transformation of English Provincial Towns*, p.194; Wrigley puts the total at around 12 000 in the 1670's, 16 000 by 1700, and 29 000 by mid century, making Newcastle the third largest provincial town during the first half of the eighteenth century, 'Urban growth', p.42

⁶⁴ M. Barke & R. J. Buswell (eds.), *Newcastle's Changing Map* (Newcastle, 1992), pp.19-26

⁶⁵ Adrian Henstock, 'The changing fabric of the town, 1550-1750', in John Beckett (ed.), *A Centenary History of Nottingham* (Manchester, 1997), pp.114-5, 126-7

the century, and 10 300 by 1740, the total increased to nearly 18 000 by 1779, and 29 000 by 1801.⁶⁶ Much of the town's spatial development occurred within the existing framework, infill that created a notoriously overcrowded centre to contrast with the relatively spacious and elegant environment depicted and remarked upon by commentators in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Celia Fiennes, travelling the country on horseback and penning a kind of gazeteer of town and countryside, thought it 'the neatest town I have seen' and as her favourite it became a yardstick by which she measured the worth of others.⁶⁷ It was similarly 'one of the most pleasant and beautiful towns in England' in Daniel Defoe's estimation.⁶⁸ For much of the period Nottingham's cultural life and leisure provision was not as rich as its prosperity and size might suggest, heightening the emphasis placed on the towns 'natural' advantages and outdoor recreational facilities.

Although smaller than Nottingham, Shrewsbury developed a lively luxury and leisure market amongst its services as county town of Shropshire, capitalising on the dearth of large towns (besides Chester) in the vicinity. With a population of a little under 7 000 in 1660, c.7 500 by the end of the seventeenth century, and just nudging past 8 000 by 1750, Shrewsbury was a middle ranking town that did not experience marked growth until the latter half of the eighteenth century (nearly 15 000 by 1801).⁶⁹ But in this respect it provides an example of the processes of qualitative urbanization. Alongside a thriving mercantile and urban professional base, the round of Quarter Sessions and Assizes encouraged gentrified seasons marked by horse races, assemblies and increased activity on the walks. Defoe characterised it as a large settlement 'full of gentry and yet full of

⁶⁶ See J.D. Chambers, 'Population change in a provincial town: Nottingham 1700-1800', in D.V. Glass & D.E.C. Eversley (eds.), *Population History* (London, 1965), pp.334-53; John Beckett, *The Book of Nottingham* (Buckingham, 1990), p.31; Wrigley, 'Urban growth', p.42

⁶⁷ Celia Fiennes, *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* ed. Christopher Morris, 1st publ. 1947 (London, 1984), p.86

⁶⁸ Defoe, *Tour*, vol.II, p.142

⁶⁹ Wrigley, 'Urban growth', p.42; Corfield, *Impact of English Towns*, pp.51, 183; McInnes, 'Emergence of a Leisure Town', p.54

trade too'.⁷⁰ Topographically, the expansion of the town was hemmed in by the walls and the horseshoe loop of the River Severn, so that development followed access routes across the river by the English and Welsh bridges, and was funnelled through the neck of land by the castle. The area between the walls and the river remained largely open ground in the form of gardens and most prominently the Quarry. The most fashionable parts of the town tended to follow the line of the walls, in areas like Belmont, Claremont and Dogpole.

For my last case study I return to the capital. London would be a difficult centre to exclude, given its status at the apex of the urban hierarchy, and the influence it exerted on the development and perception of provincial towns, as well as the richness of source material available. London was on quite a different scale to any other town in the country, and ranked as the largest city in western Europe throughout the eighteenth century. At the time of the Restoration its population stood at 400 000. By 1700 this had grown to 575 000, and 675 000 by 1750, accounting for 11% of the total English population. This rate of growth was heavily dependent on an incoming flow of migrants, especially significant in respect of the high levels of mortality in the capital.⁷¹

Economically, it is impossible to pigeon hole the city. London retained its position as focal point of the country's trade and commerce, and functioned as the key national port, although the provincial towns steadily ate away at this dominance during the eighteenth century. As a consumer centre it was unsurpassed, and finance and law became increasingly important professions. Alongside the service industries, London's manufacturing and industry flourished in such fields as shipbuilding, silk-weaving, brewing and crafts in spite of developing regional specialization that saw some manufacture shift out of the capital. But the importance of London extended well beyond

⁷⁰ Defoe, *Tour*, vol.II, p.75

⁷¹ Corfield, *Impact of English Towns*, pp.10, 7-8, 68

its' economic function. The capital served as the national hub of social, cultural and political activity.⁷² The rise of resorts like Bath did not distract from London's position at the heart of polite society, nor compete with its range of leisure facilities. As a case study I focus not so much on the metropolis as a whole but on its interaction with and the design and ordering of two of its principal green spaces, St James's Park and the Spring Gardens at Vauxhall. Both capitalised on a peripheral location that made a virtue of combining urban and natural environment.

The identification and specific forms of the parks, gardens and walks in each of these case studies is taken up in greater detail in chapter 3, but at this stage the definitions of 'greening', 'nature' and 'natural environment' deployed under the umbrella of 'rus in urbe' require some clarification.

Versions of nature

What does 'greening the English town' actually mean? The readings that emerge during the course of this study draw upon a multi-layered interpretation of 'nature' in the town. For the most part the greening of the town is conceived in environmental terms, constructed around the representation and ordering of nature in the form of parks, gardens and walks within and around the urban environment. But this in turn summons broader associations of countryside and the natural world. Attitudes towards town parks and gardens are framed within a multiplicity of understandings of nature. These spaces act as mediums for the expression of these ideas, bringing nature, in all its manifestations, into dialogue with the town. Urban green space conjures and plays with images of landscape, and its offshoots of property and power; of physical well-being that defers to an ameliorative natural environment; of moral and intellectual distinction that is vested in

⁷² Porter, *London*, pp.93-184

nature as the flag of righteousness; of gender and sexuality informed by nature as erotic or virtuous; of disorder fuelled by the wildness of the natural world. The spectrum of responses invoked is a reflection of the tantalising ambiguity and complexity of the subject of nature. Raymond Williams reckons 'nature' is probably the most complex word in the English language.⁷³ To attempt an exploration of its parameters here, and the articulation of ideas of nature in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is to broach a field that is beyond the scope of one thesis, let alone an introductory section. Each chapter of the thesis aims to explore a particular dimension of the character of nature in the town within the relevant context of contemporary perceptions. However, it is still worthwhile embarking on a somewhat reckless overview of versions of greening, to ground the central themes.

Even if one did try to pin down a definition of 'rus in urbe' to a topographical translation of the country into the city, the diverse representation and far reaching impact of nature in the town soon breaks out of this kind of constraint and demands recognition of its vicissitudes. Accommodating this breadth is crucial in terms of recognising the significance and values placed on nature in the town. On different levels countryside, landscape, garden, the elements (incorporating air and water), plant and animal life, and abstract formulations of truth and innocence or depravity can be subsumed under the general aegis of nature/natural. Contemporaries recognised that nature had numerous and overlapping interpretations. In his study of the idea of nature in the thought of the period Basil Willey points out that Robert Boyle identified eight meanings of nature used within the fields of philosophy and natural science, and Pierre Bayle struggled with the ambiguity of eleven different versions deployed within the Book of Corinthians alone.⁷⁴ Students of environment, countryside, gardens and nature grapple with the same

⁷³ Raymond Williams, *Keywords, A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London, 1976), p.219

⁷⁴ Basil Willey, *The Eighteenth Century Background* 1st publ. 1940 (London, 1986), p.2

ambiguities. Simon Pugh ventures to outline the distinctions between the terms he (and I) make frequent use of. Countryside is applied to the land in general, wild or agricultural. Both Williams and James Turner, in his work on politics and landscape, make the point that the term country can refer to both land and nation.⁷⁵ Landscape is an aesthetic processing of countryside, a particular way of seeing that frames the land in a selective composition. The term pastoral implies a retreat to an imagined landscape of peace and harmony. As a literary term it has been defined as 'a withdrawal from ordinary life to a place apart, close to the elemental rhythms of nature, where a man achieves a new perspective on life in the complex social world'.⁷⁶ The pastoral impulse has currency in the town not just on the level that the built environment created a sense of detachment and fuelled an imaginative and literal flight from the city, but also in that town parks, gardens and walks acted as a form of urban pastoral, conjured as contemplative spaces of respite, elemental calm and wisdom.

The garden is a sectioned off and ordered piece of land that may be used a vegetable plot or fashioned as a reconstructed Garden of Eden. Within its bounds the human hand sculpts and improves on nature as an harmonious symbol of all that might be. And yet the associative imagery that the garden evokes also summons the spectacle of the Fall, the anxiety of cultivation going to seed, and the threat of and battle against the wild.

Representations of urban politeness and civility run over into decadence, and of the undercurrent of disorder within the swelling town draw on these metaphors as an alternative reading to that of the urban garden site as the conductor of order and harmony. The garden serves as a tableau for negotiation between the art of humanity and the natural creation. In the case of urban garden space this interaction is made more intense through

⁷⁵ Simon Pugh, *Garden, Nature, Language* (Manchester, 1988), pp.135-6; Williams, *Country and City*, p.1; James Turner, *The Politics of Landscape: Rural Scenery and Society in English Poetry, 1630-1660* (Oxford, 1979), p.6

⁷⁶ M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (New York, 1981), p.128, quoted in Pugh, *Garden, Nature, Language* pp.136-137

sheer intimacy, as nature and town, the apex of human civilisation and culture, meet face to face. Town parks and gardens symbolise and are represented as the interface of nature and culture. Essentially, between the late seventeenth and the late eighteenth century the terms of this dialogue shift from an emphasis on art and incline more towards nature, and what is defined as 'natural'. This is expressed in garden design through the softening of geometric styles and a spatial gradation out to a more 'natural' lay out, the incorporation of 'wildernesses', the blurring of boundaries with the wider countryside, exemplified in the use of the ha-ha and the exhortation to 'consult the genius of the place'. This shift, fuelled in part by the experience of urbanisation, as indicated previously, is more broadly manifested as a heightened stress on the need to harmonise mankind and Creation, town and country, and the increasing deference of civilization to the natural world. The 'natural' is, to use Pugh's words, 'the cultural meaning read into nature', a socially determined agenda draped in the appearance of timelessness.⁷⁷ Willey's text tracks the increasing emphasis placed on what is natural as counterpoint to the artificial or superficial. The manoeuvring into position of nature as absolute standard within aesthetics, ethics, politics, justice, and religion creates a situation whereby natural could be interpreted as a byword for good, and it follows, the unnatural as misguided, or just plain bad. In the eighteenth century nature assumed the mantle of clarity, of authority, and would usher in peace, concord, progress, and order'.⁷⁸ By this reading, dressing something up as natural is to assert its immutability and appropriate the moral high ground. This process of naturalisation can be applied to gender roles, sexuality, property ownership, aesthetic sensibility, physical superiority and so on, articulating particular versions of what is natural and right. Hence Pugh's definition of natural as 'the justification for whatever society approves and desires'.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Pugh, *Garden, Nature, Language*, p.2

⁷⁸ Willey, *Eighteenth Century Background*, pp.1-2

⁷⁹ Pugh, *Garden, Nature, Language*, p.136

Mapping out the thesis

It remains for me to indicate the actual structure of the thesis and outline of the chapters that follow, each interweaving and expanding on the themes raised in this introduction. The expression of and responses to representations of nature in the town forms the backbone of this thesis. Chapter 2 addresses the question of representation as a key issue within historical writing generally, and one especially pertinent to this thesis given the emphasis on the imagery of nature in the town. As a baseline for the range of interpretations of urban greening, the opening discussion on the source as image is followed with a consideration of the ambiguities inherent in perceptions of town and country. The chapter proceeds to focus on ways of seeing nature in the town, concentrating in particular on the influence of landscape appreciation, deployed as a means of aesthetic appropriation. This is seen to manifest itself in the importance of prospect in the representation of the urban environment and its open spaces.

Chapter 3 begins by tracing the relationship between garden space and the wider environment in the ordering of urban parks, gardens and walks. The aim is to go some way towards situating the design and ordering of town parks and gardens within broader narratives of garden history. The structuring of town parks and gardens is considered under the headings of surface appearance, focusing on the basic lay out of my case study sites; garden furniture and architecture, looking at seats, lights and buildings; the horticultural characteristics of urban gardening; and the entertainments that constitute an important and distinctive feature of town public parks and gardens.

Chapter 4, on proprietors and promenaders, asks who was behind this ordering of nature in the town, and in whose interests. This addresses the responsive of these parks, gardens and walks to the social and cultural context of the town in terms of urban input and urban

participation. The bodies involved in the ordering of nature in the town are grouped as corporations, private backers of public gardens, commercial entrepreneurs, royalty and aristocracy and individuals owning private gardens. The chapter looks at their levels of investment in and shaping of urban open spaces, and considers the agendas behind this engagement.

The following chapter takes on the theme of balance so pivotal in the representation of the relationship between nature and civilisation and looks at a range of ways in which this is expressed within the built environment. Town parks, gardens and walks are deployed as means of offsetting the excesses of urbanisation and having a positive influence on the physical and moral well-being of the individual town dweller and urban society as a whole, and the salubrity of the built environment. With regards the considered impact of nature in the town on the physical constitution of the urban resident and the fabric of the town, particular attention is paid to perceptions of air and water as core elements within urban greening. The use of garden imagery in the town in the representation of morality concentrates on the casting of town parks and gardens as enclaves of retirement, spirituality and virtue. The chapter is concluded by looking at the impact of ideas of nature on the balancing of the constitution in political terms, concentrating on how urban greening was interpreted as an expression of good governance in the town.

Chapter 6, 'Keeping off the grass', carries over this theme of nature as harmony in looking at how town parks and gardens functioned within polite urban society and were used to project stability and social cohesion at the same time as being deployed in the articulation of distinction. The chapter details how levels of aesthetic engagement with and appreciation of natural environment were engaged as a means of marking out one's superior status amidst the urban crowd. As a part of this, measures to maintain and

project a lustre of eliteness and control are addressed under the headings of enclosure, subscriptions, locked gates, sentinels and behavioural orders.

Chapter 7 deals with the influence that the imagery and use of urban green sites had on the construction of gender roles and expressions of sexuality in the town. This draws on the aligning of gender characteristics with aspects of natural and built environment and looks at how these concepts were expressed through the medium of town parks and gardens. The natural imagery constructed around these sites informs the delineation of public and private domains and the question of female access. Representations of women using town gardens key into these associations to depict their engagement in terms of passivity, adornment or dangerous sexuality. Similarly, the interplay of garden and erotic imagery colours the sexual reputation of these urban public arenas, and provides scope for masquerading and homosexuality.

The thesis concludes with an epilogue on town parks, gardens and walks as boundary markers which aims to highlight the principal themes that inform the thesis as a whole, and indicate how these fit within the broader framework of the subject outlined in this introduction.

Chapter 2

(Re)presenting nature in the town

Introduction

Having introduced the historical and thematic setting in which the thesis is couched, this study might have been inclined to move straight into a series of chapters based on the research data collected. And yet such an untroubled progression would sidestep any focusing on the sources themselves, assuming them to be an essentially objective record. Given that the 'nature' with which this thesis deals is a nebulous and subjective quantity, as outlined in the Introduction, and that perceptions of the town and its relationship with the natural environment are highly ambiguous, any depiction of nature in the town cannot be taken simply at face value, or as anything like the definitive version. With this in mind, this chapter examines ways of looking at the range of representations of nature in the town, starting a questioning of who these different images served, and what their purposes were, that flows throughout the thesis. Beginning with consideration of the source as image, and the problems of the historian in relating these images to some kind of on the ground reality, the chapter then takes a summary look at perceptions of town and country in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to illustrate the ambiguity inherent in the relationship between built and natural environment and how this subsequently infuses representations of their interaction. From here, the visualisation and representation of the natural environment in the form of landscape is discussed as a means of aesthetic appropriation, in that this way of looking is differentiated and deemed superior. This account serves as the backdrop against which is set the visualising of nature within an urban context, and the considered importance of prospects in the appreciation and ordering of green space about the town.

Tapping the source: image and reality

Since the labours of historical research are so rooted in the use of the source, be it in the form of written accounts, visual imagery or material objects, the nature of the relationship between the historian and the source is the absolute key to the history produced.

Extracting the personal, the marks of authorship, from the text tends to create an impression of impartial recorder, of the objective setting down of facts removed from the act of creation and interpretation. Awareness of the act and process of writing the past is something that Michel Foucault addressed in acknowledging the impossibility of a value-neutral position. His appraisal of knowledge as power identifies a way of presenting one's own values in the guise of scientific disinterestedness. And in the same way that my own language represents a personal interpretation, no matter how dressed up as a faithful account of the way things were, so the sources I employ are particular renderings, none of them able to be stamped the real 'truth', the 'definitive' version. This is not to go so far as to say that there is no such thing as reality, and that representations of events or places have no relation to it, but rather to recognise that 'The text *mediates*: it is neither a direct expression of reality, nor is it totally divorced from it...No description is pure nor can it be total'.¹ In this sense, writing about these representations of nature in the town is an interpretation of interpretations of nature in the town. Furthermore, the parks and gardens I focus on are in themselves interpretations of the natural world, and what is the natural world? In some cases town parks and gardens are images of and defer to other urban renderings of nature, so that, for example, Bath's Meadows and Bristol's pleasure gardens are modelled on and/or read in terms of metropolitan green space, forming urban

¹ Christopher Tilley, 'Michel Foucault: Towards an Archaeology of Archaeology' in Christopher Tilley (ed.), *Reading Material Culture* (Oxford, 1990), pp.284, 332

impressions of urban impressions of nature.² So where does the final and definitive version reside? What becomes clear is the difficulty inherent in drawing clear lines between the real and the imaginary, and between a supposedly empirical, factual source, and a fictional one. Newspapers, corporation accounts, maps and poems all have an angle, tailored to a particular audience or by a particular producer, just as the town park and garden might have been established or ordered according to the vision, needs and desires of a specific group. Of course, how these representations were received, and sites used, does not necessarily tally with how they were intended. These are all issues that surface and are addressed in the course of this thesis. The point here is that none of these sources can really sustain a claim to complete lack of bias. By way of example, in its careful detached observation of urban structures a town plan convinces the viewer of its objectivity as a faithful record. The temptation to plunder the image for empirical evidence of how the town was laid out is strong, but the visual angle assumed, the features highlighted and picked out in the key, such as churches, mansions and leisure facilities, and the detailed emphasis granted to particular sections of the urban fabric, a new building development or private estate, disclose the subjective perspective of the artist cartographer and/or the intended subscribers. Put another way, the selective content of maps 'conceive, articulate and structure the human world with a bias towards, promoted by and exerting influence upon particular sets of social relations'.³

The eschewing of any emphatic differentiation between the objectivity of types of source, in that they all ought to be approached as representations, goes some way towards justifying what might appear to be an indiscriminate mix of sources within this thesis.

² Ned Ward describes Bath Meadows, 'much resorted to for pleasant Rivers, and delicate Walks', as a second Hyde Park and St James's, Ned Ward, *A Step to the Bath*, (London, 1700), p.16; an advertisement for the 'New Vaux-Hall' at the Bristol Hot-Wells is pleased to inform that the Gardens are 'decorated with Walks, Arbours, Alcoves, and c. resembling as near as possible that in London', *Bath Journal*, 3 June, 1751

³ J.B. Harley, 'Maps, knowledge and power', in Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (eds.), *The Iconography of Landscape. Essays on the symbolic representation, design and use of past environments* (Cambridge, 1988), pp.277-312, p.278

But the particular subject of the thesis also adds to my reluctance to privilege one type of source over another on the trail of authenticity. Fundamentally, the garden is loaded with meaning, as an interpretation of what is perceived to be the natural environment, and relationships to it. It is not possible to separate out the garden from its imagery because the garden *is* an image. This research is motivated by interest in attitudes towards nature, and to attempt to chart attitudes towards and experiences of nature is to try and write something rather elusive. I say elusive in the sense that personal responses, both my own and of seventeenth and eighteenth century contemporaries, are something commonly too subtle for blunt historical fact finding. Here, obviously subjective impressions and interpretations represent very valuable accounts in themselves-it is precisely the bias, the personal perspective that makes them interesting, regardless of whether the description correlates with any construction of how things *really* were. Furthermore, the concern of this thesis with urban perceptions of nature and the natural environment adds a further crucial dimension to this issue of the type and validity of imagery. Representations of nature are able to play on the 'naturalness' of their subject, of a natural order that embodies an essential truth and purity, summoning the overarching presence of the Creator in His work if necessary. By these readings nature is the absolute, the unchanging standard, and as such an unquestionable mark of objective reason. Therefore, representations of nature in the town might beguile with an apparent honesty, intrinsically rooted in the naturalness of the setting, whilst masking an unwanted version. Images that appear 'true to nature' might actually be working hard and self-consciously at conveying just that impression. This process of 'naturalising' is something that writers such as Roland Barthes, James Turner, Denis Cosgrove, Stephen Daniels, Ann Bermingham, and Simon Pugh have discussed, and is a concept that will prove highly pertinent to the representation and ordering of nature in the town throughout the thesis.⁴ Turner is

⁴ Roland Barthes, *S/Z : An Essay*, trans. Richard Miller (New York, 1974), pp.22-26; Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York/London, 1972), pp.11, 141-2; Turner, *Politics of*

concerned with how what he terms 'topographia', the use of natural imagery and landscape, 'allows the old order to seem permanent, orderly and universally agreeable...*Topographia* turns subjective values into apparent facts'.⁵

Dealing with nature and the town also immediately summons a long established dichotomy, something that I expand upon in the following section. The need to recognise a broader range of representations besides the standard polarity of town and country, and in turn such contrasts as wildness and cultivation, and virtue and vice, need not entail discarding them altogether. The deploying of such dichotomies can provide a revealing commentary on the preoccupations and anxieties at a given time. The contrasting of town and country, for instance, is not immutable and oblivious to historical circumstance.

Developing urbanisation, rural change, and shifting attitudes towards nature and landscape over the course of the late seventeenth and eighteenth century have bearing on the imagery used. Clearly, adherence to stark polarities does militate against a wider and more pluralistic field of meaning, and yet it is equally misleading to lop off these extremes and only traverse the space between on the grounds that this is more 'real' terrain. Images that play on the antitheses of rural and urban, wild and civilised, nature and art, public and private, and so on, might not bear any obvious relation to reality, but these images are pervasive and influential nonetheless. Such dichotomies serve as points of orientation, like the two poles, as something to navigate by, and refute or aspire to, framing awareness and response. The garden is used theatrically, embodying particular values, ideals, contentious issues, and serves as canvas for the discussion and negotiation of these. John Dixon Hunt considers the literal use of the garden as setting in the theatre for an emblematic play off between innocence and iniquity. He cites Etherege's *She Would if She Could* (1668), in which the Mulberry garden and the New Spring Garden

Landscape, pp.6-7, 38-39, 41-45, 48, 101, 114-115, 189; Cosgrove and Daniels, *Iconography of Landscape*, p.7; Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, p.4, 11-33; Pugh, *Garden, Nature, Language*, p.7

⁵ Turner, *Politics of Landscape*, pp.106-7

are the sites where sexual vice is effectively challenged by pastoral virtue.⁶ Such stylised imagery, fixed to places, or contexts, is influential in setting up the defining parameters of responses to, and impressions and discussions of a site, situation or ideal. If the Vauxhall Gardens are represented as a pastoral idyll to contrast with the profanity of the city, subsequent accounts may concur with or ridicule this imagery. But this still amounts to a response to it.

Finally, this leads into consideration of the effect of images. The point of not discounting so-called fictional sources within the plurality of images of nature in the town is reinforced by the fact that these representations, whether accurate or not, are influential in themselves. A heady infusion of accumulated imagery, what one is supposed to see and experience, might colour expectations, responses, and to some extent behaviour.

Therefore the preceding reputation of St. James's Park, or infamy of the Vauxhall masquerades, aired and fashioned in visual and literary representations, may exert a bearing on the desire to attend, the type of company frequenting the site, how they conduct themselves once there, and the subsequent accounts produced. Chapter 6 points out that portraits of parks and gardens as exclusive sites for superior recreation did not necessarily square with the type and conduct of the company making use of them, but pandered to the desire to feel a part of something special. The gender and sexuality chapter considers how representations of town gardens as the breeding grounds of vice, and as groves of passive innocence and virtue may have impinged on women's experience of nature in the town.

⁶ John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque. Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge, MA/London, 1992), p.68

The other side of the fence: Representations of town and country

I have already raised the issue of the relevance of dichotomies to this study. This next section chooses to focus specifically on the polarising of town and country, in that this imagery infused representations of the interaction between the built and natural environment. To survey the imagery of town and country is to confront one of the fundamental dichotomies in consciousness, crafted polarities layered with conflicting ideals and bias. Most notably, Raymond Williams has traced the long tradition of contrary images of the country and the city, at the same time as offering a reminder that 'we need not, at any stage, accept this town-and-country contrast at its face value'.⁷ The process entails looking at jostling imagery of satire and idealisation, pastoral and anti-pastoral as tied into positive and negative imagery of the town, creating a picture rather more ambiguous than one of blessed rurality and cursed city. Certainly, critics of the town lingering on perceived faults and excesses such as luxury, vanity and moral meltdown were apt to refer to a model of innocence in nature, just as plaudits for the town as the fount of civility might set this against imagery of the countryside as contrastingly backward and rude. But some imagery played off both extremes, or else fused impressions. A critical portrayal of a town park might play on a combination of rude rusticity and dissolute urban rabble. For instance, Pepys' dismissal of the Mulberry Gardens in London as a 'silly place' conflates the nature of the company as 'a rascally, whoring roguing sort of people' with the nature of the site as 'somewhat pretty, but rude'.⁸ Similarly, the degeneracy of the whole city is expressed in terms of untamed wilderness, 'This Place is a kind of large Forest of wild Creatures'.⁹ In any case, stock images of city and country frequently served as cue for the representation of nature in the town.

⁷ Williams, *Country and the City*, p.54

⁸ The Mulberry Gardens were a popular resort of the 1650's and 1660's, situated in the grounds of Goring House at the head of St James's Park, later the site of Buckingham House—see Peter Coats, *The Gardens of Buckingham Palace* (London, 1978), pp.22-24; Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. R. Latham & W. Matthews, 11 vols. (London, 1970-83), 9, 20 May, 1668, p.207

⁹ Anon, *A Trip from St. James's to the Royal Exchange* (London, 1744), p.1

Negative portrayals of the late seventeenth and eighteenth century town fed off anxieties over physical and social and moral welfare. Cities, and the metropolis in particular, appeared to suck in and destroy life. Pollution and contagion blighted the crowded streets. London was like a 'Common-sewer', receiving 'the Scum and Filth, not only of our own, but of all other Countries'.¹⁰ In worse case scenarios, the dissipation of youth and honour in unrestrained indulgence and vacuous display about town amounted to the wasting of the nation. Of course, much of the anti-urban literature dates from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, reacting in particular against spreading industrialisation and urban overcrowding. But, gauged against previous rates of growth, increasing urbanisation was noticeable across the country from the late seventeenth century, and before in London, fuelling reactions against the privations of townlife, and exaggerating the attraction of alternative visions. As Roy Porter notes, 'the greater the benefits metropolitan life conferred, the more the urban literati vilified it, idealizing Nature and lamenting the loss of rural innocence, in a movement culminating in Romanticism, that opium of the urban intelligentsia'.¹¹ The poem on the joys of the country over the town published in the *Newcastle General Magazine* strikes a typical and familiar tone, 'No, no, 'tis in vain in this turbulent Town/ To expect either Pleasure or Rest;/To Hurry and nonsense, still tying us down;/'Tis an overgrown Prison at best./...From hence to the Country escaping away/Leave the Crowd and the Bustle behind/...Here, free from Ambition, from Avarice free'.¹² In timeless tradition, the rural is posited as antidote to the excesses of the town. Although London exhibited perceived urban vices on a magnified scale, these criticisms were not only levied at the capital. Leisure resorts represented a particular target for those concerned by a threatened social and moral order. Satirical imagery locked onto towns such as Bath and Tunbridge Wells

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.2

¹¹ Porter, *London*, p.160

¹² *Newcastle General Magazine*, July 1747

with their exuberant round of amusements, highlighting their excesses, vanity and sexual immorality, but recreational facilities within towns not predominantly oriented around the provision of leisure incurred similar judgement. For park, gardens and walks, integral features of the urban social and recreational whirl, this censure contrasted particularly acutely with the idealised imagery of 'natural' virtue, innocence and order.

At the other end of the scale floats the enlightened city embodying promise and progress, the natural forum of civility and polite society. The philosophes of the Enlightenment centred knowledge and advancement in the town, where civilised man was polished through rational, ordered and polite interaction with his fellows. Voltaire considered the city to be the bedrock of liberty and civilisation.¹³ To John Locke the civility and rationality of those that dwelt in cities signalled a clear superiority over the 'irrational, untaught' inhabitants of 'woods and forests'.¹⁴ The town was heaped with the laurels of a new Augustan age of achievement and improvement. London, especially, was by these reckonings the new Rome, or modern day Athens, conceived in the image of classical greatness. To Voltaire, the capital was more than capable of carrying this mantle, 'Rival of Athens, London, blest indeed'.¹⁵ These conceptions were mirrored in the neo-classical improvements undertaken in provincial towns across the country.¹⁶ John Wood's expansive vision for the re-modelling of Bath summoned its past glories as the 'Metropolitan Seat of the British Druids', and as the Roman city of Aquae Sulis, subsequently inspiring his plans for a Royal Forum, Imperial Gymnasium and Royal Circus.¹⁷ The town was also the site of pleasure and diversity, by comparison with which

¹³ Williams, *Country and the City*, p.144

¹⁴ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p.195

¹⁵ Quoted in Malcolm Warner, *The Image of London. Views by Travellers and Emigrés 1550-1920*, (London, 1987), p.13

¹⁶ See Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, on the urban landscape, pp.41-113

¹⁷ Wood, *Description of Bath*, pp.117, 45; Wood's plans for an Imperial Gymnasium and Royal Forum never came to fruition in this form, and part of the intended sites were used for Queen Square, and the Parades, Wood, *Description of Bath*, pp.247-8, 350-351; Elizabeth Holland, 'The Kingston Estate Within the Walled City of Bath. A Composite Plan', (Bath, 1992), p.22

life in the countryside could be mocked as dull and retarded. This was a theme endlessly mined in post-Restoration literature, but pervasive into the eighteenth century. Henry Bourne's account of the 'Common People' described country places as untouched by the politeness of the age.¹⁸ As indicated previously, this is not to say that elegies for the city precluded homage to the country. John Dixon Hunt discusses the symbolised polarities of nature and town in terms of the City of God and the Garden of Eden, whereby the city cradles the promise of the future, the pinnacle of achievement and codifying of order, whilst the Garden stands for purity and virtue.¹⁹ William McClung has argued, 'the bastioned city satisfies as a representation of triumph, power and security, the garden as a representation of innocent delights'.²⁰ So, imagery of the town exploits this ambiguity of traditions, mixing positive and negative, and not infrequently within the same text. James Thomson's pastoral poem, *The Seasons*, mingles arcadian imagery and criticism of the city with an approving estimation of urbane civility; 'Hence every form of cultivated life/In order set, protected, and inspired/Into perfection wrought. Uniting all,/Society grew numerous, high, polite,/And happy. Nurse of art, the city reared/In beauteous pride her tower-encircled head...'.²¹ The journal *The Connoisseur*, published in the years 1754 to 1756 with the avowed aim 'to mark the Manners of the Town,' neatly conveys the irony in believing the grass greener on the other side of the fence.²² 'Mr Town', Critic and Censor General of the undertaking, has his counterpart in 'Cousin Village', the juxtaposition of these two exposing the ambiguities in urban/rural relations and perception. In one account Cousin Village relates how the rural folk assemble at the local clerks, retiring to 'an arbour at the end of his cabbage garden to which they have given the genteel denomination of little Ranelagh'. Mr Town responds;

¹⁸ Henry Bourne, *Antiquitates Vulgares; or the Antiquities of the Common People* (Newcastle, 1725), p.115

¹⁹ Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, p.331

²⁰ William McClung, *The Architecture of Paradise: Survivals of Eden and Jerusalem* (Berkeley, L.A., & London, 1983), p.101

²¹ James Thomson, 'The Seasons' (Autumn), quoted and discussed in Williams, *Country and City*, pp.143, 68-71

²² *Connoisseur*, 4 vols., (London, 1793), vol. I, no.1, 31 January, 1754, p.1

in London, while we are almost smothered in smoke and dust, gardens are open every evening to refresh us with the pure air of the country; while those, who have the finest walks and most beautiful prospects eternally before them, shut themselves up in theatres and ball rooms, 'lock fair day-light out, and make themselves an artificial London.²³

The country desires the civility of the town, the town desires the refreshing rurality of the countryside, and both end up mimicking their perceptions of the other. Within these patterns of idealisation and satirization, the representation of nature in the town functions as idyllic retreat from the worldly city, or as rude, wild space rubbing up against urban politeness and civility. Alternatively and/or simultaneously, imagery of the town garden might extract and fuse the concept of urban civility and refinement with 'natural' order and virtue, or align the vulgarity of popular open space with a rude and unrestrained rusticity. Urban and natural environments did not necessarily and automatically exist in symbolic opposition, but the traditional contrasting of town and country provided an inherited discourse framing representations of the interaction of what was perceived as urban and natural. That is, natural spaces incorporated within the town were crafted against this backdrop of muddled urban and rural images.

Setting the scene-appreciation of the landscape

As discussed in the Introduction, 'nature' is such a vague term as to be practically unworkable without some definition. In discussing images of countryside, landscape, garden I certainly don't mean to suggest that these all amount to the same thing, rather that these form layers of interpretation of what is natural environment. Contempt for the boorish rural squire, uneducated and impoverished farm labourer, and everyday grind of working the fields, signals a rather different conception of countryside than that of pastoral landscape of grace and order. The cleft between these versions means that, in

²³ *Connoisseur*, vol.I, no. 23, 4 July, 1754, p.108

Raymond Williams' words, 'a working country is hardly ever a landscape. The very idea of landscape implies separation and observation'.²⁴ John Barrell illustrates this in tracing the airbrushing of the agricultural labourer in representations of landscape, the drowning of harsh realities in aesthetics.²⁵ The seventeenth and eighteenth century landscape is a processing of countryside, a deliberately cultivated way of seeing and ordering that distils muck and poverty and rudeness to stake out an elevated viewpoint of aesthetic appreciation. It signals a desire to control nature, to neutralise the threat of the uncultivated wild through visual command, and order and improvement, observed and comprehended with a scientific detachment. This section looks at how nature was conceived of and contrived as landscape, and at the meaning and differentiation vested in this understanding and aesthetic appreciation, to be followed by consideration of how these ways of seeing landscape operated within an urban context.

That landscape imagery reveals a great deal about the society that creates it, and in particular the desires of those that partition this way of seeing in order to appropriate the moral high ground is well-documented territory. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels hinge their exploration of landscape on the concept of iconography, 'the theoretical and historical study of symbolic imagery'. The iconographic approach has 'encoded texts to be deciphered by those cognisant of the culture as a whole in which they were produced'.²⁶ Cosgrove explains the significance of landscape in terms of 'a way in which certain classes of people have signified themselves and their world through their imagined relationship with nature'.²⁷ Simon Schama muses on landscape as 'a text on which generations write their recurring obsessions', in all their complexities, whilst Simon Pugh, following Raymond Williams and John Barrell, sees landscape imagery as

²⁴ Williams, *Country and City*, p.120

²⁵ John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape. The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730-1840* (Cambridge, 1980)

²⁶ Cosgrove and Daniels, *Iconography of Landscape*, pp.1- 2

²⁷ Cosgrove, *Social Formation*, p.15

primarily political terrain, its representation signifying control.²⁸ The extension of art historical technique has been instrumental in the reading of scape. In the 1920's art historian Erwin Panofsky articulated the notion of symbolism in the extension of 'reading' structure and form beyond art into tangible space, and coined the phrase 'ways of seeing', later adopted by John Berger.²⁹

The usual starting point in discussions of conceptions of landscape in the seventeenth and eighteenth century is the concomitant development of the form in art and literature. This forges an immediate connection between landscape and the educated elite, for the imagery of landscape was built out of the incorporation and recognition of an artistic and literary inheritance. In one of the most familiar examples, art, literature and landscape become mutually referential forms in the paintings of Claude, creations interwoven with literary allusion. Understanding and appreciation of these images encompassed the classical learning and virtue of the Bible, Virgil, and Ovid, as the literary inspirations and models.³⁰ As such, the vogue for these paintings encouraged both a conflation of landscape with classical culture and religious virtue and honour, and the necessity of a cultivated understanding in order to recognise and appreciate these allusions. The inclusion of historical, mythological and religious themes also served to validate landscape as subject.

The Flemish tradition, developed in the studios of Joachim Patinir and Pieter Bruegel the Elder in the sixteenth century, used high viewpoints to depict extensive landscape as a

²⁸ Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London, 1995), p.12; Pugh, *Garden, Nature, Language*, p.4; Pugh, *Reading Landscape*, p.2

²⁹ Cosgrove and Daniels, *Iconography of Landscape*, pp.3, 6; John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London, 1972), pp.106-9

³⁰ The exhibition at the National Gallery, London, 'Claude-The Poetic Landscape', 26 January-10 April 1994, grouped Claude's works thematically according to their textual derivation, most notably the Bible, Virgil and Ovid

worthy subject in its own right.³¹ Indeed, the term 'landschap', becoming 'landskip', enters English vocabulary in the sixteenth century as a Dutch painting term, originally referring to the pictorial representation of the countryside, then broadening to encompass a section of countryside visually perceived, and then opening out to a sense of landscape as place.³² The requisite Grand Tour for young gentlemen promoted familiarity with Classical and Renaissance art, architecture and literature, forming a channel of taste back home, and consolidating the primacy of the classics in the thinking man's world view. The ideal landscape encapsulated and visualised this cultivated world view. It bespoke virtue and honour, order and harmony, an indulgent and labourless plenty, possession. Furthermore, the ability to recognise these motifs in artistic and literary landscape representation, and to frame a view accordingly, was assumed as a badge of distinction, a superiority rooted in a cultivated and correct way of seeing. And so the representation of landscape was used as a canvas on which to splash ones colours.

A sense of landscape, as noted above, tended towards the negation of, and withdrawal from a working countryside. It entailed the assumption of a consumer perspective, an observational aestheticised viewpoint. This distinction is one that has been characterised in terms of being 'inside' and 'outside' the landscape.³³ To possess perspective and comprehend landscape is to have a detached stance, to be outside looking on, exercising a clear controlled overview. The observer is considered able to abstract, realising the whole from its parts by taking a step back from the scene and arranging its trees, hills, meadows into a pictorial composition. This framing was aided by devices like the Claude

³¹ 'Making and Meaning. Rubens's Landscapes', exhibition at the National Gallery, London, 16 October 1996-19 January 1997, situates Rubens's landscape paintings within the Flemish landscape tradition, and discusses the popularity and influence of these in England

³² John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840* (Cambridge, 1972), pp.1-2

³³ Williams, *Country and City*, pp.121-126; John Barrell, 'The public prospect and the private view: the politics of taste in eighteenth century Britain', in Pugh, *Reading Landscape*, pp.19-40; Pugh, *Reading Landscape*, p.2; Cosgrove, *Social Formation*, pp.18-19, 24-26; Stephen Bending, 'Re-Reading the Eighteenth-Century English Landscape Garden', in Harriet Ritvo (ed.), *An English Arcadia: Landscape and Architecture in Britain and America* (United States, 1992), pp.394-5

glass, a mirror held to the countryside in order to group parts of the view into a Claudean scene.³⁴ To be 'inside' is to be a part of the picture, as a worker, perceived as lacking the ability to draw the general from the particular and thus comprehend the whole picture. Defoe indicated such a distinction in his admiration of England's fine houses and gardens; 'none has spoken of what I call the distant glory of all these buildings: There is a beauty in these things at a distance, taking them en passant, and in perspective, which few people value and fewer understand...'.³⁵ The possession of this kind of perspective was held to lend and justify command. As Turner puts it in *The Politics of Landscape*, 'The prospect was almost invariably associated with the wide-ranging political survey', as 'landscape, with its wide scope and mastery of distance, suggests a vision of transcendent truth'.³⁶ Those sufficiently elevated above embroilment in particulars were those suited to the exercise of power. It is at this juncture that aesthetic appreciation of landscape and landed estate fuse, as property in visual appropriation had its apotheosis in actual land ownership, acutely expressed in the form of the landscape garden and its representation in art and literature. And so the imagery of landscape 'very frequently complemented a very real power and control over fields and farms on the part of patrons and owners of landscape paintings'.³⁷ The landed gentleman liked to picture himself as of a superior cast by virtue of his parcelled landscape, his seat at the head of a mini-kingdom, even if others did not. It symbolised his cultivated and superior understanding, and his right and ability to exercise control. Land-holding was the major factor in the right of franchise, founded on the notion that only a man who was divorced from particulars and particular work, who was able to rise above, to look down on the world and consider the whole might yield political authority. John Barrell's work on the politics of taste examines how overview of the landscape, the ability to discern the whole picture, came to define the

³⁴ Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, p.11-12

³⁵ Defoe, *Tour*, I, p.167

³⁶ Turner, *Politics of Landscape*, p.43

³⁷ Denis Cosgrove, 'Prospect, perspective and the evolution of the landscape idea', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, X, (1985), pp.45-62, 55

'public' man in that it 'serves as an instantiation of the ability of the man of "liberal mind" to... abstract the true interests of humanity, the public interest, from the labyrinth of private interests which were imagined to be represented by mere unorganised detail'.³⁸ Of course, many landed gentlemen engaged in capital projects beyond their estate, and power did not reside solely in the hands of the rural gentry and aristocracy, as the towns fielded greater political influence, but command of the landscape retained its emblematic power, as a sign of natural and immutable superiority and order.

Sighting nature and the town

What relevance and influence does this landscape imagery and appreciation have within the town, and on the representation of nature within the town? Consideration of landscape is not something commonly or easily applied to an urban context. Representations of landscape and private estates focus primarily on the countryside, and are seen as attempts to underpin the status and authority of the landed gentry and aristocracy. And yet English towns and cities were not hermetically sealed units, impervious to prevailing status criteria, and the influence of the land politically, economically and culturally, just as land-owners were not oblivious to, and independent of the town. This section is concerned with the visualisation of nature in the town, as influenced by the landscape way of seeing, but also as a product of and responsive to the urban environment. The significance of visual appreciation, and appropriation, of nature in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century is founded on the inheritance of the so-called 'scientific revolution', and the determining of experience and verification through sight. Thus, to claim the ability of overview, and clarity of vision, was to lay claim to the 'truth'.

³⁸ Barrell, 'The public prospect', p.29

The possession and display of a cultivated taste in landscape, both in the appreciation of its representation in art and literature, and as expressed on the ground in the form of the garden, had some currency in the town in terms of the signifying of social status. This is not intended to counter the existence of means of expressing social standing besides land and lineage, and particular to an urban context. Certainly, late seventeenth and eighteenth century towns, expanding in size and confidence, were rapidly developing urban cultural facilities used for the parading of distinction. But in the status stakes, landed property was still a powerful card to hold. The playing of this cultivated taste as a fundamental mark of distinction functioned against a backdrop of contemporary anxiety over the undermining of markers of social standing. The fear grew that since, in the town, money could buy the appearance of quality, traditional social hierarchy was becoming dangerously blurred through accelerated acquisition, and the emulation of one's betters. In this context, the intellectual attributes of good taste and politeness were deployed to signal one's elevated status. Chapter six, on access to nature in the town, expands upon this fusion of good taste vested in appreciation of the natural world and urban civility in the fashioning of politeness. An appropriate and informed appreciation of nature and landscape served both to denote superior perspective, and to naturalise this elevated standing as corresponding to the natural and correct order of things, as a naturally ordained hierarchy. The urban periodical press promoted this concept of the contemplation of the natural world as the feature of a noble and improving mind. In a letter to the *Tatler* in 1709, a distinction is made in terms of response to nature, with the ability to conceive of the natural environment as landscape identified as a higher level of understanding:

That calm and elegant Satisfaction which the Vulgar call Melancholy, is the true and proper Delight of Men of Knowledge and Virtue...The Pleasures of ordinary People are in their Passions; but the Seat of this Delight is in the Reason and Understanding. Such a Frame of Mind raises that sweet Enthusiasm which warms the Imagination at the Sight of every Work of Nature, and turns all around you into Picture and Landskip.³⁹

³⁹ *The Tatler*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 3 vols., (Oxford, 1987), II, no.89, 3 November, 1709, p.60

Of course, within an urban environment the expression of good taste and perspective could not so easily be articulated, on site, through the actual ownership and ordering of private landed estate. There were certainly sizeable private gardens, attached to the town houses of urban notables and resident or visiting gentry, and the ordering and display of these gardens was used to convey social standing in the town, as will be covered later, but with space at a premium, and for the purposes of public display, parks, public gardens, and rural environs provided the grounds for the articulating of aesthetic appreciation of natural environment. Proprietorship was expressed through superior comprehension, a perceived correct way of seeing and engaging, through the visual appropriation of nature in the town. Addison was explicit in his conviction that an elevated appreciation and understanding of the works of nature sifted the polite from the vulgar, and that, furthermore, this ability was not necessarily dependent on actually owning the ground beneath one's feet;

A Man of a polite Imagination is let into a great many Pleasures, that the Vulgar are not capable of receiving...He meets with a secret Refreshment in a Description, and often feels a greater Satisfaction in the Prospect of Fields and Meadows, than another does in Possession. It gives him, indeed, a kind of Property in everything he sees and makes the most rude uncultivated Parts of nature administer to his Pleasures; So that he looks upon the World, as it were, in another Light, and discovers in it a Multitude of Charms, that conceal themselves from the generality of Mankind.⁴⁰

Accordingly, the pleasure and social aggrandisement that lay in the contemplation and processing of nature was not the sole preserve of the landowner, and did have relevance to the town and its inhabitants. From this angle it is possible to trace the application of this elevated perspective to the visualisation of nature in and around the town. This exploration of the relevance of the landscape way of seeing to the town is not, it pays to note here, intended to override the fact that nature in the town traded off a fusion of both natural and urban imagery. The influence of the urban context on the representation of nature underpins the entire thesis, but here I aim to indicate how landscape imagery transfers to the town as a whole in the form

⁴⁰ *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols., (Oxford, 1987), III, no.411, 21 June 1712, p.538

of the representation of the siting of the town within rural surrounds, and also in informing the visualising of nature in and around the town.

Good Prospects

Representations of the seventeenth and eighteenth century town, primarily in the form of plans and prospects, but also in descriptive literary accounts of their setting, can be seen to trade in the imagery of aestheticised landscape. Firstly, there was some cross-over of artists, so that the producers of landscape views and estate portraiture were also producing town prospects. Secondly, it is worth noting that many of these artists hailed from the continent, and were versed in the Flemish, Italian and French landscape tradition. John Rocque, Jacques Rigaud, Jan Kip and Leonard Knyff were among those working in both fields, and employing interchangeable styles of representation. Jan Kip's engraving of London, for example, positions St James Park as seen from Buckingham House at the centre of the view, thus enabling him to depict the city in the manner of a vast landed estate (see fig.2.1). The general impression is one of leisured consumption of space, and lots of it. Milkmaids offering strollers a glass straight from the cow might be read as symbols of a well ordered estate, as well as of a particularly orchestrated version of nature and vision of rural virtue. The built up West End to the left centred here around St James Palace is gentrified and civilised. With no sign of urban squalor, the entire image is scrupulously controlled and proprietorial, as might befit and please its royal patrons and noble subscribers. Beggars (bottom right) are safely excluded from the enclosed park.

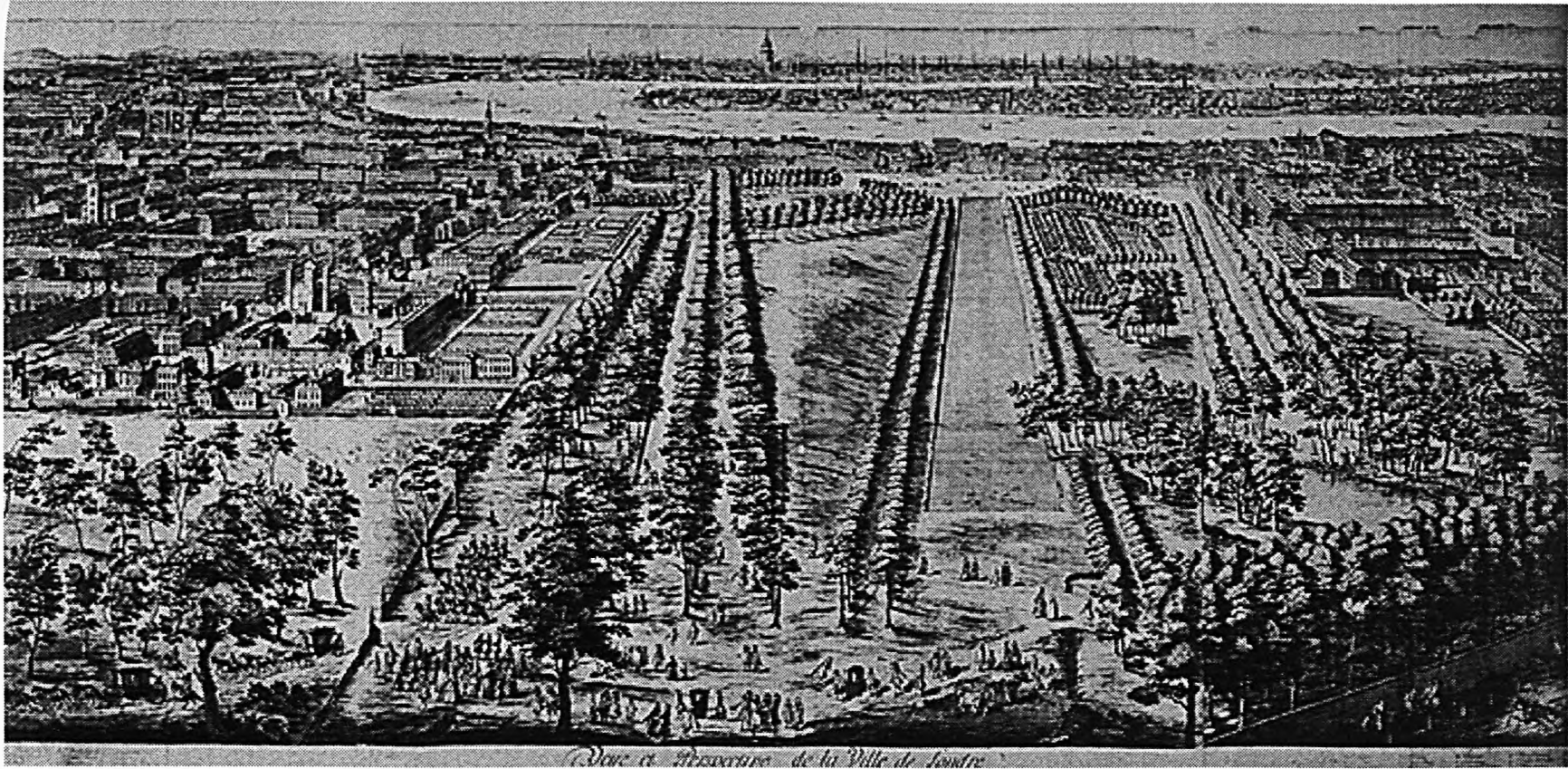


Fig.2.1 Jan Kip, 'View and Perspective of the town of London Westminster and St James's Park', c.1710-20

Similarly, Matthew Read's c.1735 painting of Whitehaven has two well dressed figures gesturing towards the mansion and grounds of Read's patron Lowther, with the town he had developed panning out as extension to this estate (see fig.2.2).⁴¹ Again, the town is represented as landed estate. This was also obviously responsive to the inclinations of the paying customer. Chapter three considers the identity and motives of those ordering and patronising nature in the town in greater detail. These prospects were commissioned, dedicated and subscribed to by the elite, sometimes, as in the case of the Pierrepont estate in Nottingham and Sir William Blackett in Newcastle, with the intention of depicting their own urban property, but also because this pictorial ordering of the town within a natural frame, using landscape imagery, provided an angle that polite society was happy to endorse (see fig.2.3).

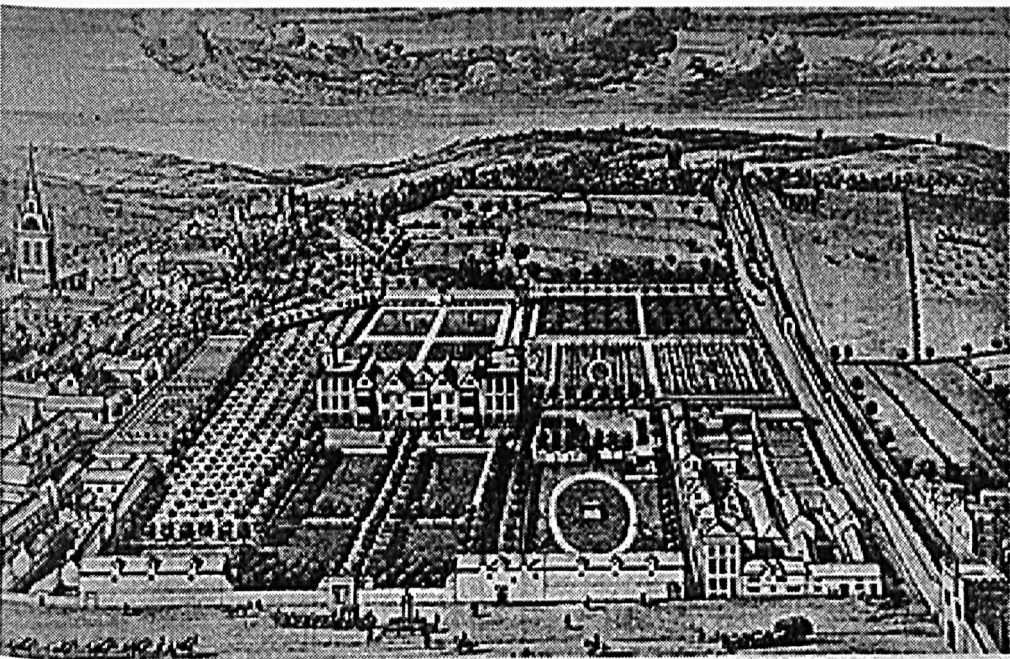


Fig.2.3 Jan Kip & Leonard Knyff, 'The Seat of the Hon.ble Sir Wm. Blackett Bar.tt with part of the town of Newcastle Upon Tyne', 1707

⁴¹ Stephen Daniels, 'Goodly Prospects: English Estate Portraiture, 1670-1730', in Nicholas Alfrey and Stephen Daniels (eds.), *Mapping the Landscape. Essays on Art and Cartography* (Nottingham, 1990), pp.9-12



Fig.2.2 Matthew Read, 'Whitehaven, Cumbria, showing Flatt Hall', c.1730-35

It corresponded with, and affirmed their own professed cultivated taste and outlook, embodying the ideals of beauty, order, and harmony between town and rural surrounds. This is to say that, in constructing urban prospects that might appeal to the sensibilities of the elite as subscribers, imagery with an edifying value, greenery was a natural source of emphasis. The representations married an impression of the nobility, order and civility of the town with the virtue, harmony and aesthetic appeal of the natural environment. We can see this exemplified further in the representations of parks and gardens within the town.

The continental landscape tradition did not systematically exclude the town. Claude's landscapes allowed for the nobility of cities, as an enrichment of the scene, and evidence of a concord between man and the natural environment.⁴² The Flemish artist Jan Siberechts' landscapes of Nottingham, painted in 1694 and c.1700, paint the town as an organic rather than overbearing feature within the scape (see fig.2.4).⁴³ The use of high aerial viewpoint is coupled with the foregrounding of rivers, fields and meadows, and framing of hills and trees to depict the town as part of an orderly and harmonious composition. The impression created transmutes the worldly, ephemeral town into something noble and universal, intrinsically rooted within the natural order of things, countering the alternative vision of the city as a blot on the landscape, a drain on the surrounding countryside's productivity and populace, and a nursery of artifice, dissolution and disorder. In other words, this kind of imagery naturalises the town. The town and the surrounding countryside do not grate against each other, but embody the kind of harmony of art and nature, mankind and the Creation, that was the ideal. This was what

⁴² Helen Langdon, 'The Imaginative Geographies of Claude Lorrain', in Chloe Chard and Helen Langdon (eds), *Transports: Travel, Pleasure, and Imaginative Geography, 1600-1830* (New Haven & London, 1996), pp.151-178, p.158

⁴³ Jan Siberechts, 'Nottingham and the Trent', 1694, Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art, London; Jan Siberechts, 'View of Nottingham from the East', c.1700, The Castle Museum, Nottingham



Fig.2.4 Jan Siberechts, 'Nottingham from the East', c.1700

Defoe had in mind when he remarked on the rural margins of London, 'nothing can be more beautiful...villages fill'd with houses, and the houses surrounded with gardens, walks, vistas, avenues, representing all the beauties of building, and all the pleasures of planting'.⁴⁴ John Macky stood on the Downs overlooking Epsom and declared 'Its' one of the loveliest Prospects imaginable, to view in the Vale below such an agreeable Mixture of Trees and Buildings, that a stranger is at a loss to know... whether it be a Town in a Wood, or a Wood in a Town'.⁴⁵ Such an harmonious fusion of art, architecture and landscape is represented as the zenith of urban form. William Goldwin's poetic description of Bristol extols the city on the basis that 'Nature's Hand and Arts Improvement join,/To make the Place in useful Greatness shine'.⁴⁶ Shrewsbury was a place of 'good strength, as well by nature as by art'.⁴⁷ As the sense of a conflict and distancing between town and countryside grows in response to increasing urbanisation, the desire to preserve and represent an harmonious balance between urban and natural environments becomes increasingly self-conscious. The fact that landscape painting developed and flourished in Europe's most intensely urbanised nations, initially Italy, Flanders and the Dutch Republic, and into the eighteenth century in France and England, supports the relationship between urban development and landscape perspective.⁴⁸ As the eighteenth century wore on, the shift towards an apparent harmonisation of the built and natural environments becomes more apparent, an embracing rather than sectioning off through enclosure. This naturalising of a process of division, and attempts to smother the rifts with an impression of seamless boundaries occurs in response to, and to head off the stark realities of the enclosure movement in the countryside, and the social inequity, and heightened distinction between urban and rural felt in the town. Within the development of garden style, this parallels the innovation of the ha-ha, and the stylistic

⁴⁴ Defoe, *Tour*, I, p.167

⁴⁵ Macky, *Journey through England*, I, p.109

⁴⁶ William Goldwin, *A Poetical Description of Bristol* (London, 1712), p.1

⁴⁷ Quoted in H. Owen and J.B. Blakeway *A History of Shrewsbury*, 2 vols., (London, 1825), I, p.491

⁴⁸ Cosgrove, *Social Formation*, p.20

throwing open of the garden to the wider countryside. Within the town, it is deducible in the shift from Royal Circus, Bath, turned in on itself, to Royal Crescent, opening its arms to a natural environment beyond; in permeable iron railings around squares and gardens replacing brick walls; in the town walls coming down, or becoming platforms on the proximity of town and country; in the enthusiasm for walks laid out to act as passageway from town into countryside; in the development and popularity of parks and gardens merging the urban threshold and the open space beyond.

Literary representations of the urban environment make similar play of aesthetic landscape motifs. Henry Jones lauded the natural advantages enjoyed by Shrewsbury in a poem celebrating its central parkland, the Quarry. The wide prospects from the site, over the Severn and out to 'blue-rob'd, lofty, distant, hills', and up into the town of 'rising Steeples' are likened to '*Claude's* rich canvass where the objects grow,/ Or, *Titian*, thy immortal tints that glow'.⁴⁹ In a poetic description of 1724 the town of Nottingham is couched within a decidedly pastoral setting, 'so well plac'd/ With such a charming situation blest;/Thro' Britain's famous isle, no town appears/That more of bounteous nature's blessings shares'. The ensuing account conjures a pre-lapsarian landscape of plenty, with 'beauteous' Nottingham basking amidst and atop 'the paradise below' of rich meadows, well-stocked waters, fertile fields, and shady woods enjoyed by 'the happy people' reared on 'sweet ambrosial air'.⁵⁰ In similar vein, Nottingham's mid-eighteenth-century historian and keen amateur botanist, Charles Deering, is pleased to quote a pastoral eulogy of his settled home that imagines forest and hills offering protective shelter whilst the town gazes benevolently on nature paying homage, a flowery carpet spread at her feet and the Trent winding by in watery tribute. In Deering's estimation the approach to the city coming from the south, from the castle side, culminated in 'a surprisingly grand and magnificent Prospect, in the framing of which (it is hard to say)

⁴⁹ Henry Jones, *Shrewsbury Quarry, &c.* (Shrewsbury, 1769), p.12

⁵⁰ Anon, *An Historical and Poetical Description of the Ancient Town and Castle of Nottingham* (Nottingham, 1724), p.7

whether Art or Nature has the greatest share'. Indeed, 'were a naturalist in quest of an exquisite spot to build a town or city upon could he meet with one that would better answer his wishes?'.⁵¹ Nottingham was to be commended 'In Respect of its Situation', which was 'extreamly commodious and delightful...standing in the Midst almost of a Forest, and a sporting County'.⁵² Another chronicler cites the towns' 'vast command of the richest Prospect of Halls, steeples, Towns, woods, and fertile meadows and Fields...her nearness to the fine & healthful air of the forest of Sherwood' concluding 'she hath real advantages, above most Towns in the Kingdom'.⁵³ This kind of florid praise was a familiar conceit in the advertising of a town's charms, but the fact that, here too, so much was made of natural setting is nonetheless revealing of the central role that nature played in the construction of positive imagery of the siting and prospect of the town, corresponding with the blooming visual representations.

Maps were able to convey a similarly idealised impression of city-scape, as an aesthetically pleasing, harmonious and well-managed estate, directed towards the external viewer. John Rocque's rendering of London in 1747 emphasised and detailed the squares and gardens, thus helping to convey the city as a very acquiescent environment, controlled and controllable, largely appropriated by elite leisured space. A good deal of attention is paid to such features as the grounds of the mansions along the Thames. The map of Nottingham by Badder and Peat included in Charles Deering's history highlights green space whilst depicting the built fabric as neat, featureless blocks, bar sketching the principal monuments of authority, and of polite urban society- the churches, schools, hospitals and mansion houses (see fig.9.8). This kind of imagery served to emphasise the fruits of urban commercial success and celebrate

⁵¹ Charles Deering, *Nottinghamia Vetus et Nova or A Historical Account of the Ancient and Present State of the Town of Nottingham* (Nottingham, 1751), pp. 2, 17

⁵² T. Cox, *History of Nottinghamshire* (London, 1727), pp.3, 18

⁵³ Bromley House, Nottingham, Deering MS., 1737-1749, cc.265, John Gunthorpe, 'A Timid Description of Nottingham'

civic pride.⁵⁴ The way that the grime and graft of rural activity and production is excluded from landscape art, country estate views and pastoral literature finds a parallel in these urban plans and prospects. The natural spaces highlighted are not, on the whole, sloshed with mud, growing cabbages, draped with laundry or frequented by beggars and pigs. Similarly, the grimier side of town is hard to pick out. These prospects skip the alleys, the dirt and the poverty and the crowding, often by not peopling the image at all. That is, except for the observers, well-dressed figures situated on the high ground overlooking the town. The urban panoramas produced between 1728 and 1753 by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck for purchase by subscription very commonly position a group of obviously leisured and well-to-do citizens on the high foreground. These exemplify the special status of the observer, able to remove himself from the fabric of the town and assume a commanding and encompassing perspective, and yet retain a connection with the leisure and cultivated civility of the town. This impression is aided by picking out the markers of order, civility and leisure, the churches, assembly rooms, walks, and so on, in the town below. These figures enjoy the countryside without becoming submerged in it. In 'The South East Prospect of the City of Bath' of 1734 the party clearly depicted on the far right are juxtaposed with a shaded cluster of ragged rustic figures, herding and hunting (see fig.2.5). In a similar vein the 'The South Prospect of Nottingham', produced in 1743, contrasts the prominent elegant promenaders in the Meadows, with cattle, milkmaids and herder going about their business in the shadowy left of the image (see fig.2.6). In each, one set is clearly 'outside' the landscape, and the others 'inside', absorbed in stylised rural tasks. It is interesting to note that the landscape and estate artist Jean-Baptiste Claude Chatelain was drafted in and responsible for the foreground and figures in a number of these panoramas.⁵⁵ In the Buck prospects, the town synchronises with its natural setting, and makes a virtue of green space within and around it.

⁵⁴ See Harley, 'Maps, knowledge and power', pp.277-312, p.292

⁵⁵ Ralph Hyde, *A Prospect of Britain. The Town Panoramas of Samuel and Nathaniel Buck* (London, 1994), p.28

A EAST PROSPECT OF THE CITY OF BATH.

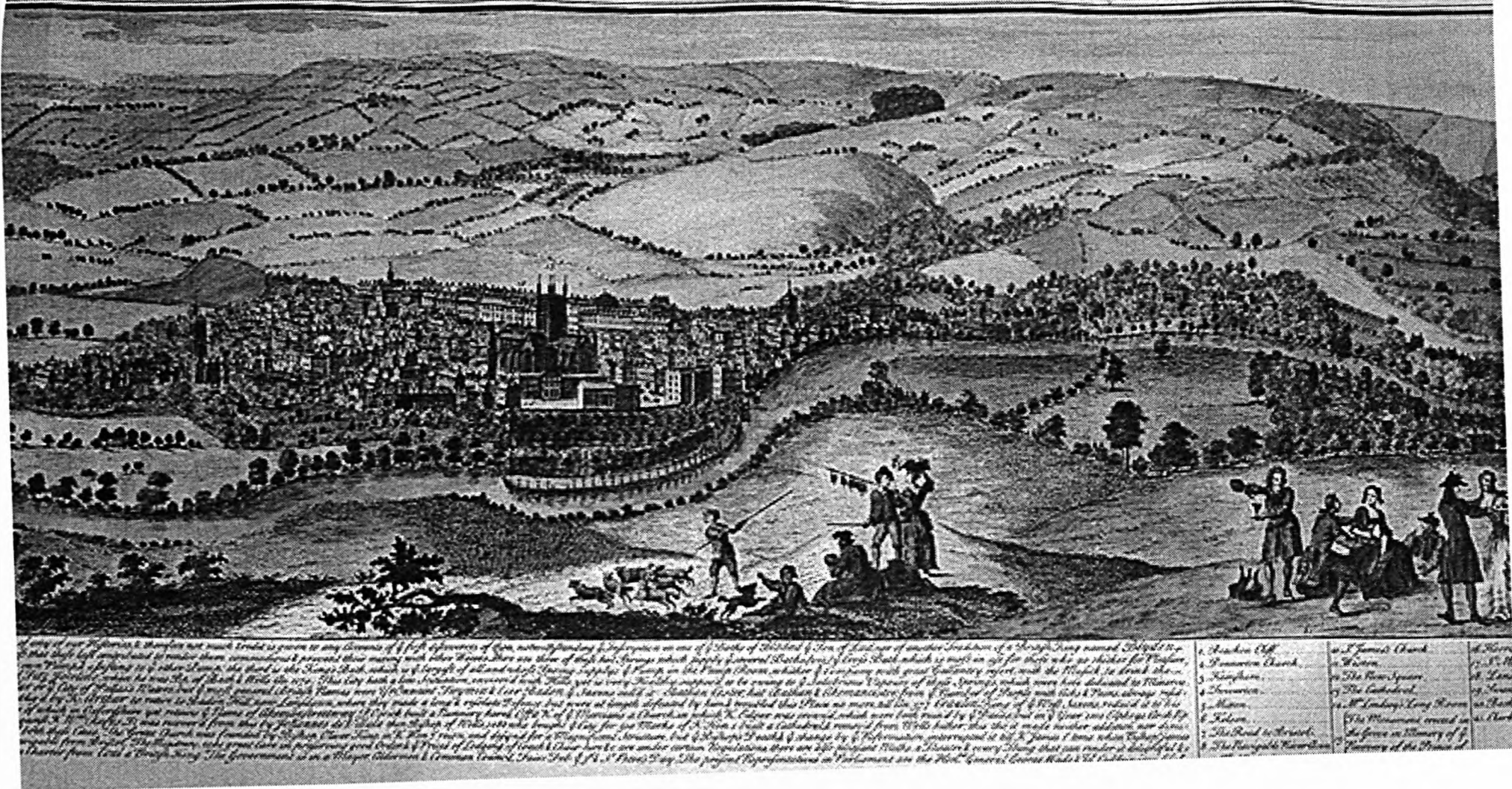


Fig.2.5 Samuel & Nathaniel Buck, 'The South East Prospect of the City of Bath', 1734

This representation of Nottingham, quite dominated by the neat Meadows that lay between the Leen and the Trent, carefully illustrates the raised footwalk that ran out from the town across 'the beautiful Meadows', and itemises the feature in a short key otherwise dominated by the Castle and churches (see fig.5.3). The Bath prospect conveys an image of the city as orderly, well built and compact, cradled between the Avon and the surrounding Downs. The angle foregrounds Harrison's Walks as an extensive tree lined area bordered by assembly rooms and the Orange Grove, seemingly within the precinct of the presiding Abbey. Again, the key picks out these features besides identifying the churches, transport links, Wood's new Queen Square, and the surrounding villages. Thomas Robins's prospect of Bath, c.1750 similarly couches the entire city within a natural frame (see fig.2.7). Robins was primarily an illustrator of gardens, and thus not only worked within the tradition of Kip and Knyff and John Rocque, but also signals a similar crossing over and applying of gardenesque style to urban scape.⁵⁶ His prospects of Bath employ elevated and/or peripheral vantage points, such as Bathwick Meadows, and Beechen Cliff, to convey a strong sense of *rus in urbe*. In this prospect the viewer is positioned on the far bank of the Avon, standing amidst cattle on a grassy bank also enjoyed by a couple out walking and three gentlemen anglers. Across the water the impression of Bath as playground for the rich is continued. The prospect is completely dominated by the riverside walk, St James's Triangle before the Grand Parade, and the Orange Grove leading up to the Abbey, the exaggeration of scale shrinking the city away to the status of model village set around a village green. Playing up these spaces within urban representations presents a welcome, safe and manageable image to visitors, soothing their passage into and negotiation of urban terrain.

The highlighting of recreational facilities is also marked in John Wood's Bath plan of 1735, which literally pictorialises the city within a rococo frame (see fig.2.8).

⁵⁶ John Harris, *Gardens of Delight. The Rococo English Landscape of Thomas Robins the Elder* (London, 1978), p.10



Fig.2.7 Thomas Robins, 'Prospect of Bath', c.1750

The plan presents Bath as very regular, comprehensible, and as an embodiment of order through civilised surroundings, built and natural, not surprisingly showcasing Wood's Queens Square development. Greater detail is invested in squares and orderly garden plots than in built structures, shown as blocks. The accompanying text, encircling the plan, is at pains to stress the natural advantages of the city, in the manner of histories and guides. Both text and plan pick out the Orange Grove, the 'Terrass Walk' and Harrison's Gardens, as well as the spa facilities for water bathing and drinking, theatres, assembly rooms, places of worship, and charitable enterprises, in short spelling out an emphatically leisured, polite perspective. In all, it leaves the reader/viewer in no doubt that Bath represents a supreme fusion of pleasure, health and urbane refinement; 'There are pleasant Walks, and everything that renders the City Entertaining and Delightful'. Indeed, such is the city's consummate appeal to persons of distinction that it has become 'one of the most Polite and Agreeable Places in Europe'.

An urban outlook

So far, the concern has been with the imagery of nature in prospects of the town from without. Moving on into the town itself, prospects out, over the surrounding countryside, prove very desirable, the possession and appreciation of such being equated with social elevation. Within the town, the scope for abstraction, for the removal from and above the urban fabric, and its bustle, noise, business, and cloying atmosphere was keenly sought and highly prized. Elevated and airy ground was appropriated for recreational purposes and fashionable living. Chapter 5 considers this relationship between environmental factors and premium residential areas and leisure space in greater detail.

Addison's stress on the importance and value of an unfettered perspective, 'a spacious Horison is an Image of Liberty, where the Eye has Room to range abroad', was not lost in

the close packed streets and alleys of the town.⁵⁷ In this environment social climbing meant exactly that, to clamber above the urban scrum and flag one's elevated status. The height of good taste and social advantage was advertised in the fine view one commanded over natural environs from an elegant upper storey window. If this was not possible, the next best thing was to commandeer the elevated vistas of the town, and flatter oneself and impress others with the possession of a cultivated eye, and superior appreciation of a country view.

Elevated position and prospect over gardens and/or the surrounding countryside was recognised as an unfailing property recommendation. Nottingham's residential appeal to the well-heeled was, in no small part, attributed to this. Houses along the fashionable Pavements and Castlegate enjoyed views over the Trent and Meadows. The prospect from Rothwell Willoughby's house on Low Pavement was framed between two summerhouses set at the end of his garden. In 1733 William Hallowes bought and cleared the site opposite his house on High Pavement in order to create a garden vista with a rural backdrop.⁵⁸ A later account describes 'an opening made on the other side the way, and here the stranger is surprised with seeing through the rails a garden, beyond which an unbounded prospect suddenly breaks upon his view...The meadows, at a considerable depth below, spreading to a very great extent, with the Trent winding along, and the view carried as far as the eye can reach'.⁵⁹ In the debate regarding the re-siting of the County Hall Thomas Parkyns marshalled arguments in favour of its situation on High Pavement that drew upon its extensive views;

Don't you think that the Judges will not much rather chuse to lie in the open, free and wholesome airy Part of the Town, as now; where they have the Prospect of the Duke of Kingston's Holme Pierepoint, with those antient Gardens, yet much in Fashion, Mr

⁵⁷ Bond, *Spectator*, III, no.412, 23 June, 1712, p.541

⁵⁸ Henstock, 'The changing fabric of the town', 1550-1750', p.121

⁵⁹ Anon, *A Description of England and Wales* (1769), quoted in Adrian Henstock, 'County House, High Pavement', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*, 78, (1974), p.58

Muster's House at Colwick, and usefull modern Gardens on the one hand; the magnificent Palace, the Duke of Newcastle's, commanding for Prospect, &c. and well finish'd castle; with Lord Middleton's Woollaton-Hall, on the other hand; and the pleasant flowry, and fragrant Meadows, the Situation of fine Clifton, with those elegant Gardens, in a direct and straight Line in their View.⁶⁰

The *Foreigners Guide* to London and Westminster, published in 1729, consistently emphasised prospects in describing prime residential areas and principal houses around the city. The tour included an account of Buckingham House, reciting the famous inscriptions etched around the architrave relating to its prospects, amongst which, on the west side, 'Rus in Urbe'.⁶¹ The alignment of the house at the head of St James's Park by John Sheffield both appropriated fine prospects and asserted the owner's defiant power.⁶² Elsewhere, prestigious urban developments were at pains to incorporate visual access to green space. Queen Square, in London, flaunted 'very fine Houses, which the Prospect into the Park, renders more agreeable'. Cavendish Square was 'commendable for its fine Situation, enjoying a clear Air, and open Prospect over the Fields'.⁶³ The taste for prospects out of the town is neatly reflected in property advertisements. The *Bath Chronicle* for 1761 advises of the letting of a house 'Fit for a Gentleman's family, situated in Kings-Mead-Square, having a garden, with a pleasant Prospect open to the Fields'.⁶⁴ A house in St James's Street was to be recommended for its 'good Prospect...in a healthy Situation'.⁶⁵ But this was not only practice in resort towns. A large house in the Westgate area of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne was recommended for its 'Garden and Summer-

⁶⁰ Sir Thomas Parkyns, *Queries and Reasons* 3rd edn. (n.p., 1724), p.12

⁶¹ Anon, *The Foreigner's Guide...in their Tour through the Cities of London and Westminster* (London, 1729), pp.22, 24

⁶² The fire-damaged Arlington House had been bought, demolished and rebuilt by John Sheffield, later Duke of Buckingham. In its construction, Sheffield re-oriented the property in such a way as to fully exploit its' position at the head of the Park, visually appropriating the royal land in the manner of private estate (making it an obvious acquisition for the royal family in 1761). At the time Queen Anne voiced her displeasure via the Surveyor General of Crown Lands, remarking on the liberties Buckingham had taken with Park land beyond that which he had been granted. Coats, *Gardens of Buckingham Palace*, pp.30-32

⁶³ Anon, *The Foreigner's Guide*, pp.26, 120

⁶⁴ *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, I, no. 26, 9 April, 1761

⁶⁵ *Bath Journal*, 21 July, 1746

house, all in very good Order, and well placed for Air and Prospect'.⁶⁶ A gentleman seeking lodgings in 1755 indicated that he desired 'a clean open Part of the Town of Newcastle', and in the following year a house was recommended as fit for a gentlemans family on account of it being 'agreeably situated, adjoining pleasant Walks, stands high, in a good Air, and retired from the Noise of the Street'.⁶⁷

The attribution of landscape prospects as asset was unfailingly deployed in urban panegyrics, even if the town itself was low-lying. Henry Chapman's 1673 description of Bath spins a positive slant on a low perspective;

being in such a bottom, [Bath] hath such a variety of Prospects, and Landskips, that few places parallel it; whereas Places scited on Levels, seldom please the Eye far, deprived by the interposition of the next Pale, Wall, or Hedge; whereas this, raising it self higher than the adjoining Gardens and Meadows, hath full and free Passage; nor do the Hills so streighten the Prospect, but that the Eye may even surfeit itself with variety of objects (in some places) for at least three Miles, at once beholding the Meander-Avon semi-circling the City, then the low Meadows, in several small and great Partitions, the Pasture grounds above them, then the Cornfields, so gradually ye come up to the Downs...⁶⁸

The key here is the stress on an unhindered prospect of the countryside from the town. It is difficult to find a description of Bath that does not make play of the natural environs, the valley setting amidst an amphitheatrical circle of hills. Along with the construction of smart new estates, moving steadily up the hills, recreational spaces in the city took account of Bath's rural environs. The Grand Parade was designed by Wood expressly to provide residents and promenaders with a perspective over the Avon and countryside beyond, in recognition of the significance he accorded each landscape feature as an integral part of Bath's distinction, 'the Building of this Parade, consisting of twelve Houses, with the Country before it, reflect a Beauty to each other, which has the Power of charming and delighting the Eye of almost every Beholder! For Solsbury Hill, at a

⁶⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 28 December, 1723

⁶⁷ *Newcastle Intelligencer*, 31 December, 1755, 25 February, 1756

⁶⁸ Henry Chapman, *Thermae Redivivae: the City of Bath described* (London, 1673), pp. 2-3

Distance of two Miles, Faces the Walk...' (see fig.3.2).⁶⁹ The Orange Grove area, previously known as the Gravel Walks, presented 'a pleasant prospect of the river and adjacent hills'.⁷⁰ Newcastle's recreational open spaces, the Forth, the Shieldfield, Carliol Croft wall walk, and the Cowhill on the town common, all furnished prospects into and out of the town.

Natural imagery within the town

From the visualisation of the town from a 'natural' perspective, and the prospect of nature from the town, I move to consider vantage points on parks, gardens and walks within the town, looking into these sites as themselves key features picked out within the urban landscape, rather than just as platforms outwards.

The representation of urban green spaces is used to convey an order and harmony within the town itself. Canaletto's images of London engage natural features, a sparkling Thames, calm, pastoral gardens, in the creation and projection of a refined, aesthetic, civilised city. He sets up his easel on the formal garden terrace of Somerset House, fronting the river, and then afloat looking back onto the gardens and house, at Richmond House overlooking Whitehall and the Privy Garden, on the promenade in St James's Park. The paintings of the Vauxhall Gardens, including one looking down the exaggerated sweep of the Grand Walk, present a vision of ordered and harmonious social interaction in a natural arena (see fig.2.9). This visual imagery, presenting a scene of refined politeness, was re-inforced by the homage to the Gardens penned by John Lockman. The *Sketch*, describing all 'the various beauties of Vauxhall', and advertised as 'a very necessary companion to the four Views of Signor

⁶⁹ Wood, *Description of Bath*, p.351; Wood compared the prospect of Bath with that of Carthage, and believed that temples had stood on the hills surrounding the city, see Tim Mowl and Brian Earnshaw, *John Wood. Architect of Obsession* (Huddersfield, 1988), pp.139,192

⁷⁰ Samuel Gale, 'A Tour through Several Parts of England...1705', *Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica*, ed. J. Nichols, 10 vols., 1st publ. London, 1780-1790, repr. (New York, 1968), III, no.II, part I, p.23



Fig.2.9 A. Canaletto, Vauxhall Gardens, the Grand Walk, 1751

Canaletti', was sold alongside the prints, on sale in the Gardens at one shilling a piece. The text explicitly pandered to a notion of superior pleasure, articulating a learned distinction in appreciation of the gardens, 'One great Pleasure felt in this Grove, by an intelligent, contemplative Spectator, is for him to observe, in how beautiful a Variety the several Objects of it group, as he moves through the different Parts of this magical spot'. The informed visitor reads the garden in the language of landscape, deploying an artistic eye to frame the garden site as a series of scenes, 'In this bless'd grove, how oft have we/Observ'd the different Objects play?/A statue, tent, alcove or tree/Now seem to join, now steal away./ One Step, and we the picture change/For other Objects claim our view:/Wond'ring, from scene to scene we range/Ever delightful! ever new!'.⁷¹

The spectator is flattered with the ability to command the scene, to see the whole and its parts. The combined packaging of these two as promotional adverts for the Gardens presented an impression of elevated taste, civility and pastoral delight in which walkers could bask.⁷² The role of visual material in forming a corpus of flattering imagery is also illustrated in the production and popularity of fans, themselves a status symbol, bearing imprints of garden sites. In 1737 newspapers advertised 'the new Vaux-Hall Fan; or, the rural Harmony and delightful Pleasures of Vaux-Hall Gardens...done to its utmost Beauty and Perfection'.⁷³ This was probably a later edition of Harris's Vauxhall fan of 1736, showing a large company mingling around the orchestra between regimented trees, bordered by the supper boxes.⁷⁴ Neat views of the tree-lined walks of the Orange Grove in Bath by Thomas Robins and George Spereen were projected onto fans in the late 1730's

⁷¹ John Lockman, *A Sketch of the Spring Gardens, Vaux-Hall. In a Letter to a Noble Lord* (London, n.d. [1752?]), p.17

⁷² See Alfred Bunn (ed.), *The Vauxhall Papers* (London, 1841), pp.123-4, & Museum of London, [Warwick Wroth] Vauxhall Gardens scrapbooks, 4 vols., vol.1, advertisement dated 7 May, 1752 (source not cited)

⁷³ ML, Wroth scrapbooks, vol. 1, source not cited. 'The Lost Pleasure Gardens' exhibition at Finchcocks House, 3 August-9 October 1994, included fans depicting the Pantiles at Tunbridge Wells, and Ranelagh Gardens. I am grateful to Catherine Nash for this reference

⁷⁴ Reproduced in David Coke, 'Vauxhall Gardens', in Michael Snodin (ed.), *Rococo. Art and Design in Hogarth's England*, Victoria and Albert Museum Exhibition Catalogue, (16 May-30 September 1984), p.83

following their re-ordering and re-planting.⁷⁵ Speren also produced a fan view of Harrison's Walks by the riverside, observed from the opposite bank with the buildings of the town behind the rural scene, and the North Parade showing Wood's imposing housing fronted by orderly gardens (see fig.2.10).⁷⁶

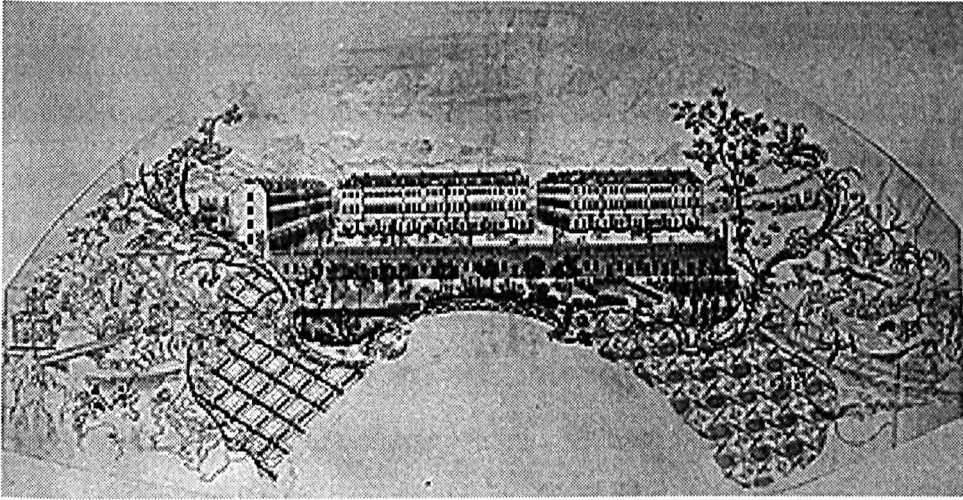


Fig.2.10 George Speren, fan view of the North Parade, Bath

In each of these impressions, the greenery, peopled by genteel citizens in detached, leisurely mode, sits comfortably alongside elegant architecture.

These serene portraits not only moderated the rough edges of the built environment with a charming leafiness, but also presented these public meeting grounds as the personification of calm order, rather than as aggressive arenas of social combat. There is no evidence of a very mixed, competitive and jostling crowd, of the town folk running amok and playing games, of concerted exclusion, of sexual indiscretions, just a deliberate promenading of affluent citizens up and down that suppresses outward signs of tension

⁷⁵ Bath Reference Library, Thomas Robins, Orange Grove from the west, 1737; George Speren, Orange Grove from the north, 1737, Victoria Art Gallery, Bath, reproduced in Trevor Fawcett and Marta Inskip, 'The Making of Orange Grove', *Bath History*, V, (1994), p.39

⁷⁶ George Speren, Harrison's Walks, 1737, BRL; George Speren, North Parade, 1757, reproduced in James Lees-Milne, *Images of Bath* (Richmond, 1982), plate nos.611 & 603

and inequity. In this way parks and gardens are used to assert that 'everything is alright', affirming an illusion of 'natural' order. They serve as excellent devices in creating an impression of a controlled and harmonious urban society, open and accessible and with its members mixing freely together.

The shift from a clear sectioning off to the appearance of synthesis between built and natural mentioned previously is deducible in the way that sight lines into and out of natural spaces in the town are set up. Chapter 3 will argue that there is a case for the town fuelling and indeed pre-empting the desire to leap the fence between the human estate and God's estate, and open up the horizon. The passion for elevated sites for prospects out has already been noted. The enclosing of parks and gardens in the town also shifted from hard to soft boundaries. By hard I mean walls and high hedges, the symbols of privacy, that very obviously exclude the incursion of prospect and person. Soft boundaries, such as railings and ha-has, are visually more permeable and present a more public persona, but are introduced alongside an increasing desire for and attempted introduction of means of exclusion. By way of example, in Newcastle in 1736 Henry Bourne relates that the gardens of the Barber Surgeon's Hall, described by Fiennes in 1698 as 'a pretty garden walled in, full of flowers and greenes in potts and in the borders', are to be opened up to view, 'the Wall at the Foot of the Garden will be taken away, and instead thereof will be Iron-Rails'. This measure would 'shew the Hall and Gardens to some Advantage'.⁷⁷ The railed private garden, as a public display of private space, served as ostentatious advertising of exclusivity in a similar fashion to the open shutters allowing full view from the street of the blaze of activity in first floor apartments.⁷⁸ Railings were also put up around squares. Thomas Fairchild, author of *The City*

⁷⁷ Fiennes, *Journeys*, p.211; Henry Bourne, *The History of Newcastle upon Tyne* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1736), p.138

⁷⁸ John Brewer, 'This, that and the other: Public, Social and Private in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in Dario Castiglione and Lesley Sharpe (eds.), *Shifting the Boundaries. Transformation of the Languages of Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter, 1995), p.17

Gardener of 1722, was very particular about the importance of the prospect into the garden square, but primarily from the view point of the houses around it. By his reckoning the desired affect was to secure a clear view of the garden from the house, and yet for it to retain its own privacy. This might be achieved by the planting of hedges and groves of trees within the square so that whilst these 'would hide the Prospect of the Houses from us; every House would command the Prospect of the Whole'. However, tall trees planted on the outside of the square were not a good idea for, once matured, 'they must stand in our Way, and resist our Sight, and rob the Gentlemen of that View which they have by their Expencc endeavour'd to gain'.⁷⁹ The Duke of Buckingham kept his wall in the gardens of Buckingham House deliberately low so as 'to admit the view of a Meadow full of cattle just under it, (no disagreeable object in the midst of a great city)'.⁸⁰ In 1764 the outer wall enclosing St James's Park was substituted with iron railings.⁸¹ The pulling down or conversion of town walls into walkways also fits within this urban experience of opened up sightlines, signalling a shift from an enclosed and defensive to a leisured perspective on the urban environs. Dr Richard Pococke enjoyed 'a walk on the town walls almost all round the town', and from a vantage point by the Castle in 1736, 'from the top of which is a most beautiful prospect', declared Shrewsbury 'the Paradise of England'.⁸² In 1750 the walls in the town were described as 'very pleasant to walk upon, in view of the River'.⁸³ In Bath the gates, wall and fencing that had been thrown around the Gravel walks back in the 1680's to make the walks more select were demolished in the renovations of the 1730's, designed to re-present the Grove as an openly accessible

⁷⁹ Thomas Fairchild, *The City Gardener* (London, 1722), pp.13, 42

⁸⁰ Quoted in Coats, *Gardens of Buckingham Palace*, p. 37

⁸¹ Hazel Thurston, *Royal Parks for the People* (London, 1974), p.40

⁸² Richard Pococke, *The Travels through England of Dr. Richard Pococke* ed. James Joel Cartwright, 2 vols, (London, 1888), I, pp.v-vi

⁸³ Anon, *A New Present State of England* 2 vols (London, 1750), I, p..201

and uniformly orderly place of assembly, albeit displacing the common sort of people who had previously been tolerated on the gravelled lower paths.⁸⁴

So far, the sighting of nature in the town has concentrated on views in and out, but it is worth sparing a moment here, as an introduction to the issues of internal style and order that concern chapter 3, to follow through the discussion of layers of images made early on in this chapter with regard to the visualisation of nature actually within the parks and gardens of the town. John Entick's description of the 'fine vista' down the Grand Walk in the Vauxhall Gardens in 1766 as 'terminated by a landscape of the country', and account of the pictorial devices in use including 'a beautiful landscape painting of ruins and running water' and at 'the end of another Walk is a beautiful painting; one is a building, with a scaffold and a ladder before it, which has often deceived the eye: the other is a view in a Chinese Garden', is reminiscent of Magritte's painting of a landscape painting set before a window.⁸⁵ This garden is explicitly a canvas, or stage for the projection of images of nature. Vauxhall also made play of emblematic representations of the natural world in the form of the wildernesses and rural downs, musical fairy bushes and a mechanical cascade set within a landscape scene, architectural evocations of Arcadia in classical style temples and arches, and directed sightlines down the walkways and out of the Gardens into a pastoralised agrarian countryside. Vauxhall was, admittedly, quite exceptional in its theatricality, but other parks and gardens exhibit a conscious pictorialisation, so that the natural setting is framed and consumed as a refracted image or series of images of the natural world. John Bowen's early eighteenth-century prospect from the Kingsland bank of the Quarry before the formal laying out of the avenues, and of Shrewsbury town beyond, is staged and framed by theatrical curtains.⁸⁶ Within the

⁸⁴ Fawcett & Inskip, 'Orange Grove', p.26; Bath City Records Office, Bath Council Minutes, 28 December, 1730

⁸⁵ J. Entick, *A New and Accurate History and Survey of London, Westminster, Southwark and Places Adjacent* 4 vols, (London, 1766), IV, pp.447, 449

⁸⁶ John Bowen, 'A Panoramic View at Shrewsbury', c.1710's, in the Paul Mellon Collection

Quarry itself the walker was steered to the double sided summerhouse at the apex of the network of paths, from where one's gaze was focused, rather like a self-appointed Kodak camera spot, across the river to the Kingsland bank, and, swinging round, up onto the spires of the town foregrounded by the green swathe of the park.

Conclusion

It is important to note and remember in all this that the notion of power and social status vested in cultivated appreciation of the landscape does not cover all angles on nature in the town. Certainly, a large part of the sources available privilege this way of looking, as the product of and/or responsive to the elite, but this should not then be taken either as the only point of view, or as an uncontested appropriation. As the introduction to a discussion of sight and site in the *Journal of Garden History* observes, 'An aspect of vision is the plurality of perspectives that viewers bring to the space they experience. Accordingly, the views intended by patrons and designers are not necessarily received visions and, just as visual prospects are constructed and prescribed, they are subverted and resisted'.⁸⁷ The projection of an elevated ordering and understanding of the natural scape is a very significant factor within social differentiation and the conjuring of an impression of harmony and order, but this thesis aims not only to track manifestations of this distinction within the town, but also to convey subversions of it, and alternative images and uses of nature in the town. The actual shaping of town parks and gardens, and who these manifold representations of nature in the town were produced by and for will now be explored.

⁸⁷ D. Fairchild Ruggles and Elizabeth Kryder-Reid, 'Introduction: vision in the garden', *Journal of Garden History*, XIV, no. 1, (1994), p.2

Chapter 3

The design and ordering of town parks and gardens

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the style and structuring of urban parks and gardens, both public and private, metropolitan and provincial. The details of garden design in this period have been the subject of a good number of studies, and it is not my intention here to retread familiar ground.¹ But, given the overwhelming emphasis on non-urban sites in these accounts, it is worth looking at the actual lay-out of town parks and gardens, and asking whether these slot within the overall picture of seventeenth and eighteenth century garden development presented, or rather exhibit any peculiarities of form and function. This ought to include sensitivity to differences between green spaces in towns too, so that just as urban parks and gardens merit particular attention rather than being swallowed up within a sweeping study of gardens *per se*, distinctions in the lay-out of public walks, royal parks, commercial pleasure gardens and private gardens should not to be blanketed. This will entail tracing the development and, where possible, evolving form of urban parks, gardens and walks. These issues of lay-out and form are considered under the topics of orientation, surface appearance, furniture and architecture, horticulture, and entertainments. As an adjunct to this, the appendix consists of maps showing the location of the parks, gardens and walks in my five case study centres; Bath, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, Nottingham, Shrewsbury, and London.

¹ These include David Jacques, *Georgian Gardens: the Reign of Nature* (London, 1983); Miles Hadfield, *A History of British Gardening* (London, 1969); John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis (eds.) *The Genius of the Place: The English Landscape Garden 1620-1820*, 1st publ. 1975, (Cambridge, Mass., 1990); Christopher Hussey, *English Gardens and Landscapes 1700-1750* (London, 1967); Tom Turner, *English Garden Design: Landscape and Styles since 1660* (Woodbridge, 1986); David Stuart, *Georgian Gardens* (London, 1979)

Orientation

This first section develops the issue of the relationship between nature in the town and the surrounding countryside, in terms of the location, or orientation of town parks and gardens, within the context of general garden design. In particular, emphasis falls on the identifying of an embracing of the natural landscape and the open countryside as a key factor in the development of what was conceived to be a more naturalistic English landscape garden style. This fits within a basic narrative of moving away from the enclosed and geometric design associated with French and Dutch, and before that Italian Renaissance gardens. It is a shift encapsulated in the epochal remarks of Alexander Pope regarding 'the *Genius of the Place*', or natural lie of the land, and of Horace Walpole, who identified and described a leaping of the fence whereby nature is drawn into the garden, and the garden merges out into nature, smoothing over the partition between man-made garden and natural environment.² At issue here is how town parks and gardens fit within this framework. Commonly, town gardens are summarily dismissed in garden history accounts as derivative and old-fashioned, trailing in the wake of much grander developments being forged on landed estates. Such interpretations, whilst pointing up the influential role of the large rural estate, can be misleading. Firstly, as Tom Williamson points out, focusing emphasis on the prominent estates, retrospectively identified as forerunners of the English style, distorts the picture by overlooking the mass of smaller or less renowned sites, including urban gardens.³ Secondly, as I will argue here, the orientation of town parks and gardens indicates that the ordering and appreciation of these sites did not lag behind contemporary attitudes towards the natural environment,

² Alexander Pope, *Of Taste, An Epistle to the Right Honourable Richard, Earl of Burlington* (London, 1731), p.7; Horace Walpole, *Horace Walpole Anecdotes of Painting...to which is added The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening*, ed. George Vertue, 4 vols., (Strawberry Hill, 1771), 4, p.137

³ Tom Williamson, *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stroud, 1995), pp.3-7

and its expression in garden design, but rather figured in and perhaps even pre-empted and fuelled the taste for a more naturalistic landscape and garden style.

Contending that nature in the town deserves more serious attention than it has received is really about asserting the significance of an urban perspective with regards the ordering of the landscape. The broader picture to this is that it is not simply the orientation of town parks and gardens in themselves that advances the taste for a greater naturalism, but rather perceptions of the urban environment. At best, the town as ordered, public, rational, geometric environment kindled the urge to retreat to a wilder place. At worst, the by-products of urbanisation- pollution, overcrowding, noise and materialism- fuelled the longing for an antidote, a simpler, purer, pastoral arcadia.⁴ Either way, the limitations of the built environment prompted a wistful gaze away from the streets and buildings and bustle, whether the imagined more naturalistic scene actually approximated to a real place or not. Town parks and gardens and walks are symptomatic of this desire. As early as 1669 the author of *Systema Agriculturae*, John Worlidge, was noting an urban inclination towards 'natural' garden design, 'It is for no other reason that Gardens, Orchards, Partirres, Avenues, etc. are in such request in Cities and Towns, but that they represent unto us Epitomized, the Form and Idea of the more ample and spacious pleasant Fields, Groves, and other Rustick objects of pleasure'.⁵

Thomas Fairchild's 1722 promotion of city gardening comments on the applicability of the common geometric style to an urban context, 'The plain way of laying out Squares in Grass Platts and Gravel Walks, does not sufficiently give our Thoughts an opportunity of Country Amusements; I think some sort of Wilderness-Work will do much better'.⁶ Even if Fairchild's concept of 'wilderness' was limited, the clear implication is that the town

⁴ Chapter 5 deals with the notion of natural spaces as antidote to the urban environment in greater detail

⁵ Worlidge, *Systema Agriculturae*, Preface

⁶ Fairchild, *City Gardener*, p.12

resident would find greater pleasure and diversion in images of naturalness, to contrast with the artifice of the built environment, than in formal garden designs. Descriptive accounts of nature in the town furnish evidence of the taste for rural touches in an urban context, so that, for example, Beat Louis de Muralt is enchanted by the meadows and pastures of St James's Park, whereby 'Its great Beauty consists in bringing (as it were) the Country into the City.' He describes it as 'a fine Country-like Place', finding it 'the more agreeable...because it has neither Art nor Regularity'.⁷ Von Uffenbach noted 'some of the finest English Cows' grazing, Tom Brown referred to the sale of fresh milk in the Park, and Kip's view depicts the milk-maids that would serve promenaders with a glass drawn straight from the cow (see fig.7.1).⁸ The Vauxhall Gardens incorporated groves, wildernesses, and 'Rural Downs', a turfed area 'where Lambs are seen Sporting', and extended its avenues out into what Lockman described as 'a View into the adjacent Meads; where Haycocks, and Haymakers sporting, during the mowing Season, add a Beauty to the Landskip'.⁹ An account of the gardens published in 1762 described the downs as 'covered with turf, and pleasingly interspersed with cypress, fir, yew, cedar and tulip trees'. The Druids or Lovers Walk, running along the southern edge of the gardens, was deliberately styled as a rustic retreat; 'on both sides of it are rows of lofty trees, which meeting at the top and interchanging their boughs, form a delightful verdant canopy. Among these trees build a number of fine singing birds, such as nightingales, blackbirds, thrushes, &c. whose sweet harmony add a peculiar pleasure in this rural scene'.¹⁰ In his constructions of promotional imagery for Vauxhall Lockman made considerable play of the notion of natural simplicity, as conveyed in his song 'Rural Beauty, or Vauxhall Garden' (see fig.3.1).

⁷ Beat Louis de Muralt, *Letters describing the character and customs of the English and French nations* (London, 1726), p.77

⁸ Z.C. Von Uffenbach, *London in 1710, From the Travels of Zacharias Conrad Von Uffenbach* ed. W.H. Quarrell & Margaret Mare, (London, 1934), p.12; Tom Brown, *Amusements Serious and Comical, Calculated for the Meridian of London* (London, 1700), p.67

⁹ Lockman, *Sketch*, pp.20, 2

¹⁰ Anon, *A Description of Vaux-Hall Gardens* (London, 1762), pp.44-5, 41



Fig.3.1 John Lockman songsheet, 'Rural Beauty, or Vauxhall Garden', 1750/2

Residents and visitors to Nottingham and Bath were able to take their recreation in a stroll across the Meadows, and there are countless examples of town dwellers delighting in the imagery of a pastoralised rurality played up in urban green space. The influence of the Virgilian model of agrarian rusticity was not then necessarily an irrelevance in the town. If, as is often said, the increasing order, formality and enclosure imposed on the countryside parallels the move towards a favouring of a more natural style in garden design and landscape appreciation, then the same argument might equally be applied to towns during a period of substantial urbanisation.¹¹ Fairchild's design for the planting of an urban square is premised on the needs of the residents for 'natural' space; 'In the first place; If a Square was planted in the Manner of a Wilderness, it would be a Harbour for Birds. 2dly, The Variety of Trees would be delightful to the Eye. 3dly, Groves and Wildernesses would be new and pleasant in a London Prospect'.¹²

Not only do urban parks and gardens provide leafy retreat, but they are developed along the fringes of the town, where the promenader can enjoy a vantage out over a supposedly unaffected landscape of fields and meadows and hills, as the previous chapter illustrated. Stephen Switzer, one of the earliest proponents of nature reigning over art in landscape design, grounded his notion of 'Rural and Extensive Gard'ning' in a greater sensitivity to the lie of the land, and in an insistence that 'all the adjacent Country be laid open to View, and that the Eye should not be bounded'. By this reckoning the garden ought to be open to 'the unbounded Felicities of distant Prospect, and the expansive Volumes of Nature herself'.¹³ The availability of space is clearly something that does limit the practical extensiveness of nature in the town, and marks out a distinction between the expansive landscaping of country estates, and town parks and gardens. But this very limitation

¹¹ Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, pp.9-14

¹² Fairchild, *City Gardener*, p.13

¹³ Stephen Switzer, *Ichnographia Rustica: or, The Nobleman, Gentleman, and Gardeners's Recreation* 3 vols., (London, 1718), I, p.335, xviii-xix, xxxv-xxxvi

prompted a desire to vault these bounds, the confines of the town, and claim an extended proprietorship. The shift in favour of the appearance of interactive garden and countryside is usually identified as epitomized by the use of the ha-ha.¹⁴ Strictly speaking, the ha-ha was a sunken wall with a ditch below, so that the bounds of a property were unobtrusively walled, removing the means of enclosure from sight. As a garden feature it stage-managed the visual merging of the garden and the countryside beyond, but, rather than suddenly appearing on the landscape and generating taste for an open vista, the ha-ha was the practical solution to a desire to achieve this effect. It was an effect identifiable in the emphasis on prospect of the countryside from the town outlined in chapter II. The town wall, for instance, solid testimony to the protective enclosure of the town, represented a block on visual access to the rural environs, and was therefore scaled to provide the walker with an unhindered perspective. Set walkways along the cusp of the town yielded country views to the eye of the spectator. At the far end of the Vauxhall Gardens a 'beautiful prospect of a fine meadow' was made the most of by use of a ha-ha, 'formed in a ditch to prevent the company going into the field', an unobtrusive boundary between the orderly confines of the garden and the countryside beyond.¹⁵ John Wood's Parades performed a similar function. From their elevated platform of quintessential urban civility one overlooked the surrounding panorama of river and meadows (see fig.3.2). For the promenader here the resultant effect was that 'you seem to be both in the City and Country at the same Time'.¹⁶ It took John Wood's son to fashion the epitome of urban form, the curl of the Royal Crescent, reaching out to the natural landscape, and drawing greenery up to the architectural frontage, Brownian style.

¹⁴ A. J. Dézallier D'Argenville, *La Théorie et la Pratique du Jardinage* (Paris 1709, trans.1712) was the first gardening text to provide an account of the ha-ha; Dixon Hunt & Willis, *Genius of the Place*, p.43

¹⁵ Anon, *Description of Vaux-Hall Gardens*, pp.46-7

¹⁶ Joseph Draper, *A Brief Description of Bath, in a Letter to a Friend* (n.p., 1747), p.5; see Elizabeth Claybourn Cossley's drawing of 1760, which illustrates this very well (fig.)

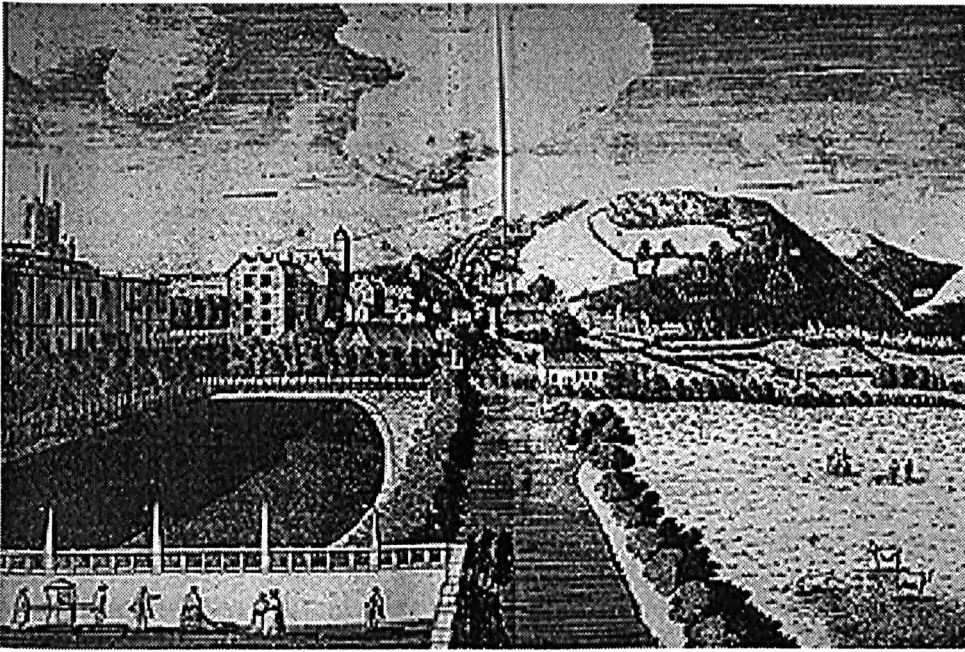


Fig.3.2 Elizabeth Claybourn Cossley, View from the North Parade, Bath, 1759 (the artist's angle makes the wall fronting the Parade appear higher than it was, but promenaders were able to see over it and enjoy the vantage)



Fig.3.3 The ha-ha in front of the Royal Crescent, Bath

This time, a traditional ha-ha was used to invisibly fence the urban domain and section off sheep grazing below, but, in an important sense, this crowned an established trend of town parks, gardens and walks acting as urban ha-ha's, naturalised buffer zones between the man-made fabric and rural environs, serving to draw the countryside into the town, visually, and lengthening perspective from the town out over rural surrounds (see fig.3.3). As raised in the discussion of the representation of nature in the town, the impression of a harmonious coalescing of built and natural environment was a potent imperative in the town. In this way one of the principal factors associated with the evolution of landscape gardening, and the shift towards an irregular and more 'natural' scape, had definite currency in the town. Furthermore, the predilection for rural imagery and a natural garden style in the ordering and appreciation of nature in and around the town from the late seventeenth century suggests that these ideas were not so much belated importations, evolved elsewhere, as integral concerns of, and responsive to an urban context.

At this point these contentions might be queried in line with the usual analysis of town parks and gardens that identifies a long adherence to formal, geometric style. Certainly, the scale of green space in the town was a factor, and also the proprietors of urban parks and gardens were not often given to investing the kind of money in these sites that wealthy landed gentlemen might have to lavish on the landscaping of their estates. Yet the suggestion that the retention of formal features means that town parks and gardens were old-fashioned and divorced from general trends in the ordering of natural spaces can be questioned on several counts. Firstly, town parks and gardens were not uniquely geometric whilst all other gardens shed their formality and became models of the English landscape style at its peak. Only a handful of renowned estates fashioned by the leading landscape designers and patrons form this core, and then primarily from the mid-eighteenth-century. Secondly, what was considered 'natural' changed over the course of

time, so that a design deemed informal might not appear so very irregular in retrospect. Therefore, finding a garden still rather geometric in design does not necessarily contradict the description or assertion that this represents a natural style. For example, the use of the term 'wilderness' to describe a section of a garden suggests a more untamed appearance than was in fact the case. Thirdly, the call for greater irregularity in landscape design appears to accommodate a gradation of formality out to informality. It was a case of negotiating a balance between art and nature, establishing what Hunt and Willis identify, in the writings of Shaftesbury, Addison and Switzer, as a sliding scale, with a retained formality closer to (the house), opening out to less regular forms farther away, as if nature was re-asserting itself.¹⁷ By this reading, it is the extended view and ordering of the natural scape that is central in the stylistic theorising of landscape design. In chronological terms too, the shift from a stilted, geometric ordering of nature to representations of informal landscape was a gradual process. It was only in the second half of the eighteenth century that Capability Brown extended the landscaping right up to the skirts of the house. This is of significance in the town in that apparent formality in urban parks and garden design, effectively comprising the safe and ordered foreground, did not negate sensitivity to the wider landscape, and a broadening perspective out to a more naturalistic hinterland. Within this context it is possible to situate and cite the countless examples of rather regular town parks and gardens oriented with the advantage of an extensive prospect out to more irregular rural environs. For example, London's formal Grays Inn walks boasted 'an agreeable Prospect to the Fields'.¹⁸ Vauxhall, as a larger plot of land, exhibited a gradation from the formality of the public and sociable central Grove that greeted the visitor upon entering the garden, with its supper boxes, orchestra and pavilions, fanning out to its more private peripheral areas, the Dark Walk

¹⁷ Dixon Hunt & Willis, *Genius of the Place*, p.9

¹⁸ Anon, *New Present State of England*, I, p.354

on one side, the wilderness and rural downs on the other, and beyond, as noted before, into adjacent fields.

The lay of the land

Having considered the cross-over between some of the theories of general garden design, and nature in the town, the chapter now moves onto a review of the layout and ordering of the parks and gardens of my case study towns. This part outlines the paving, gravelling, laying of turf, setting out of avenues and so on that shaped the outward appearance of urban green space.

My two case study sites in London, the Spring Gardens at Vauxhall and St James's Park, are also the best known and most thoroughly documented examples. The following accounts only really provide a sketch, highlighting the main features so that the characteristics of these green spaces can be considered alongside provincial town parks and gardens.¹⁹ The chronological span of this thesis begins with the opening of the Vauxhall Gardens and St James's Park around 1660. The two events, occurring either side of the river, signal a city reclaiming its provision of leisure facilities and tentatively

¹⁹ For further detail on Vauxhall Gardens see Lockman, *Sketch*; William Biggs Boulton, *The Amusements of Old London* 2 vols. (London, 1901); Warwick Wroth, *The London Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century*, 1st publ. 1896, (London, 1979); E. Beresford Chancellor, *The Pleasure Haunts of London* (London, 1925); James Granville Southworth, *Vauxhall Gardens: A Chapter in the Social History of England* (New York, 1941); W. S. Scott, *Green Retreats: The Story of Vauxhall Gardens 1661-1859* (London, 1955); T. J. Edelstein (ed.), *Vauxhall Gardens* (New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A., 1983); Coke, 'Vauxhall Gardens'; D. Coke, *The Muse's Bower. Vauxhall Gardens 1728-1786* (Gainsborough House exhibition catalogue, 1978); and the Vauxhall collections of the Minet Library, Lambeth, the Bodleian Library, Oxford, the Burn Collection, British Library, the Fraser [Garrick club] collection, on microfilm at the Guildhall Library, London, and the Wroth Vauxhall Gardens scrapbooks at the Museum of London. St James's Park has received rather less detailed and serious attention; see Edmund Waller, *A Poem on St James's Park as Lately Improved by His Majesty* (London, 1661); Edward Edwards, 'Commons, Parks, and Open Spaces, near London: Their History and Treatment', Guildhall Library, London, MS. 1867-1884; Edgar Sheppard, *Memorials of St. James's Palace* 2 vols (London, 1894); Biggs Boulton, *Amusements of Old London*; Evelyn Cecil, *London Parks and Gardens* (New York, London, 1907); Richard Church, *The Royal Parks of London* 1st publ. 1956 (London, 1965); Neville Braybrooke, *London Green* (London, 1959); Thurston, *Royal Parks for the People*; Guy Williams, *The Royal Parks of London* (London, 1978); Mcdayter, 'Poetic gardens'; and references in the Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, and Public Record Office, Kew, papers of the Office, later Ministry of Works, 1-8

putting down stabilising roots after the upheaval of the Interregnum and Restoration, particularly in the case of the Park, where Charles' re-opening and more or less immediate investment in restyling marks an attempt to naturalise and ennoble the restored monarchy. The poet Edmund Waller eulogised Charles's restoration of London's premier park, adjoining the royal palace of St James, as symbolic of the restoration of a natural order, discussed in greater detail in chapter 5. The restructuring undertaken at this time, seemingly inspired by French garden design, was considerable and costly. Exile in France had established Charles's familiarity with the work of landscape architects such as Andre Le Nôtre, responsible for Versailles, and Andre Mollet, who subsequently exerted their influence on the revamping of the neglected and sparsely planted royal demesne. The core of the work involved the planting of ranks of trees, (nearly one thousand, according to Mundy), as avenues lining broad gravel paths, along the northern boundary of the Mall, the southern boundary of Bird Cage walk, and along the central canal, 'young Trees upon the banks/Of the new stream appear in even ranks', linked by treelined walkways set out in a semi-circular, 'patte d'oie' fashion at the Whitehall end of the Canal (see plans of St James's Park, figs.9.1, 9.2, 9.3).²⁰ This use of extensive avenues and a long straight body of water established sight lines along their length, enhancing a sense of expansiveness within the Park, and training the eye out into the fields beyond. Three waterways were forged from the existing ponds; the central canal, a complex 'Decoy', or duck pond, and the rectangular Rosamonds Pond, planted about with trees which, in maturity, overhung the water creating a shaded and informal grove. The Decoy, harbouring wild fowl, was surrounded with a dense plantation of trees, later described as a 'wilderness', and open grass-land provided pasture for deer, sheep, cows and more

²⁰ Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667*, Hakluyt Society, 2nd series, LXXVIII, V, (London, 1936), p.156; Waller, *St James's Park*, p.4; Faithorne and Newcourt's 1658 map can be compared with Leonard Knyff and Jan Kip's plan of St. James's Palace and Park, Leonard Knyff and Jan Kip, *Britannia Illustrata* ed. John Harris & Gervase Jackson-Stops, 1st publ.. 1707, (Bungay, Suffolk, 1984), pp.14-15, and the view of the Park dedicated to Queen Anne c.1710 to trace the principal restructuring that occurred

exotic species.²¹ Pepys visited in September of 1660 and observed the 'making of a river through the parke' and construction of a new 'pellmell', alongside the north side, the surface of which consisted of earth scattered with 'Cockle-shells powdered and spread, to keep it fast' for the playing of the game.²² Thomas Rugge toured the park in October and found 'about 300 men are every day employed in his majesty's worke in makinge the River'. He also noted a new ice house, 'as the mode is in some parts of France and Italy'. A year later he recorded that parts of the Park had been levelled, large ditches filled in, and 'grass seed sowed to make pleasant walking'. The old trees were taken down and replaced with trees planted in straight walks.²³ Following Charles's considerable investment, the lay-out of the park matured rather than undergoing radical alteration, with efforts largely concentrated on maintenance. By way of example, in 1715 extensive repairs were carried out on the surface of the Mall and the boards enclosing it.²⁴ From 1714 to 1721 the Park Ranger received £676,18s for sweeping and shelling the Mall, gravelling and paving the walks, planting, and repairing the lodges.²⁵ In 1751 he highlighted the need for repairs to the Mall, 'which for many years has been constantly Walked on without any Repairs and is worn into great unevenness', to the drainage system, to the palisades dividing St James's from Green Park, and in general to all the other walks around the Park, 'worn for want of fresh Gravel, none having been laid therein these many years'. The subsequent improvements extended to widening the Mall, and sloping the ground down to the Canal, pushing up the costs to £1375. Following this further expence was incurred on new rails, the cleaning of the ponds and the replacing of

²¹ Mundy, *Travels*, pp.156-8; John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E.S. De Beer, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1955), vol.III, 9 February, 1665, pp.300-400

²² Pepys, *Diary*, I, 16 September, 1660, p.246, & IV, 15 May, 1663, p.135

²³ British Museum, The journal of Thomas Rugge, Addit. MS. 10,116, fol. 210, October 1660, fol.448, September 1661

²⁴ PRO, Kew, Works 4/1, vol.1, Minutes and Proceedings, May 1715-Feb 1720, fols 5, 10, 25-6, 44

²⁵ PRO, Kew, Works 3/2, St. James's Park Warrants & Letters, 1721-28, fol.2

decayed trees, but the design remained essentially unchanged into the late eighteenth century.²⁶

The famous Vauxhall Gardens of the eighteenth century opened as the New Spring Gardens, Vauxhall, to avoid confusion with the Spring Gardens, Charing Cross. The site lay on the south bank of the Thames at Lambeth, on the fringes of the city, and usually accessed by boat (until the opening of Westminster Bridge in 1750), with a passage way leading up from the landing steps to the walled garden entrance, through the proprietor's house. The broad features of the design persisted throughout the period, consisting of planted blocks interspersed with walkways, although the planting of these plots appears to have shifted from flowers, vegetables and shrubs to predominantly trees in the eighteenth century. By 1762 the blocks between the walks were described as 'wildernesses composed of trees which shoot to a great height'.²⁷ John Evelyn, paying a visit in 1661, called the gardens 'a pretty contrived plantation'.²⁸ Balthazar Monconys visited in 1663 and described 'lawns and gravel walks dividing squares of twenty to thirty yards enclosed with hedges of gooseberry trees within which were planted raspberry bushes, rose bushes and other shrubs, as well as with herbs and such vegetables and fruits as peas, beans, asparagus and strawberries'.²⁹ It was possible to eat supper in arbours, and listen to music around the central Grove, so that the later piazza style supperboxes and orchestra elaborated on an existing tradition. Jonathan Tyers obtained the lease from Elizabeth Masters in 1728, the tenancy to include maintenance of the site, and a pledge not to cut down any trees and to replace decayed trees and shrubs as necessary. He subsequently set about a programme of improvements intended to revamp both the appearance and the tone of the Gardens, officially re-opening them with a Ridotto al

²⁶ PRO, Kew, Works 6/17, vol.4, Memorials 1745-1761, fols.79-80, 100, 109

²⁷ Anon, *Description of Vaux-Hall Gardens*, p.47

²⁸ Evelyn, *Diary*, III, 2 July, 1661, p.291

²⁹ Quoted in Biggs Boulton, *Amusements*, II, p.3

Fresco on 7 June, 1732. For the most part the structural alterations were architectural, covered later, although it appears that further trees were planted to formalise the network of walks, broadened into avenues. The walks were, for the most part, laid with gravel, although by 1762 the first section leading into the grove had been 'paved with Flanders bricks or Dutch clinkers, brought purposely from Holland, to prevent in wet weather the sand or gravel sticking to the feet of the company'.³⁰ The principal walks ran parallel for the length of the Gardens and were styled the Grand Walk, facing the visitor upon entry and described by Lockman as 'a grand *Visto* or *Alley* about 900 Feet long, formed by exceedingly lofty Sycamore, Elm, and other Trees', and the Italian, or South Walk, intersected by cross walks, the chief Cross Walk running behind the Grove.³¹ The Dark, Lovers or Druids Walk ran along the southern edge, whilst the Rural Downs bordered the northern line, alongside the Wilderness area, hemmed in with lattice-work fencing. In the late 1740's, in response to the competition from Ranelagh Gardens, opened in 1742, and in anticipation of the opening of Westminster Bridge, Tyers embarked on further major improvements, fashioning the Gardens in the style detailed in Samuel Wales's views of 1751 (see fig.9.4).

Outside of London, the city of Bath was one of the premier resort towns, frequented in the pursuit of health and recreation. Gardens and walks comprised a very significant part of this package, the principal sites including the Gravel Walks, later known as the Orange Grove, Harrisons Walks, the Town Common and the Spring Gardens. The Gravel Walks, demarcated by the planting of eighty sycamore trees, were laid out by the city corporation in 1675 on a quadrangular piece of land to the rear, or east of the Abbey, adjoining the old bowling green.³² This parcel of land was enclosed by gates and railings c.1687, as indicated on Gilmore's map of 1694, the year that the walks were actually gravelled (see

³⁰ Anon, *Description of Vaux-Hall Gardens*, p.28

³¹ Lockman, *Sketch*, p.2

³² Referred to in Fawcett & Inskip, 'Orange Grove', p.26

fig. 1).³³ In 1706 a paved walk was set out along the south side of the Walks, and became frequented by good company, whilst the parallel gravelled walks became more 'for the Use of the common Sort of People'.³⁴ It was this design that the corporation decided to overhaul in 1730, when plans were drawn up for the extensive remodelling of the site in order to enhance its social repute. The pallisades and pillars surrounding the Gravel Walks came down and the ground was levelled, merging the whole plot into one. The walks were repaired, clearing out the overgrown trees topped with rookeries and replacing them with elm saplings, making the Grove 'handsome and fit for people to walk in'.³⁵ Following the visit of the Prince of Orange and the construction of an obelisk in the centre of the Walks in 1734 to mark the occasion, the Walks were refashioned the Orange Grove, signalling affirmation of their new social cachet. Thereafter, efforts were concentrated primarily on basic upkeep, pruning the trees, and regravelling the walks. The restyled Grove remained an integral part of Bath's leisure space, forming part of an extended promenade running between the Pump House and Wood's Grand Parade, 'You may walk from the End of the *Parade*, quite to the *Pump-Room*, on a fine Pavement; so that, let it be ever so wet, the Walk is not dirty'.³⁶ Harrison's Walks were laid out as a pleasure garden lying behind and accessed via Thomas Harrison's assembly rooms, built in 1708/9 along the line of the old city wall. The garden, described as 'pleasant and delightfull', appears in the Buck view and in Wood's plan as parallel tree-lined alleys edged by the Terrace Walk on the west side and the Abbey Orchard on the east and adjoining the river.³⁷ George Spere's depiction of the Walks on a fan of 1737 picks out both an alcove and summerhouse situated on the riverbank, emphasising the prospects

³³ BCRO, BCM, 23 February, 1687

³⁴ Wood, *Description of Bath*, pp.224, 343

³⁵ BCRO, BCM, 28 December, 1730, 20 November, 1732; Wood, *Description of Bath*, p.343. Keith Thomas discusses how the lopping of trees symbolised a desire for order and moral discipline, quoting John Laurence's observation that regular pruning kept 'all in order, which would otherwise be perfect anarchy and confusion', Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p.221

³⁶ Draper, *Brief Description of Bath*, pp.13-14

³⁷ BRL, 'Diary of a Tour undertaken by three students', MS. 1725, p.117

afforded by the walks, and highlighting the peripheral, semi-rusticated nature of the spot.³⁸ Mary Chandler pastoralised the spot in her poetic description of Bath, 'Round the green walk the River Glides away,/Where midst Espaliers balmy Zephyrs play'.³⁹ Between Harrison's, later Simpson's Rooms and Walks, the Grand Parade and the River Avon lay a plot of land known as St James's Triangle, now occupied by the Parade Gardens. This ground compounded the impression of spaciousness and pleasant greenery that characterised and formed an integral part of the design and attractions of this part of town. In an undated view of Bath previously attributed to Samuel Scott, focusing on the North Parade and the Triangle, and Thomas Robins' prospect, the space was unadorned, apparently laid to lawn and ringed by trees.⁴⁰ As his Grand Parade was constructed on the south side of this plot, the land and its fashioning was obviously of considerable significance to John Wood. Plans were drawn up to turn it into a 'Summer Garden', and some of the deeds for houses along the Parade mention access to it.⁴¹ Elizabeth Claybourn Cossleys' 1759/60 landscape from the corner house at the east end of the North Parade depicts the site as predominantly grassed, fenced and hemmed in by rows of trees (see fig.3.2).⁴² Part of the Town Common, lying just outside of the town, was laid out as a ring in 1699 for the use of 'Gentlemens Coaches or Horses to take the aire'. Subsequent leasing of the Common excepted and protected this designated space.⁴³ Wood called the Ring the city's first place of resort for the taking of air in coaches or on horseback, and described it as 'in Imitation of the Ring in *Hyde Park*', the emulation apparently extending to the whole common being dubbed 'Hyde Park'.⁴⁴ That urban

³⁸ Speren, advertised in *Country Journal*, 9 July, 1737 as 'An exact Prospect of the Summer-House, Walks and Gardens, with a fine View of the River Avon, and fields adjacent', along with fan views of the Orange Grove, Pump Room and inside of Mrs Lovelace's Room, Lees-Milne, *Images of Bath*, p.270

³⁹ Mary Chandler, *The Description of Bath. A Poem* (London, 1736), p.16

⁴⁰ Earl of Bessborough Collection, Paul Mellon Foundation; Thomas Robins, c.1750, British Museum

⁴¹ Wood, *Description of Bath*, p.349; Holland, 'The Kingston Estate', p.21; Thomas Robins' prospect appears to show doorways running the length of and underneath the raised Parade walkway fronting the space, and also some figures who may be promenading besides the men pulling a roller and raking

⁴² Reproduced in Lees Milne, *Images of Bath*, print 197

⁴³ BCRO, BCM, 4 September, 1699, 26 December, 1715, 11 March, 1742

⁴⁴ Wood, *Description of Bath*, pp.439-40

parks and gardens served as models and influences on nature in the town in their own right is also borne out by Bath's Spring Gardens, trading on the cachet of its famous London namesake. These Gardens, certainly open by 1737, were fashioned from a plot of land in Bathwick on the far side of the Avon, and were accessible by a ferry prior to the construction of Pulteney Bridge.⁴⁵ This peripheral location, on the edge of open land and by the river, ensured vistas both out into the country and back into town. Around 1740 the fenced site featured a fish pond, fruit trees, flowers in pots, hedges and walkways, and a dining room.⁴⁶ John Penrose's account of 1766 suggests that the Gardens had evolved with a nod to contemporary garden design, occupying 'a most delightful Spot laid out in Gravel and Grass Walks, some strait, others serpentine, with a fine Canal in one place, and a fine Pond in another, with the greatest Variety of Shrubs, Trees and other Vegetables'.⁴⁷ Maps and plans of the city also indicate a good number of private residential gardens. A painting of Ladymead House in Walcot Street depicts its rectangular garden running down to the river. The design is formal and geometric, of rectangular walks and lawns terminated at the river by a tree-lined walk accessed by a gate, and featuring a summerhouse and alcove seat. The restored garden at no. 4 The Circus, c.1760 reveals a simple formal design incorporating clipped bushes and three oval box-hedged beds set in a gravel surround. The layout of the garden and the fact that the back of the house was rather plain and not intended to be viewed from the garden, indicates that the plot was designed to be enjoyed from the windows of the house.⁴⁸

Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, although serving as county town, had a primarily industrial and mercantile identity compared to the fashionable resort of Bath, and yet possessed a

⁴⁵ John Wood's plan of 1735 shows a house and formal garden lay-out on the site; notice of William Hull's tenancy of the Spring Gardens from Michaelmas 1737 in Bristol Record Office, Ashton Court Jarrit Smith Papers, 57/22a

⁴⁶ BRO, Accounts of Jarrit Smith 57/(19)c; 57/(20) a & b, lease of 4 September, 1742; 57/22a

⁴⁷ John Penrose, *Letters from Bath 1766-1767*, ed. B. Mitchell & H. Penrose (Gloucester, 1983), p.96

⁴⁸ Robert Bell, 'The discovery of a buried Georgian garden in Bath', *Garden History*, XVIII, part 1, (Spring, 1990), pp.17-18

number of green leisure sites in and about the town (see fig.9.7). The Forth was the main one of these, a squarish plot just outside the town wall to the south-west of the city. Its traditional use as recreational space was formalised c.1656/7 with its railing in and the construction of a bowling green.⁴⁹ In 1678 the Green was taken up, levelled and returfed, and then in 1680 the Council oversaw the construction of a wall and the planting of Dutch lime trees around the square.⁵⁰ Celia Fiennes visited in 1698 and relates,

There is a very pleasant bowling-green a little walke out of the town with a large gravel walke round it with two rows of trees on each side makeing it very shady;.... there is a pretty garden by the side shady walk, its a sort of Spring Garden where the Gentlemen and Ladyes walke in the evening; there is a green house in the garden.⁵¹

The town historian Henry Bourne describes the lay-out in similar terms nearly forty years later. The site was accessed by a passage through the town wall and via a tree-lined walkway.⁵² Renovations were undertaken in the early 1730's to beautify the grounds and offset the detrimental effect of building work nearby, although by 1746 the Forth area was apparently in a ruinous state and needing repairs. The new leaseholder was required to keep the hedges and green in good condition and to roll the walks when necessary, but two years later it was recorded that the walks were 'greatly out of Order and in want of being new gravelled'.⁵³ Nonetheless, the Forth remained very popular, and continued as the town's principal recreational ground into the late eighteenth century.⁵⁴ Elsewhere, up on the hill to the north east of the town, the Shield Field was finally lost to the town as common and traditional space for walks and exercise in 1737/8, following the enclosure of the land for private agricultural use. A similar loss of the Town Moor, this time to the

⁴⁹ Tyne and Wear Archive Service, Newcastle Common Council Book, 13 October, 1656, 25 September, 1657

⁵⁰ Newcastle Central Library, John Brand MS. collections, 18 vols., vol.VII, NCCB December 17, 1678, July 19 & September 28, 1680

⁵¹ Fiennes, *Journeys*, p.177

⁵² Bourne, *History*, p.146

⁵³ TWAS, NCCB 9 July, 1733, 22 September, 1746, 13 July, 1747, 26 June, 1749

⁵⁴ Anon, *Easter Monday: or, The Humours of the Forth* (Newcastle, n.d.[1775?]) provides an account of the crowds in attendance

threat of building in the 1770's, was prevented by the campaigning of the city's freemen. This ground was used recreationally for walks and carriage rides. A proposed carriageway running up across the Moor to ease this access was first proposed in 1747, and finally constructed in 1753.⁵⁵ Visual sources, again, attest to the presence of many private gardens in Newcastle. The most prominent of these appears to have been the garden attached to the Pilgrim Street mansion of Sir William Blackett, wealthy coal merchant. Kip and Knyff's view of the estate reveals the extensive walled garden layout surrounding the house, featuring square plats with statues, intersected with tree-lined walkways on the street side, plantations of trees, and box-hedged geometric plots (see fig.2.3). A gazebo was set within the west enclosing wall, overlooking the Nuns Moor, whilst parapets around the roof, and two small gazebo type structures, one facing into town towards the river, the other out of town over the surrounding countryside, suggest that the elevation was exploited for prospects. Bourne seems to have found the grounds essentially unchanged, 'that Part of it which Faces the Street, is thrown into Walks and Grass Plats, beautified with Images, and beset with Trees, which afford a very pleasing Shade: The other Part of the Ground on the West Side of it, is all a Garden, exceedingly neat and curious, adorned with many and the most beautiful Statues, and several other Curiosities'. Besides this, Bourne noted that Pilgrim Street as a whole was beautified by gardens, enjoyed from the perspective of a 'very agreeable Walk' along the city wall through Carliol Croft, 'The Prospect of the Gardens, some of which are exceeding Curious, affording a good deal of Pleasure'. Furthermore, the gardens and trees of Pandon Gate had, in Bourne's opinion, made it the most pleasant entry into town, whilst the gardens of Westgate, a street very retired and favoured by the well-to-do, boasted

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Halcrow, 'The Town Moor of Newcastle Upon Tyne', *Archaeologia Aeliana* 4th series, vol.XXXI, (1953), p.154

gardens of 'Art and Curiosity, and Beauty of Flowers'.⁵⁶ Newcastle also furnishes much evidence of urban horticultural activity and florists societies.⁵⁷

For the the citizens of Nottingham St Anne's Well, to the north east of the town, served as peripheral green retreat in the manner of Newcastle's Forth. Again, this site, based around a walled and arched-over natural spring, had an established tradition of recreational as well as medicinal use, linking in with the legend of Robin Hood, and offering visitors the chance to sit in Robin's chair and undergo some kind of woodland ceremony.⁵⁸ In an account of 1641 the well is set out with 'fair Somer houses Bowers or Arbours covered with the plashing & inweaving of Oak-boughs for shade in which are Tables of large Oak Planks and are seated about with Banks of Earth...covered with green sodds'.⁵⁹ Charles Deering noted the frequenting of the well and its green arbours, bowling green and victualling house as a pleasant diversion, but also penned a verse indicating the recent decline of the resort.⁶⁰ Nearby to this the Shepherds Race, a maze cut into the turf, offered alternative amusement.⁶¹ On the other side of town, in 1709 the banks of the River Leen, near to a bowling green, were 'Levell'd and made Comodious for Walks and an Arbour and a great many young trees have been sett & planted there to render the same more delightfull to the Gentlemen Ladyes and other p'sons who are

⁵⁶ Kip & Knyff, 'The Seat of the Hon.ble Sir Wm. Blackett Bartt. with part of the Town of Newcastle upon Tyne', *Britannia Illustrata*, pp.116-117; Bourne, *History*, pp.85, 81, 153, 22

⁵⁷ A society of florists and botanists was first established in Newcastle in 1724, John Hodgson Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, new series, IV, (1860), pp. 240-241. Regular meetings and exhibitions were subsequently held, as advertised in the local press, see *Newcastle Journal*, 21 July, 1739, 8 May, 1742, 27 April, 11 May 1745, *Newcastle General Magazine*, 24 May, 16 August 1753, 3 May, 3 June, 2 September, 1754. The local newspapers also carried advertisements for courses in botany and the sale of seeds, trees, garden wares and horticultural literature, *Newcastle Journal*, 30 June, 1739, 3 May, 1740, 13 & 20 October, 1739, 12 April, 1740, 1 June, 1745; *Newcastle Courant*, 28 September, 1723, 11 July, 1724, 29 March, 1735, 16 & 30 January, 1742 *Newcastle Gazette*, 1 January, 1746

⁵⁸ [J. Brome], *An Historical Account of Mr Rogers's Three Year Travels over England and Wales* (London, 1694), p. 90

⁵⁹ 'Copy of a Manuscript Account of Nottingham', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*, II, (1898), p.23

⁶⁰ BH, Nottingham, Deering MS.

⁶¹ Deering, *Nottinghamia*, p.75

pleased to walk there'.⁶² These measures represented an upgrading of facilities around the source of another spring, known for waters of 'strong chalybeat Astringency'.⁶³ From here, on the edge of town, walkers could enjoy the prospect across the Meadows down to the Trent. Better still, one could actually stroll out to the river on a raised foot-walk, extending an urban pathway out from the town into the Meadows (see fig.5.3).⁶⁴ As far as private gardens in the town are concerned, John Badder and Thomas Peat's underplaying of the buildings in their plan of 1744 serves to highlight extensive garden space to the rear of most properties, largely in use as kitchen gardens, but a few are depicted as set out in geometric form (see fig.9.8).⁶⁵ Of two prominent examples, the layout of the high walled gardens of Pierrepont Mansion on Stony Street is clear from Kip and Knyff's prospect depicting the house (see fig.3.4).⁶⁶ An oil painting of the house and gardens in the early eighteenth century corresponds with the details of the earlier engraving, showing a paved walkway, embellished with stone urns and statuary, encompassing and leading down into a low-level garden of formal design (see fig.3.5).⁶⁷

⁶² Nottinghamshire Record Office, Nottingham Hall Book, 28 June, 1709

⁶³ Deering, *Nottinghamia*, p.86

⁶⁴ Depicted in Thomas Sandby's South prospect of Nottingham of 1742, and in S.& N. Buck's 'South Prospect of Nottingham' of 1743, described in the key of the latter as 'The foot Walk thro' the beautiful Meadows'

⁶⁵ The gardens of Bromley House, Angel Row (1752), and of the Georgian properties along Middle Pavement are rare survivors of the urban infill that destroyed much of Nottingham's green space from the late eighteenth century

⁶⁶ Kip & Knyff, 'The Prospect of Nottingham, From ye East', *Britannia Illustrata*, pp.158-159

⁶⁷ Attributed to Jan Griffier, Yale Center for British Art

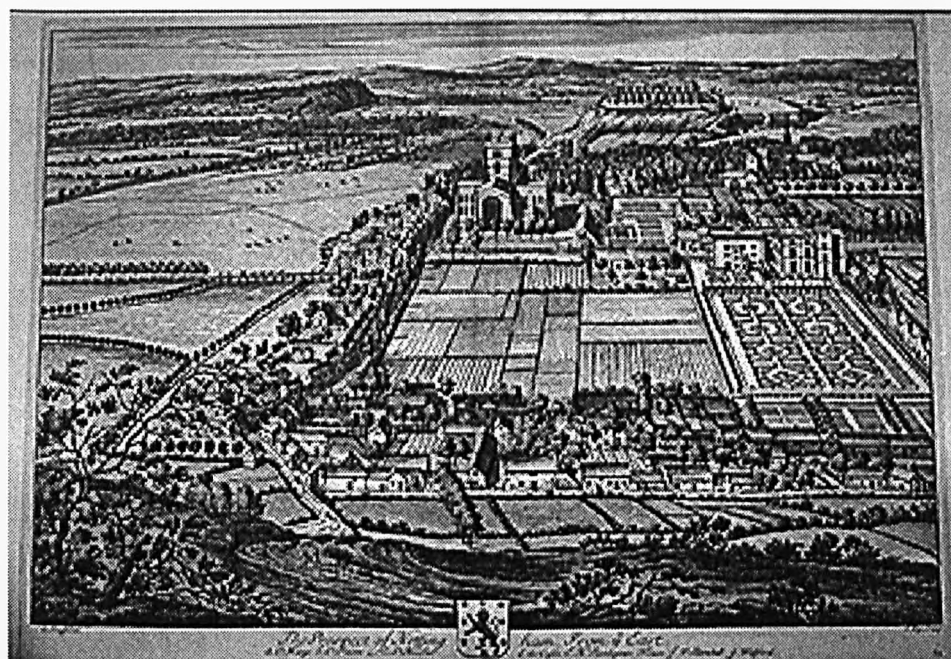


Fig.3.4 Jan Kip & Leonard Knyff, 'The Prospect of Nottingham from the East', 1707 (with the emphasis on Pierrepont House and gardens, to the right of the picture)

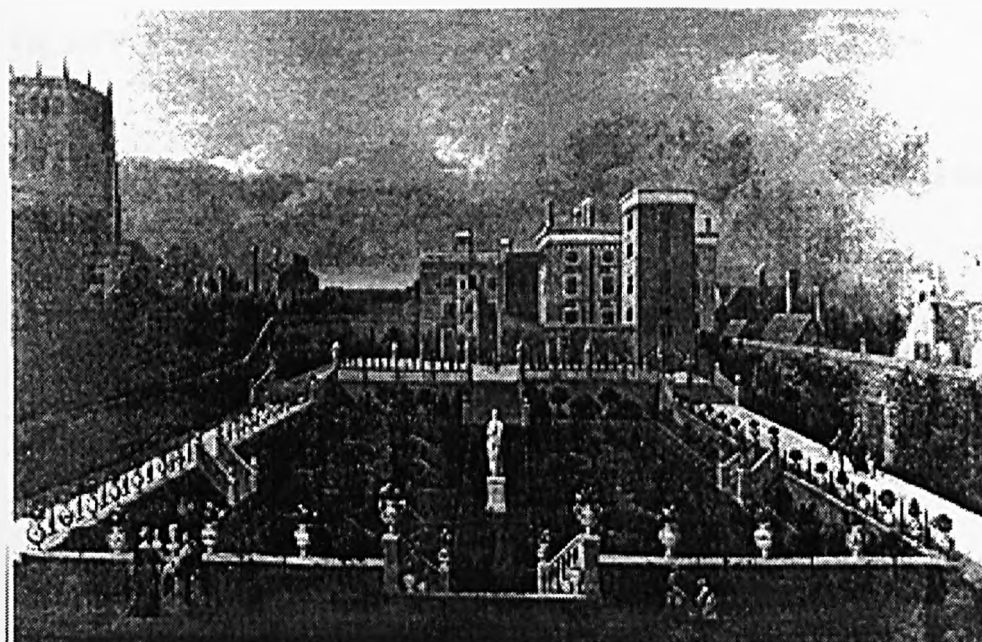


Fig.3.5 Pierrepont House and garden, Nottingham, c.1695

The garden created by Marshal Tallard during his detention at Newdigate House, Castle Gate from 1704-12 was in the French manner, a neat and formal design based around parterres of gravel and grass with flowers in pots and carefully trimmed shrubs (fig.3.6)

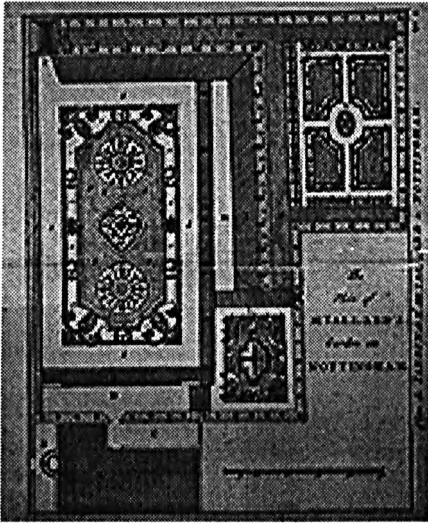


Fig.3.6 Plan of Marshall Tallard's garden, Nottingham, 1706

The creation marked a turning point in Nottingham's interest in matters horticultural, according to Deering,

There were very few Gardiners...and all those but very indifferently skill'd in their Art, till after the Arrival of Marshal Count Tallard...when Encouragement was given to Men of Industry to render themselves useful, by raising all kinds of Garden Stuff, in which they are now come to a complete Perfection.⁶⁸

The influence of Tallards' design was given even wider currency through the inclusion and account of a plan of the garden in George London and Henry Wises's *The Retir'd Gardner* of 1706, itself a translation of French texts by Francois Gentil and Louis Liger, purportedly modified to 'render it proper for our English Culture', but very much a part of

⁶⁸ Deering, *Nottinghamia*, p.97

London and Wise's popularisation of French garden design during the reign of Queen Anne.⁶⁹

My final case study town, Shrewsbury, is notable for the survival of its largest green space, the Quarry, and in a form not changed substantially from the mid-eighteenth century. The open land, lying outside of the town walls within the curve of the River Severn, was used for the staging of theatrical events and animal sports in the Middle Ages, whilst the Quarry banks following the riverside appear to have been used for recreational promenading before the formalising of the walks from 1719 (see fig.3.7).

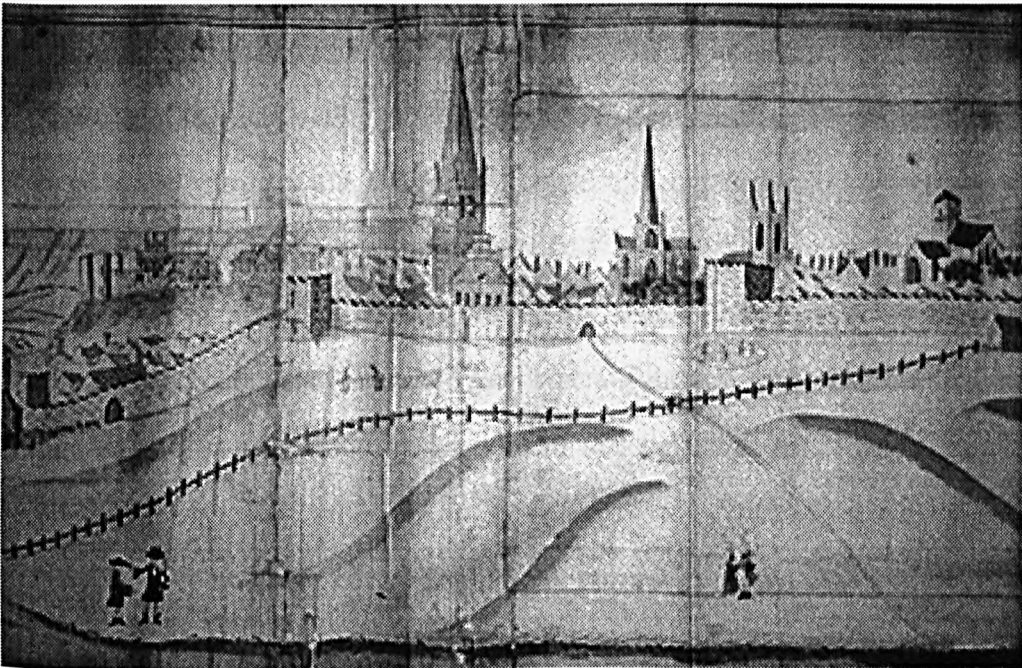


Fig.3.7 Anonymous watercolour painting of the Quarry, Shrewsbury, pre.1719

In this year Mr Wright the nurseryman was awarded the contract whereby 'there be a handsome walk made in the Quarry for persons to walk in'.⁷⁰ Of the initial avenues of

⁶⁹ George London & Henry Wise, *The Retir'd Gardner*, 2 vols., (London, 1706), II, title page and addendum following p.786

⁷⁰ Shropshire Records and Research Centre, Shrewsbury Corporation Minutes, 15 January, 1719, quoted in R.F. Prideaux, 'Historical notes on the Quarry' (Shrewsbury, 1936), p.7

limes, the Quarry or River walk was the main walk, running along the riverbank, whilst the Mid or Middle walk cut across the centre of the Quarry. A post and rail fence cut diagonally across the green, in the Buck print appearing to section off the animals grazing from the walkers in the lower Quarry, although in 1734 workers were paid to clear dung from both the upper and lower Quarry.⁷¹ In 1726 fifty new lime trees were planted, and in 1733/4 substantial investment in the site included the purchase of ninety two more limes for the laying out of a further new walk, the sowing of grass, paving at the newly constructed summerhouse and at the entrance to the Quarry, and levelling of all the walks.⁷² By the 1740s the avenues consisted of the Quarry and Mid walk, plus the Bottom walk, bounding the park to the south, the Rope walk, bounding the park to the north, and the avenue following the line of the town wall at the top of the Quarry on either side of the Mid walk (see fig.9.9). Small neat clumps of trees were also planted alongside the Middle walk, whilst the Dingle area, a quarried indentation near the centre of the Quarry, retained a less formal appearance with its encircling trees.⁷³ Across the river from the Quarry lay the Kingsland Bank, a high and airy spot itself used recreationally, notably by the trade guildsmen of the town who had established harbours here, and by horse-riders and coaches as an airing ground, initially by subscription.⁷⁴ Celia Fiennes is the principle informant on the Abbey Gardens, an area of public walks nearby the Abbey where 'every Wednesday most of the town the Ladyes and Gentlemen walk their as in St James' parke'. She describes the gardens as laid out with 'gravell walks set full of all sorts of greens orange and lemon trees: I had a paper of their flowers were very fine, there were alsoe firrs Myrtles and hollys of all sorts and a greenhouse full of all

⁷¹ S. & N. Buck, 'The South West Prospect of Shrewsbury', 1732; SRRC, Shrewsbury Mayor's Accounts, October 1734

⁷² SRRC, SMA, 27 December, 1726, 1 March, 1733, 27 August, 21 July, 1 September, 1734

⁷³ Camilla Beresford, Notes on Quarry park and Dingle for English Heritage, November 1993; SRRC, Computation of Quarry walks length, Leighton [Sweeney] MS collection, 177/1/26

⁷⁴ Samuel Hulbert, 'History of the Shrewsbury Show', MS. 1831, p.43; T. Philips, MS. Collection relating to Shrewsbury, 6001/2229 includes a map of Kingsland showing the harbours and turf maze there; SCM, 6 March, 1746

sorts of Curiosities of flowers and greens'.⁷⁵ What became of this site after Fiennes' visit in 1698 is not known, since there is no reference to it thereafter, but it is possible that the transferral of the land to Edward Baldwyn in 1701 after six generations in the Langley family resulted in the annexing of the ground for private use.⁷⁶ Of private town house gardens in Shrewsbury, there survives a painting, c.1700, of the formal garden belonging to a house on Dogpole.⁷⁷ The walled garden consists of gravelled paths, shown being rolled, around a central circular path, dissecting plats of neat planted borders and fancy insets. The whole is embellished with sculpted plants and bushes, statues and pots. There is also a summerhouse set into the wall in the bottom left hand corner, the position offering an excellent vantage, high on a bank that sweeps down to and overlooks the Severn. John Rocque's plan of the town illustrates the garden space attached to properties around the mid-eighteenth century, particularly in the Belmont and Claremont areas, fashionable parts of town on high ground with vantages to the river and beyond (see fig.9.9).⁷⁸

Garden furniture & architecture

Furniture and architecture serve as ornamental addition to the basic lay-out of town parks and gardens. Investment in seating, lights and structures geared to refreshment and entertainment underlined the public and sociable character of these sites. In undertaking improvements of this kind town corporations affirmed their responsiveness to the leisure market and the need to upgrade facilities to accommodate and generate demand. For example, artificial lighting along the promenades extended hours of access to the walks, just as paving, gravelling and improved drainage diminished the inconvenience of mud

⁷⁵ Fiennes, *Journeys*, p.186

⁷⁶ Owen and Blakeway, *History of Shrewsbury*, II, pp.135-6

⁷⁷ Reproduced in Girouard, *English Town*, p.71

⁷⁸ John Rocque, Plan of Shrewsbury, 1746

and standing water, helping to stretch the 'season' for outdoor pursuits. In effect, the use of lighting and seating carried over into garden space features of the domestic realm and the urban street, fashioning the town garden as a habitable, safe and comfortable domain. Furthermore, the erection of summerhouses, statuary, or strategically placed seating was a convenient and very public means of demonstrating stylistic and aesthetic sensibilities as well as advertising disposable wealth. Jonathan Tyers invested heavily in architectural embellishments at Vauxhall to interest, amuse and impress the company. The description of the gardens of 1762 noted that 'by annually adding further improvements...Vauxhall has deservedly acquired public favour'.⁷⁹ In its implementation of these styles Vauxhall reflected the evolving designs of the mid-eighteenth century, expressing a confident exploration of geographic and stylistic boundaries in its montage of influences.

Summerhouses or gazebos were intended to mark and provide a vantage over attractive scenery and, as such, their use in towns signifies the considered value of prospects of greenland from an urban perspective. The siting of a gazebo indicated that not only was there a fine and coveted prospect to be had, but that the architect/user was sufficiently possessed of aesthetic appreciation of scape to recognise and visually appropriate the scene by constructing an out-house at the head of it. The additional ornament to the garden also bespoke wealth, and provided scope for stylistic sensitivity in the design. These structures extended the domestic comfort of, at the least, covered seating, and often a furnished room with heating and basic facilities for food preparation out to the edges of the garden, providing a safe and civilised platform on the outside world. In Nottingham, Langford Collin's two storey summerhouse, visible on the Badder and Peat map, enjoyed a vantage of the Castle, and to the Leen and over the Meadows. In Shrewsbury, a pair of summerhouses to the rear of Pig Hall in Quarry Place can be picked out on the Great

⁷⁹ Anon, *Description of Vaux-Hall Gardens*, p.51

Frost view of 1739 and John Rocque's plan of 1746.⁸⁰ The private land projected directly into the Quarry, and the two summerhouses originally had windows opening out onto the park, although these were later bricked in, perhaps over a concern for privacy. One of these is still standing, as is another two storey brick structure, c.1730, in the grounds of 12 St John's Hill (see fig.3.8).⁸¹ But summerhouses were not only found in private gardens. The double-sided summerhouse actually in the Quarry was paid for by the corporation as a public amenity to enhance the appeal and appearance of the walks, as was the summerhouse on the riverside within Harrison's Walks of Bath. Work on the Quarry structure was in progress from the summer of 1734, involving the purchase and transport of thousands of bricks, plus stone, sand, boards, timber, slate and labour costs, all amounting to a considerable sum, with on-running cleaning and maintenance costs.⁸²

The Quarry was also furnished with benches along the riverside walk to capitalise on the vista out over the Severn. Evidently seating formed a part of the early lay-out of the park, already in place by 1727. In 1734, as a part of the improvements underway, further new seats were ordered to be set along the riverbank.⁸³ The avenues of St James's Park were also set out with benches. In 1715 the Park Ranger petitioned for thirty new seats.⁸⁴ But since promenading was the thing, and the motivation in frequenting the public walks commonly to see and be seen to the best advantage, the use of walk-side seating could be eschewed, and considered unfashionable, 'no Women of Fashion ever sit upon a Bench'.⁸⁵ The implication is also that to do so is suggestive of dubious moral character in a woman, loitering with intent. At the same time, observations of women keeping on the move on the walks seemed to re-inforce the notion that their presence there was not about

⁸⁰ Stanhope and Geraldine, 'A Prospect of the Town of Shrewsbury Taken as it Appear'd in the Great Frost 1739', reproduced in Hyde, *Gilded Scenes and Shining Prospects*, pp.78-79

⁸¹ I am indebted to Paul Stamper for this information and for slides of the summerhouses

⁸² SRRC, SMA, August 27, 31, October 12, 21, 1734

⁸³ SRRC, SMA, September 6, 1727, 1734

⁸⁴ PRO, Kew, Minutes and Proceedings of the Office of Works, 29 February, 1715

⁸⁵ P.Q., *St James's Park: A Comedy* (London, 1733), p.58

exercising studied appreciation of fine surroundings but rather to do with seeing and being seen (chapter 7 explores this theme in greater detail). Beat Louis De Muralt noted that walking was 'a great Diversion among the Ladies', but 'nothing can amuse or put them out of their way: I doubt they would stoop to take up a flower from under their Feet'.⁸⁶ The company were more apt to retire to arbours for rest and retreat from the walks. Here food and drink might be served, again with the emphasis on sociable interaction. Newcastle's Forth, Nottingham's St Anne's Well and Spa by the Leen, Shrewsbury's Kingsland bank, the Vauxhall Gardens and Bath's Harrison's Walks and Spring Gardens were all furnished with arbours and/or rooms for the consumption of food and drink. On the Kingsland site, arbours were set up by the town guilds from the early sixteenth century. These temporary structures were eventually upgraded into substantial stone structures from the 1660's, featuring facilities and a seating area for refreshments, and were enclosed.⁸⁷ The Shoemakers arbour contained a dining room and a kitchen, and was fronted by a small enclosure, accessed by a gateway, where musicians might play.⁸⁸ The gateway to this arbour (1679) is all that remains, now standing in the Dingle in the Quarry (see fig.3.9). Supper boxes had been a feature at Vauxhall from the outset. Monconys noted these arbours in 1663, whilst in 1710 Von Uffenbach found 'green huts, in which one can get a glass of wine, snuff and other things, although everything is very dear and bad'.⁸⁹ The flimsy structures were later upgraded, c.1750, into the elaborate semi-circular colonnades observable on the Wale view, eclectically styled in the Gothic and Chinese taste on the north side, with cupolas and minarets, whilst those to the south were styled more in line with the Doric order. William and John Halfpenny popularised perceived Chinese design in their *Rural Architecture of the Chinese Taste* of 1750, whilst

⁸⁶ Muralt, *Letters*, p.35

⁸⁷ In 1661 the Tailor's Company paid out £11, 10 for an arbour and 10s, 2d for the seats, Henry Pidgeon, *Some Account of Ancient Guilds, Trading Companies, and the Origin of Shrewsbury Show* (Shrewsbury, n.d.), p.8. Leave was granted to enclose the arbours in the Corporation minutes of 6 March, 1746

⁸⁸ Hulbert, 'History of Shrewsbury Show', pp.42-44

⁸⁹ Uffenbach, *London in 1710*, p.131



Fig.3.8 Summerhouse in Quarry Place backing onto the Quarry, Shrewsbury



Fig.3.9 Gateway to the Shoemaker's arbour in the Dingle, Quarry, Shrewsbury

William Chambers continued the vogue with his publication in 1757 of *Designs of Chinese Buildings*.⁹⁰ These boxes also stood as a noted feature of the garden in their own right as the frames for a series of paintings.

Another mark of the public and social function of town parks and gardens was the use of artificial lighting, extending recreational use of the walks into the evening. The use of artificial light in parks and gardens was presented as a projection of civility and order, partly in that it carried over a feature of the upmarket parts of the town, commonly the first to be lit, and also because the scale of the illumination contrasted with the comparative gloom of the urban scape.⁹¹ This contrasting of the bright, ordered park and garden enclosure with the dingy disarray of the city beyond carried over the pointed arrangement of light and shade notable in, for example, the paintings of Claude and the prospects of Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, whereby labourers are cast in the shade and gentlemen of leisure in the light.⁹² Corridors of light and protection carved a passage through the town for the leisured set, so that visitors to the Spring Gardens in Bath could be assured that 'The Passage from the Grove to the Gardens will be properly lighted', and patrons of Cupers Gardens, on the south bank of the Thames, that 'There is a back Way leading from St George's Field, where proper attendance will be given, and due care taken for watchmen to guard those who go over the Fields at Night'.⁹³ Tyers took similar steps to extend protection beyond his safe and lit haven, appointing 'a strong Guard all the

⁹⁰ Brian Allen, 'The Landscape', in Edelstein, *Vauxhall Gardens*, p.21; Dixon Hunt & Willis, *Genius of the Place*, p.283

⁹¹ By way of example, as an urban showpiece, the Chamber footed the bill for the illumination of Queen Square, in Bristol, BRO, Bristol Common Council Proceedings, 10 February, 1738. Street lighting was largely the responsibility of the individual householder and was gradually and sporadically extended through the town from the late seventeenth century, see Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp.72-4

⁹² Cosgrove, *Social Formation*, p.213, from Barrell, *Dark Side of the Landscape*, p.22. Foucault discusses this in terms of the desire for a transparent society, of light and clarity, to contrast with zones of darkness as zones of disorder, Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other Writings 1972-1977* (London, 1980), ed. Colin Gordon, pp.152-3

⁹³ *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 16 July, 1761; *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 4 April, 1740

Way between his Gardens and Southwark'.⁹⁴ Even within the garden itself, the shadows were for skulking, whilst the lamplight set the bounds for a public arena of gleaming display. Visitors to the Vauxhall Gardens were apparently bedazzled by 'above one thousand lamps, so disposed that they all take fire together, almost as quick as lightning, and dart such a sudden blaze as is perfectly surprising'.⁹⁵ By 1766 it was estimated that the Grove alone was illuminated by about one thousand five hundred glass lamps.⁹⁶ But there were also shady recesses within the Gardens. 'The Lamps and Trees in mingled Lights and Shades' offered considerable scope for covert activity. Tyers was forced to extend his lamps along Vauxhall's infamous Dark Walks following the critical attention brought to the indecencies occurring there, and to placate the magistrates licensing places of entertainment in 1763, although it wasn't long before these were smashed. Frequenting St James's Park after dark provided quite a different set of opportunities to a public afternoon stroll along the Mall. The darkness dispelled the associations of light, the order and appearance that dictated the use and style of the park in daylight hours. The characters in William Wycherley's *Love in a Wood* are delighted with 'this midnight coursing in the Park'. Here was a cover for alternative use, 'A man may come after Supper with his three Bottles in his head, reel himself sober, without reproof from his Mother, Aunt, or grave relation'. Alderman Gripe, precise by day, loosens up, 'Mrs Joyner, I can conform to this mode of publick walking by moon-light, because one is not known...because in the dark, or as it were the dark, there is no envy, nor scandal; I wou'd neither lose you, nor my reputation'. When light is brought into the park, it shatters this private and alternative use of the public space, 'What unmannerly Rascals are those that bring light into the Park? 'twill not be taken well from 'em by the women certainly'.⁹⁷ The use of lighting became a desired feature in public gardens for the imposition of

⁹⁴ ML, Wroth scrapbooks, vol. III, J.Tyers, 1744

⁹⁵ *England's Gazetteer*, 1751, quoted in Wroth, *London Pleasure Gardens*, p.293

⁹⁶ Entick, *New History of London*, vol.IV, p.447, and see Anon, *Description of Vaux-Hall Gardens*, p.20

⁹⁷ William Wycherley, *Love in a Wood, or, St. James's Park* (London, 1672), pp.19, 79, 23

propriety. Cupers Gardens boasted walks 'beautifully illuminated with Lamp Trees in a grand Taste, disposed in proper order', in 1749, whilst in Shrewsbury the Quarry was already lit by glass lamps atop iron posts by 1727.⁹⁸ In 1732 the committee of the Chapel of King Charles the Martyr responsible for the overseeing of the walks at Tunbridge Wells agreed that 'a sufficient number of lamps be conveniently plac'd in the upper Walk for the Benefit of the Ladies and Gentlemen towards the Latter End of Seasons when the Evenings are dark'. Thereafter the vestry endeavoured to pay for the cleaning, lighting and upkeep of the lamps, replacing or repairing them when necessary, although by 1750 maintenance had evidently lapsed to the point where the vestry was forced to redetermine 'what number of Lamps there used to be Lighted & where Placed, & how many of them are now remaining'. In 1758 the committee invested anew in lighting, avowing that, from 1760, the lamps were to 'be lighted from the middle of July to the middle of October, the moon light nights Excepted'.⁹⁹

Ornamental architectural structures play an important part in discussions of landscape garden design in that they represent ubiquitous and prominent additions to the lay-out, and are commonly interpreted as significant emblematic features, inscribed with meaning. Do similar architectural forms, such as temples, arches, grottos and statuary, figure in town parks and gardens, and if so, do they bear comparable inscription? On the strength of my case study examples, provincial public parks and gardens were not heavily laden with these kind of ornamentations. Beau Nash did oversee the siting of an obelisk in the Gravel Walks of Bath to commemorate the visit of the Prince of Orange in 1734, but otherwise the emphasis falls very much on arboreal monuments. It may be that this is largely down to the question of finance, but also a reflection of the fact that, unlike grand

⁹⁸ ML, *The Pleasure Gardens of South London*, 2 vols., vol.I, newspaper advertisement, 1749 (source not cited); SRRC, SMA, 11 April, 6 September, 1727

⁹⁹ Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone, Kent, Minutes of the Chapel of King Charles the Martyr, P371 E/8/1-3, 1 October, 1732; 30 August, 1750; 25 August, 1760

country estates, public gardens do not generally bear the stamp of any one or a generation of wealthy individuals engaged in personal aggrandisement. Rather, the town garden, less cluttered by solid emblematic forms invested with and demanding a particular reading, was open and accessible to a broader range of company, in spite of attempts to differentiate between levels of intellectual appreciation.¹⁰⁰ The meaning and aesthetic value derived from the site appears more fluid, and less manageable, as evinced in the satirical demolishing of the symbolic structures at Vauxhall (quoted below).

The possible exceptions to the point about the imposition of singular or familial vision are the royal domain of St James's Park, and the Vauxhall Gardens under the extended proprietorship of Jonathan Tyers, and his son thereafter. The Park does not appear to have been furnished with these kind of embellishments. Of all my garden sites, the Vauxhall Gardens are the most rich in architectural features.¹⁰¹ Up to the 1740's, the styling of its garden architecture followed a classical line, intended to convey cultivated status. Tyers set up an orchestra, arches, statues, temples and an obelisk inscribed with a Latin quotation. Commentators following the party line referred to the 'Elegance of the Decorations', and 'Architecture, such as Greece would not be ashamed of'.¹⁰² On closer inspection, some of these edifices transpired to be as fragile as Vauxhall's pretensions to grandeur, fashioned from canvas stretched over temporary wooden frames, stage scenery for the theatrical Garden. The Gothic obelisk put up at the end of the Grand Walk was 'only a number of boards fastened together, and erected upright, which are covered with canvas', whilst the three triumphal arches over the south walk were made of wood with columns painted on canvas.¹⁰³ Satirists ridiculed such attempts to ennoble the garden through allusive architectural form, 'Rome and Athens now must yield to Lambeth-

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter 6 on the intellectual and physical appropriating of nature in the town

¹⁰¹ See Chapter 4 for a consideration of the motives behind the establishment and ordering of town parks and gardens

¹⁰² *Gentlemen's Magazine*, August, 1742

¹⁰³ Anon, *Description of Vaux-Hall Gardens*, pp.7, 43

Marsh'.¹⁰⁴ The supposed symbolism and instructiveness of the classical form at Vauxhall was recognised, and rubbished by a piece in *The Universal Spectator* even before Tyers had officially opened the refashioned Gardens with the Ridotto al Fresco. Looking down the newly styled Italian walk, with its triumphal arches, 'the *Temple* in distant Prospect, where a painted Statue of Pallas standing on a Pedestal, appears; has a noble Effect, and must infallibly inspire your Pupils of both Sexes with a Love for *Wisdom* ; as the Triumphal Arches will rouze in the Male Part of 'em, the Spirit and Bravery of the old *Romans*'.¹⁰⁵ From the 1740's the architectural character of the Gardens shifted towards Gothic, and exotic, Chinoiserie design, fashioning an archetypal rococo style that was, at the very least, much in vogue, and potentially innovative and influential in its own right, whether it was taken seriously by all or not.¹⁰⁶ Kalm commented in 1748, 'There are here ready all the statues and ornaments which are used in gardens'.¹⁰⁷ The curving Chinese supper box pavilions were in place by the late 1740's, described by Lockman as 'in a noble Style of Gothic Architecture', and the so-called Turkish Tent, intended for diners, was built behind the Orchestra c.1750.¹⁰⁸ The Prince's Pavilion was crafted in honour of the Prince of Wales, contriving to spice the gardens with an aristocratic lustre in pandering to the royal taste. An elaborately decorated Rotunda put up c.1749 reflected the popularity of the larger model at Ranelagh. In one of the last significant architectural changes, the 'rustic' style orchestra was replaced in 1757/8 by a Moorish Gothic structure. Undoubtedly, the commercial success of his venture both provided Tyers with the capital to accessorise the Gardens, and fuelled the desire to perpetuate the novel and modish appeal of the site.

¹⁰⁴ Hercules Mac-Sturdy, *A Trip to Vauxhall* (London, 1737), quoted in Coke, *The Muse's Bower*, p.9; Edward Malins notes that the associationist concept of the aesthetic and the moral, whereby for instance forms of landscape might morally elevate the man of taste, was generally subject to ridicule and satire, *English Landscaping and Literature, 1660-1840* (London/Oxford, 1966), p.viii

¹⁰⁵ *Universal Spectator and Weekly Journal*, 3 June, 1732

¹⁰⁶ Coke, 'Vauxhall Gardens', in Snodin, *Rococo*, p.80

¹⁰⁷ Pehr Kalm, *Kalm's Account of his Visit to England on his way to America in 1748*, trans. J. Lucas, (London/N.Y., 1892), p.66

¹⁰⁸ Lockman, *Sketch*, pp.9,18; Anon, *Description of Vaux-Hall Gardens*, pp.9-10

Planting in towns

As important as architecture and furniture were to gardens, they remain spaces devoted to and characterised by greenery. Were the trees, flowers and shrubs selected with particular regard for an urban setting? John Evelyn was convinced of the necessity for a sensitivity to environment in horticultural practice. The atmosphere of London offered a particular challenge to the gardener. The burning of sea-coal produced a smoke 'suffering nothing in our Gardens to bud, display themselves, or ripen; so as our Anemonies and many other choycest Flowers, will by no Industry be made to blow in London, or the Precincts of it...'.¹⁰⁹ Pollination was affected as a result of the harm suffered by bees in the choke of the city. Trees were also vulnerable to the 'pernicious smoak', so that caution was urged when it came to replacing mature trees 'upon hope of new, more flourishing Plantations'. The increase in pollution, coupled with

the buildings environing them, and inclosing it in amongst them, which does so universally contaminate the Air, [means] that what Plantations of Trees shall be now begun in any of those places will have much ado, great difficulty, and require a long time, to be brought to any tolerable perfection.¹¹⁰

For Evelyn, pockets of green within and around the city not only provided places of retreat, but actively refined the urban environment.¹¹¹ Poor air quality might be countered by ringing the city with plantations of carefully selected, highly-scented plants. To this end he recommended the inclusion of roses, rosemary, lavender, pinks, carnations, and clove, whilst 'the blossoms of the Tilia or Lime-tree, are incomparably fragrant'.¹¹² The first gardening text directed specifically at the urban environment,

¹⁰⁹ John Evelyn, *Fumifugium: or The Inconveniencie of the Aer and Smoak of London Dissipated* (London, 1661), p.7

¹¹⁰ Evelyn, *Sylva*, p.93

¹¹¹ The notion of the refining quality of nature in the town, physically, socially, and spiritually, is developed further in chapter 5

¹¹² Evelyn, *Fumifugium*, p.24

Fairchild's *The City Gardener* of 1722, was equally aware of the particular atmospheric circumstances that an urban context presented;

Now we must consider, that in Places in London, where every Part is encompass'd with Smoke, and the Air is suffocated, or wants its true Freedom; plants, which generally are used to the open Air, will not be always so healthful, and therefore I have now made it my Business to consult what Plants will live even in the worst Air of Chimneys, and the most pent up Air that we know.

Fairchild tailors his advice, providing the names of plants that can cope with these rigours, so 'that every one in London, or other Cities, where much Sea-Coal is burnt, may delight themselves in Gardening', a pleasure equated with the experiencing of 'Country Air'.¹¹³ Pehr Kalm also noted that the gardens of the city were carefully planted out with 'several of the trees, plants, and flowers which could stand the coal-smoke', partly in earth and partly in pots.¹¹⁴ As the proprietor of a commercial nursery, Fairchild had to be responsive to the requirements of his customers. For example, garden planting in squares had to take into account the season when the occupants were in residency, and so the challenge was 'how to make it look well in the Winter, and that Part of the Spring, when Persons of Distinction are in Town, or else the main Foundation of the Design will be lost; for they will not pay for a Thing that they have no Benefit of, or Pleasure in'. Evergreens were thus to be preferred, mixed in with some flowers, shrubs and trees that would bud in the spring.¹¹⁵

The elm and the lime were the most favoured trees within the town. Kalm observed that nearly all of London's squares were planted with elm, and Saussure echoed many in remarking on the elm and lime avenues of St James's Park.¹¹⁶ A nursery for young elms

¹¹³ Fairchild, *City Gardener*, pp.45, 6, 8

¹¹⁴ Kalm, *Visit to England*, p.85

¹¹⁵ Fairchild, *City Gardener*, pp.14-15

¹¹⁶ Kalm, *Visit to England*, p.86; Cesar De Saussure, *A Foreign View of England in the Reigns of George I and George II. The Letters of Monsieur Cesar de Saussure to his family* ed. M. Van Muyden, (London, 1902), pp.47-8

was established in Exeter to replenish the Southernhay and Nothernhay walks, whilst Shrewsbury's Quarry was set out with limes.¹¹⁷ It was a popularity rooted in both practical and aesthetic considerations. For a start it was noted that these types were well suited to the urban environment in their ability to withstand pollution. Fairchild advised his readers, 'We have Instances enough of the Elm, that it will do well in London', and that 'All the Squares which are already made, are Proofs that the Lime-Tree will bear the London Smoke, and will grow even in the closest Places'.¹¹⁸ These trees also served a protective purpose on the street and for urban promenading. The planting of limes along roadsides 'skreens the houses both from Winds, Sun and Dust', and, in avenues, provided 'a goodly shade at a distance of eighteen or twenty foot'. Queen Square, in Bristol, was planted with ordered ranks of 'modish Lymes' that would serve to 'screen the walking Beauties from the Sun'.¹¹⁹ Of course, dense foliage also offered some protection from another distinct possibility, that of rain. For Evelyn, liberal use of the lime in the town created that most desired effect of a harmonious blending of man-made and natural environment, 'is there a more ravishing, or delightful object then to behold some intire streets, and whole Towns planted with these Trees, in even lines before their doors, so as they seem like Cities in a wood?'. The elm was equally esteemed a 'noble Tree for shade and delight'.¹²⁰ For the purposes of greening the town, this species was commendable in that it 'stands for a long time green, and keeps it's leaves till the autumn, when others are pale and shed them'.¹²¹ Aesthetically, the lime was 'the most proper and beautiful for Walks' by virtue of its shape and appearance, foliage and scent.¹²² But the use of long rows of lime and elm trees in the town also traded on aristocratic association. Such avenues were a recognised emblem of large country estates and upper class life,

¹¹⁷ Devon Record Office, Exeter Act Book XIII, 1728, fol.625

¹¹⁸ Fairchild, *City Gardener*, p.18

¹¹⁹ Goldwin, *Description of Bristol*, p.17

¹²⁰ Evelyn, *Sylva*, pp. 31, 19

¹²¹ Kalm, *Visit to England*, p.87

¹²² Evelyn, *Sylva*, p. 30

indicating property, patriotism, economic investment, cultivated aesthetic appreciation, and affluent recreation symbolised by the topography of the hunt.¹²³ These regimented urban plantations set out for the purposes of elite recreation were portrayed as pointedly distinct from tangled woodland clumps stripped for firewood by the lower orders, and churned up commons. Ned Ward contrasts the airs and graces of St James's Park, 'where trees in such true order grow', with the site of Bartholomew's Fair, 'ankle deep in filth and nastiness', and populated by 'a true English unthinking mob'.¹²⁴ Abraham Cowley's conflation of arboreal imagery with social order, 'Hail, old Patrician Trees, so great and good! / Hail, ye Plebeian underwood!', traded on an association of stately trees with good order and nobility, and dense, dark woodland with the lower classes and unruliness.¹²⁵ Against this backdrop, orderly tree planting translated a superior aesthetic and dignifying aspect from the estate to the town, fashioning spaces that would flatter and ennoble the promenader with a sense of elevated presence. Long straight avenues also brought extended sight lines into the town, as discussed previously, helping to negate the impression of an enclosed and claustrophobic environment.

The marketing and consumption of all these trees, plants and flowers formed a part of the so-called 'consumer revolution'.¹²⁶ Horticultural literature, catalogues, nurseries, botanical classes and florists societies all provide testament to an active and burgeoning interest in gardening amongst an urban as well as rural, and by no means exclusively upper ranking clientele. Fairchild's *City Gardener* served as an advertisement for his nursery at Hoxton pitched at an urban market, whilst Robert Furber promoted his business at Kensington with publication of the elaborate *Twelve Months of Flowers* in

¹²³ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, pp.207-9

¹²⁴ Ned Ward, *The London Spy* ed. Paul Hyland, from the 4th edn. of 1709 (East Lansing, Michigan, 1993), pp.140, 181-2

¹²⁵ Abraham Cowley, *The English Writings of Abraham Cowley* ed. A.R. Waller, (Cambridge, 1906), 'Of Solitude', p.395; Stephen Daniels, 'The political iconography of woodland in later Georgian England', in Cosgrove and Daniels, *Iconography of Landscape*, p.43

¹²⁶ Plumb, 'The commercialisation of leisure', p.273

1730.¹²⁷ Newspapers carried notices for the sale of flowers and plants, and advised of florists society meetings. The efforts of these florists concentrated on the cultivation and display of a select few plants, most commonly auriculas, tulips and carnations, in an effort to point up a distinction between their aesthetic sense, and the limited and rustic flower patch nurtured by a country woman.¹²⁸ The popularity of these societies lay in their couching of an appreciation of flowers, apt to be regarded as somewhat domestic and feminine, within a clubbable frame, as an urbane amusement. Meetings in Newcastle apparently attracted a large company of gentlemen, and were commended as innocent and elegant events.¹²⁹ Plants were considered in 'Terms of Art' and within their proper classes in botanical lessons offered 'To the Curious of Both Sexes' in Newcastle. These sessions were followed by a series of home visits during the course of the Spring and Summer to assist in the identification and care of plants.¹³⁰ Florist's Society meetings were frequently styled 'feasts' for the obvious reason that the gatherings invariably involved the consumption of food and drink. Nature in the town is not all about promenading and philosophic contemplation of the natural world. The next section details the facilities for drinking, eating and other amusements that characterise town parks and gardens.

Entertainments

As significant features on the urban recreational map, parks and gardens represented key arenas of sociability within the town.¹³¹ Before theatres and assembly rooms became a common feature in towns and cities across the country, open land in and about the town

¹²⁷ John Harvey, *Early Gardening Catalogues* (Chichester, 1972), p.14

¹²⁸ Ruth E. Duthie, 'English florists' societies and feasts in the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries', *Garden History*, X, (1982), p.17

¹²⁹ *Newcastle Journal*, 27 April, 11 May, 1745; *Newcastle General Magazine*, 3 May, 3 June, 2 September, 1754

¹³⁰ *Newcastle Journal*, 30 June, 1739, 3 May, 1740

¹³¹ See Chapter 6 on sociability and access for more on this

provided the stage for communal and recreational events.¹³² But even after alternative social venues were established, town parks and gardens continued to play host to gatherings and serve as a focus of entertainment. In this sense public urban natural spaces have a clearly distinguishable function from the country estate. This is not to say that non-urban gardens were devoid of visitors and entertainment value, but they were not geared particularly towards catering for and amusing large, broad-ranging numbers of people.¹³³ Obviously, Vauxhall stands out as the premier pleasure garden, and one that set the tone for imitative pleasure grounds all over the country, from the gardens at the Hot Wells of Bristol to Gallowgate in Newcastle.¹³⁴ The consumption of food and drink proved to be an integral part of a visit to many of these sites. It may be that removing to or just beyond the bounds of the town, and its order and jurisdiction, contributed some degree of levity to the proceedings. The proprietors of commercial gardens were certainly keen to encourage the purchase of refreshments, as 'they do not get quite so much by the company's walking as they do by their eating and drinking'.¹³⁵ Eating and drinking played a key role as social lubricant in this context, not just in loosening up the company, but in bringing them together, seated at tables, as at the public breakfasts held in Bath's Spring Gardens and Lyncombe Vale, or gathering in arbours like those at Vauxhall, St Anne's Well in Nottingham, and on the Kingsland bank in Shrewsbury. In each case the catering provided a focus, and an opportunity for the company to break from walking and enjoy more intimate social contact. In particular, this feature of parks and gardens is represented as significant in the initiation or pursuit of courtship. The

¹³² See previous references to traditional recreational use of, for example, Shrewsbury's Quarry, Newcastle's Forth and Nottingham's St. Anne's Well. John Wood makes explicit the reliance on Bath's open air leisure facilities for entertainment in the resort up to the early eighteenth century, and thereafter such sites hardly diminished in popularity, Wood, *Description of Bath*, p.220

¹³³ Adrian Tinniswood indicates that country house and garden visiting did occur from the first half of the eighteenth century, and before in some cases, as illustrated in the travels of Celia Fiennes. Guides to the gardens at Stowe began to be published from 1756, but visiting was by no means common before the later eighteenth century, *A History of Country House Visiting* (Oxford, 1989), p.251

¹³⁴ The commercial gardens opened at Gallowgate in Newcastle in 1760 were alternatively styled the Spring Gardens and the New Ranelagh Gardens in deference to London's premier sites, *Newcastle Courant*, 7 June, 1760, Hodgson Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', p.245

¹³⁵ Anon, *The Adventures of Mr Loveill* 2 vols., (London, 1750), II, p.22

green arbours in the Mulberry Gardens, at the head of St James's Park, became renowned as sites of assignation.

The centrality of the supperboxes at Vauxhall has already been illustrated. The gardens offered a kind of picnic cum barbecue experience, packaging the pleasures of al fresco eating and its attendant pleasing prospects and environs within safe and comfortable surroundings, under some form of cover, and without straying from a sociable urbane environment. Walpole's party had some chickens brought to their arbour and then cooked them themselves, minced 'into a china dish, which Lady Caroline stewed over a lamp with three pats of butter and a flagon of water'.¹³⁶ The *Description* of 1762 provides an account of the company retiring to the pavilions for supper, and of the provisions on offer, including champagne at 8 s. a bottle, cider at 1s. and and a quart of beer for 4d., and 2s.6d for a chicken, 1s for a dish of ham or beef, 6d. for a salad, 1s. for a tart and 4d. for a custard or cheesecake.¹³⁷ Celia Fiennes noted that the company at Bath walking in the Kings Mead were served with 'severall little Cakehouses where you have fruit sulibubs and summer liquours'.¹³⁸ The Spring Gardens in Bathwick appear to have incorporated the option of dining as part of the attractions from the outset.¹³⁹ The satirist Christopher Anstey included an account of a public breakfast there in his *New Bath Guide*, in which the company cross the river in wind and rain to eat bread and butter and listen to music. John Penrose's rather more sober rendition notes that a large, handsome building in the gardens served up 'Tea, Coffee, Chocolate, Sweetmeats'.¹⁴⁰ Just out of town, the Lyncomb Gardens were initially developed in the 1730's as a spa by Dr Hilary and Mr

¹³⁶ Horace Walpole, *Letters from the Hon. Horace Walpole to George Montagu, Esq.* 2nd edn. (London, 1819), p.74

¹³⁷ Anon, *Description of Vaux-Hall Gardens*, pp.49-50

¹³⁸ Fiennes, *Journeys*, pp.46-7

¹³⁹ BRO, AC/JS/57/(19) a-c, An inventory of goods at the gardens dated 7 August, 1742, includes dozens of pewter plates, china, cutlery, glasses and tables and chairs from the kitchen, cellar, scullery and summer room

¹⁴⁰ Christopher Anstey, *The New Bath Guide*, 1st publ. 1766, this edn. 1815, reprinted (Bath, 1970), pp.39-42; Penrose, *Letters from Bath*, pp.70, 96

Milsom as a venture designed to capitalise on the health market. Unfortunately, the large building they erected at a cost of £1 500 disrupted the flow of water and the investment was abandoned.¹⁴¹ Revamped as pleasure gardens from the 1750's the site entertained guests with concerts and public breakfasts, and acted as a stop-off point for visitors travelling to and from Ralph Allen's Prior Park. An advertisement of 1751 for the gardens advised that 'Messrs. Charles the French-Horn Masters, with a Band of Musick, are to perform a Concert, at Breakfast, upon a variety of Instruments', to be followed by country dancing. The site also played host to florists feasts meetings, the showing and prize-giving being followed by a meal.¹⁴² Newcastle's Forth had traditionally been used by the city's trade guilds for feasting. In 1682 the Forth House was made 'suitable for entertainment, with a cellar convenient, and a handsome room, &c', with a balcony that overlooked the walks and green.¹⁴³ The mayor and members of the corporation of Nottingham also used to march the short distance out of town to feast and sup in the arbours of St Anne's Well.¹⁴⁴ Similarly, the trade guildsmen of Shrewsbury paraded around town before heading across the river to their arbours on the Kingsland bank for a spot of ceremonial eating and drinking. This eating out in the town's open spaces was commonly accompanied by music. Garden concerts played an important part in opening out musical performance to a wide public. The orchestra building at Vauxhall was the focus of the Grove, and the concerts performed there the centre piece of the evenings entertainments. These started at about six o' clock with instrumental music, interspersed with songs and sonatos or concertos, generally finishing by ten o' clock. In between listening to the vocal performances the company would 'stray about the garden'. In the event of cold or rainy weather the musical entertainment shifted into the rotunda situated

¹⁴¹ William Hillary, *An Inquiry into the Contents and Medicinal Virtues of Lincomb Spaw Water*, (London, 1742); S. Sydenham, *Bath Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century, issuing Metal Admission Tickets* (Bath, 1907), p.12

¹⁴² *Bath Journal*, 20 May, 1751, 16 April, 1753, 14 August, 1766

¹⁴³ M.A. Richardson, *Reprints of Rare Tracts and Imprints of Antient Manuscripts* (Newcastle, 1848/9), p.66; NCCB, 25 Sept, 1682

¹⁴⁴ *Records of the Borough of Nottingham*, 9 vols., (London/Nottingham, 1882-1956), V, 30 March, 1626, p.108; BH, Nottingham, Deering MS., poem on St.Anne's Well describes the annual procession and feast

on the north side of the Gardens just inside the entrance.¹⁴⁵ Tyers enlisted the finest singers, musicians and composers of the day, and songsheets from the Gardens were printed and distributed all over the country.¹⁴⁶ Musical performances were a key attraction at Newcastle's Spring Gardens, Bath's Spring Gardens and Lyncomb Vale, St Anne's Well in Nottingham, and most of the public gardens in and around London, including Ranelagh, Cupers, Marylebone and Islington Spa.¹⁴⁷

Besides the serving of food and drink and the playing of music, a few other novelty attractions were devised to draw in and amuse the company at town public gardens. Masked balls, or masquerades, beginning with the opening Ridotto that Tyers held at Vauxhall, were not exclusively outdoor pursuits, but fused in with and played up the theatrical context of the pleasure garden.¹⁴⁸ Vauxhall's display of paintings were set up as an additional attraction, and to lend the site aesthetic credibility. Edelstein points out, in his essay on the iconography of the Gardens, that the paintings of Francis Hayman were commissioned and unveiled at the same time as the opening of the rival Ranelgh Gardens.¹⁴⁹ The works of Hayman and Hogarth ornamented the supperboxes, on subjects apparently 'admirably adapted to the place'. These included 'Two Mahometans gazing in wonder and astonishment at the many beauties of the place', 'a shepherd playing on his pipe and decoying a shepherdess into a wood', 'an archer, and a landscape', 'the

¹⁴⁵ Anon, *Description of Vaux-Hall Gardens*, pp.8, 19-20

¹⁴⁶ 'Mr. Handel's Musick for the Royal Fireworks, was Yesterday rehearsed in the Spring-Gardens, Vauxhall, to the most numerous and brightest Assembly of Ladies and Gentlemen, that ever met together on such an Occasion', newspaper ad., April, 1749, Vauxhall Gardens Collection, Minet Library, Lambeth); The event, performed by a band of one hundred musicians, was attended by a fee-paying audience of 1 200, according to *Gentlemans Magazine*, 21 April, 1749; Handel's association with the gardens was commemorated with a statue by Roubillac

¹⁴⁷ The commercial gardens in Newcastle offered weekly musical concerts over the summer season, John Sykes, *Local Records; or, Historical Register of Remarkable Events*, 2 vols., 1st publ. 1833, 2nd edn. 1866, repr. (Stockton-on-Tees, 1973), p.241; The Lyncombe site, a garden resort developed around a natural spring just out of town on the way up to Prior Park, offered public breakfasts and concerts with dancing as well as hosting regular florists feasts, *Bath Journal*, 20 May, 1751, 16 April, 1753; Wroth, *London Pleasure Gardens*, pp.16-18, 93-96; Chancellor, *Pleasure Haunts of London*, pp.349-53, 359-61

¹⁴⁸ See Chapter 7 for further details relating to masquerades

¹⁴⁹ Edelstein, *Vauxhall Gardens*, p.18

country dancers round the maypole', and 'the play at bob-cherry'.¹⁵⁰ The mechanical devices at Vauxhall were apparently very popular. A mechanical tableau of waterfall within a landscape scene was set up in a hedge half-way up the Grand Walk. Illuminated by concealed lights, the model was unveiled at around nine o' clock in the evening and entertained the gathered crowd with its spectacle of running water turning the wheel of a mill for ten or fifteen minutes before the curtain fell again.¹⁵¹ The other famous gadget employed in the Gardens was the 'Fairy Music' that emanated from bushes in the Rural Downs. Cupers Garden advertised its mechanical attractions as including 'a grand Archimedean Screw and Horizontal Globes, illuminated; a grand Pyramid on the Water, lighted by Neptune, Dolphins, & c. spouting out water, three grand suns on the Top of the Machine, Air Balloons, &c.&c'.¹⁵² What these mechanics conveyed in their representation of natural features was an image of harmony and control. Waterfall, volcano and mountain scenes were wheeled out at a set time as set pieces, run by cogs and wheels to present the assembled audience with natural phenomenon deftly controlled and comprehensible by means of human agency. In effect these scale versions of the landscape represent another layer of interpretation, situated within the overall framework of the gardens as orderly microcosms of the natural environment.¹⁵³

Conclusion

It is important, in assessing their design and ordering, to situate these parks, gardens and walks within the overall structure of their urban physical and social landscape. The incorporation of 'rural' features, wildernesses and groves and grazing animals, is

¹⁵⁰ Anon, *Description of Vaux-Hall Gardens*, pp.28-30

¹⁵¹ Anon, *Description of Vaux-Hall Gardens*, pp.8-9

¹⁵² Lockman, *Sketch*, p.19; ML, *Pleasure Gardens of South London*, vol.1, newspaper advertisement (source not cited)

¹⁵³ See Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision-Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States* (Oxford, 1993), pp.51-53 on the relationship between nature and machines

stimulated in response to the desire to moderate or counter the character of the built environment. Their positioning along the fringes of the town, and emphasis on prospects of the surrounding countryside is significant in terms of the growing impulse to bridge the gap and convey a harmony between the man-made and natural environment. In these respects urban parks and gardens serve as important indicators, and indeed motivators, of a general trend in aesthetic taste and garden and landscape design towards a greater naturalism. Socially, the public function and spectacle of these arenas represents an important distinction to be drawn between urban parks and gardens of the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century and the private gardens and estates that dominate garden history accounts. In fashioning areas like Newcastle's Forth, Shrewsbury's Quarry, Nottingham's Leen walks, Bath's Orange Grove and London's Vauxhall Gardens, and furnishing them with architectural, musical and theatrical, mechanical and culinary attractions, town corporations and private investors were responding directly to the leisured tastes of a public audience. London's public gardens clearly display these characteristics on a more elaborate scale than provincial examples. As the capital, the urge to seek out a temporary retreat from the city was more acute, the market was significantly larger and the leisure trade more developed than elsewhere in the country. But resorts like Bath, so prominently oriented around health and recreation, also developed a range of garden, walking and airing facilities of increasing sophistication in relation to the demand and scale of a leisured clientele. Elsewhere, the laying out of one or two green sites was able to accommodate the taste for public promenading. It is true that the company, both in the capital and in provincial towns, was made up of both town residents and visitors, but this does not negate the urban character of the facilities, as the product of geographically centred and burgeoning consumer markets. Chapter four picks this up as its theme, identifying the proprietors responsible for the design and ordering of town parks, gardens and walks, and in turn the audience for whom these were intended.

Chapter 4

Proprietors and Promenaders

Introduction

The preceding account has set out the style and character of urban parks, gardens and walks. This chapter follows this in asking who was behind this ordering of nature in the town, and in whose interests. Corporations, private backers of public gardens, commercial entrepreneurs, royalty and aristocracy, and individuals owning private town gardens are identified and considered in turn as agents fashioning and orchestrating urban green space.

Since garden histories are usually oriented around country estates, large or small, the issue of ownership has been dominated by the motives and interests of private individuals and families, often landed gentry. In such cases the form and functioning of the site is more cohesive, as the potential for alternative interpretations and use is constrained by its private nature. By contrast, the character of public urban garden sites renders them more vulnerable to the opening up of a gap between the considered lay-out and purpose, and individual perception and use. It is this exposed ground that becomes the contested territory examined in chapters 6 and 7, as the ideals and intentions behind the shaping of these arenas become muddled by the tramping of so many feet. The ordering of nature in the town is a product of its setting in that it is necessarily sensitive to this context of a busy, worldly, public urban environment, a marketplace of pointed display. Even private gardens within towns were subject to wider public awareness than more isolated plots out in the countryside, farther removed from the public gaze. So the motives of the

proprietors of parks and gardens about the town, and the measures undertaken are attuned and prone to a wider audience.

With both an urban clientele, (at least in part, allowing for incoming visitors), and ordering that takes account of the social and environmental context of the town, these parks, gardens and walks do reflect the input of urban consciousness, and the interests of urban residents. The involvement of the town corporations is particularly notable in this respect. What this is addressing, in a wider sense, is the issue of how involved town dwellers were in cultural development, and the extent to which these leisure facilities were oriented by and directed to an urban audience. Jonathan Barry is concerned that too much emphasis is placed on the presence and influence of the landed elite at the expense of urban residents proper.¹ Clearly, with regard to nature in the town, landed models are a factor, as addressed in chapter 2, but in highlighting the organising bodies behind town parks and gardens, and the nature of their investment in and running of these spaces, the urban dimension to these endeavours is given due consideration.

Before moving on to look at the main groups behind the ordering of nature in the town, it is worth providing a summary of the possible motivations and interests behind investment, particularly as some of these points may be applicable to various bodies. The establishment of a formally designated park, garden or walk might act as a kind of legacy, committing to posterity the repute and public spiritedness of the individuals or body concerned. The planting and nurturing of a garden is, by its very nature, a long term project, and this is especially true of arboriculture, given the symbolism inherent in laying down seeds or saplings to mature for generations to come. As discussed elsewhere, planting provided an opportunity to root and naturalise one's wealth and influence. This was especially appealing

¹ Jonathan Barry, 'The press and the politics of culture in Bristol 1660-1775' in Jeremy Black & Jeremy Gregory (eds), *Culture, Politics and Society in Britain, 1660-1800* (Manchester, 1991), pp.50-51

to those whose urban power and status felt fleeting and vulnerable. Henry Jenks, mayor of Shrewsbury, enshrined his name in the planting of the lime avenues he ordered and oversaw for the Quarry in 1719. The undertaking also requires and/or conveys a certain confidence and stability in its appropriation of space and stamping for the future. For the corporation, it was a matter of civic pride to effect the transformation of green land and thus enhance the town's assets. Those responsible for promoting urban parks, gardens and walks were pleased to imagine that they were administering to the physical and moral well-being of the town, and could accordingly bask in a philanthropic glow. Thus the corporation of York were commended for establishing the New or Long Walk, 'so much conducing to the entertainment and health of the gentry and citizens'.² Some projects were launched on the back of an explicitly moral agenda, designed to steer the free time of the citizens in a potentially less threatening, debilitating direction than drinking and running amok by containing recreational activity in a more easily regulated forum. This sense of moral superiority was also cultivated through the aesthetic sensibility that imagining and then fashioning open land as garden scape displayed. This reflected favourably both on the individuals and on the image of the town generally, signalling its credentials of good taste. Parks and gardens were something to be proud of, to be boasted of in guides and histories as emblematic of the town's social standing and civilised status, catering to the beau monde. Furthermore, they served as leading facilities to draw people into the town, desirable not just for the kudos that such popularity lent, but in terms of the economic and commercial gains to be made in attracting a pool of wealthy incomers. York Council evidently kept a keen eye on the gentry of the surrounding region in fashioning its social amenities, 'Our magistrates take great care that families of this sort should be encouraged to live here; by allowing of all innocent diversions, and making of publick walks for their entertainment, & c.'. ³ For the proprietors of commercial pleasure gardens, the aim was obviously to cash in on the demand for leisure pursuits. Playing up the supposedly

² Francis Drake, *Eboracum: Or the History and Antiquities of the City of York* (London, 1736), p.249

³ Drake, *Eboracum*, p.241

exclusive nature of the site, and offering attractions such as music, food and mechanical curiosities, as outlined in chapter 3, was intended to perpetuate the popularity of these arenas. Not a small part of the appeal of towns like Nottingham, Shrewsbury and Bath to gentry visiting and establishing town residences was credited to a pleasant, green environment and attractive leisure amenities. Constructing mini estates in towns by investing in private gardens attached to town houses gave landed gentry and aristocracy a foothold in the city and an urbane air, projecting their wealth and status and polite sensibilities on new territory, just as the private gardens of the urban elite and middling orders might signal their natural aesthetic taste alongside their acquired assets. Nature in the town also satisfied, on site, the impulse of elevation and retreat. In a crowded urban environment essentially non-productive garden space allowed for a pointed removal from business and worldly bustle. The range of reasonings behind and interests in the ordering of nature in the town is obviously something that this thesis is addressing throughout, but the aim here, and concern of the remainder of this chapter, is to track investment from the point of view of the organising bodies.

The corporation

The main agency behind the laying out and upkeep of public parks, gardens and walks in provincial towns was the corporation. In many instances town councils both initiated and provided the start-up and ongoing financial backing that such projects demanded. In cases where the land concerned was leased to individuals, with the urban authority as ground landlord, stipulations might be made that recreational use of the site was not infringed. At any rate, leisured use of public open land often had to be accommodated alongside, or asserted over and above the rights and demands of freemen to graze stock, tenants to pursue their particular trade, soldiers to exercise, commoners to launder and dry their clothes, gather firewood, play sport and make merry. For example in Shrewsbury the corporation had to balance or decide to privilege interests in the Quarry

from various sections of the urban community, including those keen on pursuing quarrying, pasturage and bleaching.

Recreational use of the Quarry was not in itself initiated by Shrewsbury town council, as indicated in chapter 3, but was rather placed on a formal footing by Henry Jenks's decision to spend £65 13s on a consignment of limes to demarcate avenues. Although a professional nurseryman was appointed, the actual lay-out of the walks appears to have fallen to Jenks, 'that trees be planted in the same in such manner as Mr Mayor shall think most ornamental'.⁴ Clearly his initiative was not intended to displace alternative uses of the space, for Jenks himself was subsequently granted a licence to extract clay from the Dingle to make bricks, and he also sat on the committee responsible for settling the 'Turns' in the Quarry and Kingsland, concerning the right of the freemen of the town to pasture. Furthermore, the upper part of the Quarry continued to be laid out with tenters for the drying of drapers cloth. It seems that, although most portraits take care to remove evidence of such, the use of the green for pasturage and by soldiers continued alongside promenading throughout the period, although not without tension. The soldiers were banned in 1742 for the damage caused to the grass, but evidently returned. In 1760 complaint was made that leys in the Quarry were being ruined by soldiers playing and exercising daily, compounding the grievance suffered 'considering how much ground has been taken up by the inclosed walks'. In this respect, efforts to keep the people to the walks were not always about social regulation. The money raised from turns in the Quarry and on the Kingsland bank represented an important contribution to the town coffers. For instance, capital from the turns for 1742 was put towards the cost of improvements to the council room. The point is that although this thesis focuses primarily on recreational uses of nature in the town, it is important not to overlook the balance of interests that town councils were often obliged to acknowledge in their

⁴ SRRC, SCM, 15 January, 1719, quoted in Prideaux, 'Historical notes on the Quarry', p.7

ordering of these sites. That said, they were undoubtedly keen to encourage polite, leisured use of open land. Shrewsbury's attempts to banish unruly behaviour from the Quarry, detailed in chapter 6, included protection of the landscaping set up for this composed promenading, 'a Reward of 20 guineas to be proclaimed for discovering the persons who damaged the trees in the Quarry on Saturday night last to be paid upon Conviction and the Offenders to be prosecuted'. The investment in, and upkeep of the walks represented the most substantial on-going contribution of the corporation to the leisure facilities of the town. Attracting and gratifying visitors was certainly an important factor, as an assembly of the common council noted, 'That from the pleasant Situation of the said Town numbers of Gentry & other persons are induced to resort thereto & reside therein'.⁵

Shrewsbury corporation also owned and leased out the Kingsland bank, opposite the Quarry, again overseeing a mixture of interests. At first the letting of the ground for agricultural purposes clashed with the traditional use of the land and the arbours set up there by the trade guilds of the town. The Shoemakers had been using an arbour there from the 1520s, and a turf maze from 1570. The natural setting seems to have been integral to this chosen recreation, as well as offering the advantage of a removed site beyond the town walls. Each year a ceremonial procession wound its way out of town across to Kingsland, 'In order'd elegance, serene and slow'.⁶ Both the deliberate processing from the town out into rural environs and the actual character of the event married civic ceremony with natural imagery. Each guild employed emblematic figures for the occasion. The Tailors and Skinners walked with Adam and Eve adorned with a few leaves sown together. Before or between them paraded a tree, sometimes bearing a

⁵ SRRC, SCM, 18 November, 1734; 27 August, 26 October 1742; 1 March 1742, 1 October, 1760; 12 March, 1742; 5 March, 1759; 12 January, 1756

⁶ Jones, *Shrewsbury Quarry*, p.13

serpent and bedecked with a few apples occasionally plucked and temptingly offered.⁷ Both the Hatters and the Glovers chose to parade with an Indian Chief/hunter. Burne's *Shropshire Folklore* prints what Peele refers to as the 'show tune par excellence', a piece of music perhaps common to all the Companies and entitled 'Shrewsbury Quarry'.⁸ In 1724 the Kingsland was enclosed and set to Richard Morgan, butcher, who sowed it with corn. In response the tradesmen threatened to destroy the crop in order to access their arbours. As a result a compromise was brokered. By 1726 Morgan was obliged by the Cloth-worker's Company to cut a way through the corn to allow them passage.⁹ The corporation appear to have been at greater pains to protect the newly established designation of the site as an elegant airing ground for subscribers (see chapter 6). In 1742 Kingsland was let to the highest bidder on the understanding that 'in any such lease there be reserves leave for Gentlemen and Ladies to Air their Coaches and Horseback, they doing as little damage as may be'. William Bennett obtained the lease for 21 years at £50, accepting these conditions, transplanting unwanted trees to other parts of the Kingsland or to the arbours, and leaving a roadway clear for those out for an airing.¹⁰

The town council for Newcastle became similarly entangled in a conflict of interests over the Shield Field. In this case successive minutes show the Council at some pains to preserve common interests and access for the residents of the town, for instance in 1652, and apparently prior to this, resisting plans for the ploughing up of the Shield Field, the reason given 'That we have had liberty of recreation tyme without mynde', and in 1654 seeking to ensure the preservation of a freeway to the 'Sheild feild, that soe the same may be used for the ease and good of the Inhabitants as formerly'. As early as 1707 complaints were being lodged that access was being infringed by enclosure, 'the ancient

⁷ Michael Peele, *Old Shrewsbury Show* 1st publ. 1934 (Shrewsbury, 1980), p16.

⁸ Peele, *Shrewsbury Show*, p10

⁹ J. Barker, 'The Kingsland and Shrewsbury Show', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society* 4th series, VII, (1918-9), p.177

¹⁰ SRRC, SCM, 1 March, 1742

way & liberty used and accustomed there is of late enclosed & stopped up', and on this occasion the corporation took action, 'its ordered that if they will not on notice lay open the same that the towne cause and enforce the same to be done'.¹¹ Dispute rumbled on for some twenty years. The Council did not, or were not able to drop the matter. In February 1738 the private landowners used the local press to issue warnings of prosecution for trespass to those who persisted in damaging the ground and breaking down hedges in order to ride horses and exercise there.¹² The following month an inquiry was launched, at the expense of the corporation, to determine finally 'if the Inhabitants of the Corporation have any and what Rights to recreate themselves in or otherwise make use of the said Shield Field', concluding that the people of the town did have a right to use the same.¹³ Shield Field remained private property.

Although concerned with upholding traditional common recreational use of the Shield Field, the civic authorities were at the same time endorsing the clean up and enclosure of the Forth across town for the attraction and entertainment of a more select clientele. Newcastle was, after all, a county town, drawing in the monied and powerful from the surrounding region, as well as accommodating a home-grown wealthy mercantile elite. The Council itself had a long standing relationship with the Forth. Bourne's *History* relates that, traditionally, the mayor, aldermen and sheriff frequented the site in all their regalia at Easter and Whitsun, these public holidays remaining the traditional and most popular occasions there.¹⁴ The use of the Forth for meetings of the various town guilds appears to have continued until 1728.¹⁵ As further evidence of the frequent links between trade guilds and civic ceremony and green sites in and about the town, this connection

¹¹ TWAS, NCCB, October, 1652, fol.96; 1654, fol. 239; 21 April, 1707

¹² *Newcastle Courant*, 18 February, 1738 and successive editions

¹³ TWAS, NCCB 23 March 1738; 10 April 1738

¹⁴ Bourne, *History*, p.146

¹⁵ G.B. Richardson, 'Extracts from the municipal accounts of Newcastle-upon-Tyne', in M.A. Richardson (ed.), *Reprints of Rare Tracts and Imprints of Antient Manuscripts* (Newcastle, 1847), pp.67-68

represents a particular urban association and dimension to the use of nature in the town. The Forth project received its initial financial backing from a group of private subscribers (see below), but the council collaborated from the start, and maintained their interest in the upkeep of the green as an orderly and prestigious social arena. For instance, in 1733 they regulated highways passing through the Forth and granted the resources necessary for its beautifying, and for the attraction of 'the best Company'. Further repairs and alterations to the house and grounds were undertaken in 1742 and 1746 when the new tenant was ordered 'to keep in good repair and Scour the Hedges and the Green, and Rowl the Walks as often as necessary'. The following year the walks were ballasted by order of the Council, and again in 1749. When plans for the construction of an Infirmary at the Firth Banks were presented, a Committee of the Common Council was set up to consider 'whether or not the Building an Infirmary in the Situation then desired and mark'd out might in any wise be prejudicial to the Health of or disagreeable to persons walking in the Firth', concluding, after consultation with doctors, that the project would not present 'any Inconveniencies of that Nature'.¹⁶

Nottingham's civic leaders also made ceremonial use of a green resort of the town, St Ann's Well, marching out there in all their finery to indulge in food, drink and musical entertainment. The Corporation did invest some money in the site, seeking to compound its popularity with visitors, and build on its past reputation as the resort of nobility and even royalty.¹⁷ The victualling house at the well, along with a bowling alley and the lands thereabouts, was leased out, but the council oversaw the care of the trees there, ordering that they were not to be cut down in 1698, took it upon themselves to enlarge the bowling green in

¹⁶ TWAS, NCCB 9 July, 1733; 21 April 1742; 22 Sept. 1746; 13 July 1747, 26 June 1749; 4 April 1751 [Infirmary opened 1752]

¹⁷ Deering quotes an anonymous account of 1641 that describes the importance of the well as a place of consort, 'when any of the Town have their Friends come to them, they have given them no welcome, unless they entertain them at this Well'. Similarly, 'there are many other Meetings of Gentlemen, both from the Town and the Country, making choice of this Place rather than the Town for their Rendezvous to recreate themselves at'. *Nottinghamia*, pp.73-4

1702, and also paid for 6000 bricks towards building new stables.¹⁸ Nonetheless, the prestige of the well seems to have steadily declined, so that it became primarily associated with the superstitious revels of the common people come to gawp at 'authentic' Robin Hood artefacts. The Spa by the Leen site was to be pitched at a more discerning company, oriented around promending along tree-lined paths laid out by the river bank. A bowling green nearby also formed part of the package. The initiative by Alderman Watkinson, who leased and paid rent for the land from the council, clearly won the backing of the rest of the corporate body. In 1707 the council granted him the sum of £10 'towards the charges he has been at in making a convenient Walk to accomodate the Water Drinkers & c.'. In 1709 the council members voted a futher £10 towards the bowling green. By the summer of 1709, just as the facilities for the riverside promenading of 'the Gentlemen Ladyes and other p'sons' were complete, they faced a challenge from 'some unruly Burgesses' threatening to destroy the walks and trees. The motives behind this proposed action are unclear; it may be that rights to the land used were in dispute, or that the burgesses in question had some other quarrell with the authorities and were threatening to express this by challenging and destroying their show-piece. At any rate, the council threw its authoritative weight behind the resort, decreeing that on the back of the contibutions already made, and 'design further to contribute towards p'fecting the same' the walks and trees were expressly 'made and sett by the direcon and allowance of this Corporation' and they would thus not hesitate to 'exert their Authority to pr'vent the spoyling or hurting of the pr'misses'. The town cryer was sent out onto the streets to pronounce their full intention to exact 'strict punishment of such disorderly or disobedient person or persons' that threatened to vandalise the site. In May of the following year the corporation gave Watkinson all the old trees he needed to enclose the bowling green with railings.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Records of the Borough of Nottingham*, V, 8 February, 1698, p.397; NRO, NHB, 12 March, 1702; NRO, NHB, 30 April, 1707

¹⁹ NRO, NHB, 30 April, 1707; 11 February, 1709; 28 June, 1709; 5 May, 1710

As a major resort, the corporation of Bath could hardly neglect investing in leisure facilities to oblige the company. Much of this focus was directed at the old bowling green and Gravel Walks area to the east of the Abbey. In the interests of providing an attractive and sociable forum in which the ladies and gentlemen might promenade, the town council financed work on trees, including the planting of sycamores, provided lime and ash for plant nurture, set up and maintained a privy, and gravelled the walks. In 1694 they backed extensive improvements including the felling of the old elms and replanting of young trees, returfing, levelling and gravelling, and funded on-going grass-cutting, pruning and watering.²⁰ This level of investment was given added stimulus in response to the development of alternative diversions such as Harrison's Walks, and, later, the Parades and the Spring Gardens, in order to preserve the popularity of the Walks, and meet an increasing sophistication in the expectations and demands of the company. According to Wood the private enlarging of the terrace walk in 1730 and the success that this met with 'had such an Effect upon the Corporation of the City, that they forthwith began to level and plant the Grove in the Manner we now see it'.²¹ It was at this time that the comprehensive renovations detailed in chapter 3 were undertaken, entirely at the expense of the city. Thereafter, regular attention was paid to the area. In 1735 more elms were planted in the Grove, followed by more in 1744, all subsequently nurtured and pruned. The walks themselves were regularly swept, and regravelled in 1746 and 1753, after which the Chamberlains accounts record weekly payments for the cleaning and upkeep of the Grove.²²

Elsewhere, the Corporation sought to protect and formalise opportunities for airing, as a key attraction and pursuit within the resort. To this end they established the 'Ring' as a

²⁰ BCRO, Bath Chamberlains Accounts, 15 March, 1676, December 1677, March, 1678 & 1679, 16 January, 1683, 20 November, 1684, 2 January, 1704 for tree planting and care; BCA, 6 December, 1673, 28 December, 1704 for ash and lime; BCM, 13 February, 1681, 25 June, 1714, 26 July, 1715, 30 May, 1716 for 'house of ease' establishment and maintenance; BCM, 11 December, 1693, 4 September, 1701 for work on the gravel walks; BCM, 1 January, 1694, BCA, 2 November, 1694, for programme of improvements

²¹ Wood, *Description of Bath*, p.246

²² BCRO, BCA, 12 September, 1735, 30 May 1738, 9 July, 1746, 13 July 1747, 19 August, 1748, 18 July 1749, 31 July, 1750, 29 August, 1751, and accounts for 1753 thereafter

designated airing ground on the Town Common, a space that, as a micro version of the town as a whole, focused the virtues of a healthy constitution and the desire to see and be seen in one area. In the same way that Shrewsbury council managed Kingsland, Bath Corporation continued to lease and collect rent from the Common whilst ensuring that access to the Ring was not infringed. In 1746 the cost of repairs to the road leading to the Ring and work on the Ring itself was drawn from the chamberlains purse.²³ Wood also records that the Corporation formerly paid an annual rent of £30 per annum to acquire the freedom of the private Claverton Down for airing.²⁴ And yet Wood also complained of finding the Corporation and the people of Bath narrow and obstructionist with regards his own endeavours towards redeveloping and improving the city. In contrast with the conception of an elevated, 'true' public spirit able to discern the broader public good, and naturally in possession of good taste, Wood depicts his detractors as unable to see the grand and overall picture, and guilty of asserting their own private advantage over the public good, 'Tis amazing that such a Malignant temper should subsist in the minds of these Bath people, who have such opportunities everyday of civilizing themselves, that they are so blind to conviction and so untouched by Experience as not to perceive of how great advantage to the Town the improvements within these twenty years have been and how great they may be'. He characterised 'Bath Man' as 'so mean and contracted and his Spirit so low mean and groveling that for a little private advantage he would not care if all his species suffered'.²⁵ Tobias Smollett backed Wood on this point, criticising the conservatism of the Corporation and their apparent short-sightedness regarding the fact that investment in facilities would bring 'a greater concourse of company to their town, perpetuate these blessings to them and their posterity. How little is to be expected of them, in this particular, might be guessed by their conduct to Mr. *Wood*, the architect, to

²³ BCRO, BCA, 13 July, 1747

²⁴ Wood, *Description of Bath*, p.440

²⁵ John Wood the Younger to Mr Shering (the Duke of Kingstons' agent), Bath, 1 October 1755. Quoted in Trevor Fawcett (ed.) *Voices of Eighteenth-Century Bath, An Anthology* (Bath, 1995), p.7

whose extraordinary genius they are indebted for a great part of the trade and beauty of the place: yet they have industriously opposed his best designs'.²⁶ It does seem to be the case that the Corporations' keenness to preserve their own interests led them into conflict with Thomas Harrison (see below), proprietor of the Rooms and walks that offered alternative recreational space to the Council's Gravel Walks, and William Purdie, proprietor of the Spring Gardens, in ordering him to pull down his boat house, but their cautiousness in allowing developments does not negate their own investment, and Wood was not, in spite of his self-promotional essay, the only developer working in the city.²⁷

Sensitivity to the tastes of visitors, both for the sake of establishing a reputation and for boosting revenue, prompted civic authorities in other fledgling resort towns to invest in the natural, aesthetic appeal of the environment. In Southampton measures by the corporation to improve and beautify the approach into the town on the London/Winchester road down the Avenue tie in with the developing popularity of the town as a spa and seaside resort. In 1744 the profits from the sale of timber cut from the common was expended on 'two Rows of Elm Trees to be planted on the said Cross called John of Guernsey's Cross [the inner avenue area] to wit one Row on each Side'. In 1750 the Mayor undertook 'to replace the Trees decayed in the Avenue on the Cross and to trunk the new others to be put in and as many of the old ones as shall be necessary'. The council continued to fund the planting and enclosing of trees along this key approach route throughout the 1750's and into the 1760's.²⁸

Exeter city council appear to have planned and financed the earliest provincial town walks in the country, exploiting the elevation of the town walls, 'Northen-hay levelled, and a pleasant

²⁶ Tobias Smollett, *An Essay on the External Use of Water* (London, 1752), pp.38-9

²⁷ BCRO, BCM, 3 October, 1757; see Neale, *Bath*, pp.107-110, 175-184, and Sylvia McIntyre, 'Bath: The Rise of a Resort Town 1660-1800', in Peter Clark (ed.), *Country Towns in Pre-Industrial England* (Leicester, 1981), pp.222-37 on the role of the Corporation in Bath's development

²⁸ Southampton City Archives, Southampton Journal Book, 15 February, 1744, 30 November, 1750, 15 May, 1752, 21 December, 1753, 4 November, 1763

Walk made thereon; and upon the Mount over against Gallants-Bower, Seats or Benches of Timber erected, and all at the City's Charge' in 1612.²⁹ In the years running up to the civil war the city chamber paid for the planting of trees and their subsequent maintenance, the establishment of seats, levelling, and the gravelling, repair and railing of the walks at both the Southernhay and Northernhay sites on opposite sides of the town (see fig.4.1).³⁰ This extensive investment was interrupted by the war, when the mature elms of the walks were felled, but in the years following the Restoration the city renewed its commitment and worked to build up these facilities, presumably in recognition of their value in a populous commercial centre and county town that catered both to gentry and a prosperous mercantile and industrial elite.³¹ In 1664 the chamber agreed that the Northernhay site may be 'better leavelled & fitted for the publick use of those that walk there as formerly it hath been, by inlarging of the paths & the ordering of whereof was left to Ald. Butler etc. & trees there to be there planted att the charge of the Cittie by the Receiver'. Thereafter, regular expence was incurred in the course of planting trees and embellishing the walks. In fact, such was the faith of the Council in the merits of urban tree-planting that the policy was extended to 'such other places where may be fitting and necessary for ye good of the cittie'. And yet setting up a framework for orderly promenading did not guarantee that this was how these spaces were used. In 1693 a committee of the chamber was sent out to see about fencing Southernhay in order to prevent it being spoiled by the public. In 1694 the chamber were forced to pay a man to clear Northernhay of the rubbish that had been lately dumped there, and an order was issued in 1699 that none of the trees in Southernhay or Northernhay were to be removed without consent.

²⁹ Richard Izacke/Samuel Izacke, *Remarkable Antiquities of the City of Exeter* (London, 1723), p.145

³⁰ See DRO, EAB, VII-VIII, 1611-1647

³¹ Izacke, *Remarkable Antiquities*, p.157; Borsay states that Exeter offset potential decline in trading revenue by cultivating consumer services, *English Urban Renaissance*, p.21

A gatekeeper was already in attendance at Northernhay by 1701, and a Mr Trewman was appointed in 1703 'to take care that Northinghay Walk bee kept in good repair & that he have Twenty Shillings a yeare for the same from Michaelmas next'.³²

If an area was used for public recreation, and the appearance of it and conduct therein was likely to reflect on the standing of the town, then it fell within the local council's interest to maintain the site. This was apparently the case in Bristol, where the upkeep of Queen Square, as prestigious ground, was assumed not exclusively by the home-owners, but by the Corporation. Besides financing the lighting of the Square, the chamber also took it upon themselves 'to take into their Consideration the present State and Condition of the Statue in Queen Square and of the Walks there and to report their opinion to the next or any subsequent House what will be the Expence of Repairing and puting the same in order'. In 1749 the committee 'agreed that the Sume of One hundred pounds be given by this House, towards repairing and putting in order the Walks in the said [Queen] Square'.³³ But the corporations were not always so inclined to foot the bill for greening the town, or in a financial position to do so. Local private backing proved an important additional factor in the creation of town parks, gardens and walks.

Private interest-public gardens

Private individual or group support for these projects represents a direct bearing on the landscape of the town by wealthy and influential members of the urban elite. This investment might, on the face of it, be a case of selfless benefaction. Keith Thomas cites the legacy of John Kyrle of Ross-on-Wye, whose personal intervention resulted in the

³² DRO, EAB, 11 October, 1664, 9 May, 1665, 22 October, 1667, October, 1668, 11 October, 1670, 23 August, 1692, 31 October, 1665, 13 March, 1693, 23 April, 1694, 1699, fol.256, January, 1701, August, 1703

³³ BRO, BCCP, 10 February, 1738, 14 December, 1740, 24 February, 1749

siting of elms by the church and along an approach road, and the laying out of a public park for the citizens.³⁴ However, personal interests and gains figure prominently in most instances. Although Newcastle town council were involved in the restructuring of the Forth from the outset, the town declared itself 'not in a condition to contribute any considerable sum to help to defray the charg'. Instead, the cost of near £300 for the green and accompanying house was borne entirely by a band of private subscribers, the investment providing them with an opportunity to shape leisure facilities to their own agenda;

Whereas divers of the Aldermen, merchants, and other gentlemen Inhabitants of this Town have given very large and considerable sumes of money for & towards the makeing of a Bowling-Greene in the Firthe and Railing the same aboute with it now fully furnished for the sober and civill recreation of such who use the exercise of Bowleing and also to prevent the use of other loose disorderly and unlawful pastymes which might otherwise be followed and practised if such publique places of Recreation were not allowed and tollerated.³⁵

In 1752 a group of aspiring residents of the new houses in New Street, Bristol, running between the College Green and Orchard Street, banded together to petition the Council for leave 'to convert a Bank of Earth, opposite the said Houses, into a Terras Walk'. Clearly this would both improve the outlook from their properties, and simultaneously reflect favourably on their elegant status, as promenaders drifted by. To this end they pledged to keep the said walk 'open and publick', to underwrite the expenses of the whole project, and duly deposited a plan at the Chamberlains office for general perusal. The corporation voted unanimously in favour of the undertaking, no doubt delighted at the prospect of improvements to the fabric of the city at no expence of their own.³⁶ Bath corporation also relied to a certain extent on private enterprise to boost the package of attractions that Bath offered, as well as personal donations. The establishment of a

³⁴ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p.206

³⁵ TWAS, NCCB, 25 September 1657

³⁶ BRO, BCCP, 21 March, 1752

walkway along part of the city walls was launched 'by a publique Collection of every man's free Guift if soe much mony may be that way raysed'.³⁷

In Tunbridge Wells the order and maintenance of the walks, along with the chapel and the charity school, appears to have been in the jurisdiction and financial management of the Chapel of King Charles the Martyr from 1713. In this year a general meeting of interested parties agreed that 'a Treasurer and 3 or more Trustees be chosen who with the Minister shall have the immediate Care and Oversight of the school and of the Repairs necessary for ye chappel & Walks: And shall report the State & Condicion thereof at the Monthly Meetings'. The committee for the orchestrating of these concerns was to be comprised from a pool of resident and transient company;

That during the Summer Season when the Company is large the Treasurer & Trustees be chosen montly out of the contributors resorting to the wells. That at the end of each season the Treasurer & Trustees be chosen out of the neighbouring Gentlemen & Principal Inhabitants who shall be desired to continue in the sd. Trust until a new choice be made at a full meeting of the Contributors in the next Summer season.³⁸

This means that control of the walks was in this instance assumed by those that used and felt they had a superior claim on the facilities, local elite and visitors to the resort. That money from collections in the chapel was used to service the walks, alongside repairs to the chapel and the support of the charity school, neatly reflects the concerns of the company in or visiting the town. The link satisfied the benefactor with its public-spirited packaging of spiritual and physical welfare, infusing the walks with a degree of moral sanction. The collections were sufficient to enable considerable investment in the appearance of the walks, as directed by the core committee of at least four, and later seven contributory trustees. To begin, a programme of repairs was launched. Thereafter benches were set up, trees planted, and the walks swept and watered to counter the

³⁷ BCRO, BCM, 22 September, 1674

³⁸ CKS, MCKC, 28 September, 1713

nuisance of dust from the road to 'the Gentlemen & Ladies walking upon the Walks'.³⁹ In 1728 more extensive renovations were deemed necessary, whereby the lower walk was levelled and fixed up with gates to keep horses off, the upper walk repaired, and the trees pruned. In continuing to grant considerable sums towards watering the road the committee made it clear in whose interests such measures were undertaken, 'the Dust shall not be troublesome to the Gentry upon Tonbridge Walks this Season for the Sum of Ten Pounds and Ten Shillings'. Besides the on-going expence of watering and cutting the trees, the trustees maintained their interest in the steady improvement of the walks, ordering new fences, replacing the tiled paving, and investing in lighting (see chapter 3).⁴⁰ Such benefaction, while dressed in philanthropic garb, would also have had a commercial dimension, in that attractive and elegant surrounds and leisure facilities were very important in maintaining the flow of visitors, and their money, into the town. For the proprietors of commercial walks and gardens, the presence of company with money to spend on their recreation was obviously crucial to their success.

Commercial enterprise

Private financial investment in pleasure gardens and walks was recouped through charged admission, on the door and/or through a system of subscription, and through additional charges inside the site, primarily for food. The levying of seasonal subscriptions gave the proprietor money up front, and allowed him/her to pitch their development at a core company, the kudos and apparent exclusivity of which might then be traded upon in drawing in occasional trade, but this also made the owner more directly accountable to these subsidiary investors. Parks, gardens and walks as commercial ventures were, at this stage, particular to the urban environment, dependent upon a buoyant and populous

³⁹ MCKC, 1713, 1725, 1726, 14 September & 22 September, 1727, 3 October 1726 (min. 4 trustees), 14 September, 1727 (min. 7 trustees, and decisions carried by a majority)

⁴⁰ MCKC, 3 July, 1728, 5 July, 1729, 15 July, 1731, 1 October, 1732

society of residents and visitors willing to pay to play, view and be viewed in the right arenas.

As significant as the desire to translate the celebrity and distinction of London's Vauxhall Gardens to provincial towns was, it was the great success of the Vauxhall Gardens as a commercial venture that encouraged entrepreneurs to set up parallel sites, cashing in on the prosperity of the original formula. Jonathan Tyers had leased the gardens, and the approaches to the site from Elizabeth Masters in March 1729 for thirty years at £250, on the agreement that he would, at his own cost, 'maintain sufficiently repair and uphold, cleanse it, and not to cut down Trees, and during the said Term at each Tree or shrub shall die, he shall replant and make good the same'.⁴¹ He then set about revamping the gardens as a means of rebuilding its reputation, staging the Ridotto al Fresco as a grand and prestigious re-opening in June 1732. Tyer's achievement was based on simultaneously fostering an impression of exclusivity whilst pulling in an ever more diverse public. To this end he skilfully promoted the act of charging as a necessary tool of selection(see Chapter 6 for a discussion of this and details of entry charges and the company at Vauxhall). A visitor in 1748 noted that the owner 'is said to gather a pretty penny...out of it in the summer'.⁴² The creation itself was styled to amuse and flatter the company, keeping abreast of, and to some extent shaping modern tastes, and responding to competition (especially Ranelagh Gardens, opened in 1742). All of this investment was not without its personal as well as its financial compensations. Tyers enjoyed the friendship of royalty and an aristocratic and urban elite, financed his own large estate at Denbies, and passed on proprietorship of the gardens as a legacy to his son. Upon his death, epitaphs praised his achievement in terms of morality, patriotism, virtue and taste, "Who charmed to truth and taste the ear and sight...Who drew, by moral craft, the

⁴¹ BL, Burn MS. collection on Vauxhall Gardens, pp.67-8

⁴² Kalm, *Visit to England*, p.66

attentive throng,/And bade his minstrels play to Virtue's song...the zealot of his country's cause-/Friend of her King, and pupil of her laws'.⁴³

One of the spin-offs of the famous London pleasure gardens was the Spring, or Ranelagh Gardens in Newcastle, opened at the latest by 1760 on a section of land at Gallowgate. A notice in the *Newcastle Courant* on the occasion of the 22nd birthday of the Prince of Wales reported that 'In the Afternoon there was a grand Concert of Musick at Mr Callendar's new Ranelagh Garden, being the Opening for the Season, where there was a great Company, who expressed their Satisfaction at the Performance'.⁴⁴ Later in the season Elizabeth Montagu attended a morning musical entertainment there, and from 1763 concerts appear to have been weekly affairs during the summer. Tickets for the season cost half a guinea, or one shilling on the gate per night.⁴⁵

The Spring Gardens in Bath, another Vauxhall protégé, formed part of the estate of Sir William Pulteney, and were initially leased by William Hull from 1737. However, the landlord evidently found his tenant less than forthcoming with the rent, leading Pulteney to press his solicitor for a resolution to the matter, 'there is one Hull at the Spring gardens, that I know not how to deal with, he has never yet paid a farthing of rent, & yet I am told complains of me, as a hard land Lord'. In 1742 an inventory of the goods of William Hull, gardener tenant of the Spring Gardens, was drawn up in preparation of reclamation for arrears of rent. On 4 September 1742 the site and property 'lately leased and let to Wm. Hull Gardner commonly called Spring Gardens' was relet to a group of five brewers for a yearly rent of £32, with a stipulation that they be responsible for the upkeep and good repair of the buildings and grounds, and 'to keep and support the Gardens fruit trees

⁴³ ML, Wroth scrapbooks, vol.1, *Whitehall Evening Post*, 18 July, 1767

⁴⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 7 June, 1760 (In William Whitehead's *Newcastle Directory* for 1778 a Robert Callender is included in the list of gardeners)

⁴⁵ P. M. Horsley, *Eighteenth Century Newcastle* (Newcastle, 1971), p.236; Sykes, *Local Records*, I, p.241

and Walkes in good order and Condition'. Following the use of bailiffs and the ejection of Hull from the tenancy of the Gardens, Hull pursued a case of loss and damages, apparently stirring up sufficient trouble for Pulteney by protesting his poor treatment that, some ten years after the event, Pulteney requested that the papers concerning the affair be gathered to furnish a defence.⁴⁶ After this problematic start, the Gardens really began to prosper under the proprietorship of William Purdie, who expressly ordered his gardens to suit the taste of Bath's self-styled elite. The desired effect was 'utmost Regularity', with Purdie self-avowedly putting himself to 'considerable Expence, in making and keeping them in proper Order for the Amusement of the Company'.⁴⁷ In 1760 he was granted 'Liberty at his own Expence to make more Commodious the way leading from Orange Grove to the Waterside...for the benefit of Persons having Occasion to Pass over the Water to the Spring Gardens now rented by the said Purdie'.⁴⁸

Thomas Harrison obtained a lease on part of the Abbey Orchard in Bath in 1709 and ploughed an intended sum of £1000 into the construction of assembly rooms and adjoining walks.⁴⁹ By means of subscription fees, at least two guineas for the season in 1725, and apparently with the backing of Beau Nash as 'the greatest promoter of the diversions', largely gambling, Harrison's project rapidly became a commercial success as a favoured resort of good company, the gardens frequented by 'People of Rank and Fortune'.⁵⁰ This success, and the appeal of the accompanying riverside walks seems to have rankled the Corporation, who evidently feared that their control of the town's leisure facilities was being undermined, and that council properties might sustain a loss of income. Wood records, 'his Works were soon looked upon as prejudicial to the Gravel Walks, and as an invasion of the Liberties of the City; and as such the Corporation

⁴⁶ BRO, Pulteney MS., AC/JS/57/15 e, 19 a-c, 20 a&b, 22 a

⁴⁷ *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 16 July, 1761, 26 April, 1764

⁴⁸ BCRO, BCM, 30 June, 1760

⁴⁹ Holland, 'Kingston Estate', p.21

⁵⁰ BRL, *Diary of a tour*, p.117; Wood, *Description of Bath*, p.225

opposed them with the Power of men determined by Might to overcome all Manner of Right'.⁵¹ This disgruntlement manifested itself in a protracted dispute between Harrison and the Corporation over the city wall. The council tried to upset Harrison's plans by blocking his access through the wall and then building the wall up so that the view from the windows of the assembly room was blocked. However, they subsequently found themselves up against the weight of Harrison's supporters, 'Persons of Quality and Gentry now residing in this City have threatened and are resolved to pull down or cause to be pulled down the new wall', and in order 'to oblige the Nobility and Gentry' a compromise was reached whereby a doorway was allowed through the wall.⁵² Although they were unable to monopolise the city's recreational pursuits, the council continued to be mindful of challenges to their own interests, for example in 1737 agreeing that in return for ensuring that no buildings were erected against his ground, Harrison was not to erect 'any chimney fleu house of Ease or any other such building that may be a nuisance to or in any sort annoy or incommode the Walks or Grove or the People there inhabiting or thither resorting'.⁵³ After Harrison's death the rooms and walks continued under the proprietorship of Mrs Hayes and, from 1745, Mr Simpson.

Clearly, the nobility and gentry were of great importance to a resort like Bath, both as consumers and for setting the tone of the place. Bath's recreational spaces also traded on connections with royalty, as in the Prince of Orange's visit commemorated with the obelisk and renaming of the Orange Grove, and with the visit of Princess Amelia, daughter of George II, frequenting Harrison's Walks. The next section looks at the influence and input of royalty and members of the aristocracy as proprietors of town parks and gardens, focusing particularly on the royal St James's Park.

⁵¹ Fawcett & Inskip, 'Making of Orange Grove', pp.30-31; Wood, *Description of Bath*, p.225

⁵² BCRO, BCM, 19 June, 1710, 7 May, 1711; Fawcett & Inskip, 'Making of Orange Grove', p.31. By December of 1714 the Council had spent at least £180 in pursuing their case against Harrison, BCM, 27 December, 1714

⁵³ BCRO, BCM, 27 May, 1737

Royalty and aristocracy

Connections with royalty, above all, but also with the aristocracy imbued a space with a special kudos that had a marked impact on its reputation and popularity. The patronage of such high profile figures was enough to establish or resurrect the fortunes of individual sites or whole resorts, as in the fillip Queen Anne's visit of 1702/3 gave to Bath, and the new lease of life enjoyed by Islington Spa after its frequenting by Princess Amelia.⁵⁴ That these kind of connections summoned associations of good taste and estate was particularly pertinent with regards the ordering of parks and gardens. Vauxhall was actually part of the estate of the Duke of Cornwall, and so the Prince of Wales was ground landlord, cementing his involvement with the Gardens.⁵⁵ Tyers exploited the royal endorsement all he could in the interests of ennobling his grounds, honouring the Prince and his entourage with a Prince's Pavilion.

Of course, St James's Park represents the chief example of royal proprietorship. The immediate and lavish investment in the Park post-Restoration was expressly the project of the newly instated King, keen to put down roots and signal the return of rightful order. The designs undertaken, and the imagery constructed around the Park were therefore pointedly intended to enhance the prestige of the monarchy, and assert Charles' authority. The sense of expansiveness and long sight lines extending perspective into the distance hoped to serve as a reflection of the proprietor's own expansive power. Unfortunately for the Royal family, seated at St James's Palace, and with power centred at Whitehall, the orientation of the Park actually flattered Goring, later Buckingham House as the apparent head of the estate (see fig.4.2).

⁵⁴ Wroth, *London Pleasure Gardens*, pp.17-18

⁵⁵ Coke, *Muse's Bower*, p.6; Lockman, *Sketch*, intro.

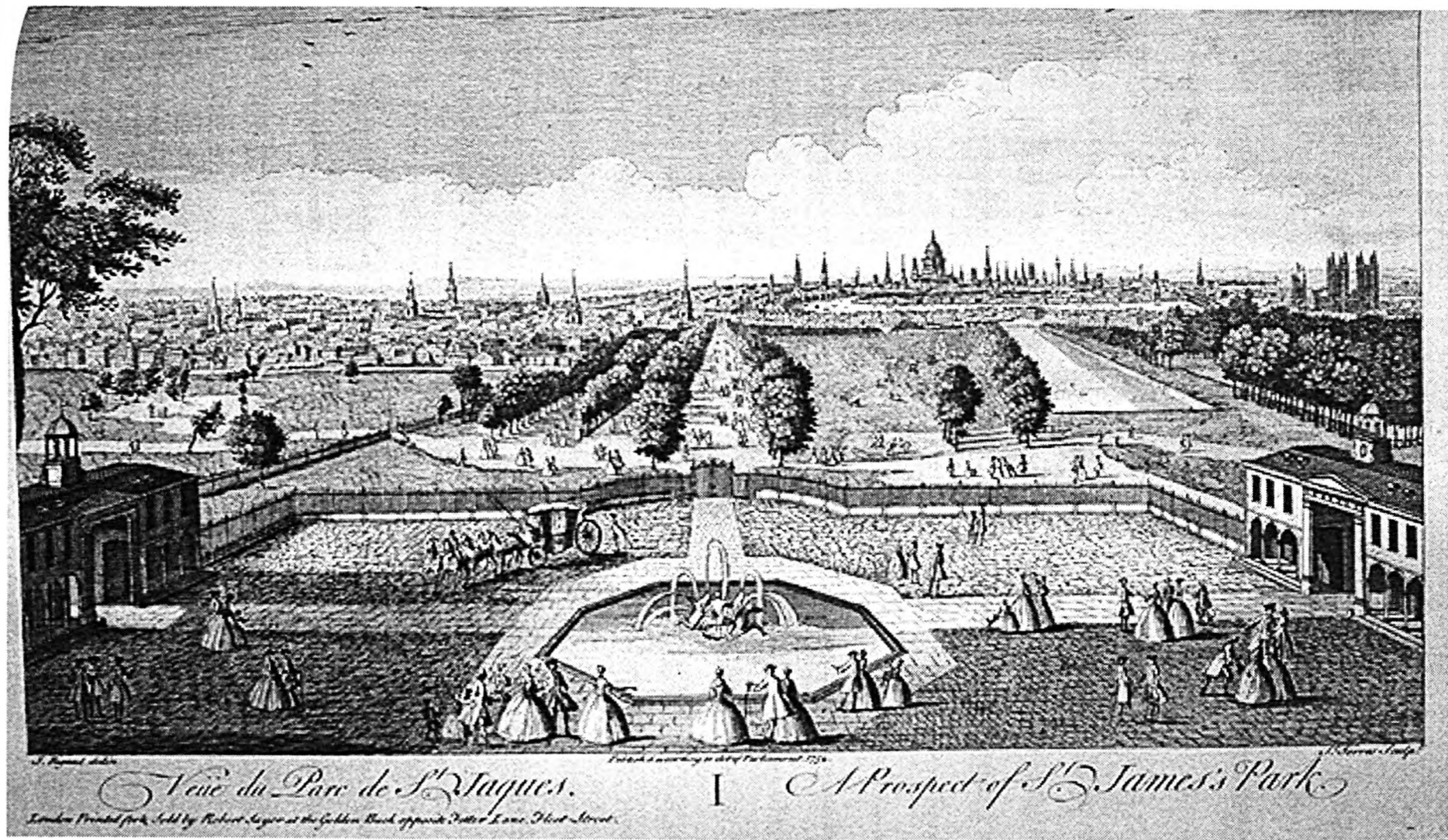


Fig.4.2 Rigaud & Torres, 'A Prospect of St James's Park', 1736 (from the courtyard of Buckingham House)

Mark Mcdayter's analysis of the political symbolism of the Park asserts that this flaw is symptomatic of the failure to redraw a new Stuart myth and enshrine royalist power in the Park.⁵⁶ After Charles' initial investment the royal line did not attempt to redraw the layout, instead eventually moving into the house that claimed the Park to best advantage. This is not to say that successive monarchs did not recognise the representative importance of this royal estate in the heart of the capital, and pay close attention to its ordering. Up to 1754 jurisdiction of the Park was marshalled by the Office of Works, and thereafter by the Department of Woods and Forests, both accountable to the royal household, and financed by the Treasury.⁵⁷ The monarch appointed a Ranger and Deputy Ranger, who assumed responsibility for maintaining the Park and requesting resources as necessary, sensitive to the image of the royal landowner and his/her city. For instance in 1751 the Ranger was granted £941 for 'Preserving the Park in as much Order and Beauty as a Publick Place can be, in so great a Capital'. But the management of the Park was also responsive to the demands of the well-to-do living roundabouts (see Chapter 6 on access measures and the maintenance of good order in the interests of residents). A petition to the Chief Ranger from inhabitants of properties on the south side of the Park in 1751 complained about standing water and inadequate drains in the Park, 'they are greatly aggrieved & have suffered of late in their health by the Lodgement of great Puddles of Water in front of their Houses both on the Grass Platt and Gravel Walk, which is not only a great Nuisance to the said Inhabitants, but at the same time, such a Disgrace to the Royal Park'. Following a survey of the area in response, funds were granted to the tune of £45 for raising the ground, cleaning the drains and supplying new gravel.⁵⁸ Large sums of money were spent on keeping the appearance of the Park up to a standard as the premier promenades and showcase of the stature of the monarchy, the city and its citizens.

⁵⁶ Mcdayter, 'Poetic gardens and political myths', p.145

⁵⁷ H.M. Colvin, J. Mordaunt Crook, K. Downes, J. Newman (eds.), *The History of the King's Works*, 6 vols., (London, 1976), V, pp.101-2

⁵⁸ PRO, Kew, 6/17, vol. 4, fols.79, 71-2

Between 1742 and 1753 £4549 16s. 5 1/2 d., averaging £379 3s. 03/4 d. per annum was spent on St James's and Green Park.⁵⁹ But this level of expenditure, and the attempts to regulate access detailed in chapter 6, did not make a private and promotional estate of the Park. Safety concerns made it increasingly difficult for Charles to enjoy his walks, and the pursuit of games and gambling and sexual liaisons there, notably during the licentious court of Charles, tarnished the image of monarchy. Furthermore, the frequenting of the walks by the undistinguished general public diluted its royal and aristocratic kudos.

While the royal family faced difficulties in marshalling the public park to their own agenda, their gardens at St James's Palace provided an enclave of privacy and absolute control. This was undoubtedly part of the appeal of private gardens, space to direct exactly as one wished, and to retreat to away from the noise and indiscriminate crowds of the town. The last section considers some of these issues in the pursuit of private gardening.

Private gardens

In both town and country, the private garden makes a personal statement about the wealth, aesthetic sense and authoritative bounds of the owner. But the virtue of conveying these credentials within a natural frame was of particular appeal in the town. In her case study of a town garden of the 1770's in Maryland, United States, Elizabeth Kryder-Reid underlines the point that 'To the audience the garden is a display of wealth in a medium that was timeless and natural and therefore immune to challenge'.⁶⁰ Town gardens provided means by which owner-residents might announce and bask in detachment from the worldliness of the urban environment. In his tract on city

⁵⁹ Colvin, *King's Works*, V, pp. 101-2

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Kryder-Reid, 'The archaeology of vision in eighteenth-century Chesapeake gardens', *Journal of Garden History*, XIV, no. 1, (Spring, 1994), p.51

gardening, Fairchild promoted the pursuit of gardening as a marker of ambition, and associated the creation of a garden with status, fortune and achievement. In the introduction he partly founds the justification of his undertaking on the experience and direction it will provide town gardeners in the acquisition and managing of larger gardens as their fortunes improve. In this sense there is a definite connection made between the private town plot and the country estate. The former is conceived of as one step on the aspirational slope headed towards rural estate. In establishing a town garden one elevates oneself, nurturing good taste and signalling the loftiness of one's vision beyond the fabric of the town and its commercial and industrial wealth, out to land. And so the garden serves as a clear indicator of status, 'in Proportion to the Money Men get, so may their Gardens be larger and better garnish'd'. Therefore, for the cit town gardens provide the grounds to 'prepare their Understanding to enjoy the Country, when their Trade and Industry has given them Riches enough to retire from Business'.⁶¹ In his keen awareness of the distinction garden space might lend town residents, Fairchild set out designs that were oriented towards personal enhancement, commenting that 'we may remark, that large Pieces of ground, such as are in the Squares...may be put into such Order, as will contribute to the Pleasure and Happiness of those Gentlemen who have Habitations in them'. Consequently, his plans for public squares appropriated the central space as a private garden in the interests of private tenants. The planting was, above all, to be sensitive to the taste and prospect of the surrounding houses who were, after all, responsible for its maintenance. To this end tall trees were not to be planted on the outside of a square since these, once matured, would 'break the Prospect of the whole Design; which should by no means be interrupted next to the Houses'. The target and beneficiaries of such proposals were those 'who by their being Great and Noble, are Inhabitants of such Places'.⁶²

⁶¹ Fairchild, *City Gardener*, pp.9, 6

⁶² Fairchild, *City Gardener*, pp.42-3

Town gardens were a notable part of the overall design of the modish Grosvenor Estate in London, where 'every house has a garden behind it', and were also built into the development of Gay Street and the Circus in Bath.⁶³ In Shrewsbury houses with gardens were credited with drawing visitors into the town, appealing to gentry seeking an elegant permanent or temporary residence. According to Linden's publicity for the nearby Hanlys Spa, Shrewsbury had much to offer in terms of 'good houses and delightful gardens, for the reception and convenience of the neighbouring and distant gentry, who are continually resorting to it'.⁶⁴ Fashionable residential areas in the town included Belmont, where the houses overlooked gardens across the town walls to the river, the St John's Hill area and along the town walls overlooking the Quarry. And yet town gardening was not the exclusive preserve of those with the property and money to create something elaborate and noteworthy. The extent of a townperson's garden might only stretch to a window box, or a few pots, but still represented a desire to bring on and enjoy a little greenery. Pehr Kalm observed that in every little town house yard the people 'had commonly planted in these yards and round about them, partly in the earth and ground itself, partly in pots and boxes, several of the trees, plants, and flowers which could stand the coal smoke in London'. The reason for this Kalm attributed to the fact that they 'sought to have some of the pleasant enjoyments of a country life in the midst of the hubbub of the town'.⁶⁵ The popularity of urban based florists societies, and expansion in the number of town nurseries attests to a widespread interest in horticulture. In 1723 the *Newcastle Courant* advised that Benjamin Atkinson, trading from Castle Garth in the town, was acting as agent and taking orders for fruit and non-fruit trees. The following year readers were recommended Philp Miller's *The Gardiners and Florists Dictionary*, sold by a Durham bookseller, and in 1742 the second edition of Stephen Switzer's *Ichnographia Rustica* was

⁶³ Burton, 'Georgian Town Gardens', pp.130-1

⁶⁴ Diederick Linden, *The Medicinal and Experimental History and Analysis of the Hanlys- Spa*, (Shrewsbury, 1768), p.5

⁶⁵ Kalm, *Visit to England*, p.85

available at a number of booksellers in Newcastle. From 1735, an apothecary in Newcastle's Sandhill district advertised the sale of garden seeds, whilst all kinds of trees were being sold in the city in 1739 by the gardeners Thomas Olliver and Thomas Jones.⁶⁶ Newcastle also played host to an active florists and botanists society from 1724, drawing on 'the Florists and Lovers of Gardening, in and about Newcastle', and meeting regularly to show blooms.⁶⁷ Deering recommended gardening as an activity eminently worth the attention of tradesmen as it was a cheap and easy pursuit, suited to all and inherently morally and physically corrective.⁶⁸

Conclusion

In looking at the various bodies responsible for the development and ordering of town parks, gardens and walks, what emerges is an impression of the extent to which these green sites were a product of and responsive to urban residents and an urban social scene. Chapter 3 has already made the point that an important distinction can be drawn between urban parks, gardens and walks and parks and gardens *per se* in terms of the orientation to a public clientele and their requirements. This is reinforced here by tracking the investment of town councils, commercial backers and individual citizens in fashioning green sites according to an urban context. City corporations frequently juggled a panoply of local interests in their ordering of open space in and around the town. They were certainly looking to the prestige of the town, trusting that this would in turn reflect on the renown of its councillors, in their backing of parks, gardens and walks as refined recreational arenas. But at the same time, existing concerns such as agricultural, trade and domestic use required negotiating and/or accommodating if the interests of the urban

⁶⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 28 September, 1723, 11 July, 1724; *Newcastle Journal*, 30 June, 1739; *Newcastle Courant*, 30 January, 1742, 29 March, 1735, 16 January, 1742; *Newcastle Journal*, 13 October & 20 October, 1739

⁶⁷ Hodgson Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', pp.240-1; *Newcastle Journal*, 8 May, 1742, 27 April & 11 May, 1745; *Newcastle General Magazine*, June, August, 1753, May, June, September, 1754

⁶⁸ Deering, *Catalogus Stirpium*, 'To the Reader'

citizenry as a whole were to be represented. Private individuals investing time and money in gardens and walks could afford to be more focused in their endeavours, seeking to embellish the town and demarcate and preserve spaces of social distinction. Commercial enterprise in this field succeeds as a reflection of the growth of the leisure market centred on the town, and the potential for making money by pandering to the increasingly popularised urban taste for greenery. Private town gardens, although not open to a wide audience in the conventional sense that public gardens were, still functioned as an explicit advertisement of one's surplus land, wealth, and aspirations to good taste to the rest of the town, and suggested a level of superior detachment from the city. The royal styling of St James's Park, in similar fashion, was intended as a blazon of courtly power and brilliance in the heart of the capital, and ongoing efforts were made to preserve the esteem of this very public showpiece. In a broad sense, the tangible *urban* dimension to these parks and gardens serves to underline the ambiguous character of nature in the town that is a recurring motif of this thesis.

As a motivating principle behind investment in parks, gardens and walks, the marshalling of nature in the town in the interests of the physical and moral well-being of the urban habitat and its inhabitants emerges as a key factor. The following chapter expands on this theme in exploring perceptions of nature as a moderating influence on the urban environment and urban society.

Chapter 5

Middle ground: striking a balance between nature and town

Introduction

One of the chief and recurrent themes in dealing with the relationship between the town and its parks, gardens and walks is that of balance. Negotiations between the built and natural environment are routinely construed in the sense of striking a balance between a man-made and natural order. The notion of constitutional balance is in itself a pivotal concept in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. James Turner refers to the 'Augustan ideal' of a 'mean between two self-destructive extremes'.¹ The pursuit and maintenance of a natural and easy middle way that avoided the pitfalls of excess became a motivating principle in politics, physical health and moral conduct, art and landscape and garden design. These concepts of balance were informed to a large degree by recourse to nature, and the identifying of what was perceived to be the natural order of things. The demarcation and use of natural imagery to convey a calm and naturalised order is one of the central underlying issues within this thesis. Within the context of the town, this is largely expressed in spatial terms, in the desire to blend greenery with the urban fabric, but it incorporates and is reinforced by the notion of nature as physician to the body of the town and the body of the town-dweller. Town parks and gardens are perceived as purgative of bodily and urban excess, so that the physical, moral and political constitution of the individual, the town (and in turn the nation) is regulated by an ameliorative natural world. It is this concept of nature in the town as a moderating influence that forms the motivating principle behind this chapter. Obviously, faith in these corrective properties draws heavily upon benevolent imagery of nature, but this does not mean that the natural

¹ Turner, *Politics of Landscape*, p.12

world was conceived as wholly benign.² Rather, the period witnesses an increasingly confident and scientific enquiry into the workings of nature that underpins the conviction that the environment can be worked upon and improved, fitting within a general culture of improvement. By this reading, nature becomes a pliable tool deployed according to will. In shaping the human habitat to best advantage, efforts are made to expunge the undesirable elements of nature identified, and play up those aspects deemed conducive to human comfort and welfare. And so, for instance, dark, low-lying, dense and stagnant environments posed threats that were countered by emphasis on elevated, airy, spacious grounds. Subsequent attempts to cleanse and control what was perceived as dangerous territory and appropriate the higher ground clearly had a moral as well as physical dimension. That the marshalling of the natural within the urban environment was not impartial and to universal advantage, but geared to particular agendas is another of the main strands running through this thesis.

The casting of nature in the town as corrective and redemptive fits within a context of perceived potential disjunctions or imbalances arising from the circumstances of urbanisation. This does not signal an anti-urbanisation *per se*, in a black and white scenario of cursed city and blessed rurality. Rather, part of the significance of nature in the town during this period, before the accelerated urbanisation and industrialisation of the later eighteenth century, lies in the confidence vested in getting the balance right, harmonising the best aspects of town and country and fashioning a refined urban environment, physically, socially and morally. Incorporating selective elements of the natural world within the make-up of the town was conceived as vital in crafting this balance. Nature is deployed as a form of control, naturalising the town, and neutralising the potentially destabilising effects of urbanisation. Without some exterior standard to

² The more malevolent characteristics associated with the natural world, wild, sexual, rude and defying control, are considered in chapters 6 and 7

check and naturalise the evolution of the social and physical urban environment, the body of the town and of the town dweller was prone to disfunction - disease and disorder. The casting of town parks and gardens as a counterpoint to urban form makes a great deal of their impact on the health, physical and moral, of the individual, society and environment, and this comprises the backbone to this chapter. The first section discusses the notion of a healthy body, in which natural elements serve to cleanse the physical make-up of the town dweller and the fabric of the town. Ideas about general environmental health and contemporary medical theory are sketched out in relation to the respective physiological values of man-made and natural habitat. Out of this, the bearing that the perceived benefits of circulation and exercise, and air and water had on the creation and representation of parks, gardens and walks within and around the town is tracked. This is followed by the second section on moral welfare, considering the use of parks, gardens and walks in the classic image of garden as retreat, made more pointed as spaces of retirement from the surrounding urban bustle. In this private and contemplative capacity, town parks and gardens are also cast as islands of spirituality in a sea of worldliness, harbouring natural harmony and virtue against a crashing tide of sin, luxury and excess. That parks and gardens, as playgrounds of the wealthy, idle and dissolute, can simultaneously embody what they are imagined to counter is part of the ambiguity of these spaces, trading on the capriciousness of nature. The final section addresses the notion of a balanced constitution in political terms, assessing the influence of the imagery of natural order and projected harmony on models of good governance in the town.

Circulation and the urban body

From the second half of the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century medical historians discern a shift towards emphasis on a broadly Hippocratic conception of

disease as a product of environment.³ This stress on the habitat as a key factor in determining health coincides with the notion of the natural world as manageable and malleable gathering steam from the seventeenth century. This was a confidence built around scientific observation of flora and fauna, climate, population, topography, and so on, as steps towards understanding and control of the environment. Not that this faith can be blithely translated into a picture of unproblematic improvement in quality of life, but these efforts sit within an enlightened ideology of optimism. And yet the urban environment presented particular challenges within a framework of improving society. Whereas on the one hand the city was pitched at the core of enlightened civilization, as the hub of progress, on the other hand it appeared to encapsulate the blighting of health and moral degeneracy. Cities were associated with high mortality rates, unsanitary conditions, and overcrowding, concentrating the dregs as well as the assets of society. 'London is the grand Reservoir, or Common-sewer of the World', according to a mid century account, 'like the Ocean, wherein the muddy and dirty Brooks, as well as the clear and rapid Rivers, disembody themselves, this city receives the Scum and Filth, not only of our own, but of all other Countries'.⁴ The demographer John Graunt's analysis of mortality in seventeenth century London concluded that the capital's shorter life spans were attributable to the fact that its 'Smoaks, Stinks and Close Air, are less healthful than that of the Country'. Even tour guides were forced to acknowledge that there was a problem, 'In the Winter indeed, the Town is not altogether so pleasant in itself: The thick Air, proceeding from the Moistness of the Weather, and the Smoak from the great Quantity of Coals burnt, render it Obnoxious to many Constitutions'.⁵ Daniel Defoe noted a commonplace recognition of this in the capital, describing the 'smoke and dirt, sin

³ See James C. Riley, *The Eighteenth Century Campaign to Avoid Disease* (Basingstoke/London, 1987); Andrew Wear, 'Making sense of health and the environment in early modern England' in Andrew Wear (ed.), *Medicine In Society. Historical Essays* (Cambridge, 1992); With thanks to Anne Borsay for medical literature references

⁴ Anon, *Trip from St James's*, p.2

⁵ Anon, *Foreigners Guide*, p.132

and seacoal, (as it was coursly express'd) in the busy city'.⁶ But this was not just a metropolitan phenonmenon. John Graunt remarked, 'I have heard that Newcastle is more unhealthful than other places', on account of the sea coal smoke. In the mid-eighteenth century Thomas Short's observations on urban mortality pinpointed density and overpopulation as contributing factors to the inherent unhealthiness of towns, 'The closer Towns and Villages stand, the more pent-up the Houses, the lower and closer the Rooms, the narrower the Streets, the smaller the Windows, the more numerous the Inhabitants, the unhealthier the Place'.⁷ To counter this threat, those with the means chose residences in open, spacious and leafy parts of town, layering environmental patterns with a social zoning whereby the poorer citizens are left in the least salubrious areas. The problems of close streets and houses, human and animal waste disposal, spread of disease, and smoke pollution from the burning of sea coal were real enough, but these aspects of urban life were compounded in the imagination by the spectacle of profligacy, of wealth and time and youth mis-spent on food and drink, fashion and display and idleness. The town embodied excess, or at least the capacity for it. The Scottish physician George Cheyne judged that moral and physical infirmity multiplied in proportion with increasing wealth and the move towards an urban existence consumed with luxury, 'the Wealth and Abundance of the Inhabitants (from their universal Trade) the Inactivity and Sedentary Occupations of the better Sort (amongst whom this Evil mostly rages) and the Humour of living in great, populous and consequently unhealthy Towns, have brought forth a Class and Set of Distempers, with atrocious and frightful Symptoms, scarce known to our Ancestors'.⁸ It was within this context of urban civilization as potentially pollutant that nature in the town gained its potency, heading off these ills and keeping society on the right track. The distinction between urban and rural forms a powerful current in medical

⁶ Defoe, *Tour* vol.I., p.168

⁷ John Graunt, *Natural and Political Observations...upon the Bills of Mortality* (London, 1676), Thomas Short, *New Observations on City, Town and Country Bills of Mortality* (London, 1750), quoted in Wear, 'Making sense of health and the environment', pp.130-1

⁸ George Cheyne, *The English Malady* (London, 1733), ed. Roy Porter (London/N.Y., 1991), preface p.ii

thinking. The further humankind slips away from a simpler and hardier existence rooted in honest labour and exercise, clean living and cleansing surroundings, the greater the imbalance, manifested in disease and disorder. Recourse to nature was thus considered fundamental in correcting these deficiencies.

The associations drawn between a dense, claustrophobic and overcrowded urban environment, a lack of physical exertion on the part of the town dweller and ill health were given added weight by medical theories on the importance of circulation. Here, the key idea was that good health was vested in movement as opposed to stagnation, applicable not just to circulation within the body of the individual, but the body of the town itself. Conceptions of the city as organism draw clear parallels between the human and urban body, exemplified in the description of town parks and gardens as the lungs of a city commonplace from the nineteenth century, but in currency well before this. Simon Schama explores the theme of circulation in antiquity, noting that Plato compares currents within the natural world and the human body.⁹ Richard Sennett emphasises William Harvey's 1628 scientific treatise, *Du motu cordis*, on the circulations of the body as having a significant effect on notions of public health allied to ideas of circulation in the city.¹⁰ Tom Brown wrote of London, 'The Streets are as so many *Veins* , wherein the People Circulate'.¹¹ The unobstructed flow of blood, air and water was a prerequisite for good constitution. Motion was a sign of vitality. This stress on free-flow and movement promoted the case for open space as crucial to the functioning of the otherwise congested town. Use of green space in and around the town emphasised the physical exercise factor, stretching the limbs and getting the blood flowing. Furthermore, it is not accidental or on purely aesthetic grounds that most town parks and gardens were

⁹ Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, pp.247, 256-63

¹⁰ Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone. The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (New York/London, 1994), pp.23, 256-263

¹¹ Brown, *Amusements*, p.23

developed around flowing water, rivers and streams and spas, and in elevated sites with clear, unhampered airflow. The remainder of this section develops the significance of exercise, air and water within the context of nature in the town.

Physical exercise such as walking was vaunted as promoting circulation of the blood and, given the appropriate environs, the respiratory circulation of good air. Dr Cheyne was of the opinion that 'Of all the Exercises that are, or may be used for Health...Walking is the most natural' whilst riding was more manly, and good for shaking the body into healthy internal action. With its stress on the cleansing ritual and function of exercise, this activity required a non-polluting atmosphere. As Cheyne put it, 'being in the Air, contributes much towards the Benefit of Exercise'.¹² It did little good to walk in the street, a potentially dirty, congested, unsafe and morally dubious domain. Carriages delivered their passengers to the gates of St. James's Park. In *St James's Park: A Comedy*, Lady Betty is carried right onto the Mall and set down.¹³ One did one's walking in designated promenades. Walking was certainly a defining characteristic of these leisure facilities. The promenade was no coffee house or assembly room to idle in. The use of parks and gardens was very much tied up with keeping in motion. Walking in these gardens frequently involved following a circuit along laid out walkways, often incorporating particular vistas. In this respect the act of viewing nature was not passive, but hinged around movement. In the St James's Park comedy Mrs Loll bemoans the vogue for constantly promenading, 'if it were not for the odious custom of keeping continually upon one's Feet, this Park would be a perfect Heaven'. The company long to fling themselves down on the grass but such languor is not in keeping with the accent on healthy activity.¹⁴ Walking was a purifying flow in itself, alongside the flows of water and air. In his *Catalogus Stirpium* and *Nottinghamia Vetus et Nova*, Doctor Charles

¹² George Cheyne, *An Essay of Health and Long Life* (London, 1724), pp.94-5

¹³ P. Q., *St James's Park*, p.10

¹⁴ P.Q., *St. James's Park*, p.5

Deering used his medical background to promote nature and natural spaces in and around Nottingham. A large part of the value of these spaces was, according to Deering, rooted in their provision of healthful surroundings for exercise. Consequently he trumpeted the good fortunes of Nottingham in 'the Conveniencies, Nature and Art has furnished this Town with, for Exercise, which is as necessary for the Preservation of Health, as food is for the support of Life, it being impossible for a Person long to enjoy an uninterrupted State of Health, if the Exercise he takes does not in a great Measure counterballance his Way of living'.¹⁵ Without physical motion the delicate balance of the body is upset, and stubborn 'Hypochondriacal Symptoms' follow, and so, to head this off, 'the continued moderate Exercise of the Body in an open Air will greatly contribute towards rectifying what a late Excess has put out of order'. The sad desperation of those worn out by a lifestyle of luxury and excess, propelled onto the walks by faith in the natural environment as redeemer was picked up on by urban chroniclers. The cost of inbalance is ironically highlighted on the promenades of Constitution Hill, where 'The Punishments Heaven has inflicted on an intemperate and debauch'd Life, are no where more manifested..'.¹⁶ Deering identifies Gout as a particular affliction that arises from lack of exercise, and prescribes walking as a relief. Gout was an ailment commonly associated with the well-to-do, as a symbol and product of excess. In this sense, the classic gouty visitor to Bath highlights the different elements contributing to the appeal of the resort, as a site offering healthy doses of water, air, and exercise in natural surrounds at the same time as catering to the refined tastes of the beau monde. Leisured consumption in and of Bath was strongly oriented around water, airings, and walks through or overlooking greenery, particularly during the first half of my period. Celia Fiennes, visiting in or before 1687, noted that the 'places for diversion about the Bath is either the Walkes in that they call the Kings Mead, which is a pleasant green meadow, where are walkes round

¹⁵ Deering, *Nottinghamia*, p.72

¹⁶ Anon, *Trip from St James's*, p.10

and cross it, no place for coaches', or the 'good walkes of rows of trees' around the Abbey.¹⁷ For Deering, the corrective virtues of the natural world form a crucial part of the equation whereby physical activity leads to health. The sedentary character of urban life, cultivating a regrettable overfondness for drink, demands a sober and healthful release, 'Can there then be a more suitable as well as more agreeable Interposition between the Bottle and Books, than the Examination of the vegetable World?'.¹⁸ Outdoor exercise in natural surroundings was the key, 'to preserve the Body in Health and Vigour; the principal of which are Walking and Riding'. Deering then went on to detail Nottingham's walks and outdoor recreational facilities.¹⁹ But it was not just the physician who represented the town's green spaces in this way. Thoroton's *History* lauds the city on the grounds that 'For exercise and air, in its vicinity, as an inland town, none exceeds it'. The Meadows, with their raised boardwalk, are 'as fruitful as beneficent to the health and pleasure of the inhabitants of Nottingham'.²⁰ St Anne's Well was favoured for the medicinal qualities of its water and 'by Reason of the Sweetness and openness of the Air'.²¹ A similar line was assumed in pressing the significance of urban access to natural space all over the country. Dr Linden, in seeking to put Hanley's Spa on the itinerary of Shrewsbury's polite visitors and residents, advised that the journey from the town to the waters, made once or twice a day, would 'greatly contribute to the restoration of health'. This was on account of the efficacious combination of physical motion through proper exercise, riding and walking, with the taking of these mineral waters.²² As part of its guide to London, *The Foreigners Guide* of 1729 advised 'Those that take delight in the Walking-Exercise, have nowhere a greater Opportunity, than in the several fine Meadows

¹⁷ Fiennes, *Journeys*, pp.46-7

¹⁸ Deering, *Catalogus Stirpium*, Dedication, To the Reader

¹⁹ Deering, *Nottinghamia*, pp.72-75

²⁰ John Throsby, *Thoroton's History of Nottinghamshire* 3 vols. (Nottingham, 1790), II, p.130

²¹ Copy of a MS. account of Nottingham, 1641, quoted in Deering, *Nottinghamia*, p.74

²² Linden, *Hanlys-Spa*, pp.3, 8

and Fields, which surround the Town, and lead to the many agreeable Villages full of fine Houses, Gardens, Walks, and Places commendable for the good Air'.²³

Air

As already indicated, in the context of what was, or was perceived to be a claustrophobic, smoky, contagious urban atmosphere, clear, flowing air was at a premium. The general consensus on the importance of air was bolstered by enquiries like that by the physician John Arbuthnot, who published *An Essay Concerning the Effects of Air on Human Bodies* in 1733, the physicist Robert Boyle's investigation of the atmosphere, and demographer Thomas Short's assertions that the healthiest places were those with 'a free, pure, open Air'.²⁴ City air suffered for being enclosed, and subject to the concentrated exhalations and noxious emanations from waste, decomposing matter, and the sickly. These miasmatic theories stressed the significance of contaminated air in damaging health. Short conjured particularly alarming imagery, 'the City Air is full of perspired Matter, discharged from both dead and living animal Bodies, and other noxious Matter'.²⁵ John Evelyn's Restoration treatise, *Fumifugium*, concerned with improving the atmosphere in the capital, related the quality of air to both physical and mental well-being;

as the Lucid and noble Aer, clarifies the Blood, subtilizes and excites it, cheering the spirits and promoting digestion; so the dark, and grosse (on the Contrary) perturbs the Body, prohibits necessary Transpiration for the resolution and dissipation of ill Vapours, even to disturbance of the very Rational faculties, which the purer Aer does so far illuminate, as to have rendred some Men healthy and wise even to Miracle.²⁶

²³ Anon, *Foreigners Guide*, p.126

²⁴ Riley, *Eighteenth Century Campaign*, pp.20-26; Wear, 'Making sense of health and the environment', p.135

²⁵ Short, *New Observations*, quoted in Wear, 'Making sense of health and the environment', p.137

²⁶ Evelyn, *Fumifugium*, p.3

In deference to these attitudes on the health risks of town atmospheres, urban apologists took pains to play up the healthy credentials of the site, and emphasise ease of access to fresh air, primarily in the form of green spaces in and about the town. In William Goldwin's laudatory description of Bristol the city is a healing resort whence might repair 'sickly Souls, with broken Health...To suck the Wholsome Draughts of healing Air'. The free-flowing breezes enjoyed by the towns residents and visitors mark 'In Nature's Breath a kind Physician'.²⁷ In touting the natural healthiness of Bath, John Wood cited the supposed longevity of the inhabitants living up on Lansdown as testament to the salubrity of the air, extending his consideration of such benefits to the good complexions, and easy childbirth enjoyed by inhabitants of Bath in general. The surrounding hills were an integral part of Bath's attraction and value;

what fine Air do the Invalids breath in upon them...I will venture to say, that thirty different Rides, each sufficient for a Morning's Airing, with so many beautiful Points of View, and Matters of Curiosity may be found about BATH, as conducive to the Health and Pleasure of Mankind in general, as can be met with in ten Times the Space of Ground in any other Country.

In recognition of the crucial role these open spaces played in the imagery of Bath as a healthy resort, efforts were made to ease passage from the town. Wood records that in the summer of 1706 the sum of £1700-1800, raised by subscription, was spent on repairing the road to Lansdown, 'that the Invalids might conveniently ascend that Hill, to take the Benefit of the Air upon it'.²⁸ Later that year an Act exempted those leaving the city for the sake of recreation and taking the air from the payment of road tolls.²⁹ Companion guides to the city advised of these opportunities for airings; 'As the Roads round Bath have been lately repair'd; so the Riding out for the Benefit of the Air, is render'd very agreeable'. In the mid eighteenth century, Thomas Boddely found

²⁷ Goldwin, *Description of Bristol*, p.3

²⁸ Wood, *Description of Bath*, pp.54, 57, 440, 224-5

²⁹ *Bath Journal* advertised the fact that those leaving the city to take the air were exempted the road toll, 'if he or she return the same day', 7 January, 1751

Lansdown the most frequented site for airing, although Claverton Down was 'also a pleasant Place to take the Air'.³⁰ Nottingham was, in Deering's opinion, pre-eminent among inland towns for its 'healthful, advantageous and delightful situation', fanned by refreshing southerly breezes.³¹ Daniel Defoe says of Tunbridge Wells, 'The air here is excellent good, the country healthful...'.³² Linden describes Shrewsbury as esteemed for its 'healthfulness of air' and points out that 'There are a very great variety of most delightful walks in the fields and meadows round about Shrewsbury, in a pure, healthful air'.³³ The Town Moor in Newcastle was apparently 'much frequented by the Gentry of this Town, and others for Exercise and Health; it being (that Part of it especially call'd the Cow-hill,) a Place of the most wholesome Air about the Town'.³⁴ Guides to London were particularly anxious to counter bad press, 'This City...has the Advantage of being sweetened on one Side by the fresh Air of the River, and on the other by that of the Fields'.³⁵ Spaces like the Moorfields, laid out for recreational walking, were acclaimed as 'no mean cause of preserving Health, and wholesome Air to the City'.³⁶

This kind of optimistic testimony to the healthiness of the city was built around the faith that natural elements introduced into or in close proximity to the town could actively purify the air. This meant that the value of parks and gardens lay not just in being self-contained pockets to retreat to for drafts of fresh air. Rather, in being drawn into the town, nature could extend a positive influence over the urban environment as a whole and help cleanse the atmosphere. In a way this scaled up the traditional notion of using small bunches of flowers or poesies to offset the danger of infectious air. At around the time of

³⁰ Thomas Boddely, *The Bath and Bristol Guide* (Bath, 1753), pp.15,17

³¹ BH, Nottingham, Deering, MS. History of Nottingham, 1740-1749, cc.859, section I

³² Defoe, *Tour*, I, p.127

³³ Linden, *Hanlys-Spa*, pp.3-4

³⁴ Bourne, *History of Newcastle*, p.150

³⁵ Anon, *Foreigners Guide*, p.2

³⁶ John Strype, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster...written at first in the year MDXCVIII by John Stow* (London, 1720), Book 3, p.70

the Restoration a number of horticultural enthusiasts were theorising the merits of planting to 'rectify and purify the ayre of all the neighbouring countrey, both for health of body and mind'. John Evelyn is the most notable figure in the articulation of these garden schemes for the improvement of body and soul, on the strength of *Fumifugium*, *Sylva*, and his 'Elysium Britannicum', but he was engaged in a ready dialogue with a group of like-minded contemporaries. Furthermore, Mark Jenner offers a reminder that Evelyn's interest and proposals are situated within the context of mid-seventeenth-century English scientific research into the properties of air, notably among the Hartlib circle and under the auspices of the fledgling Royal Society, both of which Evelyn had connections with.³⁷ In 1659 John Beale, a gentleman gardener, relayed to Evelyn his ideas concerning the use of scented flowers to purify the air. These proposals were, in his opinion, of great potential value within London as a 'sweet and easy remedy' to its pollution.³⁸ It was this concept that Evelyn advocated in the publication of *Fumifugium* two years later, explicit in linking and promoting plantations as a natural foil to urban pollution. Evelyn held that the actual siting of the capital was naturally good, but that this advantage was spoiled by the polluting of the air, principally by the industrial burning of sea coal in and around the city 'so universally mixed with the other wise wholesome and excellent Aer, that her Inhabitants breathe nothing but an impure and thick Mist...disordering the entire habit of their Bodies'. By contrast, pure air was that which was 'cleare, open, sweetely ventilated and put into motion with gentle gales and breezes; not too sharp, but of a temperate constitution'. Removing this air pollution would render the city 'one of the sweetest, and most delicious Habitations in the World'. His proposed solution to this problem was two-fold; that the offending industries be removed several miles out of the city, and that bands of trees, shrubs and flowers be planted in the

³⁷ Mark Jenner, 'The Politics of London Air. John Evelyn's *Fumifugium* and the Restoration', *The Historical Journal*, XXXVIII, 3, (1995), p.535

³⁸ John Beale in a letter to John Evelyn, 30 September, 1659, quoted in Graham Parry, 'John Evelyn as Hortulan Saint', in Michael Leslie & Timothy Raylor (eds), *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England. Writing and the Land* (Leicester, 1992), pp.139-141

environs of the city to perfume the air. The character of the plantations proposed, Evelyn pointed out, was 'not much unlike to what his Majesty has already begun by the wall from old spring-garden to St James's in that Park; and is somewhat resembled in the new Spring-garden at Lambeth'. This is to say that these two spaces were the closest London came to a template for natural purification of the town. The plantations themselves were to be planted 'with such Shrubs, as yield the most fragrant and odoriferous Flowers, and are aptest to tinge the Aer upon every gentle emission at a great distance'. Amongst the scented plants and flowers that might be used, Evelyn recommends roses, rosemary, lavender and lime trees as suitably 'odiferous and refreshing'. The result of these aromatic plantings, fanned by breezes, would be that 'the whole City, would be sensible of the sweet and ravishing varieties of the perfumes, as well as the most delightful and pleasant objects, and places of Recreation for the Inhabitants'.³⁹ The project may not have come to fruition in the grand manner conceived, and at any rate Evelyn also had a political agenda in the wake of the Restoration, as addressed in the later section on the political constitution, but the work helped promote the sense that areas of greenery actively generated pure air that could then waft improvingly across the city scape.

These commendations of nature in the town employ the notion of free-flow as a positive and improving characteristic. However, since miasmatic theories also associated air flow with contagion, as diseases were identified as spread by airborne particles, the ameliorative value of town parks and gardens was vested in their being free of the contaminating bodies that threatened the welfare of the town as a whole. At this point conceptions of physical and moral welfare collide, as the medical metaphor of contagion spread to portray the dangers of unfiltered social contact too. The unpolluted air made so much of in accounts of parks and gardens was conflated with an imagery of social refinement, a purity that could be tainted or infected through too close a contact with the

³⁹ Evelyn, *Fumifugium*, pp.5, 2, Dedication, 24-25

wrong bodies. Those living within the dense body of the town, perhaps in cramped and unhygienic conditions, were seen as dangerously prone to the contaminating influences of the urban environment, with the resulting physical and moral dissolution representing a form of contagion in itself. This fuelled reactions against too crowded and indiscriminately mixed a company. Movement, physically and socially, was desirable and healthy as long as it was within the right environment, and undesirable elements were excluded. This idea of a 'moral miasma' was particularly prevalent in the nineteenth century, underpinning attempts to clean up the breeding grounds of filth and immorality, focusing on the activities of the working classes.⁴⁰ But, given the role of parks, gardens and walks in nurturing physical and moral well-being, the concept of social contagion was a motivating principle in their representation and ordering throughout my period, informing the efforts to police access discussed in the following chapter.

The idea of contamination of the rarified air of town parks and gardens is clearly drawn out in literary accounts. The self-important Mrs Straddle seeks to banish common city workers from St James's Park as unsuited to breathing its air. Furthermore, to the question 'what sort of Constitutions art thou willing to allow the liberty of this place?', the response is 'To none but sound ones'. The physically, as well as socially unfit cannot be suffered to taint the refined atmosphere of the Park, 'The Sick ought to be sent to Kensington Gravel-Pits, Hampstead, or Highgate, and not be suffer'd among the polite World, to infect our Gaiety by looking on their Languor'.⁴¹ The benefits of the Hyde Park Ring for airing are lost in the dust kicked up by the hordes resorting there, more concerned with exhibition than constitution, the outcome of which is that 'the Wealthy and the Great repair,/ To draw Contagion from polluted Air'. The natural environment is rapidly choked by overcrowding and by artifice, 'And struggling Nature sucks in ev'ry

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City* (London, 1991), pp.37-9

⁴¹ P.Q., *St James's Park*, p.32

Charm/ Lab'ring for Breath, instead of cooling Air/ We draw in Poyson, cast out by the Fair/ Contagious this, men frantick grow, and mad/ And here forget the Reason once they had'.⁴² The refinement of air, both physical and social, that fine county towns boasted of could also be exposed, as in a play of George Farquhar's set in Shrewsbury; 'for Shrewsbury, me thinks, and all your Heads of Shires, are the most irregular Places for living; here we have Smoak, Noise, Scandal, Affectation, and Pretension; in short, every thing to give the Spleen-and nothing to divert it-then the Air is intolerable'. In fact, as the daughter of the character 'Balance' is forced to conclude, 'there are several Sorts of Airs', and more than one way of spoiling the atmosphere.⁴³

The conflation of a health and social agenda is also evident in urban residential trends. Increasingly, the priming of spacious and elevated green sites as the most airy and refined within the urban body, compared with narrow, enclosed streets in the core of the town, rendered the occupation of these healthiest, most ventilated plots as an indicator of one's refined constitution. It was in the welfare interests of these select inhabitants that such grounds be preserved from the encroachments of urban contaminants. John Wood assumes an aligned spatial/environmental and social hierarchy in commenting that a particularly high and well-positioned site in Bath was wasted on hovels and ought to be the habitat of the chief citizens.⁴⁴ In both *Sylva* and *Fumifugium* Evelyn suggests that eyesore settlements, and uncivilized people, ought to be removed from prime green sites since they seriously diminished the inherent value of natural environment. For example, 'poor and nasty cottages' around the capital, and notably around St James's Park, 'disgrace and take off from the sweetness and amoenity of the Environs of London', and so thwart their potential for 'Health, Profit, and Beauty'.⁴⁵

⁴² [Joseph Browne], *The Circus: or, British Olympicks* (London, 1709), p.13

⁴³ George Farquhar, *The Recruiting Officer: A Comedy* (London, 1706), p.10

⁴⁴ Wood, *Description of Bath*, pp.331-2

⁴⁵ Evelyn, *Sylva*, p.112; Evelyn, *Fumifugium*, pp.25-6

As towns grew in size and density and the atmosphere seemed to become more choked, the desirability of residential areas became increasingly influenced by these environmental criteria. In Newcastle, Bourne indicated that the pattern of residence among wealthier inhabitants had shifted from the Close, a central commercial region and 'formerly that Part of the Town where the principal Inhabitants liv'd', up to 'the higher Parts of the Town'. Westgate was described as a favoured district on account of its proximity to fields and gardens noted for their 'Art and Curiosity, and Beauty of Flowers', and was simultaneously characterised as 'a Street more retired than any other in this Town; there being no Artificers or Mechanicks in this Street, nor any Market. It is chiefly inhabited by the Clergy and Gentry'. Meanwhile the fashionable Pilgrim Street boasted 'the most Pleasant Situation of any within or without the Town. It stands as it were in the middle of Gardens and Shady Fields'.⁴⁶ The building developments creeping up the hillsides of Bath played on the kudos of a lofty, airy positioning that went some way towards overcoming the disadvantages of a naturally low-lying site. Queen Square would apparently 'outdo every Thing in Bath, both for Air and Situation'.⁴⁷ In the capital, the new buildings of the first half of the eighteenth-century 'towards the Fields in the Liberty of Westminster' are 'where most of the Nobility and Gentry now live, for the Benefit of the good Air'. Developments like Grosvenor Square exploited a location 'at the farthest Extent of the Town, upon a rising Ground, with the Fields on all Sides; which, with the fine Air it thereby enjoys, renders the Situation delightful'.⁴⁸ Again, social cachet fuses with environmental superiority, as Entick notes that polite inhabitants headed west in line with the 'fashion to draw as near as possible to breath the air of the court of St James's'.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Bourne, *History*, pp.126, 22, 151

⁴⁷ *Gloucester Journal*, 11 April, 1732, quoted in Fawcett, *Voices of Eighteenth-Century Bath*, p.6

⁴⁸ Anon, *Foreigners Guide*, pp.10, 122

⁴⁹ Entick, *New History of London*, III, p. 342

Water

Besides air, the other natural flow that served as a focus and feature of nature in the town was water. In the same way that low-lying, dense areas were conceived as a health risk in contaminating the air, damp or marshy environments with standing water were also castigated as begetting ill-health. And yet clean, moving water, like free-flowing air, had the potential to cleanse the body of the individual and of the town, washing away ills. Besides its' aesthetic appeal, the imagined health-giving properties of flowing water anchored the development of parks, gardens and walks around spas, rivers and streams.

The potent symbolism of water as a natural element is very much bound up with its redemptive quality. A powerful current in the religious imagination, water is the fundamental spring of life. In the ritual of baptism the body and the soul are given new life through immersion. The vogue for taking or bathing in the water among polite society in the seventeenth and eighteenth century is couched within a climate of earnest scientific enquiry into chemical components and verified restorative properties, but is layered upon this boundless quasi-mystical inheritance.⁵⁰ It was not just water bubbling miraculously to the earth's surface that washed the body clean. The ebb and flood of the seas, and rivers through the seasons marked the rhythmic pulse of a natural world maintaining its own balance.⁵¹ Within the context of a man-made urban environment, perceived as more destructive than self-sustaining, this flow acted as a lifeblood, and connection with the natural rhythms. The river was redolent of the natural, and its' flowing into and through the town literally conveyed the kind of harmonising interflow between town and country that was desired. Tree-lined walks laid out by the riverside in

⁵⁰ Christopher Hamlin, 'Chemistry, Medicine, and the Legitimization of English Spas, 1740-1840', in Roy Porter (ed.), 'The Medical History of Waters and Spas', *Medical History*, Supplement no. 10, (1990), p.68

⁵¹ Seaside resorts became increasingly popular from the mid-eighteenth century, initially encouraging visitors to drink the sea water, but soon switching to promote bathing. The seashore, very clearly a boundary line, satisfied the desire both for Addison's 'unfettered perspective' in the ultimate form of the horizon, and the sensation of flow in the tidal waters and maritime breezes

the town heightened this impression of an easy and contiguous association between the natural and built environment. The notion of the river as the town's artery, pumping life into the heart of the city, functioned on an economic level too, as trade was carried in and out along the waterways. In this sense the river seemed to harmonise town and countryside, marrying economic and natural vitality.⁵² The Trent was imaged as washing both commercial intercourse and bucolic purity into Nottingham, 'Britain's third Stream which runs with rapid force,/No sooner Spys her, but retards his Course,/He turns, he winds, he cares not to be gone,/Until to her he first has Homage done'. This was a happy and fruitful union between the masculine river and the feminized town. The 'bountiful and lovely stream' serviced the mercantile town, 'And at her Footstool foreign Dainties lays...And richest Merchandize from Sea imports'.⁵³ Its currents represented a confluence of the urban world of finance and trade with that of rural innocence, so that the stroller along or overlooking the water might perceive a harmonious blending of two worlds, the truck of commerce that flowed through the town watered down with rustic imagery. It is the same image of an harmonious fusion of health, wealth and pleasure that poets, guides and historians of towns are consistently at pains to ascribe to their subject. The actual appropriation of water supply for the health and leisured pursuits of those with the time and money to spend has social connotations for the urban fabric and population as a whole too. The conspicuous and recreational use of water in the form of spas, rivers as part of an aesthetic landscape, fountains in gardens, and canals laid out in parks becomes an issue of social distinction when this water is not uniformly available. Whilst the better off could buy into a pumped water scheme, visit spa resorts to purge their systems with mineral waters, and purchase bottled water, access to clean, flowing water by poorer sections of the community was inhibited by cost, the declining numbers of

⁵² Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, pp.330, 356

⁵³ Deering, *Nottinghamia*, p.17; Throsby, *Thoroton's History of Nottinghamshire*, II, p.127

water bearers, and the maintenance of stand pipes.⁵⁴ It appears that London's public water supply was increasingly marginalised from the mid-seventeenth century, in contrast with the corresponding increasing commodification of water.⁵⁵ The constant bubbling of clear water from a fountain, or channelling of flow into a purpose built canal gains added potency within this context, as a statement of wealth and proprietorship. Waller claimed the new canal that formed the centrepiece of the restructured St James's Park as emblematic of the King's power and vision, 'tis of more renown/To make a River then to build a Town'.⁵⁶ In the parish of Saint Martin in the Fields the spring sources of the community water supply were purchased by the royal estate at a cost of £2 500, in spite of objections on behalf of the local poor, and redirected to serve Hyde Park and the creation of the Serpentine River.⁵⁷

Playing up the exclusive nature and purifying qualities of water was obviously very much in the interests of a resort like Bath, built around the pursuit of health in general, and focused specifically around the pump rooms and baths. Thomas Boddely casts the siting of Bath as 'a particular Favour from Heaven' on account of the famous hot springs.⁵⁸ Certainly the city was somewhat disadvantaged topographically, but the healthiness of the urban fabric as a whole might be improved by the waters, 'This City, tho' situated in a Bottom, is generally very healthy, which I believe to be owing, in a great Measure, (as some Writers, in the Description of this Place have observ'd) to the Salubriousness of the Air, from the Vapours of these Salutary Waters that are here'.⁵⁹ Thomas Fairchild voiced a similar opinion with regards the Thames having observed some plant varieties thriving

⁵⁴ The spectacle of tourists lounging in swimming pools within foreign resorts whilst locals struggle to fulfil their water needs represents a modern day parallel to this

⁵⁵ Mark Jenner, 'Networks of Water in London, 1500-1725', seminar at the Institute of Historical Research, 23 November, 1994

⁵⁶ Waller, *St James's Park*, p.4

⁵⁷ Westminster Archives Office, Saint Martin in the Fields Vestry Minutes, 13 October, 24 November, 1730, 12 January, 25 February, 1731

⁵⁸ Boddely, *Bath and Bristol Guide*, p.1

⁵⁹ Draper, *Brief Description of Bath*, p.9

in gardens by the riverside that could not stand the smoky air elsewhere in the city, 'perhaps the constant rising Vapour from the River, helps the Plants against the poisonous Quality in the City Smoke'.⁶⁰ In the case of Bath this view became harder to sustain in the face of the perceived risk of steamy emanations, and there does seem to have been a shift away from bathing through the eighteenth century, but the considered personal benefits to be gained from imbibing the waters were loudly proclaimed. The trade in bottled water from Bath had apparently already extended nationwide by 1673.⁶¹ In the eighteenth century water-bottling and transporting activities were up and running at Scarborough, Bristol and Holt alongside the widespread importing of mineral water from famous foreign resorts such as Spaw and Pyrmont.⁶² Mary Chandler endorsed the life-giving image of the waters as embodying physical and moral salvation in her poetic panegyric of the town. In particular, these natural flows were able to restore balance to those suffering the ill-effects of over-indulgence, 'Fatal Effects of Luxury and Ease!/ We drink our Poison, and we eat Disease/...Our Waters wash those num'rous Ills away,/And grant the trembling Wretch a longer Day'.⁶³ This kind of faith in Bath's watery purging fashioned the resort as a mecca for the gouty.

Spas and baths, merging leisure and health, were also apt to provide a focus for the development of accompanying facilities in the shape of gardens and walks, continuing the theme of restorative recreation. In Nottingham the water drinkers at the Spa by the Leen were provided with tree-lined walks as part of a package of physical reform couched in a morally uplifting natural setting. Water drinking and bathing established the quasi-religious site of St Anne's Well, fashioning a grove with an inheritance of physical and moral sanction even after this specific function had faded away. The wider facilities of

⁶⁰ Fairchild, *City Gardener*, p.45

⁶¹ Chapman, *Thermae Redivivae*, reprinted in Thomas Guidott, *A collection of treatises relating to the city and waters of Bath* (London, 1725), p.422

⁶² *Newcastle Journal*, 14 July, 1739; *Nottingham's Weekly Courant*, 7 May, 1741

⁶³ Chandler, *Description of Bath*, pp.4-5

Bath, Tunbridge and countless other spa resorts were constructed around the core attraction of the waters, and again the concomitant development of parks, gardens and walks was a logical extension of the faith in elements of the natural world as halting and reversing the corruption of body and soul.

If not specifically evolved around the source of spring waters, the formal development of natural spaces within and around the town is, in many cases, closely tied to proximity to rivers or streams. Besides the notion of the vital and purgative flow discussed above, the predilection for walking along the course of the river is also a reflection of its symbolic importance as the natural boundary of the town, marking the cusp of the urban fabric and rural environs (see fig.5.1).

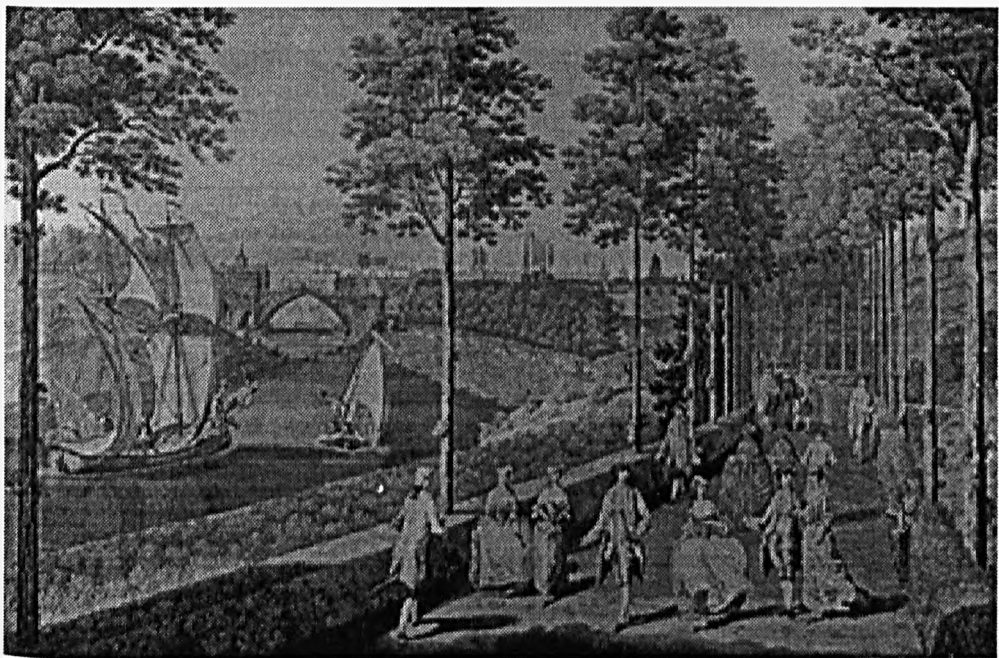


Fig. 5.1 C. Grignion after N. Drake, *The New or Long Walk, York*, 1756

The heart of Shrewsbury was very clearly bounded by the river; 'The Severn surrounds this town...it makes the form of a horse-shoe'.⁶⁴ The 'most delightful advantage of the

⁶⁴ Defoe, *Tour*, II, p.75

river Severn' was an important aesthetic asset of the town, besides its economic value, and integral to the charm of both Quarry and Kingsland on either bank.⁶⁵ The appeal of the Quarry, in particular, derived in no small part from its riverside location. Linden crowed that 'The Quarry (the public walk near the town) is superior to St. James's Park, from the most delightful advantage this place receives from the river Severn', whilst a late-eighteenth century directory, lauding the Quarry walks as among the finest in the country, highlights the way that 'the spreading branches of its lofty limes hang enchantly over the majestic Severn, while the sweetly-winding stream closely embraces the verdant bank the whole extent of the lower walk'.⁶⁶ Nearly one hundred years earlier, Celia Fiennes had made a note, 'its pleasant to walk by the river', an early indication of recreational use of the riverside prior to the lay-out of formalised avenues in 1719.⁶⁷ George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* of 1706 set several scenes in 'The Walks by the Severn side'. Similarly, a watercolour of the Quarry in the early eighteenth century before the trees were planted to delineate the walks reinforces the point that it was the river that initially attracted the walkers, and the walks were subsequently formalised to exploit this (see fig.3.7).⁶⁸ A view of the town taken from the Kingsland Bank and attributed to John Bowen (c.1710's) shows a number of rather well-to-do people sharing the riverside footpath with barge pullers (see fig.5.2).⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Linden, *Hanlys-Spa*, pp.3-4; Thomas Minshull, *The Shrewsbury Guide and Salopian Directory* (Shrewsbury, 1786), p.43

⁶⁶ Fiennes, *Journeys*, p.186

⁶⁷ Farquhar, *Recruiting Officer*, pp.33-47

⁶⁸ Reproduced in Hyde, *Gilded Scenes and Shining Prospects*, pp.74-75

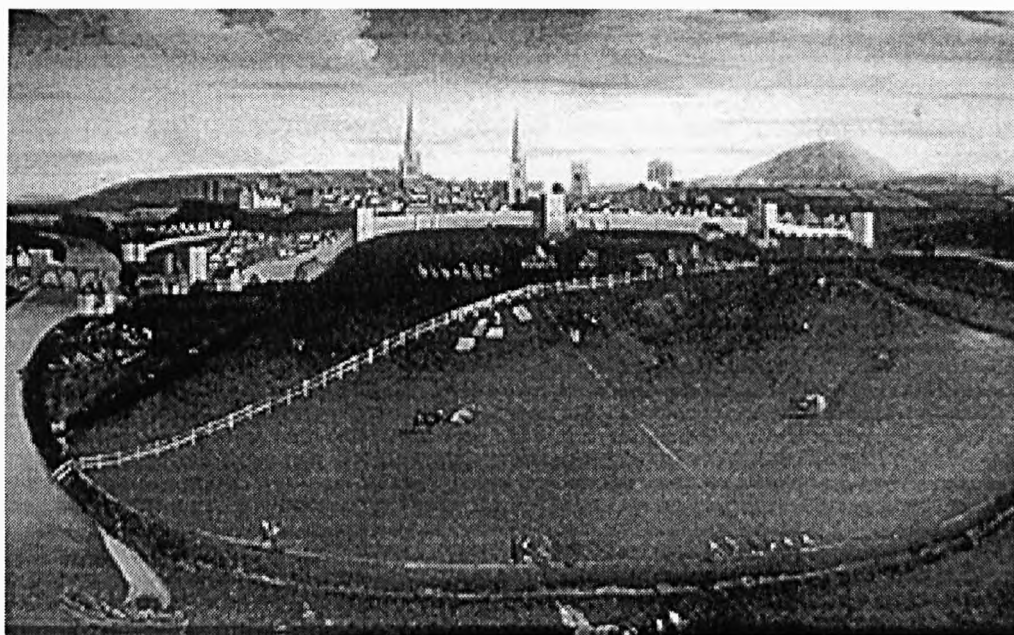


Fig. 5.2 [John Bowen], *The Quarry, Shrewsbury*, c.1710's

The Tyne served a primarily economic function within Newcastle, and would have been heavily trafficked with coal barges, and yet was still represented as an aesthetic asset too. From the Forth the range of prospects included the banks of the River Tyne, whilst the views from the Ropery walk in the Sandgate area included 'an agreeable Prospect of the River'.⁶⁹ The advertising of a house to let in the Close may have been an early instance of estate agent bluster, but the 'Liberty of a Summer-house and Balcony, which projects over the River' were listed among its selling points.⁷⁰ Elsewhere, Bourne mentions the walk to Magdalen Well, and the route up Pandon Dean following the burn as pleasant walks for Novocastrians.⁷¹ Nottingham's Trent and Leen were recognised as primary natural assets. The city was rendered 'extreamly commodious and delightful' by virtue of 'being washed with the winding Streams of the River Lind', running along its southern flank. Between this current and the Trent lay 'fine Meadows', and it was across this

⁶⁹ Bourne, *History*, pp.146, 154

⁷⁰ *Newcastle Journal*, 26 March, 1743

⁷¹ Bourne, *History*, p.153

stretch that a raised boardwalk led walkers out of town to bask in the healthy atmosphere of rural open space, and free flowing air and water (see fig.5.3).⁷² Deering recorded that this pathway out to the river also served those wishing to swim, 'Those of the Fair Sex who like the Water-side, have a very agreeable Way to it over Nottingham Meadows, where in Summer Evenings they do not want Conveniencies at the Trent Bridge to bath themselves unseen'.⁷³ In Bath the river Avon provided an alternative fluid connection between the city and the natural environment, bounding the built landscape and highlighting the easy proximity of the surrounding countryside along the prime stretch of the Parades, Harrison's Walks, St James's Triangle and the Orange Grove. The formal Green Walks along the river on the town side were matched by a more casual pathway skirting Bathwick meadows on the far bank, also a popular diversion of the company.⁷⁴ This led along to the Spring Gardens, accessible by boat before the construction of Pulteney Bridge. William Purdie channelled guests along a 'commodious passage' from the Orange Grove before rowing them across the water to the gardens set among fields. That the river itself had become a leisure facility is evident from the running of a recreational boat service. In 1758 it was possible to follow a path leading from the end of the South Parade down to the waters edge 'where neat Pleasure-boats will attend constantly to convey Ladies and Gentlemen cross the Water, or down the River on Parties of Pleasure'.⁷⁵ Getting to Vauxhall and Ranelagh by boat was also very much part of the experience before the construction of Westminster Bridge.

⁷² Cox, *History of Nottinghamshire*, p.18

⁷³ Deering, *Nottinghamia*, p.75

⁷⁴ Wood, *Description of Bath*, p.439

⁷⁵ *Bath Advertiser*, 25 March, 1758

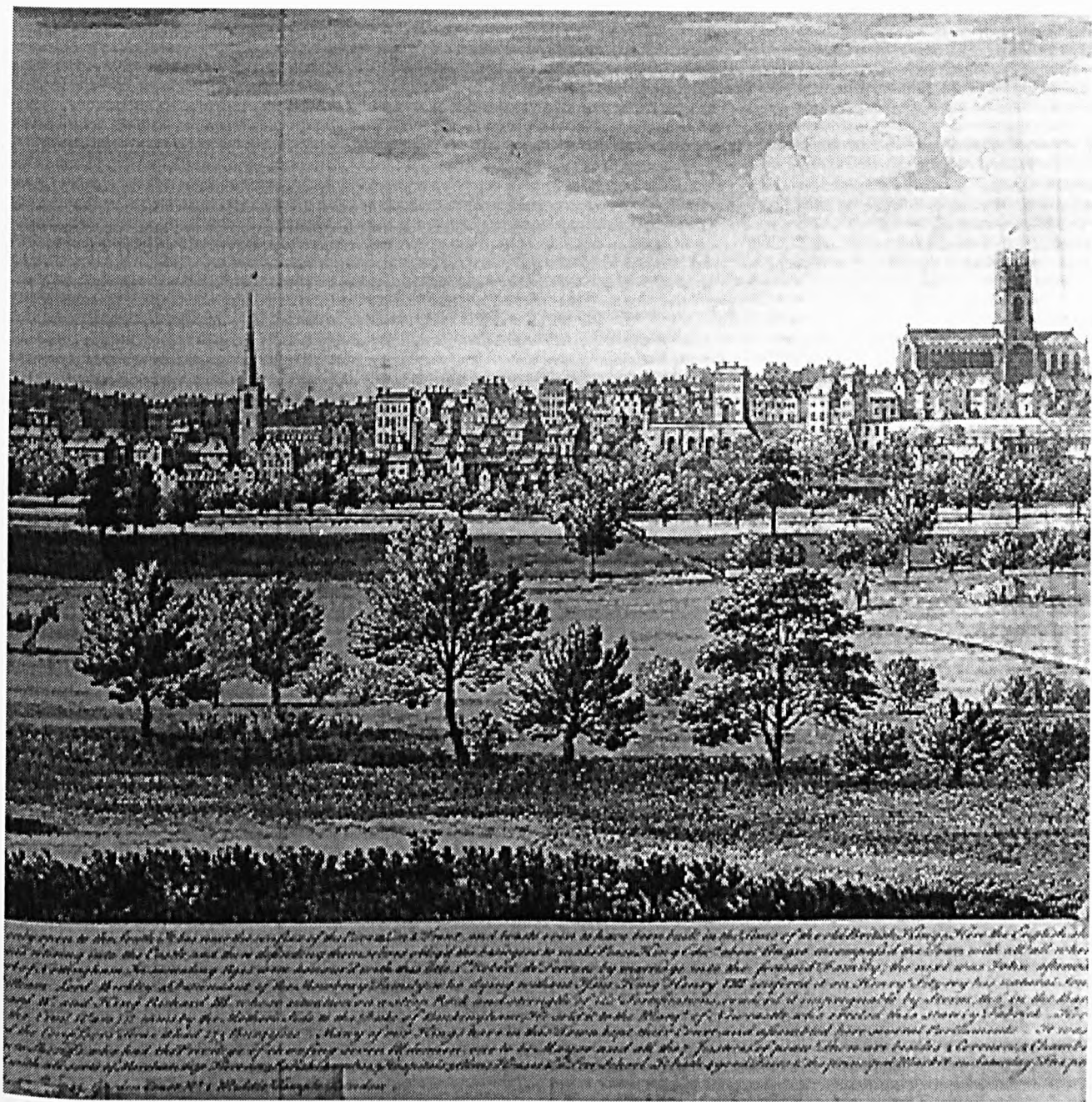


Fig.5.3 Samuel & Nathaniel Buck, 'The South Prospect of Nottingham', 1743 (section showing boardwalk running out of the town and across the Meadows)

The Thames could be pitched as a recreational amenity in its own right, adding 'greatly to the Diversions in Summer: Here Noblemen and Gentlemen, who have their own Barges and Pleasure-Boats, make a select Company, and with Trumpets, Haut boys, and other Musick, divert themselves upon the River'.⁷⁶ This section has been primarily concerned with the corrective role assigned nature in the town regarding the physical constitution of the human body and in turn the urban body. The section that now follows concentrates on the credit accorded nature in the town in administering to the soul.

Moral welfare- retreat

As an extension of the potential imbalances that the built environment created, the risk that urban excess posed to health also threatened to undermine the moral well-being of those resident in towns or coming into contact with them. The characterised worldliness of the town, its emphasis on public display and interaction, its business, luxury, indulgence and vice, stood in stark contrast to the imagined delights of rural innocence, honest labour, peace, virtue, beauty, and a closeness to God through harmony with his creation. But then of course the point, already made, is that it was not simply a case of the city being all bad and to be shunned, bringing us back to the bridge of nature in the town. Again, parks, gardens and walks, both public and private, were nurtured as capable of correcting these deficiencies and maintaining and symbolising rural qualities within an urban frame, embodying retreat, spirituality, and harmony and virtue. This emphasis, on the 'natural' associations of virtue, innocence and order that characterised parks, gardens and walks, was deployed to offset fear and criticism of the expanding leisure trade as opening the door to moral corruption.

⁷⁶ Anon, *The Foreigners Guide*, p.128

The idea of the garden as idyllic paradise retreat, to contrast with urban dissolution, has an infinitely long lineage. Retirement from the world to the simple pleasures of green groves crops up in the literature of any period you care to choose, as Raymond Williams exemplified. The Roman and Renaissance tradition of retirement, and cultivating of groves of wisdom within the city was strong and influential.⁷⁷ The theme of retirement to the countryside was as pertinent and pervasive in the eighteenth century, as Maynard Mack elucidates in his work on Pope.⁷⁸ My purpose here is not to rehearse this general body of work, but to look at the uses of this language within the context of developing urbanisation in late seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century England, and at how the notion of the garden as retreat informs the representation of parks and gardens within these growing towns. At first it appears contradictory to discuss town parks and gardens as spaces of retirement given their acknowledged role as public leisure facilities, recognised forums of display in which to see and be seen. But again this bears witness to the particularity and ambiguity of these urban features, stemming from their character as gardens. At the same time as encompassing a very public, sociable dimension, oriented around the promenades, the green site is simultaneously able to trade on the imagery and appeal of the garden as private and contemplative space, allowing for individual and emotional experience. The evolving importance accorded privacy is something that historians have traced in the stress placed on solitude, 'an Augustinian sense of the importance of inwardness and self-examination', and 'the consciousness of man's ability to shape himself'.⁷⁹ And yet these public and private domains are not fixed and mutually exclusive realms. Nature in the town is moulded to assume both a civilised, urbane face, and a retired, virtuous and redemptive persona to counter civility slipping into artifice and superficiality.

⁷⁷ Hunt and Willis, *Genius of the Place*, p.11; also see John Dixon Hunt, *Garden and Grove: The Italian Renaissance Garden in the English Imagination 1600-1750* (London, 1986)

⁷⁸ Maynard Mack, *The Garden and the City ; Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope, 1731-1743* (Toronto, 1969)

⁷⁹ Brewer, 'This, that and the other', pp.7, 17

In full eulogistic mode, the garden represents a sanctuary, a protected enclave harbouring natural truth and virtue, and a haven in which to wash away the stains and temptations of the town. As temporary respite from the urban environment, the garden could offer an experience unhinged from time and dislocated in space, a way to cope with urban disease. The natural world was there as a place of retreat, in which to even out the temperment, 'As to the Mind, it will always be employed about something or other, and the viewing and examining the gay Produce of the Earth will effectually unbend, and divert it from more crabbed Contemplations'.⁸⁰ A correspondent in the *Tatler* reminded the reader of the 'delicious Retirement' afforded by a garden, 'the Beauties and the Charms of Nature and of Art court all my Faculties, refresh the Fibres of the Brain, and smooth every Avenue of Thought'.⁸¹ Meanwhile, Addison had written that the garden, as mankind's first and natural home, was 'naturally apt to fill the Mind with Calmness and Tranquility, and to lay all its turbulent Passions at rest'.⁸² Retreat to the garden was to recognise and attempt to recover this natural state, a literal re-creation of innocence lost. This impulse could be reflected stylistically too. As discussed in both Chapter 3 on design, and in the consideration of enclosure in Chapter 6, eighteenth-century garden style and ordering displays an increasing desire to recreate the easy harmony between humankind and the original Creation, between the built and the natural environment. The model of declining stress on overt emblems in the landscape and shift towards a more expressive, individual experience fixed to the latter half of the eighteenth century identified in accounts of landscape and country gardens is not readily transferable to town parks and gardens not just because of the ownership issues raised in Chapter 4.⁸³ It was also the case that the urban environment stimulated an early desire for natural, unaffected

⁸⁰ Deering, *Catalogus Stirpium*, Preface

⁸¹ Bond, *The Tatler*, vol.II, no.179, p.477

⁸² Bond, *The Spectator*, vol.IV, no.477, p.192

⁸³ See Ronald Paulson, *Emblem and Expression. Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1975); Bending, 'Re-Reading the Eighteenth-Century English Landscape Garden'

scenes to contrast with the formality and artifice of the town, as discussed in Chapter 3 on design and ordering.

Turning to accounts of town parks, gardens and walks, it is clear that positive representations of these sites trade on a steeped tradition of garden retirement. Drawing on a classical conceptualising of retreat from the city, Edmund Waller drapes Charles II in the enlightening and ennobling olive and laurel and, in his depiction of the King alone and deep in thought in St James's Park, summons the authority of Kings of old who 'by frequenting sacred Groves grew wise;/Free from th'impediments of light and noise/Man thus retir'd his nobler thoughts employs'. The trees and groves stand as wise and elevated spaces away from the city and its diversions. Here, the King will find the perspective and clarity he needs to exercise good government, 'free from Court compliances He walks/And with himself, his best adviser, talks'.⁸⁴ The principal champion of Vauxhall's charms, John Lockman, assiduously promoted the notion of these most public gardens as an idyllic rural retreat, 'Retir'd from Town, Life's idle Cares forgot,/How have I hail'd, (with Extasy!) my Lot'. Indeed, were Homer and Virgil to visit they would sing, 'What different Pleasures here are found!/Now wand-ring lonely, up and down/The lofty Trees, which shade us round/Waft us in Fancy, far from Town'.⁸⁵ In lines cribbed from Pope's account of the contemplative solitude and tranquility provided by gardens, the Druids Walk in Vauxhall was described as suited to those 'whose minds are adapted to contemplation, it seems devoted to Solitude', on the strength of the certitude that 'there is certainly something in the amiable simplicity of unadorned nature, that spreads over the mind a more noble sort of tranquillity'.⁸⁶ Tyers himself calculated and played upon the appeal of a 'rural retreat' to Londoners flocking 'from this large and populous City

⁸⁴ Waller, *St James's Park*, pp.6-8

⁸⁵ Lockman, *Sketch*, pp.22-3

⁸⁶ Anon, *Description of Vaux-Hall Gardens*, p.41, lines taken almost directly from Pope's essay in the *Guardian*, 1713

(especially in hot and sultry weather)'.⁸⁷ This presentation of the garden as recreational retreat moderating life in the city echoes Sir Thomas More's Utopian vision of a cityscape in which urban residents have gardens to resort to in the summer.⁸⁸ Fairchild promoted gardens for urban residents 'in order to increase their Quiet of Mind, to be fix'd in a right Notion of Country Happiness'. This was no idle activity either, 'And I have heard a learned Man say, that where there was the greatest Opportunity of recreating the Spirits, the mind was improved by that Opportunity'. The citizen, thus refreshed, could return to the urban marketplace with a vigour that would soon pay dividends.⁸⁹ In the context of a city of London's unmatched scale and pace, purification through occasional retreat restored one's sanity. A French commentator noted that St James's Park was 'the Place where People go to get rid of the Dirt, Confusion, and Noise of this great City'.⁹⁰ A turn in the gardens of Lincoln's Inn restored 'usual Temper and Serenity of Soul,' and enabled one to retire 'having passed away a few Hours in the proper Employments of a reasonable Creature'.⁹¹ Ned Ward's urban observer, troubled with worldly cares and humane wrongs 'turn'd my back upon the noisy Town' and 'stroll'd into the Fields'.⁹² The London Spy, strolling by the water in St James Park felt that 'nothing inhabited this watery place but Peace and Silence. I could have wished myself capable of living obscure from mankind in this element like a fish'.⁹³ Mary Chandler characterised Harrison's Walks in Bath as 'A cool Recess, the Muses chosen Seat,/From Crouds, and empty Noise, a blest Retreat!'.⁹⁴ Similarly, the narrator of *Bath Intrigues* sought out the garden as a quiet refuge from the city, 'I went into the Garden, hoping to find that Refreshment from the Air, which at that

⁸⁷ ML, Wroth scrapbooks, vol. III, newspaper advertisement, 1736 (source not cited)

⁸⁸ Sir Thomas More, *Utopia*, 1st publ. 1516, quoted in Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, pp.305-7

⁸⁹ Fairchild, *City Gardener*, pp.8, 43

⁹⁰ Muralt, *Letters*, p.77

⁹¹ Bond, *The Tatler*, vol. II, p.114

⁹² [Edward Ward], *The Field Spy: or, The Walking Observer. A Poem* (London, 1714), pp.1,3

⁹³ Ward, *London Spy*, p.139

⁹⁴ Chandler, *Description of Bath*, p.16

time neither Company nor Books could afford me'.⁹⁵ Likewise, 'Foe to the pomp of Courts, to Routs, and Noise,/To Fashion.../Debauchery's patent, Folly's sanctuary/Nature's distortion'. The foil to the town lay in the garden, 'Where calm Content expands her balmy wings'.⁹⁶

Spirituality

Much of the language used to stress the value of retirement is suggestive of a moral regeneration through spiritual elevation. The garden serves here in that it is assumed to represent a higher order, counterbalancing a perceived urban inclination towards temporality and worldliness, although at the same time rendering the citizen better equipped to cope with and offset the profanity of the city. William Temple expressed the contrast between the original garden, a pure natural state, and the city as the tainted product of temptation, 'If we believe the Scripture, we must allow that God Almighty esteemed the Life of a Man in a Garden the happiest he could give him, or else he would not have placed Adam in that Eden; that it was the State of Innocence and Pleasure; and that the Life of Husbandry and Cities came after the Fall, with Guilt and with Labour'.⁹⁷ The luxury, vice and self-absorption that formed the subject of critiques of the town was patently far removed from the austerity of life and purity of faith that Christianity set out. Attempts to lend urbanity, its improvements, lifestyles and recreations moral sanction were manifested in urban church building programmes, philanthropic gestures, and the stressing of harmony with and appreciation of God's creation on both a personal and environmental level. Using natural spaces as urban recreational facilities capitalised on and played up the sense of preordained sanctity, enabling polite society to lay claim to

⁹⁵ Anon, *Bath Intrigues: In Four Letters to a Friend in London* (London, 1725), pp.12-13

⁹⁶ Anon, *Bath and its Environs, A Descriptive Poem* (Bath, 1775), p.26

⁹⁷ William Temple, *Sir William Temple, Upon the Gardens of Epicurus, with other XVIIth Century Garden Essays* ed. A.F. Sieveking (London, 1908), p.21

elevated moral as well as physical character in fashioning and frequenting these gardens without jettisoning the sociable, civilized context of the town.

Endorsements of the garden as a form of worship in bringing God and his subjects closer together, although by no means unique in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century, gained their relevance and potency in this period in particular response to the climate of scientific enquiry and circumstances of developing urbanisation, both accentuating the gulf between the spiritual and the material. John Laurence's comments addressed to the gentry and added to his 1714 work on how gardening had directed his mind to divine matters, *The Clergy-Man's Recreation*, asserted 'that all the best and noblest Entertainments are to be met with in a Garden'. This was because it was here that 'a Man may converse with his God'.⁹⁸ Here, the link between humanity and the Creation, severed or strained by a narrow, self-absorbed perspective in the urban environment, could be glimpsed again. The creation of a garden was an act of redemption, re-scaping an image of Paradise.⁹⁹ The extreme discomfort expressed at the violation of these gardens, detailed in chapters 6 and 7, derives from this iconographic status, with all the talk of tainted virtue, snakes in the grass and a re-succumbing to temptation. Evelyn's faith in gardens had a clearly redemptive hue, 'they are a place of all terrestriall enjoyments the most resembling Heaven and the best representation of our lost felicity'.¹⁰⁰ As a consequence, the frequenting of these gardens might engender moral improvement, 'We will endeavour to shew how the aire and genious of Gardens operat upon humane spirits towards virtue and sanctitie...these expedients do influence the soule and spirit of man, and prepare them for converse with good angells'.¹⁰¹ The notion was

⁹⁸ Quoted in David Coffin, *The English Garden. Meditation and Memorial* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1994), p.6

⁹⁹ Carol Fabricant, 'Binding and Dressing Nature's Loose Tresses: The Ideology of Augustan Landscape Design', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, VIII, (1979), pp.127-8

¹⁰⁰ Evelyn, 'Elysium Britannicum', quoted in Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, p.330

¹⁰¹ John Evelyn to Dr Browne, 28 January, [1658] in Temple, *Upon the Gardens of Epicurus*, pp.175-6

expanded on further in the third edition of *Sylva*, where Evelyn supported his argument in favour of tree-planting with the observation that 'all intelligent persons have inbrac'd the solace of shady Arbours, and all devout Persons found how naturally they dispose our Spirits to Religious Contemplations'.¹⁰²

For Deering, this represented another key point in the significance of urban access to the natural environment, 'A Man who indolently and incuriously spends his Days, may easily imbibe Atheistical Notions; but he who delights in Natural Knowledge, is forced by every Thing he looks upon, to acknowledge and admire the infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of the great Author of all Beings'.¹⁰³ A young woman living in London described how she kept aesthetical thoughts at bay by 'admiring the curious works of the God of Nature'.¹⁰⁴ The Duke of Buckingham, in his epistle describing his own gardens, comments 'the works of nature appear to me the better sort of sermons, and every flower contains in it the most edifying rhetorick to fill us with admiration of its omnipotent Creator'.¹⁰⁵ And so the level of one's appreciation of the natural world was tied up with one's piety, as studying nature itself became an act of devotion. The use of paradise imagery reinforced the spiritual credentials of the site, and so in turn the elevated status reflected onto the individual able to distinguish the higher order apparent there. Waller aimed to sanctify Charles's Restoration by symbolising it as a horticultural recreation of Paradise, a recrafting of lost virtue and honour. A new Golden Age of natural bounty is heralded, 'The choicest things that furnisht Noahs Ark,/Or Peters sheet, inhabiting this Park:/ All with a border of rich fruit-trees crown'd,/Whose loaded branches hide the lofty mound'.¹⁰⁶ In its attempt to provide the most flattering account of Nottingham possible, a poetic description of the town depicts a recreated Eden offering up plenty without labour.

¹⁰² Evelyn, *Sylva*, 3rd edn. (London, 1679), p.255

¹⁰³ Deering, *Catalogus Stirpium*, To the Reader

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p.237

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Coats, *Gardens of Buckingham Palace*, p.33

¹⁰⁶ Waller, *St James's Park*, p.5

Down at the Trent-side, 'num'rous gliding fish, of diff'rent kind,/The happy people, at their pleasure find', whilst in the Meadows 'beasts of various kinds, in plenty graze;/And the large fertile fields, where grains appear,/In plenteous crops, for bread, for ale, for beer;/And in her sweet ambrosial air there fly,/Those sorts of fowls that Please the taste, or eye'. The site is represented as a utopia, combining healthy trade and industry, 'in trade and grandeur, worthy high regard', with natural beauty and plenty to forge a paradise on earth.¹⁰⁷ If not an avowedly Edenesque vision of garden spirituality, there was also some investing of nature in and about the town with an ancient, pagan or pantheistical spiritual legacy. John Wood's envisioning of Bath and its rural environs was interwoven with Druidic significance, and an understanding of the area as an ancient site of worship. For instance, Solsbury Hill was identified as the Temple of Apollo, and the spot where the founding King Bladud launched himself into fateful flight.¹⁰⁸ Vauxhall possessed a Druids Walk, and John Lockman summoned Druids and Echoes in his evocations of the Gardens as retreat from the worldly rationale of the city.¹⁰⁹

The casting of parks, gardens and walks as retired and spiritual, contemplative spaces helped foster an impression of harmony and virtue that had a significant bearing on their ordering and use. The following section explores further the association between town parks and gardens and virtue as a product of their greenery.

Virtue

The imagery of the garden/landscape as pastoral idyll enshrining a natural and higher order sets it up as a site loaded with the essence of virtue. If here is God's work, then

¹⁰⁷ Anon, *Historical and Poetical Description of Nottingham*, pp.6-8

¹⁰⁸ This sense of spirituality was re-invoked in the attempted protection of the site from a road-building programme, 'Halfway up little Solsbury Hill there's a shrine built by local ramblers as a tribute to the place. It has become a meeting place for all the protesters, and people have strewn flowers all about it. Genius Loci, it says: Spirit of Place'. C. J Stone, *Guardian*, 4 June, 1994

¹⁰⁹ Lockman, *Sketch*, p.5

here is moral guidance, a template for purity and perfection. As already indicated, this was felt to be of particular pertinence in the town. The *Connoisseur*, under the aegis of 'Mr Town', Critic and Censor General, undertook to alert the reader to vice and folly by 'always endeavouring to hold, as it were, the mirror up to Nature, to show Virtue her own feature'.¹¹⁰ Within the urban environment, the notion that parks and gardens and walks may prove morally corrective is usually attributed to the nineteenth century, informing the narrative on the Victorian creation of parks for the people. Similar initiatives and motivations are ascribed to the crafting of nineteenth century American city parks. The maintenance of an umbilical link between the city and the natural environment was considered fundamental to moral order, a belief that inspired the establishment of pockets of nature steered by self-appointed guardians of society. Frederick Law Olmsted believed that nature in the town would counter the unhealthiness and unhappiness fostered in the city, and proved instrumental in the carving out of Central Park in New York.¹¹¹ But a clearly identified moral dimension to parks and gardens is certainly not a nineteenth century innovation, and nor is the encouragement of public town parks, gardens and walks as virtuous recreation. England's growing towns and cities were offering an increasingly diverse range of entertainments within a context of developing commercialisation. The way that urban residents and visitors disported themselves in their free time was perceived as having a significant bearing on the moral character and upholding of order in that society. At worse, leisure carried with it associations of corrupting luxury, drunkenness, riotous behaviour and sexual licence. In his essay on the pleasures of the imagination, Addison had written that 'There are, indeed, but very few who know how to be idle and innocent...every Diversion they take is at the Expence of some one Virtue or another'. In respect of this menace, 'A Man should endeavour, therefore, to make the Sphere of his innocent Pleasures as wide as possible, that he may

¹¹⁰ *Connoisseur*, vol.I, no. 1, 31 January, 1754, p.6

¹¹¹ Terence Young, 'Trees, the park and moral order: the significance of Golden Gates Park's first plantings', *Journal of Garden History*, XIV, no.3, (July-September, 1994), pp.158-9, 164-5

retire into them with Safety, and find in them such a Satisfaction as a wise Man would not blush to take'. The contemplation of nature was central within these pleasures that might 'have a kindly influence on the Body, as well as the Mind'. Later, Addison returned to and underlined his conviction in an account of a 'natural' garden, 'You must know, Sir, that I look upon the Pleasure which we take in a Garden, as one of the most innocent Delights in Humane Life'. Considering that the garden was the first and natural state and a badge of Creation, that it induced calm, and aided meditation, one could only conclude, 'I cannot but think the very Complacency and Satisfaction which a Man takes in these Works of Nature, to be a laudable, if not a virtuous Habit of Mind'.¹¹²

The author of an observational piece on social conduct at the resorts of Bath and Bristol's Hot-well contrasted the virtues derived from contemplation of nature with the shallowness that prevailed in other recreational activities, 'Nothing has that Tendency to form the Mind to Excellency in any kind, as dwelling long in the Contemplation of Beauty, till at last it comes to be taken with it, and to possess it. There naturally arises hence a Love of Virtue as Perfection, and a Hatred and Disdain of Vice as Imperfection'. It was to be regretted, therefore, that such moral elevation did not characterise other pursuits;

what we do every Day in natural things, me thinks, should teach us what should be our Conduct in moral Matters...prodigious Folly! that we can descend into a parterre, and be transported with the Holly's variegated Green, the noble Colour of the Tulip, the Auriculas, and Carnations fine Smell and Colour, and yet go into an Assembly, and see not at all, or with indifferent, or rather sorrowful Eyes, each others particular Excellencies!.¹¹³

Wood also had faith in the redeeming, instructive qualities of fine natural locations and prospects from within the town, 'The Landskip commanded by the high situation of this

¹¹² Bond, *The Spectator*, vol.III, no.411, pp.538-9; vol.IV, no.477, p.192

¹¹³ [Robert Whately], *Characters at the Hot-Well, Bristol, in September, and at Bath, in October, 1723* (London, 1724), pp.xi-xiii

Court [on the former High Street] may be very justly said to have Charms sufficient to invert the Principles of a Miser; and to infuse a Spirit of Liberality'.¹¹⁴ Expanding on his theme of nature as cure-all, Deering applied this notion of the natural world as invoking a superior moral standard directly to the circumstances of Nottingham's citizens, recommending that the working people of Nottingham spend less time drinking bad liquour and more time 'in Conversation with the Vegetable Tribes'. The 'Innocent and useful Diversion' of walking in natural surroundings would render them 'moderately wearied with Exercise, returning Home' for an 'Evening Cup as wholesome as it is refreshing'.¹¹⁵ In John Lockman's estimation, if people wanted to drink they would drink and therefore better that they do so in orderly and edifying surroundings; 'It is far more healthy, for such Persons to rove about, and take a Glass in these Gardens, than to be coop'd up every Night, in a Tavern'. He goes on, 'Diversions, of one sort or another, are absolutely necessary to Mankind; and therefore, the great Wisdom of Legislators seems to be, to make choice of such Diversions as may polish; without corrupting the Minds, or enervating the Bodies, of the People whom they govern'.¹¹⁶ The ramifications of this ordering of nature in the town according to notions of virtue, harmony and elevated status are taken up and explored in greater detail in the following chapter, concerned with the measures to regulate access. The remainder of this chapter is concerned with the use of imagery of nature in the town in the articulation of political constitutional order.

Political constitution

Having discussed the perceived influence of natural environment on the physical and moral welfare of the town and its inhabitants, this final section deals with the use of nature in the town to represent a political harmony. Drawing on the notion of parks,

¹¹⁴ Wood, *Description of Bath*, p.337

¹¹⁵ Deering, *Catalogus Stirpium*, To the Reader

¹¹⁶ Lockman, *Sketch*, p.29

gardens and walks as emblematic of a natural order, their imagery and ordering is deployed as an expression and endorsement of political authority. This process of attempting to fix order by a process of naturalisation not only functions within a national context of social and religious change, but also within a context of urban expansion, and social fluidity. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 was largely represented as an act of preserving mixed, constitutional government, a balance that was invoked as a mark of stability thereafter, characterising the English temperament, and contemporary affairs.¹¹⁷ But in effect this cloak of harmony and stability was attempting to conceal a great deal of change and discord. The impulse towards sustaining an impression of harmony and continuity in social and political relations prompts the deployment of natural imagery and natural spaces as statements that everything is as it should be, according to nature's grand plan. As Turner puts it, the 'interrelated landscape provides an organic model for society, emphasising the mutual relationship between its members', so that 'landscape is read as a political lesson, as a 'pattern' or exemplary structure. The analogy works reciprocally too; at the same time political institutions are 'greened'-transformed into part of the natural order'. Upsetting the naturally ordained status quo could thus be deemed threatening and counter to rightful order, 'Beauty, Nature and political establishment are assumed to be sustained by the same forms of propriety; all opposition is hideous and violent'.¹¹⁸ Representations of nature in the town such as Waller's depiction of Charles in James's Park operate within this framework in deploying natural imagery for political capital.

It is also of importance here, given the stress that was placed on the interaction of the body and the natural environment, to note that the well-being of society and its government was commonly conceived in terms of the health of the body writ large, expressed in the notion of the body politic. Sennett defines this as the idea that society is

¹¹⁷ Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People. England 1727-1783* 1st publ.1989, (Oxford, 1992), pp.677-685

¹¹⁸ Turner, *Politics of Landscape*, pp.103, 7, 6

based and should operate on the supposed dictates of nature.¹¹⁹ Microcosmically, the balancing of the bodily constitution corresponds with the language of constitutional politics, whereby the nation is represented in human form and its workings depend upon the harmony and welfare of its organs and limbs.¹²⁰ This has the effect of carrying over the emphasis on natural order as the image of healthy balance to the political body. The cross-over of physical health, politics and nature can be illustrated in representations of gout as an illness.¹²¹ As indicated previously, this was an affliction routinely characterised as a disease of civilisation, in that it was seen as a product of excess, associated with wealth and luxury and targeting the upper classes in particular. And, like luxurious excess, it was seen as somewhat inevitable, a partial evil that might not be eradicated but could be moderated. It is interesting, then, to note that in the same way that the natural world was invoked to temper the excesses of civilisation, the natural elements served to alleviate the symptoms of gout, focused on the taking of water and gentle outdoor exercise in good air at resorts like Bath. Furthermore, images of the distemper cast it as a constitutional illness, drawing clear comparison between the bodily and political constitution. The corruption that has upset the physical balance, caused the malady, and uses natural environment as a balancing mechanism, is taken as emblematic of the corruption that threatens to upset the the political constitution, and requires regulation, from an orthodox view, or complete purging as the more radical stance. Again, this corresponds with the deployment of natural order to reinforce the impression of a healthy constitution.

¹¹⁹ Sennett, *Flesh and Stone*, p.23

¹²⁰ Henry Fielding uses a common physiological metaphor in describing the people as constituent parts of the political constitution functioning as a body, 'and here, as in the Natural Body, the Disorder of any Part will, in its consequence, affect the whole...Diseases in the Political, as in the Natural Body, seldom fail going on to their Crisis, especially when nourished and encouraged by Faults in the Constitution'. Henry Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Late Increase of Robbers* (London, 1751), pp.viii, 1

¹²¹ The following account is drawn from a seminar given by Roy Porter entitled 'Gout and the British Constitution' at the Institute of Historical Research, 18 January, 1995. The symptoms of Gout are painful joints and swellings, especially in the hands and feet, caused by a build-up of uric acids

Following a similar line as the representations of gout, the perception of good order in the body and in society as achieved by effecting a balance between vices and virtues is illustrated by a piece entitled 'The Englishman' on the state of the nation. This applies the metaphor of tending the garden to the well-being of the state, based on a concept of natural equilibrium. 'Every Plant, Herb, and Seed, is supported by two opposite Qualities; which act upon, correct, and enliven each other...According to the Constitution of Human Nature, Vice is in some Degree as necessary as Virtue'. By vice the writer indicates its meaning as 'that natural Fire in our Blood, which, when corrected by Reason, contributes at once both to our Health and Welfare; and without which Correction, is the Source of infinite Calamities'. This was the same as in the natural world, 'England, in its moral State, may be compared to a Field richly cultivated; that produces excellent Corn, immixt with Weeds and Tares'. Bad men are styled as weeds, to be kept under control by the good husbandman.¹²²

The use of images of natural order to assert political and social order is a core theme within landscape/garden studies. Stephen Daniels addresses the political iconography of woodland, quoting Abraham Cowley's 'Of Solitude' as illustrative of a social order rooted in natural environment, 'Hail, old Patrician Trees, so great and good!/ Hail, ye Plebeian underwood!', also identified as such by Raymond Williams.¹²³ Mature, stately lines of trees are associated with the nobility, and dense, scrubby woodland with the lower orders, dark and disorder. This kind of distinction, of contrasting natures, does have a bearing on the ordering of urban parks, gardens and walks, as noted in chapter 3. John Dixon Hunt points up the links between governance and the garden, and how gardens have been used as symbolic of kingly power and absolutism, illustrated in Simon Schama's account of

¹²² *Newcastle Gazette*, 8 January, 1746

¹²³ Daniels, 'The political iconography of woodland in later Georgian England', in Cosgrove & Daniels, *Iconography of Landscape*, p.43; Williams, *Country and the City*, p.26; also see Turner, *Politics of Landscape*, pp.97-99

Versailles.¹²⁴ This is something that D. Fairchild Ruggles traces in the ordering of a medieval Islamic estate for the greater glory and elevation of the ruler, and Turner explores in discussing how power was vested in land and the well managed estate served as totem of the well managed nation.¹²⁵ I am not seeking to provide a thumbnail sketch of the extensive literature on the interaction of landscape/natural imagery and the wielding of authority, nor to section off a theme that informs the thesis as a whole. The point here is to highlight explicit use of nature in the town to make political points, and naturalise authority.

It is no incidental detail that Waller uses St James's Park as the frame of his celebration of the restoration of the Stuart monarchy.¹²⁶ The site was doubly symbolic. Firstly, Waller exploits the imagery of the first and natural state, and the recognised associations of elevated perspective and patrician rule as expressed through land and well-ordered estate. Charles's recreation of the Park is thus indicative of a true restoration of rightful order according to the natural scheme of things. Secondly, the fortunes of the capital's parks during the Interregnum were presented as encapsulating the violation of natural order at the heart of the nation. Their very future had been called into question; Hyde Park was sold off and Evelyn records that intervention was necessary to prevent the wielding of a second axe against the monarchy, this time in the form of the felling of the trees in St James's Park, 'no footsteps of Monarchy remain unviolated'.¹²⁷ At any rate, royalists presented tree-felling, the destruction of natural environment, as synonymous with the destructiveness of republicanism, and tree-planting and regrowth as symbolic of restored

¹²⁴ Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, p.329; Hunt, *Garden and Grove*, p.143; Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, pp.339-343

¹²⁵ D. Fairchild Ruggles, 'Vision and Power at the Qala Bani Hammad in Islamic North Africa', *Journal of Garden History*, XIV, no.1, (1994), pp.28-41; Turner, *Politics of Landscape*, see chapter 4 on 'The Happy State-the politics of land and landscape', pp.85-115

¹²⁶ The best account of this is McDayter's essay, 'Poetic gardens and political myths', pp.135-148

¹²⁷ Evelyn, *Diary*, vol.3, pp.82-3; Evelyn, *Sylva*, To the Reader

order and loyalty.¹²⁸ The nurturing of rural harmony in St James's Park was intended as a metaphor of renewed national harmony and vitality following the upheavals of civil war, Commonwealth and Restoration. Furthermore, Waller exploits the setting as in itself providing a model constitution to Charles as he wanders through its groves.¹²⁹ The legitimacy of this regime is clearly rooted in natural growth, for example in aligning the trees and the monarch, 'May they increase as fast, and spread their boughs/ As the high fame of their great Owner growes'. And so the Park bespoke the glory of the King, his wealth, his fertile omnipotence in bidding and even improving on nature, and his physical health and strength, attributes in turn reflected on the nation. The manly stride is a totem of his political energy. The strong arm that thwacks the ball down the Mall is a cannon shot that can be turned on the enemy.¹³⁰

John Evelyn also recognised and exploited a correlation between political authority and natural environment, as already noted in his estimation of the symbolic importance of the trees in the Park. *Fumifugium*, dedicated to the newly restored monarch, presented improvement of the air as a matter of national pride, and symbolic of the restoration of good order. Mark Jenner reads the work as an overtly political text, playing on the association of the imagery of smoke or dirty clouds with the Interregnum, and the King's ability, as an emblem of sun or light, to disperse these dark clouds and cleanse the body politic.¹³¹ Poor air quality in the capital was 'indangering as well the Health of Your Subjects, as it Sullies the Glory of this Your Imperial Seat'. Evelyn deplored that a city of such ancient glory and imperial vigour 'should wrap her stately head in Clouds of Smoake and Sulphur, so full of Stink and Darknesse'. Such a sorry state of affairs rendered the city more 'Suburbs of Hell' than 'Assembly of Rational Creatures, and the

¹²⁸ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p.209

¹²⁹ Turner, *Politics of Landscape*, p.43

¹³⁰ Waller, *St James's Park*, pp.4,6

¹³¹ Jenner, 'The Politics of London's Air', pp.536-542

Imperial seat of our incomparable Monarch'. The improvement of air quality was therefore an issue of patriotism and sound royal government;

But now that God has miraculously restor'd to us our Prince, a Prince of so magnanimous and Publick a Spirit, we may promise our selves not only a recovery of our former Splendour; but also whatever any of our Neighbours enjoy of more universal benefit, for Health or Ornament: In summe, whatever may do honour to a Nation so perfectly capable of all advantages.

Of course, as already noted in the previous consideration of air, Evelyn placed great emphasis on the merits of natural environment in restoring well-being. In an appeal to Parliament to address this menace of urban pollution, this significance is extended on the basis that natural harmony underpins physical harmony which is in turn crucial to the achievement of political harmony. The nations 'Noble Patriots' are urged 'that they would consult as well the State of the Natural, as the Politick Body of this Great Nation, so considerable a part wherof are Inhabitants of this August City; since, without their mutual harmony, and well-being, there can nothing prosper, or arrive to its desired perfection'. The recommended use of plantations would not only sweeten the air of the city but also yield 'a Prospect of a noble and masculine Majesty', by virtue of their standing for 'Ornament, Profit, and Security'.¹³² A healthy city made for a virile nation. A few years later Evelyn revisited his theme of the political symbolism of the ordering of nature in *Sylva*, arguing for an extensive tree-planting programme. Here the links were more overt, in that the timber was held to be the strength of the nation in the form of naval ship-building. Again, the violation of rightful order is articulated by the violation of natural order in the form of deforestation during the Commonwealth. Charles, Evelyn points out, is setting the pace for all patriots in the rapid planting of his estates.¹³³ By this reading, the plantation in St James's Park stood as an emblem of his power and vision right at the centre of his domain.

¹³² Evelyn, *Fumifugium*, Dedication, To the Reader, pp. 6,23,25

¹³³ Evelyn, *Sylva*, Dedication

The use of natural imagery to convey political strength and patriotism is not confined to the Restoration. Charles Deering makes patriotic capital out of his promotion of native nature, extending the health and constitution of the individual to that of the nation. By this reading God's natural Creation is a balanced one, fashioned to best suit 'the Climate and Constitutions of the Inhabitants'. The use of foreign natural produce upsets and weakens the constitution, 'to alienate their Constitutions', whilst to live on that which is home-grown is to 'hail and beget a sound strong and useful Race'.¹³⁴ Garden design could also be interpreted on patriotic grounds. The development and championing of an English style as incorporating a finer balance of nature and art, more in harmony with the natural landscape, was contrasted with a French style labelled absolutist.¹³⁵ Lauding native parks and gardens became a gesture of national pride and allegiance. Thomas Fairchild extolled St James's Park, 'Some Gentlemen, who have been abroad, have told me, that there is no publick Place for Walking in any City on this side Italy, that is so pleasant...The Gardens belonging to the French King at Paris, are not near it in Beauty'.¹³⁶ The Vauxhall Gardens were famous all over Europe, much visited and indeed emulated. Tyer's epitaph casts both him and his gardens in glowing patriotic light, 'British glory beams upon his walls/...And made the astonished foreigner applaud/...the zealot of his country' cause/Friend of her King, and pupil of her laws'.¹³⁷ Tyers was always keen to play up the royal association with the Prince of Wales as ground landlord and patron, naming a pavilion in his honour and displaying his crest. British glory was literally plastered over the walls in the form of triumphal paintings. In 1761 a work by Francis Hayman commemorating the surrender of Montreal in Canada to the British was hung in the rotunda, showing General Amherst displaying clemency to the French,

¹³⁴ Deering, *Catalogus Stirpium*, To the Reader

¹³⁵ Hunt & Willis, *Genius of the Place*, p.8

¹³⁶ Fairchild, *City Gardener*, p.10

¹³⁷ *Whitehall Evening Post*, 18 July, 1767

and bearing the inscription 'Power Exerted, Conquest Obtained, Mercy Shewn'. In 1762 another historical painting by the same artist was hung in the adjoining panel, this time representing Britannia 'holding in her hand a Medallion of his present Majesty'.¹³⁸

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on nature represented as a positive element within the town, a moderating counter-balance. The drawing of parks and gardens as pockets of physical and spiritual purification, as oases of rightful order, virtue and contemplative retreat clearly exerted a powerful tug on the imagination, and forms a part of the contemporary imperative on striking a balance in all things, but this does not constitute the whole picture. The next segment of the thesis fleshes out some of the ambiguities inherent in the image of nature in terms of private and contemplative space also serving as sociable, public domains within the town, and the dark, wild, sexual side to the virtuous persona. In particular, Chapter 6 concentrates on the tensions over access to and use of town parks and gardens that simmer beneath the façade of unanimity, looking at the appropriation of nature in the town as informed by the notions of physical and moral superiority discussed here. The 'Proprietors and Promenaders' chapter first raised the issue of the imperative on tending to the physical and moral welfare of the town and its residents and visitors as a key motive in the development of town parks, gardens and walks. In a number of cases these sites were consciously positioned within a package of moral and physical reform. In Bath the leisured ritual interwove attendance at Church with a turn around the walks, visits to the pumps, airings and polite social intercourse. The curative properties of the resort was apparently derived from these combined effects, mocked in satires on the town, 'There drink the wholesome Stream by Rule/...Arise betime, to Pump repair,/First take the Water, then the Air'...'Frequent the Church, in decent Dress,/ there offer up

¹³⁸ Anon, *Description of Vaux-Hall Gardens*, pp.7, 24-26

religious Vows'.¹³⁹ The joint jurisdiction of the chapel and walks in Tunbridge served a similar purpose. This conflation of physical and moral well-being is indicative of the social agenda that accompanied the development and ordering of town parks, gardens and walks. Their virtue and appeal was largely vested in an impression of social/moral and physical refinement, and this was patently compromised by the unchecked passage of the wrong elements. Some form of filtering was therefore considered desirable to preserve this refinement and the kudos that access to it was imagined to lend. It is this that the forms the background to the next chapter, on the means of exclusion deployed to hedge the reputation of town parks, gardens and walks.

¹³⁹ 'An Easy Cure; or, a Prescription for an Invalid when at Bath', in *The New Bath Guide; or, Useful Pocket Companion* 1st publ. 1761, (Bath, 1784), pp.14-15

Chapter 6

Keeping off the grass: contested access to town parks and gardens

Introduction

With its emphasis on the perceived corrective and redemptive qualities of nature in the town, Chapter 5 elaborated on the projection of harmony, order and well-being within the urban environment first discussed in the consideration of landscape imagery in chapter 2. This chapter now picks up the baton in asking what bearing the deployment of this imagery had on the fashioning of parks, gardens and walks as sociable public arenas, and on access to them. From an urban perspective, approaching town parks and gardens as sites of social interaction locates them within accounts of public leisure facilities along with assemblies, clubs, concerts and coffee houses. But what this contextualising tends to do is smother the fact that these particular arenas were gardens, green spaces, subsequently overlooking the specific invocation of garden and natural imagery that informed their ordering and use.

Again, it is possible to draw parallels between the marshalling of landscape imagery to naturalise social and spatial upheaval during a period of enclosure and agricultural capitalism, and the use of pockets of greenery to cushion and harmonise change, growth and social tensions during a period of marked urbanisation.¹ Within this context, the projection of a stable, ordered society of individuals mixing freely and comfortably aspired to gloss over disparities. Green sites nourished this impression of cohesion by

¹ Cosgrove asserted that 'one of the consistent purposes of landscape painting has been to present an image of order and proportioned control to suppress evidence of tension and conflict between social groups and within human relations within the environment..this is true of the arcadian image of English landscape parks in the Georgian period of rural conflict and transformation'. 'Prospect, perspective and the evolution of the landscape idea', p.58

rooting it within a natural order, soothingly proclaiming that everything was as it should be, calm, controlled, virtuous, and tasteful. Of course it was not. Nor were parks and gardens truly models of respectability. Chapter 7 discusses the garden as a dangerously wild and sexual place, fear of which motivated attempts to bridle its dark side. But, on the arcadian side, for pleasing associative imagery of peace and inherent order, natural spaces in the town provided the ideal screen upon which to project the illusion of a well-regulated and harmonious urban society. Of course at the same time as setting up a backcloth of social harmony, the garden site also called into play the kind of distinctions in ability to comprehend and appreciate the natural environment laid out in chapter 2. Along the town promenades, the highlighting of an informed, aesthetic regard to contrast with low-brow cavorting served to stake out territory against a backdrop of contemporary concern over cultural diffusion and the plundering of status markers. The setting up of imaginary boundaries fencing off parks and gardens as the realm of polite sensibility is paralleled by the use of physical boundaries designed to regulate access. The structure of the chapter follows this divisioning. The first section reviews the intellectual distinctions drawn in the use and appreciation of nature in the town. The hub of this argument is that town parks and gardens became established at the centre of polite urban society by fusing natural imagery of taste, virtue and order with urban civility, rationality and sociability. This served to underpin an ethos of exclusivity around the garden, fuelling a concomitant sensitivity at its perceived violation. Participation was variously policed to protect and maintain a lustre of eliteness and social order. The second section tracks this in dealing with measures that served to restrict access to nature in the town. Enclosure, subscriptions, locked gates, sentinels and behavioural orders were intended to hedge the status of the garden and its company.

Nature and status in the town

The playing of garden and landscape aesthetics as a signifier of social distinction has as a backdrop the concern that the marking of one's status about town was being violated by cultural diffusion. This section begins by considering the role of cultural and leisure pursuits in the delineation of status, contextualising parks, gardens and walks as urban leisure facilities. Contemporary anxiety over the undermining of markers of social standing was legion in the late seventeenth and into the eighteenth century. Land and lineage continued to be the seat of power and standing, and yet mercantile and manufacturing wealth and power, notably channelled into towns and cities, was enhancing the economic and cultural importance of the urban middling and upper orders. As discussed in the '(Re)presenting nature' chapter, this is not about opposing battle lines-landed gentry engaged in trade, manufacture, and property development, and marked out their presence in the towns, whilst acquired fortunes might be used to acquire landed estate. The point is that the intense and dynamic environment of the town, witnessing increasing social fluidity, seemed to threaten a perceived traditional order and stability in society. Wrigley points out that status is not invariable in the city, but determined by the role associated with the particular transaction which gives rise to the contact. London, in particular, boasted men of great wealth and power who maintained this without acquiring estate. An increasingly large group stood outside the traditional landed system, comprising what Everitt calls 'pseudo-gentry', a class of leisured and predominantly urban families regarded as gentry by their manner of life but not supported by landed estate.² And so how might one determine status in the town? The familiar lament ran that accelerated acquisition, and the emulation of one's betters was blurring means of distinction. In an enquiry into causes of social disorder Henry Fielding singled out the pernicious effects of a 'vast Torrent of Luxury', observing how 'While the nobleman will emulate the grandeur of a prince; and the gentleman will aspire to the proper state of the nobleman; the tradesman steps

² Alan Everitt, 'Social Mobility in early modern England', *Past and Present*, XXXIII, (1966), pp.70-72

from behind his counter into the vacant place of the gentleman. Nor does the confusion end here: it reaches the very dregs of the people, who aspire still to a degree beyond that which belongs to them'. Fielding felt that traditional order in society had been upset by the burgeoning wealth and aspirations of the commonalty. Whilst it was acceptable that persons of fashion and fortune indulged in idle diversions, since they were in this, 'as in other matters...to be distinguished from their inferiors', he was strictly opposed to 'the Luxury of the Vulgar'. Ranelagh and Vauxhall, although 'not entirely appropriated to the People of Fashion', just about passed muster on the grounds that 'they are seldom frequented by any below the middle Rank; and a strict Regard to Decency is preserved in them both'.³

The first point to reassert is that the town was not impervious to the economic, political and cultural value attached to land. The importance of this was outlined in chapter 2, whereby the established social kudos of the landed gentry and aristocracy underpinned the ongoing significance attached to landscape and garden, as markers of wealth, power and learned taste. But the town also developed its own means of declaring social standing. Appearance and conduct become pivotal in a context where rank is not anchored to the ground. One of the key attributes of promenading was its capacity for a malleability of identity. Parading in the towns' public gardens placed a lot of emphasis on the coveting and display of status through correct appearance and conduct. Here was a premier opportunity to parade one's status for what the comic piece *St James's Park* of 1733 called the 'walking Audience'.⁴ For instance Defoe comments on the walks of Tunbridge Wells, 'Here you have all the liberty of conversation in the world, and any thing that looks like a gentleman, has an address agreeable, and behaves with decency and good manners, may single out whom he pleases'.⁵ Historians have located the development and commercialisation of leisure within this context of status demarcation, where acquired social attributes are displayed and deployed as statements of

³ Fielding, *Enquiry*, pp.4-9, 11-12

⁴ P.Q., *St. James's Park*, p.ix

⁵ Defoe, *Tour*, I, p.126

worth.⁶ The ambiguous position of nature in the town becomes evident here, for whereas on the one hand town parks and gardens formed an important part of the new urban leisure facilities, mediating status outside of the traditional land and lineage framework, at the same time they actually traded in and channelled the imagery and associations of landscape into the urban environment, and thus acted as a continued outlet of this kind of status demarcation in the town.

The possession of good taste was summoned as a more exclusive sign of quality, an intellectual distinction that could be pitched beyond the grasp of aspiring social climbers. This did not mean that the middling orders and/or those with newly acquired non-landed wealth were denied social standing, but the criteria established for inclusion in polite society required adhesion to a set of values besides monetary wealth, as the next section on politeness elaborates. Barrell talks about how women and the vulgar were excluded from the 'republic of taste'.⁷ The lower orders of society were deemed too close to nature and a part of the landscape in a similar way that women were marginalised through their relationship with the natural world, as the next chapter elucidates. The uneducated were often characterised as animalistic in their behaviour and living conditions, and lacking the polish of civil society.⁸ From this level it was not considered possible to exercise an intellectual perspective over and aesthetic appreciation of the natural world. The point is that detached appreciation of the natural environment and landscape formed a key component in the presentation of a cultivated persona and that this aesthetic awareness was an elevating factor in the make up of one's social standing. The fashioning of a superior claim on the garden site, and access to it utilised this distinction. The *Connoisseur* noted how it was commonly held that 'the full display of

⁶ This is not to say that cultural development in the urban environment was related solely to the mediation of status. Jonathan Barry asserts the role of politics and religion in provincial urban cultural change, see 'The Press and the politics of culture in Bristol 1660-1775', in Jeremy Black & Jeremy Gregory (eds), *Culture, Politics and Society in Britain, 1660-1800* (Manchester, 1991), and Jonathan Barry, 'Provincial town culture 1640-1780; urbane or civic?' in A. Wear and J. Pittok-Wesson (eds), *Interpretation and Cultural History* (Basingstoke & London, 1990)

⁷ John Barrell (ed.), *Painting and the Politics of Culture* (Oxford, 1992), p.4

⁸ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, pp.43-47

modern polite learning is exhibited in the decorations of parks, gardens, &c., and centred in that important monosyllable, Taste. Taste comprehends the whole circle of the polite arts, and sheds its influence on every lawn, avenue, grass-plot, and parterre'.⁹

Samuel Pepys serves to illustrate the way that a detached, aesthetic appreciation of the environment might be wielded to back a superior claim on the garden site. Fancying himself as a bit of a cultural aesthete, Pepys liked his leisurely pursuits marked out as the province of those in possession of elevated understanding. In June of 1665 he crossed the Thames to enjoy the New Spring Gardens, 'Thence by water to Fox hall, and there walked an hour alone, observing the several humours of the citizens that were there this holiday, pulling of cherries and God knows what'.¹⁰ Finding the company rather mixed, Pepys assumes a detached stance, as a bemused and rather contemptuous observer of the frolics of the people there, indulging in bobbing at cherries on string. The implication is that there was a distinction to be drawn in experience of the garden. The cavorting citizens act 'inside' the landscape, whilst Pepys, self-conscious cultural aesthete, projects his resort there as altogether more cerebral.

A divorce from particulars, from labour, was often stated as the mark of elevation above embroilment in the scene, and private interests. Parks and gardens were adopted as sites where the townspeople might transcend their insular urban and commercial activity against a broader canvas of natural estate, and public good.¹¹ The company could fancy that presence on the promenade lent a 'different Air, Attitude and Decorum', as an advert for Vauxhall maintained in 1737.¹² The act of walking out in the open, and particularly in the day, is clear indication of surplus, leisure time in a similar way that the ground itself stands as

⁹ *Connoisseur*, vol.IV, no. 113, 25 March, 1756, p.38

¹⁰ Pepys, *Diary*, vol.6, 20 June, 1665, p.132. The foot note reads that this refers to playing at the game of bob-cherry

¹¹ John Brewer writes that economic activity was characterised as private because it was not the activity of the state but of particular individuals, and because it had particular rather than general ends, Brewer, 'This, that and the other', p.9

¹² ML, Wroth scrapbooks, vol.III, advertisement for the Vauxhall fan, 1737 (source not cited)

unproductive land. These sites, and the frequenting of them, are conspicuously about consumption over production. This links in with the imagery of landed wealth, removed from the industry of the town. Therefore, to denigrate their level of participation, jibes at the company frequenting town parks and gardens make much of their common trades and labours that fix them within the city. One of the characters in the St James's Park comedy ties right of access to the park to non-working status, 'Well I think we have drove a good number of those City-Drones back to their Hive; they won't pretend to breathe St James's Air again yet a-while'. The company at the Forth, Newcastle's premier public garden, on an Easter Monday was depicted as no longer exclusive by highlighting the common occupations of those present, 'Heavens! here are all the Attorneys' Clerks, Journeymen Shopkeepers, Doctors' Apprentices, Taylors and Coblers that the Town can produce'.¹³ As the *Connoisseur* put it, working Londoners demonstrated a rather limited and decidedly unrefined connection with the natural environment, 'it is not to be supposed, that the country has in itself any peculiar attractive charms...To most of our Cockneys it serves only as an excuse for eating and drinking'.¹⁴

Nature in the town within a culture of politeness and sociability

So far this sounds rather like a rejection of the town in order to harness its greenery as signifier of good taste and distinction, but this is not yet the whole picture. As indicated earlier, in the case of the town garden a crucial connection is forged in the fusion of the kudos of elevated taste and status as rooted in informed appreciation of natural scape, with the perceived civility and polite sociability of the town. Again, we find ourselves on convenient middle ground. For all its attractions, the marking of one's detached superiority and exorcising of the taint of the worldly in rural retirement had its down side in that it entailed a retreat from urbane sociability. Life on a country estate could be awfully dull, rural gentry

¹³ Anon, *Easter Monday*, p.6

¹⁴ *Connoisseur*, vol.I, no. 26, 25 July, 1754, p.122

socially inept and the countryside dirty and rude. Phyllis Hembry notes Lady Elmes complaining about the 'stink of sour whey and cheese' in her chamber at Astrop Well in 1665, and no coal fire to burn perfume to dispel the country smells. The 'clownish, rude' Somerset country folk around the spa at Alford were a definite factor mitigating against its success.¹⁵ It was far preferable if the appeal but not the inconvenience of a natural setting could be incorporated within a commodious and civilizing environment, so that, for example, the success of Bath as a spa resort was heavily vested in trading on its natural, rural credentials couched within a civilised and sociable framework. At the same time, criticism of the town as drifting dangerously from traditional order and sunk in money without morality, as chapter 2 illustrated, might be offset by the moderating influence of idealised natural estate. And so nature in the town straddled the dilemma, representing and offering a form of removal and a contemplative setting at the same time as remaining public and sociable space.

In order to reinforce this assertion that town parks and gardens provided ideal territory for polite society, it is worthwhile expanding on the character and construction of the culture of politeness. The term is a key one in late seventeenth and eighteenth century society, and is generally taken to denote those of a superior cast. Paul Langford summarises politeness as based on a combination of material accoutrements, intellectual and aesthetic taste and adherence to routinized social behaviour.¹⁶ As such, a gentleman was not automatically polite. Social mixing was crucial to the concept, as Lawrence Klein indicates in his review of the influence of the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury; 'politeness' was situated in 'company', in the realm of social interaction and exchange, where it governed relations of the self with others'.¹⁷ The opinion that politeness required a public persona, and that social mixing was a key attribute of a person of taste was not only espoused by

¹⁵ Phyllis Hembry, *The English Spa 1560-1815: A Social History* (London, 1990), pp.70, 77

¹⁶ Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, p.71

¹⁷ Lawrence Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral discourse and cultural politics in early eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1994), p.4

Shaftesbury, philosophising politeness, but was also promoted by the periodical press. The *Grub Street Journal* explained, 'there is a decent, civil, and obliging Deportment to be observed towards all; a perfect Knowledge and constant Practice of this is properly Good Breeding, and is acquir'd only by a Liberal Education, and frequent Conversation with People in the higher stations of life'. In sum, according to the *Gentlemans Magazine* in 1734, politeness was 'not to be learn'd by Rules of Art, but to be form'd on the best Models in a great Variety of Company'.¹⁸ The crucial tenet for Shaftesbury, Addison, Steele and others involved in defining polite society was that the sociability underpinning it was both refined and virtuous, that it polished, rather than tarnished. There was no virtue in an unruly mass. The company kept and the way that that company conducted itself determined the polite credentials of the forum and the individual.

The shaping of the culture of politeness therefore sought to incorporate sound moral foundations. Shaftesbury promoted a cultivated regard for beauty, order and virtue in the fashioning of the consummate polite man.¹⁹ In his *Characteristicks* he asserted that 'To philosophize in a just Signification, is but To carry Good-breeding a step higher. For the Accomplishment of Breeding is, To learn whatever is decent in Company, or beautiful in Arts: and the Sum of Philosophy is, To learn what is just in Society, and beautiful in Nature, and the Order of the World'.²⁰ According to the *Tatler*, the soul of Man was a rough affair polished through the combined efforts of virtue and wisdom, 'A happy Education, Conversation with the finest Spirits, looking abroad into the Works of Nature, and Observations upon Mankind, are the greatest Assistances to this necessary and glorious Work'.²¹ Addison signalled the importance of infusing politeness with virtue in declaring

¹⁸ *Gentleman's Magazine*, April 1734, reprinted from *Grub Street Journal*, 11 April, 1734, no.224

¹⁹ David Solkin, 'ReWrighting Shaftesbury: The Air Pump and the Limits of Commercial Humanism', in Barrell, *Painting and the Politics of Culture*, pp.86-88

²⁰ J.A.A.C. [Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury], *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* 3 vols. (London, 1711), III, p.161

²¹ Bond, *Tatler* vol.II, no. 87, 29 October, 1709, p.48

'what can more undermine Morality than that Politeness which reigns among the unthinking part of Mankind'.²² Steele was concerned with image, outward appearance, overriding the substance of nature, reason and virtue.²³ It was one thing to take on the appearance of politeness, but there still existed a kind of inner core of substance at the heart of vacuous display, and this underpinned the distinctions frequently levied at the company.

'Works of Nature' acted as a base line for what was inherently good and beautiful and virtuous, but these combined values were ideally cultivated and displayed in a refined social setting. Shaftesbury was explicit in highlighting the potential role of public urban forums in anchoring polite society, noting how the ancients utilised open spaces, 'publick Walks or Meeting-places...', but found modern day London, by comparison, poorly served with public concourses.²⁴ Wood drew on a similar conception of the ancient cities in formulating his visions of squares and parades, forum and circus as public assemblies. In this sense public space was conflated with participation in public life, as the discourse and interaction conducted there was imagined as the motor of society. In an account of the gathering of 'politick' persons in St James's Park, discussing current news stories, politics and religious matters, the *Tatler* gently mocks whilst distinguishing between those in conference and 'the unthinking Part of Mankind...eating and drinking for the Support of their own private Persons, without any Regard to the Publick'.²⁵ The contestation of access to these public spaces might, from this perspective, be read as attempts to shut the gate on participation in urban public life—a line followed up in the next chapter with regard to women's use of public parks and gardens.

²² Bond, *Spectator*, vol.II, no.231, 24 November, 1711, p.400

²³ Lawrence Klein, 'The Third Earl of Shaftesbury and the Progress of Politeness', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, XVIII, no.2, (Winter, 1984-5), p.198

²⁴ Klein, 'The Third Earl of Shaftesbury', pp.210-211

²⁵ Bond, *Tatler*, vol. II, no.155, 6 April, 1710, pp.370-373; no.160 18 April, 1710, pp.393-395; no.232, 3 October, 1710, p.199

Politeness was essentially a balance, then, negotiated between urbanity and artifice, and natural virtue and aesthetics. Bermingham points out that etiquette books set out politeness as 'a balance struck between excessive ceremony and excessive freedom', whereby cultivated civility was conveyed with natural ease.²⁶ The ideal was therefore a demonstration of sociable urban refinement within the bounds of natural virtue. This is where nature in the town offered very particular advantages in the articulation of polite status. Town parks and gardens represented the spatial embodiment of this balance, intermingling the natural and the social. Their appeal lay in representing a forum of sociability within a frame of natural virtue. That is, as 'natural' spaces they were loaded with the symbolism of morality, order and beauty, fused with the public social interaction that was required to improve and polish the individual. It was this kind of imagery that polite society was happy to endorse, as a bridge between and best of both worlds-urban yet landed, leisured yet virtuous, public yet removed.

On the back of this, depictions of town parks and gardens as social arenas blending taste, virtue and harmonious public interaction are mobilised in the projection of politeness and moral order. Lockman describes Vauxhall as a scene of the 'most rational, elegant, and innocent kind', and the Gardens were styled and self styled as a haven of innocence and emblematic of refinement and repute, 'the darling Resort of all Persons of Taste'.²⁷ The *Description of Vaux-hall Gardens* of 1762 was keen to indicate that appreciation of the charms of the site denoted superior taste and intellect, so that 'A person of a lively imagination and possessed of an acute apprehension, to discover whatever is beautiful and grand, will enjoy a particular pleasure, that is easier conceived than described in beholding the variety of objects, with which the grove abounds as he walks round it'. Tyers was credited with having 'studied every art, and exerted every means, however costly, to render these gardens worthy the reception and esteem of every polite person, and indeed he has so far succeeded'.²⁸ This

²⁶ Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, p.21

²⁷ Lockman, *Sketch*, pp.28, 26

²⁸ Anon, *Description of Vaux-Hall Gardens*, pp.39, 51

kind of imagery was intended to boost the genteel appeal of these sites, as innumerable accounts attested to their distinguished character. The opening Ridotto at Vauxhall boasted of 'a very numerous and splendid Appearance of Persons of Quality, and of the first Distinction. The Undertakers can truly say, that the Regularity of its Conduct answer'd their Wishes'.²⁹ The gardens of Kensington are described as no less frequented than St James's Park, 'but are open only for Persons of Distinction'.³⁰ The gardens at the Drapers Hall on Throgmorton Street were 'open every day, except Sundays and rainy days, for the recreation of genteel citizens to walk in', whilst Entick records that the Grays Inn gardens were 'open at all times for genteel company'. Henry Bourne described the town wall walk in Newcastle as 'generally frequented in a Summer's Evening by the Gentry of this Part of the Town'.³¹ Park and garden walks were firmly planted within the round of urban polite leisured activity, as in Bath, principal resort of polite society, where frequenting natural sites in and around the town featured prominently in the breakdown of the days amusements;

When Noon approaches, and Church is over, some of the Company appear on the Grand Parade, and other Publick Walks, where a Rotation of Walking is continued for about two Hours...other Part of the Company are taking the Air and Exercise; some on Horseback, some in Coaches: There are others who divert themselves with Reading in the Booksellers Shops, as well as with Walking in Queen Square, and in the Meadows round about the City, particularly in those by the Avonside...³²

Of course, the desire for virtuous sociability stressed by some, and the representation of town parks and gardens as oases of polite order did not automatically translate on the ground. The gulf between the ideal and the actual opened up ripe territory for satirists to mine.³³ As one author remarked, St James's Park was favoured and frequented 'because it carries so much the

²⁹ *Daily Post*, 9 June, 1732

³⁰ Anon, *Foreigners Guide*, p.126

³¹ Bourne, *History*, p.81

³² Wood, *Description of Bath*, p.439

³³ Basil Willey describes satire as playing on this juxtaposition, as practised by those who credited themselves with being able to see past pretence to how things really were, *Eighteenth Century Background*, p.102

appearance of Innocence, yet at the same time has all the opportunities of Vice'.³⁴ The disjunction between the ideal of what these sites stood for, and how they were actually used was mercilessly exploited. However, exposing the vice and vanity that carried on under the guise of virtue provided means by which to distinguish between those of true substance and those unable or unwilling to engage in the site with the required gravitas.

The vulgar and shallow

For all the talk of exclusivity, the pool of those who could afford and were interested in using urban leisure facilities continued to widen. As a reaction against free-for-all access to status markers, much criticism and exposure was levied at the hollow and vulgar core of those assuming the outward appearance of politeness and cultivated civility in their dress and frequenting of the walks. This fed off concern that, as John Brewer writes, 'a culture of appearances is easily transmuted into a culture of disguise'.³⁵ Under these circumstances, supplementary means of distinction, including aesthetic sensibility, aspired to offset the dilution of status by purchase power alone. This section provides examples of depictions of vulgar and limited participation in town parks and gardens. These do not necessarily constitute accurate reflections of who was attending, but do gratify the desire to identify and elevate one's own engagement as of a superior cast.

The charm of St James's Park was considered undermined by its popularity with the wrong sort, with 'nothing there, That's Tempting, Beautiful, and Fair' as a result of the lamentable fact that it is 'The Rendezvous of half the Mob in Town'.³⁶ Hampstead Spa and Heath rather quickly lost its sparkle due to its being frequented by 'loose Women in Vampt-up old Cloaths' out to catch city apprentices. The company was apparently 'too

³⁴ P.Q., *St James's Park*, pp.57-8

³⁵ Brewer, 'This, that and the other', p.15

³⁶ Richard Ames, *The Rake* (London, 1693), p.2

mixt', according to Macky, indicating to his gentrified readership that free social interaction certainly had a limit. 'There are in this Town a great Number of insignificant People who are by no Means fit for the better sort of Conversation' declared a piece in the *Spectator* in 1711, and yet 'If you walk in the Park, one of them will certainly joyn with you'.³⁷ The satirical poet Joseph Browne took it upon himself to turn his literary microscope onto the social arena and expose its' rampant folly, vanity and pretence. At Hyde Park's Ring the parade of self and standing is admittedly judged by sight; 'he wins the Prize/ That dazles most the fair Spectators Eyes'. But those that thought turning up in the right gear was a ticket to class reckoned without the ultimate discernment of the trained and enlightened eye, 'Sometimes alone th'insipid Ideot rowls[rules]/The Admiration of fond gazing Fools/ Whose slender Opticks can no farther go/ Than to the Splendor of the gilded Show'.³⁸ This exposure of affectation fits within a context of nature as truth and guide to contrast with artifice. To guard against the diluting of status were those who styled themselves as sufficiently ennobled with clarity to see who did and did not belong. Back in St James's Park the 'sober trading Cit' cannot resist 'imitating the Top of Quality...in his Dress'.³⁹ The show could not be sustained for long, however. 'But spight of all the tawdry Coat and Lace/Th'unthinking Thing will peep out of the Glass/ And shew the Multitude his Monkey-Face'.⁴⁰ Frequenting the Mall in finery lent an air of gentility that was exposed by 'Mr Town' in the *Connoisseur* when he surprised, on the street, 'in a very extraordinary dishabille two females, whom I had frequently used to see strangely dizen'd out in the Mall ... one ... genteely employed in winding up the jack, while the other was up to the elbows in soap suds'.⁴¹ Ladies on the parades went back to being washer-women on the streets. The message was that, ultimately, shallow display

³⁷ Bond, *Spectator*, vol. I, no.24, 28 March, 1711, pp.100-1

³⁸ Browne, *The Circus*, pp.11, 7

³⁹ [Joseph Browne], *St James's Park: A Satyr* (London, 1708), p.12

⁴⁰ Browne, *The Circus*, p.7

⁴¹ *Connoisseur*, vol.I, no. 25, 18 July, 1754, p.118

did not amount to much, and that good breeding would win the day. The author of *A Trip from St James's to the Royal Exchange* was in no doubt;

The Mall, in a fine Spring Morning, is often adorned with more of our Nobility and Gentry than any where else to be seen in so short a Compass; freed from mixed Crouds of saucy Fops and City Gentry, who are as distinguishable as a Judge from his Clerk, or a Lady from her Waiting-Woman. Those of real Rank carry an Air of Dignity and Greatness in their Aspects....[a man] 'may D_mn with a good Air, Dress well, and even hum over two or three Opera tunes, and pass in all the Wards of the City for a well-bred Person; but towards St. James's he won't pass muster...'⁴²

To avoid any confusion, frequenting the park at a certain time might provide the differentiation that presence and presentation alone could not. One foreign visitor to St James's in the previous year found that walking in the park on a Sunday afternoon was a kind of social death, 'on this day no genteel persons come here, but only those who cannot get there in the week or who live too far from Westminster', whereas 'during the week gentlemen of the highest fashion are to be met here'. Notably, the gentleman preserves his own detachment and dignity by merely *observing* the hordes of promenaders there at this time.⁴³ Swift took regular walks in the Park during the relative quiet of the week, and resented it being overrun during the holidays, 'all the rabble have got into our Park these Easter Holidays'.⁴⁴

The popularity of the Spring Gardens at Vauxhall, crafted around aristocratic pretensions, both lured aspiring social climbers and muddied any clear blue water between the self-styled elite and the urban masses as they flocked across the Thames. Here, 'Each Barber's Prentice makes a powder'd Beau'. After the indulgences of a visit to the Gardens the throngs depart, 'Home they retire to mourn their threat'ning Ills,/And learn to live, on Gruel, Broth, and

⁴² Anon, *Trip from St James's*, pp.4-5

⁴³ Uffenbach, *London in 1710*, pp.36, 12

⁴⁴ Jonathan Swift, *Jonathan Swift, Journal to Stella*, ed. Harold Williams, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1948), I, 2 April, 1711, p.229

Pills'.⁴⁵ Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* was warned not to expect 'to see a single creature for the evening above the degree of a cheesemonger; that this was the last night of the gardens, and that consequently we should be pestered with the nobility and gentry from Thames-Street and Crooked-lane'.⁴⁶ A concerned correspondent to a journal in 1765 took as their cue the apparent sighting of a butchers' slaughterman in his working dress at a public garden to urge that, 'It is certainly a duty incumbent on every keeper of a place of public resort, to exclude all who, by their appearance or behaviour, are likely to be disagreeable to the rest of the company; and if this care is neglected, they will find their houses and gardens will soon become disreputable'.⁴⁷

Out of London, derision was similarly directed at an indiscriminate mix of company and social use of open green spaces. Ned Ward depicted Bath's bowling greens as an unholy mish-mash of 'Quallity, and Reverend Doctors of both professions, Topping Merchants, Broken Bankers, Noted Mercers, Inns-of- Court Rakes, City Beaus, Stray'd Prentices, and Dancing-Masters in abundance'.⁴⁸ This was the site later characterised by Wood as rude, vulgar and put to much better use for an extension of Ralph Allen's private garden (see below). Distinction was also drawn around the use of St Anne's Well in Nottingham. The well appears to have borne the name of Robin Hood before that of St Ann, and retained it in popular usage. The story ran that Robin and his band frequented the well, a legend perpetuated by the display of 'authentic' artefacts such as his cap, bow and chair. The whole thing apparently went down well, according to Deering, with 'the People in low-Life', who frequented the site especially at Christmas, Easter and Whitsun.⁴⁹ Thoroton also recorded that the Robin Hood legend was more popular with the lower orders.⁵⁰ The higher echelons of

⁴⁵ *Gentlemen Magazine*, June 1732

⁴⁶ Oliver Goldsmith, *The Citizen of the World* 2 vols., (London, 1762), II, letter LXVIII, p.26

⁴⁷ ML, Wroth scrapbooks, vol.III, 1765 (source not cited)

⁴⁸ Ward, *A Step to the Bath*, p.14

⁴⁹ Deering, *Nottinghamia*, p.73

⁵⁰ Throsby, *Thoroton's History of Nottinghamshire*, vol.II, p.164

society apparently used St Ann's Well in an ostensibly more elegant way. Once a year on Black Monday the mayor, aldermen and their wives proceeded to the site in full regalia to feast.

It is clear that access to and perceived levels of engagement in town parks, gardens and walks was subject to criteria beyond the simple taking of recreation. The delimiting of these sites on the grounds of social inadequacy is tracked more explicitly in their physical appropriation. The second section of the chapter follows discussion of the fashioning of a superior claim on and appreciation of nature in the town with an account of measures that were intended to have a more tangible impact on access to urban green space. These were, for the most part, motivated by a desire to hedge its status in response to the perceived risk of defilement and vulgarisation. Beginning with the enclosure of nature in the town, and then moving through the use of locked gates and sentries, charged entrance and the introduction of behavioural orders, these mechanisms serve as indicators of how town parks, gardens and walks were variously policed to protect and maintain a lustre of elitism and control.

Enclosure

The appropriation of open ground in and about the town was expressed most lucidly by its enclosure. The Foucauldian model of the organisation of power developed in *Discipline and Punish* has visible individuals enclosed within a field of surveillance, with a shift towards light over darkness and vision over concealment. The challenge, in Foucault's account relating to the context of hospitals and prisons, was to allow circulation, and yet avoid contamination, and to divide up space and exercise control

whilst keeping it open.⁵¹ It is a framework that does seem to have some application to the ordering of public spaces in the towns, and the social use of these spaces, whereby attempted control and restriction is exercised within an apparently open forum. Chapter 5 first raised the issue of the conflation of social and physical contagion, whereby eighteenth century polite society placed a premium on circulation in an open forum, but at the same time was sensitive to the contamination of this forum by the wrong bodies. The first half of this chapter has addressed manifestations of this in the efforts to impose a filter on access to nature in the town as a sign of refinement. Of the physical measures employed to police access, shifts in the enclosure of parks, gardens and walks also convey the parallel objectives of being open to view at the same time as retaining means of restraint.

It is possible to track the enclosing of parks and gardens and of the wider landscape as part of the same theme. Both Simon Pugh and Ann Bermingham develop the notion that changes to the countryside in the form of enclosure are closely bound with the the shift in landscape and garden representation towards an apparent harmonisation of the artful, or man-made, and the natural. As the countryside is parcelled and agricultural practice becomes more intensive the desire to smooth over the rifts and present an unchanged and harmonious scene fits within the pattern of actual loss and imaginative recovery referred to by Bermingham. Furthermore, landscape imagery serves to reinforce and naturalise the appropriation that enclosure entails. Pugh refers to the application of a landscape way of seeing and ordering as 'the aesthetic corollary of enclosing the land', and Bermingham traces the role of landscape art in naturalising the re-ordering of land.⁵² Couching urban green sites within this framework points up interesting parallels. Firstly, as the rural environment begins to experience a transformation, so the processes of urbanisation

⁵¹ Richard Burt & John Michael Archer (eds.), *Enclosure Acts. Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, USA, 1994), pp.2-3; Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, pp.146-165

⁵² Pugh, *Garden, Nature, Landscape*, p.11; Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, see esp. pp.9-14

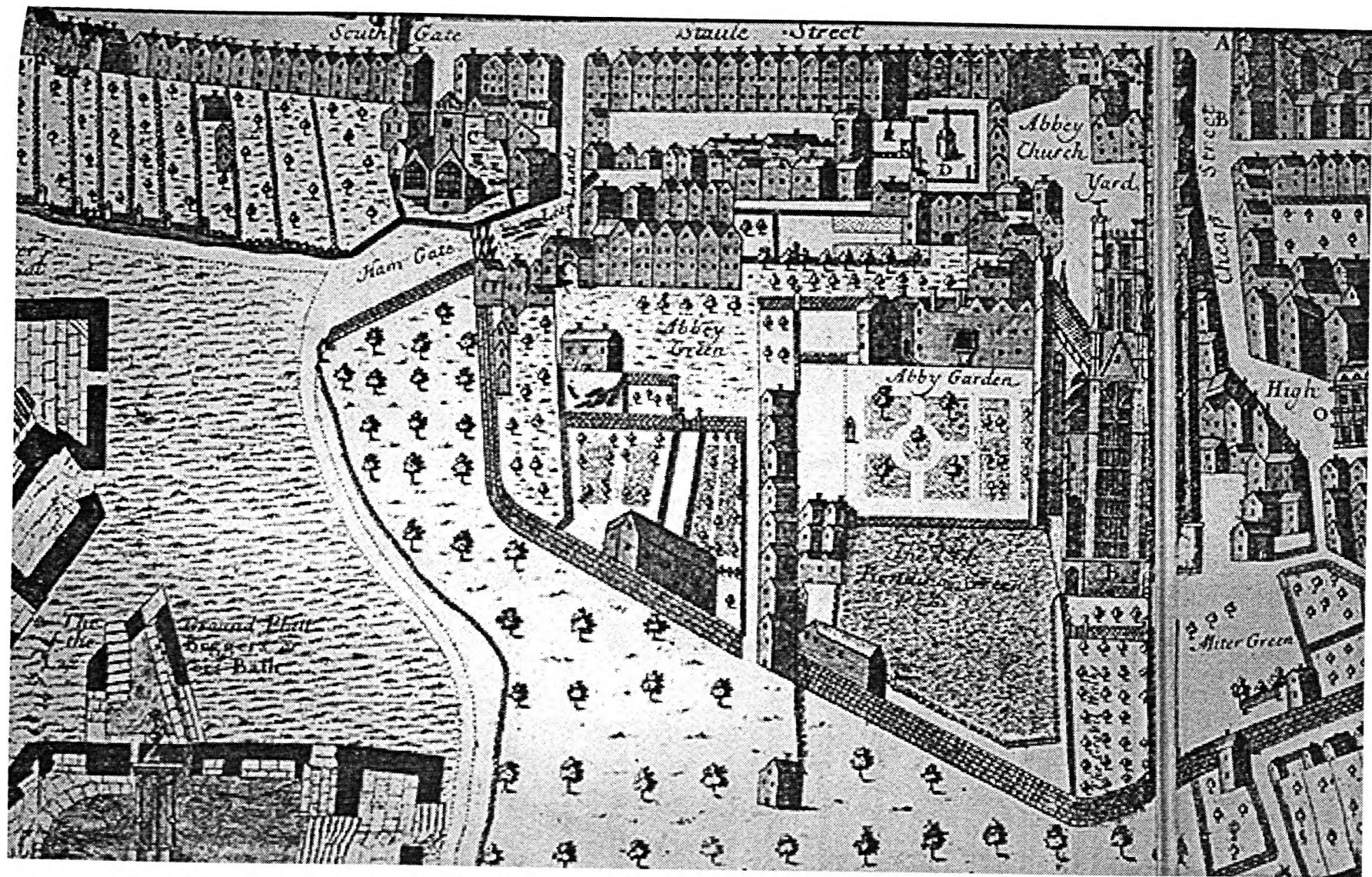


Fig. 6.1 Joseph Gilmore, 'The City of Bath', 1694 (section showing Gravel Walks, to the rear of the Abbey, enclosed by wall and gates)

prompt efforts to normalise and contain the changes and potential disorder within the built environment. Simultaneously, the town exhibits an increasingly self-conscious desire to bridge the gap between the built and the natural. Landscape art projects concord between man and the natural environment. In the garden/estate this bridging effect is epitomised by use of the ha-ha, the sunken ditch that provides subtle fencing cloaked in an appearance of boundlessness, of unrestrained interaction. In the town, the interlinking of the built and the natural environment is conjured in the form of extended sightlines in and out, as discussed in chapter 2 and 3, and in the styling of parks, gardens and walks on the cusp of town and country. Accordingly, the ordering of these public, open spaces shifts in a process of enclosure at first articulated by physical boundaries, and then, mirroring concern with a presentation of harmony and permeable boundaries, steadily assumed by alternative means of exclusion, enclosures that do not block the view in or out, such as ha-has, iron railings, and low hedges, discrimination in levels of appreciation and engagement, screening by subscription or guards, and in behavioural strictures.

In Bath gates, wall and fencing were thrown around the Gravel walks to the rear of the Abbey in the 1680's in order to make the walks more select (see fig.6.1).⁵³ A pattern of segregated use evolved from the early 1700's whereby the gravelled lower paths were frequented by what John Wood called 'the common Sort of People', polite society keeping to the upper paved alleys.⁵⁴ From 1730, in response to an increasing sophistication in the expectations and demands of the company, the walks were revamped, the 'Pallisadoes and Pillars between the Upper and Lower walks in this city shall at the Charge of the Chamber of the sd. City be taken down, the ground sloped, and the sd. Walks be repaired and made handsome and fit for People to walk in, and thrown into one piece of ground'.⁵⁵

⁵³ Fawcett & Inskip, 'Orange Grove, p.26; BCRO, BCM, 28 December, 1730

⁵⁴ Wood, *Description of Bath*, p.343

⁵⁵ BCRO, BCM, 28 December, 1730

These measures were designed to re-present the Grove as an openly accessible and uniformly orderly place of assembly, albeit displacing those that did not fit the picture by erasing the walks designated for the common people. This fashioning of purportedly social space with a finite notion of to whom this was oriented was evident elsewhere in Bath in the conception and construction of Queen Square. The ambiguity of a 'public' space reserved for private consumption is well-illustrated by the town square of the late seventeenth and eighteenth century. Simon Varey notes that the railing of city squares enshrined the politics of keeping distance.⁵⁶ The image of the open urban square as a place of free public concourse was matched in reality by the sectioning off of these spaces to serve the interests of the immediate residents, and to enhance the repute of the developer. Richard Sennett makes the observation that the squares incorporated within the Bedford and Bloomsbury developments in London were 'not filled with people but with shrubs and trees'.⁵⁷ Planting out these squares not only improved the visual appeal of otherwise empty space, but stamped it with gardenesque associations of health, cultivated taste, and harmonious order. It also established a stark contrast between leisured and pointedly non-productive garden and communal ground that might be used for play and sport, trading, the grazing of animals, collecting of firewood, and so on. The symbolism of assembly that renders the town square 'public' is not altogether absent, but this public is not all inclusive. The notion of 'public' that informed John Wood's designs for Bath as a city of noble assembly is revealed in his comments on social mixing, 'the nobility would not associate with the gentry at any of the public entertainments of the place: but when proper walks were made for exercise, and a house built for assembling in, rank began to be laid aside, and all degrees of people, from the private gentleman upwards, were soon united in society with one another'. This was a public with a cut-off point, exclusively inclusive. And so, in setting out his vision of Queen Square, Wood

⁵⁶ Simon Varey, *Space and the Eighteenth-Century English Novel* (Cambridge, 1990), p.200

⁵⁷ Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (Cambridge, 1974), p.54

alludes to the function of the square as social, but the space is planted out and enclosed as a site designated for a limited public. The 'Espaliers of Elm and Lime Trees' and quarters planted with flowering shrubs are 'inclosed with a low Wall bearing a Ballustrade; and in the middle of every side there are Gates of twenty feet broad'. This styling, Wood makes clear, was an essential part of the design and function of the square;

The Inclosing, Planting, Turfing, and Gravelling this open Area...was a Work of much greater Expence than the paving the whole Surface of it would have been...But yet I preferred an inclosed square to an open one, to make this as useful as possible: For the Intention of a Square in a City is for People to assemble together; and the Spot whereon they meet, ought to be separated from the Ground common to Men and Beasts, and even to Mankind in general, if Decency and good order are necessary to be observ'd in such Places of Assembly; of which, I think, there can be no doubt.

The enclosed garden square created a domestic private space that at the same time bespoke public virtues of civility and sociability. The surrounding residents were able to enjoy, overlook and enter their own orderly domain. The leases of the houses fronting Queen Square incorporated provision for its upkeep, the certainty of its good regulation drawing 'People of Distinction and Fortune'. The 'utmost good Order' preserved in Queen Square meant that 'it may be looked upon as a perfect Sample of a well regulated Place'.⁵⁸ The enclosed garden square became recognised as emblematic of residential areas of distinction. Macky notes how Leicester Square has 'several Houses of abundance of the first Quality. The Middle is planted with Trees and railed round, which gives an agreeable Aspect to the Houses.' Likewise Golden Square, planted and railed, was the residence of 'many great People of Quality'.⁵⁹ What Saussure refers to as London's fine open spaces, planted with flowers and trees, were actually 'shut in by railings of painted wood'. The square of St James's, surrounded by 'handsome houses belonging to wealthy noblemen' was surrounded by iron balustrades. The railings used to make a visual, if not practically enforceable declaration of exclusion about

⁵⁸ Wood, *Description of Bath*, pp.411, 345, 347

⁵⁹ Macky, *Journey through England*, I, pp.168-9

town squares served a similar purpose with regards other garden, park and promenading sites about the town. Within the expanse of Hyde Park the railed off 'Ring' signalled a separate area for the parading of distinction. As Saussure describes it, 'It is a round place, two or three hundred feet in diameter, and shut in by railings. This ring is surrounded by fine trees, and it is here on Sundays, during the warm season, between five and six o' clock, that fine ladies and gentlemen come and drive slowly round, in order to see and be seen'.⁶⁰

The parcelling of land by means of walls, hedges, railings, and gates either formalised the designation of existing recreational grounds, or carved out new, more controllable pockets of leisure space. As Simon Pugh puts it, the garden fixed and ordered pleasure by confining it within 'a carefully defined terrain'.⁶¹ In Newcastle traditional use of the Forth as recreational space was formalised and regulated c.1656/7 with its enclosure by rails and restructuring as a site 'fully furnished for the sober and civill recreation of such who use the exercise of Bowleing'.⁶² The resulting refined and orderly site consisted, as Celia Fiennes found it in 1698, of a very pleasant bowling green 'with a large gravel walke round it with two rows of trees on each side'. There was also 'a pretty garden by the side shady walk, its a sort of Spring Garden where the Gentlemen and Ladyes walke in the evening'.⁶³

Gates and keys

Gates and keys were used to restrict and police access to these sectioned off sites. At around the same time as the trade guilds were battling with the stewards of the Kingsland bank, opposite the Quarry in Shrewsbury, to gain access to their arbours, threatening to

⁶⁰ Saussure, *Foreign View of England*, pp.70-71, 138

⁶¹ Pugh, *Garden, Nature, Language*, p.9

⁶² TWAS, NCCB, 25 September, 1657

⁶³ Fiennes, *Journeys*, p.211

destroy crops if their traditional right of way was not opened up, the Corporation granted leave for an airing there, put up locked gates and began charging, 5d. a horse and the cost of a key for the gates.⁶⁴ In 1728 this liberty was re-iterated, and referred specifically to the gentry. The following year it was recorded that 'Kingsland be an airing place for the gentry and they to have keys of the same, paying such yearly sum as the Mayor and Chamberlains shall think reasonable'.⁶⁵ Thereafter the corporation ensured that the locks on the gates were in good working order.⁶⁶ The exclusivity constructed around this recreational space was, at the time, to be quite strictly enforced; 'No persons to ride there, but such as pay', and a case of entering Kingsland by force was sued.⁶⁷ Across the river there is some evidence of locks in the Quarry, fitted with new keys and a chain in 1725.⁶⁸ At the public Northernhay walks in Exeter, overseen by the corporation, there is mention of a gate keeper keeping the lower gate in 1701 and in December 1714 it was 'Ordered that the keys of Northernhay Gates be delivered to and kept by Mr Receiver to prevent the spoiling of the Walk'. It appears that the counterpart Southernhay walks had been fenced in the late seventeenth century to protect them 'from publique spoyle'.⁶⁹ In his account of the outdoor exercises for the people of Nottingham Deering notes that the walk to Colwick Hills 'used to invite a great Number of young Ladies; but that since these Hills are walled in, this pleasure is only allowed to them whom Mundy Musters, Esq: (whose Property they are) is pleased to favour with a Key'.⁷⁰ The attending gardener of the walks at Grays Inn found that instructions to admit 'no ordinary men, women or children into the Walkes, nor noe Lewd or confident Women nor any in vizor maskes' were not sufficient to prevent damage, and authorisation was subsequently granted to

⁶⁴ Barker, 'The Kingsland and Shrewsbury Show', p.177

⁶⁵ H. W. Adnitt, 'The Orders of the Corporation of Shrewsbury 1511-1735', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* 1st. Series, XI, (1888), pp.204, 207-8

⁶⁶ SRRC, SMA, 22 January & 20 July, 1733, monies spent on repairing the locks

⁶⁷ Adnitt, 'Orders of the Corporation', pp.208, 205

⁶⁸ SRRC, SMA, 27 April, 1725, 9 June, 1725

⁶⁹ DRO, EAB, XIII, January 1701, fol.314; December, 1714, fol.494; 1693, fol.165

⁷⁰ Deering, *Nottinghamia*, p.75

throw out disorderly persons and to keep the walks locked.⁷¹ In 1673 Christopher Wren oversaw that improvements to the Old Spring Garden were accompanied by heightened entry control, shutting up unauthorised doorways save those belonging to residents willing to pay for the privilege and adhere to his orders, whilst main gates were hung at the entrance.⁷²

Royal governance of St James's Park enforced a particularly regulated access policy. It may not have been politically viable to exclude the public completely, as Queen Caroline famously proposed in angling to appropriate the park as a private noble garden for St James's Palace, but enclosure by other less extreme means endeavoured to sift the public permitted access.⁷³ In 1668 the enlarged St James's Park was enclosed with a new brick wall. The preservation of such was obviously deemed crucial in stemming the unchecked flow of the people into the Park. When part of the boundary wall collapsed in 1742, the keeper ensured that temporary fencing was erected on the same day 'to keep the Deer in, & people out'.⁷⁴ The number of gates and doors leading into the Park was initially reduced in 1665, for fear of the safety of Charles on his walks.⁷⁵ Further anxiety over the King's safety around 1678 led to nineteen doorways being blocked off.⁷⁶ A process of selective access ensued. In 1681 it was noted that unregulated entry occasioned 'many inconveniences by affording passage and retreat to lewd and disorderly persons', and that

⁷¹ Quoted in Dawn Macleod, *The Gardeners London. Four Centuries of Gardening, Gardeners and Garden Usage* (London, 1972), p.109, 1711 & 1718

⁷² Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, (1 March-31 October, 1673), 31 August, 1673, p.519.

⁷³ *Walpoliana*, vol. I, p.9, quoted in Sheppard, *Memorials*, I, p.28. Apparently the Queen asked Walpole what the cost of enclosing the park as private royal estate might be, to which he replied 'Only three Crowns'

⁷⁴ PRO, Kew, Works 1/2, 6 & 12 October 1742, fol.59

⁷⁵ Jacob Larwood, *The Story of the London Parks* (London, 1873), Following the Rye House plot on the King access to the Park was restricted in 1665, p.335; Also see CSP, Dom., (November 1667-September 1668), 22 April, 1668, p.353 regarding orders for a new brick wall to enclose the Park, & Evelyn, *Diary*, IV, 15 July, 1683, pp.330-331, 'The whole Nation was now in greate Consternation, upon the late Plot & Conspiracy; his *Majestie* very Melancholic, & not stirring without redoubled Guards, all the Avenues & private doers about White-hall & the Parkee shut up; few admitted to walke in it'

⁷⁶ In 1678 it appears that access was limited in direct response to an assassination attempt on the King whilst walking in the Park. Christopher Wren, Surveyor General of the Works, was charged with 'shutting and walling up certain doors and passages going into St. James's Park' numbering some 19, CSP, Dom., (1 March-31 December, 1678), 18, 29, 31 October, 1678, pp.466, 493, 497

therefore a number of access points should be stopped up.⁷⁷ However, petitions for the re-opening of old and construction of new private doorways into the Park continued to be granted to large residences occupied by nobility and gentry around the perimeter.⁷⁸ For example, in 1686 and 1687 Sir Edward Hales, Lord Jeffreys, the Earl of Scarsdale and the Countess Dowager of Plymouth were all granted private access from their respective properties along the wall 'for convenience of ingress and recreation in the park'.⁷⁹ Furthermore, new building projects around the edges of St James's, constructing 'Substantial Houses fit for the Reception of Persons of Fortune & Distinction', were allowed to open up passageways leading directly from these streets into the Park.⁸⁰ In 1730 the altering and cleaning up of the passageway leading from the Spring Garden into St James's Park was approved to suit the convenience of nearby resident the Earl of Berkely. Thereafter this accessway was to be policed by a porter or servant of the Earl 'to keep the whole passage before mentioned clear from Dirt and Dust and also free from all Beggars and other Nusances and to cause the said Servant to open and shut the Door of the said passage regularly and constantly at the usual hours'.⁸¹

The usual hours of park closure, followed by the official gatekeepers, were 10pm in the summer, and 9pm in the winter, and seem to have been strictly observed, regimenting the hours of recreation according to a fixed and imposed timetable as well as enforcing a spatial restriction. Saussure stayed in the Park until 10pm one fine evening and found the

⁷⁷ CSP. Dom., (1680-1), 11 March, 1681, p.209

⁷⁸ CSP. Dom., (1 March-31 December, 1678), 20 December, 1678, p.580; CSP, Dom., (1 January-31 August, 1680), 24 April, 1680, p.447

⁷⁹ CSP. Dom., (1686-7), 15 August, 12 September, 1686, 19 January, 19 May, 1687, pp.241, 262, 345, 428

⁸⁰ PRO, Kew, Works 6/17, vol.4, fols.141, 148. The approved petition of James Mallors, builder, to open up a new passageway leading from his new street directly into the Park forms a part of his project to enhance the location and appeal of his properties by securing their ease of access. A similar provision of private access for the nobility is also observable at Hyde Park. The anonymous author of *The Foreigners Guide* of 1729, commenting on the noble character Grosvenor Square, remarks 'By the Favour of his late Majesty, a Passage was granted into Hyde-Park, for the better Conveniency of the Nobility in this Quarter to take the Air therein', p.124

⁸¹ Westminster Archives Office, Saint Martin in the Fields vestry minutes, 12 January, 1730, fol. 365

gates already closed when he tried to leave by the Mews.⁸² The restrictions represented by the presence and locking of the gates to the Park were challenged in 1762 by a gentleman apprehended after a fracas following his being locked in the Park after hours. The gentleman contested that 'all Persons have a right of passage thro' and over the park at all Hours of the day or night and have so done without Obstruction Time Immemorial'. As a reflection of the King's ability to keep order in his own back yard, the case was not taken lightly; 'Lord Ashburnum Desires Mr. Attorney Generals particular Attention to this Affair as the preserving Good Order and Decency in this his Majesty's park it is apprehended Depends very much in defending and supporting the Gate Keepers in the Due Execution of the Orders given them'.⁸³ Orders for the patrolling and securing of the Park were duly presented. A copy issued for 1751 stipulated 'That each Gate keeper do attend his Gate, from the usual Time of opening in the Morning, to the Time of shutting it in the Evening, to give Passage to such Persons as are proper to pass and repass through the said Park; and to prevent Beggars, and disorderly Persons, and rude Boys, from having Admittance...'.⁸⁴ Furthermore, a number of keepers of the Park were called to testify that it was 'an Indispensable part of their Duty to compel Obedience to the said General Rules and Directions' and that those acting in violation of the regulations were apprehended and detained, including a carpenter sent to Bridewell for a month for walking in the Mall in wet weather.⁸⁵

⁸² Saussure, *Foreign View of England*, p.37

⁸³ PRO, Chancery Lane, Treasury Solicitor case papers, TS11/843/2870, 30 January, 1762

⁸⁴ PRO, Chancery Lane, TS 11/843/2870, 'Orders for the several Keepers and Gate-Keepers in St. James's Park', 1751

⁸⁵ Royal regulations for St James's Park issued 20 May, 1703 stated 'No person to walk on the grass, but on the Mall or gravelled foot-path, and in all wet weather to walk only on the gravelled foot-paths and not on the Mall'. CSP. Dom., (1702-1703), 20 May, 1703, pp.723-4

Sentries

Besides attending the gates, each keeper was also instructed to 'keep a good Look-out as far as his Eye will reach; and if he sees any Person begging, or Boys playing, that he forthwith seizes and turns them out at his Gate'. The two keepers in the lower Park continually circuited the grounds on the look-out for undesirables to expel. The endeavours of the gate-keepers in this respect were backed by the use of sentrys, on hand to enforce appropriate and orderly conduct. In 1669 the King pardoned Thomas Moore, sentinel by St James's Park, for striking and killing a man who tried to run past him in defiance of his orders to let none pass.⁸⁶ Henry Fielding has Amelia's son remonstrate, after being accosted by a heavy handed sentry for running onto the grass, 'what harm did I do? I did not know that people might not walk in the green fields in London'.⁸⁷ Keeping off the grass and to the paths served as an emblem of regimented behaviour. These measures were aiming for a well-regulated promenading of citizens up and down that repressed outward signs of tension and inequity. In 1703 orders had been issued by Queen Anne that 'No persons shall be suffered to walk on the grass, but only on the gravelled path or in the Mall, except only such as are employed in the Park about planting and pruning the trees and other work'. In the 1750's the grass in the Park from Rosamonds Pond round to the head of the Canal at Whitehall was railed and fenced in, and in 1760, George III's 'Rules and Directions' re-iterated that park keepers were 'to hinder all Persons from Walking on the Grass, or out of the Publick Walks'.⁸⁸ Officers and soldiers were stationed in centinel boxes about the perimeters and within the park (see fig.6.2).

⁸⁶ CSP. Dom., (October 1668-December 1669), August, 1669, 2 September, 1669, pp.467, 470

⁸⁷ Henry Fielding, *Amelia* ed. David Blewett, 1st publ. 1751, (Harmondsworth, 1987), p.179

⁸⁸ PRO Kew, Works 6/17, vol. 4, 23 November, 1753, fol.109; PRO, Chancery Lane, TS 11/843/2870, no.2



Fig.6.2 Chatelain & Toms, 'A View of the Mall in St James's Park', 1745 (showing centinel)

Royal regulations for 1703 stated that 'Sentinels or gatekeepers to be placed at every public gate leading into the Park, and directions given them by the Deputy Ranger not to admit any ordinary or mean people, beggars or dogs'. The drying of linen, passage of carts, carriage of goods and selling of wares within the grounds of the park was also outlawed.⁸⁹ If these orders were disobeyed and the offender resisted being turned out of the park, the officers and keepers had leave to immediately carry them before a magistrate. Saussure believed the penalty for misdemeanour in the park to be harsh, 'there is little danger of being attacked in the park or in the neighbourhood of the Palace, for should the offender be taken up in any of these priveleged parts, the laws would condemn him to lose his hand'.⁹⁰

There is some evidence of the use of officers in other town parks and gardens. Payments were made 'for a moving sentry' in Shrewsbury's Quarry, and for the cleaning of a guard house there.⁹¹ An advertisement for the opening of New Vauxhall, near the Long Room at the Hot Wells of Bristol in 1751 informs that 'the greatest Order and Regularity will endeavour'd to be observ'd; proper Officers attending during the whole Evenings Entertainment that neither the Audience may be disturbed, Riots bred, or irregular People encourag'd'. The official re-opening of the revamped Vauxhall Gardens in June 1732 was 'managed with great order and decency, a detachment of one hundred of the foot guards being posted round the garden'.⁹² Criticism of the slipped standards at the Gardens in 1759 referred back to the order imposed during the early years of Tyers' proprietorship when 'Guards were properly placed to prevent the prostitution of those pleasant groves', although the *Description* of 1762 was keen to assert that 'peculiar attention is paid to the preservation of good order and decorum by a number of proper persons stationed in

⁸⁹ CSP. Dom., (1702-3), 15 January, 20 May, 1703, pp.539-540, 723-724

⁹⁰ Saussure, *Foreign View of England*, pp.48-9

⁹¹ SRRC, SMA, 10 June, 1720, March 1726

⁹² *Daily Advertiser*, 21 June, 1732

different parts of the gardens'.⁹³ In 1763 watchmen were instated, along with lights and railings, to satisfy the magistrates granting licenses required by places of public resort, although the vandalism suffered indicates the level of resistance.

Subscriptions

The introduction of subscriptions and entry fees to parks and gardens may not have entailed the laying out of such large sums as cultivating the right appearance incurred, but it still expressed an avowed interest in and/or impression of restricting the company in attendance. It seems that charged entry to Vauxhall dates from Jonathan Tyers' investment in the Gardens from the early 1730's. The opening Ridotto admitted no one without a printed ticket, at one guinea each.⁹⁴ Grand events aside, apparently one thousand season tickets were available at 25 shillings each, to admit two. Admission at the gate, without a ticket, cost 1 shilling.⁹⁵ Tyers publicised his ticketing policy as underpinning the exclusive credentials of the Gardens. A newspaper advertisement of 1736 declared,

As the Master of the Spring Gardens at Vaux-Hall has always been ambitious of obliging the Polite and Worthy Part of the Town by doing everything in his Power that may contribute to their ease and Pleasure; he for that reason was induced to give out Tickets, but in no other View than to keep away such as are not fit to intermix with those Persons of Quality, Ladies, Gentlemen, and others, who should honour him with their Company.

He professed himself concerned with the trade in tickets by the servants who received them, 'because Servants may be induced to encourage great Numbers of the inferior sort

⁹³ *London Chronicle: or, Universal Evening Post*, 7-9 June, 1759; Anon, *Description of Vaux-Hall Gardens*, p.51

⁹⁴ *Daily Courant*, 31 May, 1732; *Craftsman*, 3 June, 1732

⁹⁵ ML, Wroth scrapbooks, vol. III., April 1737. This price does not seem to have altered, as it was noted in 1748 that, 'No Man or Lady enters the garden without paying a shilling at the entrance. After that anyone is free to buy anything or not', Kalm, *Visit to England*, p.65

to come to the Gardens'.⁹⁶ In the following year new ticketing arrangements required subscribers 'not to permit their Tickets to get into the Hands of Persons of Evil Repute; it being of absolute necessity not to admit any such'.⁹⁷ Of course, it is less clear whether these arrangements effectively excluded than it is that this was the image of Vauxhall that the proprietor of the commercialised venture wished to convey. Nevertheless, the cost did obviously screen entry to a certain extent. The *Connoisseur* noted that as the summer season approached and Vauxhall prepared for opening 'Happy are they, who can muster up sufficient, at least to hire tickets at the door, once or twice in a season!'.⁹⁸

In Bath, Harrison's Walks were designated, in Woods words, 'for People of Rank and Fortune to walk in', access being checked by subscription charges and the fact that entry was via the adjoining assembly rooms.⁹⁹ John Macky described the site as 'a pretty Garden, for every body that pays for the Time they stay, to walk in', and Dudley Ryder found them to be 'filled with company'.¹⁰⁰ The Spring Gardens, just across the Avon, introduced a charge of half a crown for the season in 1764, or six pence on the door, with the announcement that 'The Proprietor humbly hopes no lady or gentleman will think the above Terms unreasonable, as they are calculated to render the Gardens as agreeable as possible to polite Company'.¹⁰¹ The subscription fee for New Vauxhall, the public gardens at the Bristol Hot Wells, was one guinea, a scheme open to 200 subscribers, who would be issued with a silver ticket engraved with their name. This admitted two people for the duration of the three month season. Non-subscribers paid a shilling on the gate.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ ML, Wroth scrapbooks, vol.III, newspaper advertisement, 1736 (source not cited)

⁹⁷ ML, Wroth scrapbooks, vol.III, newspaper advertisement, April 1737 (source not cited)

⁹⁸ *Connoisseur*, vol.II, no.68, 15 May, 1755, p.148

⁹⁹ Wood, *Description of Bath*, p. 225

¹⁰⁰ Macky, *Journey through England*, vol.II, pp.129, 239

¹⁰¹ BCWG, 26 April, 1764

¹⁰² *Bath Journal*, 3 June, 1751 on the opening of New Vauxhall

Behavioural orders

The attempted policing and restraint of access and land use that these measures entailed is in some degree indicative of a moral agenda more commonly associated with the nineteenth century and Victorian 'people's parks'. The framing of how these spaces should and should not be used played up the inherent virtues of morality, order and healthiness associated with the natural world, as discussed in chapter 5. They seemed to offer a positive channelling of the energies of town residents with time on their hands. Unfortunately these high ideals of refinement through environment were undermined by persistent unfitting behaviour, spurring attempts to encourage and/or impose what was held to be civilised conduct, in some cases via explicit behavioural orders. Shrewsbury Corporation had invested substantially in the formalised lay out of walks in the Quarry, as a showpiece of the town's cultivated status. In 1738 the house meeting of the corporation deliberated over the problem of inappropriate conduct;

complaint hath been made to the House that several Idle and disorderly people do frequent the Publick Markett House of this Town and also the Quarry and do there play at unlawful Games and committ divers Indecencys and misbehave themselves. It is therefore ordered by this House that the Serjeants and under Officers of this Corporation do apprehend any person or persons that shall be found at either of the aforesaid Places committing disorders or misbehaving themselves or playing at any unlawful Games or Running naked in the Quarry and when so apprehended to confine them in the Bushel House (which is to be kept for that use only and the key thereof Delivered to the Chamberlain of this Corporation to be kept by him) until he or they can be brought before some Justices of the Peace for this Town.

Furthermore, in a bid to encourage the good citizens of Shrewsbury to police their own space and 'apprehend such Idle and disorderly persons it is further ordered that the Chamberlain of this Corporation pay for every disorderly Person who shall be taken ... and convicted ... five shillings to the Person or Persons so apprehending him or them'.¹⁰³ The committee of the Chapel of King Charles the Martyr, responsible for the overseeing of the walks in Tunbridge

¹⁰³ SRRC, SCM, 16 May, 1738

Wells, proposed a similar policy of apprehension for those whose presence and conduct on the walks was disruptive. In July of 1729 they decreed, 'upon the account of many Disorders which are daily committed about this place by Vagrants and Sturdy Beggars and also by many Drunken Fellows belonging thereunto, That a Cage be Built upon some convenient Spott of Ground, for to put such persons in, near Tunbridge Wells, and that the Same be paid for out of the Collection for the Repairs of the chapel and other good purposes'. Mr Mercer was paid £13, 2s for building the cage.¹⁰⁴ The New Walk at York, an avenue of trees laid out along the bank of the river Ouse in the early 1730's, represented an express effort on the part of the town council to develop facilities attractive to the beau monde, as indicated in chapter four. The challenge thereafter was to ensure that this designated space maintained a lustre of elitism. Following further investment to improve the walk around 1740 the corporation determined to put an end to the use of the site by washerwomen, employing 'proper persons...to devise means...for preventing people hanging clothes upon the hedge'. They also attempted to tackle the same problem encountered by Shrewsbury corporation, using the local press to place warnings against 'persons exposing themselves naked in the water, or out of the water, within the view of the New Walk'.¹⁰⁵

John Wood was similarly at pains to drive the rustic and rude out of green sites in favour of more refined behaviour. He is pleased to describe the appropriating of green space in Bath for housing and an extension of Mr. Allens' town house garden, putting to an end the popular recreations which had apparently made use of the site of late; 'Smock Racing and Pig Racing, playing at Foot-Ball and running with the Feet in Bags in that Green'.¹⁰⁶ The park keepers at St James's were also under orders not 'to suffer any Persons, whatsoever, to play at any sort of Games'.¹⁰⁷ Alternative use of nature in the town that failed to conform to the preferred

¹⁰⁴ CKS, Chapel minutes, 7 July, 1729

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p.293

¹⁰⁶ Wood, *Description of Bath*, p.244

¹⁰⁷ PRO, Chancery Lane, TS11/843/2870, no.2, 'Rules and Directions of George III', 1760

ordered and polite image constructed around the formalising of these sites-common commercial use such as laundry and bleaching, pasturage and animal markets, drunken revelry, sexual impropriety, rustic sports, fell subject to clean up orders.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with distinction pursued *in* urban parks and gardens. A sense of a correct and cultivated reading and experience of the garden/scape was invoked to demarcate status in these urban public forums. The socially aspirant might try to advance their standing here, but those that considered themselves of superior refinement reserved the right to dismiss their presence as tittle tattle cavorting rather than the elevated promenading in which they engaged. The investing of such kudos was derived from a fusion of elevated taste and status as rooted in landscape and informed appreciation of nature, with the perceived civility and polite sociability of the town. By this reading town parks and gardens were uniquely placed to be appropriated by and represent polite society, as the best of both worlds.

It is important to point out, however, that this is not to say that all the measures aimed at asserting and defending the politeness of these sites were successfully implemented, and unchallenged. Crafting an *impression* of refinement and good order was often as far as it went. Advertisements for Vauxhall, as a commercial pleasure garden, make great play of the quality of citizen in attendance, and the civilised order of the proceedings, but such representations of the garden can be read more as incitements to a pool of paying visitors with aspirations of upward mobility than as reliable indicators of the composition of the crowd. Repeated directives were aimed at securing St James's Park as an oasis of respectability, but the issuing of orders and patrolling of the grounds did not mean that absolute decorum prevailed. Rather, the need for such measures only indicated that it did not. Nor did the presence of keepers and locking of the gates secure the Park's reputation

after dark, as a sentinel testifying in the case of Doctor Dechair was forced to concede, "Tis Notorious that many bad persons frequent the Park in the Night'.¹⁰⁸ What this paper has set about illustrating is the styling and use of nature in the town as conveyor of social distinction, and paradoxically as grounds for a projection of harmonious order, naturalising of control and submerging of tensions in a facade of natural sociability. It was the striving for this that hedged town parks and gardens as open and accessible arenas, whereby ostensibly public space became increasingly subject to notions of correct usage. Chapter 7 is again concerned with this notion of contested access to town parks and gardens, but this time focuses on how the nature of these sites was related to male and in particular female experiences of them, and informed expressions and depictions of sexuality in the urban environment.

¹⁰⁸ PRO, Chancery Lane, TS11/843/2570, evidence of Peter Stace, sentinel in St James's Park

Chapter 7

Snakes in the grass: gender and sexuality in the garden



Fig.7.1 James Lightbody & John Harris, 'The South West Prospect of his Grace the Duke of Marlborough's House in St James's Park', c.1720 (section showing a woman walking alone along the Mall)

Introduction

The question of access to parks, gardens and walks addressed in chapter 6 dealt with the issue of differentiation in appreciation of the natural world. As a part of this, reference was made to the assertion that women, as well as those deemed vulgar, were not credited with the faculty of elevated perspective and superior engagement with the natural scape. The chapter also touched on attempts to suppress alternative use that challenged the air of virtue and harmony cultivated in parks and gardens, including licentious sexual activity.

But issues of gender and sexuality are pertinent to this study not just because parks, gardens and walks were important social spaces for men and women, and for sexual liaisons, but also, crucially, because the nature of these sites was keyed into the representation of gender and sexuality there. Again, a key point is that parks and gardens are not neutral urban leisure facilities, but carry a great deal of symbolic weight in being green sites that subsequently has a significant bearing on the way they are styled and used as social spaces. And so, in this penultimate chapter, attention is focused on the potential influence that the imagery and use of nature in the town had on the construction of gender roles and expressions of sexuality in the urban environment.

The fashioning of parks, gardens and walks as spaces of urban recreation and social interaction has particular implications for the drawing of gendered traits and portrayal of sexuality in the town in that these green sites invoke and articulate perceived links between gender, sexuality and nature. The first section of this chapter sketches the ways in which female (and to a lesser extent male) characteristics are aligned with aspects of nature, so that for instance women embody the natural virtue, fruitfulness and beauty of the natural world, but also its' capacity for wild, uncontrolled irrationality. Not only do these images find expression in the town via its parks and gardens, but they are reinforced by readings of the urban environment as a male, public, civilised, rational domain. The second section looks at the ways in which appreciation and experiences of nature in the town are used to underline gendered roles, and fix notions of public and private domains. This is followed by consideration of the interplay of garden and erotic imagery, whereby sexual use of these meeting grounds and the representation of this sexual behaviour is influenced by the natural setting. That parks and gardens could accommodate alternative uses that challenged the presentation of virtue and order is highlighted specifically in separate considerations of masquerades, and homosexuality. These took advantage of spaces peripheral to the main fabric of the town whilst still a part

of it that could provide cover for inversions of the normal order of things. Pugh writes that the garden permits travesties of the world it shuts off, but neutralises those travesties as well, since it is not about real life, but rather a carefully contained permissiveness.¹ Reactions against these kind of activities levy their reproaches at the violation of the natural order and virtue that the site is supposed to encapsulate. The remainder of the chapter deals with the question of female access to town parks, gardens and walks, and the implications of the natural imagery deployed regarding this use. Representations of women frequenting these public social arenas are expressed in terms of predatory dangerous sexuality, domestic passivity, and natural virtue and aesthetic adornment of the landscape. These are images which are by no means unique, but which are given currency in an urban context through the medium of parks and gardens.

Nature gendered

Clearly, gendered representations of nature in the town are situated within a broader framework of the gender stereotyping of nature. There is a extensive body of work on this subject, in particular feminist studies on the associations drawn between women and nature, and the wider implications of this. This section aims only to broadly identify the ideological assumptions on nature/gender alignments that lay behind the imagery deployed within town parks and gardens.

The fundamental assumption that informs gender/nature relations is that women are closer to nature than men. As Carol MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern put it in their study of nature and gender, 'A biological determinism 'explained' women, but men were defined more by their social acts'.² This was a closeness rooted in the female

¹ Pugh, *Garden, Nature, Language*, p.9

² Carol P. MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern (eds.), *Nature, Culture and Gender* (Cambridge, 1980), p.21

reproductive and nurturing role, and underlined by the female characteristics of passion and emotion.³ Male and female characteristics are squared up behind a classic nature/culture divide. The close alignment of nature and female nature has the woman as virtuous, private, passive, ornamental, wild, irrational, and the male, sufficiently detached from nature as to be able to exercise cultivated and superior understanding, appreciation and ordering of the natural world, as rational, cultivated, public, urban. But the range of interpretations of nature and their association with gendered characteristics meant that it was not simply a case of male characteristics as good and female as bad, anymore than culture was perceived as unquestionably superior to nature. Rather, as previously discussed, it was a case of striking a balance. Masculinity as culture could be destructive, artificial and corruptive, whilst female nature enshrined morality and virtue. Ludmilla Jordanova notes that 'in the eighteenth century a struggle was imagined inside each individual: between those elements which were thought to be masculine-reason and intelligence-and those which were thought to be feminine-the passions and the emotions'.⁴ And yet at the same time as embodying an inherent virtue, beauty and passivity, this schism also aligned women with the capacity for wildness, rudeness and irrationality that was the flip side of nature. By this reading, the fear of nature out of control that fuelled its taming and domestication carried over to the female, and the perceived threat that needed to be subdued. Of course this interpretation had its origins in the Garden of Eden, with the serpent enticing Eve with an apple from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. The taint of original sin borne by mankind, and the corruption of the harmony that had originally been created between man and his natural environment was the product of her temptation and weakness. Here was enshrined her flawed and inferior judgement and the decree that she should henceforth be dependent on

³ Maurice Bloch and Jean H. Bloch, 'Women and the dialectics of nature in eighteenth century French thought', in MacCormack and Strathern, *Nature, Culture and Gender*, p. 32; Merchant, *Death of Nature*, p.144

⁴ L. J. Jordanova, 'Natural facts: a historical perspective on science and sexuality', in MacCormack and Strathern, *Nature, Culture and Gender*, p.63

and ruled by the male. From this primal myth, depictions of women in the garden play on the notion of a natural purity and virtue nonetheless under siege from temptation, of snakes in the grass.

These general conceptions of the relationship between men, women and nature find particular expression in the iconography of landscape. The significance accorded land and estate as statements of power and control has already been acknowledged. For the male, estate represented inheritance and possession, and the styling of this landscape authority and superior judgement. For women, not usually property owners, or in official positions of power, the lie of the land had quite different implications. Women usually fitted within this picture in a reproductive capacity, ensuring the continuity of the family line.⁵ Consequently, a childless female was like a barren soil, failing to nurture the seeds scattered there. The feminizing of the landscape positioned both nature and female nature under masculine direction and masculine gaze. Fabricant writes, 'Both women and landscape were continually being judged for their ability to titillate the imagination and satisfy the senses while at the same time remaining within carefully prescribed moral, aesthetic, and territorial limits'.⁶ The idea of the ha-ha as boundary satisfied here in that it cultivated the appearance of freedom, a kind of permissive expansiveness at the same time as actually constraining, so that the desire that characterised treatment of the eighteenth century landscape can be carried over to the female form.⁷ As a metaphor for the female body, the aestheticised landscape succumbs to the male. 'You have nothing to do', Thomson says to Shenstone at the Leasowes, 'but to dress Nature...to caress her; love her; kiss her; and then-descend into the valley'.⁸ Expressions of a masculine experience of the feminized garden/scape are legion. Stephen Switzer advised gentleman gardeners

⁵ Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, p.17

⁶ Fabricant, 'Binding and Dressing Nature's Loose Tresses', p.111

⁷ Simon Pugh, 'Loitering with intent: From Arcadia to the arcades', in Pugh, *Reading Landscape*, pp.150-151; Fabricant, 'Binding and Dressing', pp.112,117-122

⁸ Quoted in Pugh, 'Loitering with intent', p.152

on how to manage the 'careless and loose Tresses of Nature'. Classically, Pope's *Epistle to Burlington* pictorialised the landscape in female form; 'let Nature never be forgot./But treat the Goddess like a modest fair,/Nor over-dress, nor leave her wholly bare;/Let not each beauty ev'ry where be spy'd,/Where half the skill is decently to hide'.⁹

The power accorded the male gaze in uncovering and ordering the natural world functioned on other levels too. The learned male expressed a scientific interest and understanding. Richard Bradley, member of the Royal Society, remarked that he was building on the previous research of members of the Society in publishing a work on planting and gardening that set out plant regeneration as 'somewhat analogous to that of animals'. The 'couplings' of the male and female parts of plants are consequently described in explicitly sexual biological language, so that, for example 'the Dust of the Apices in Flowers (ie. the male sperm) is convey'd into the Uterus or Vasculum Seminale of a Plant, by which means the seeds therein contain'd are impregnated'. Close examination of the lily revealed ovaries containing eggs to be fertilised by the male seed, whilst exposed between the ovaries of the melon Bradley indicates 'we may very easily perceive the vagina'.¹⁰ The Linnnean classification of the natural system, developed from 1735, was similarly overtly sexual. Whilst this approach did not automatically preclude women from showing an interest in botany, the male-oriented and gynaecological spirit of enquiry assumed did prompt objections to the suitability of the subject for young women.¹¹ Furthermore, it also served to differentiate between a domestic female knowledge and appreciation of herbs and flowers perceived as rooted in superstition, and the rational, scientific interest exercised by men.

⁹ Switzer, *Ichnographia Rustica*, 2nd edn., (London, 1742), vol.III, p.46; Alexander Pope, *Alexander Pope, Epistles to Several Persons* ed. F.W. Bateson, (London, 1951), pp.137-8

¹⁰ Richard Bradley, *New Improvements of Planting & Gardening* (London, 1717), pp.13-14, 18

¹¹ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, pp.65-6

In the context of this thesis the central issue is how these images of nature gendered function within and influence the town. Keyed into an urban context these stereotypes engage with representations of the town as refined and yet impure, a site of civility and yet uncontrolled, threatening disorder. Aligned with this, the male is characterised as urban, public, and rational, and yet also destructive and raw, whilst the female, closer to nature, is virtuous and ornamental, irrational and emotional, private and domestic, situated on the margins of urban experience and interaction. The next section explores these alignments further, and considers some of the implications of these.

Gender and the public/private domain in the town

This section sets about relating the above general discussion of gendered nature to the context of the town and its parks and gardens, focusing in particular on the gendering of engagement with nature related to engagement in the public urban domain. This is based around the notion, as indicated above, that the female character was associated with the natural world, whilst the city was imagined as embodying male characteristics. Rousseau and Porter are keen to point out that these assigned roles were not overthrown during an 'enlightened' eighteenth century; 'It is important to stress how such stereotypings of woman as merely private (in contrast to man's public role) and as a product of nature (as distinct from man's role within culture) were not excrescences of the ancien regime, against which the paladins of the enlightenment were committed to do battle, but were to a large degree the creation of the enlightenment and its fellow travellers from Addison and Steele onwards'.¹² This aligning of the male with culture, urbanity and the public realm, and the female with nature and the private, domestic domain is of particular significance in the case of town parks, gardens and walks in that these sites are meeting

¹² G.S. Rousseau & Roy Porter (eds.), *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment* (Manchester, 1987), pp.4-5

grounds of these different elements; leisured public, urban facilities for the parading of politeness and civility within natural surrounds that at the same time provide private contemplative and virtuous space. The associations drawn between these varying aspects of nature in the town and male and female characteristics has a significant bearing on the portrayal and recreational use of these spaces by the sexes and by the sexually active. The role of women is a key one within the debate on public and private realms, conceived as it is in terms of a basic division between the private nature of the home and public life. Women engaging in the public life of the town were outside the confines of domesticity, family and husband, and thus harder to control. One line taken has been that women were excluded from an expanding and gendered public sphere, and increasingly domesticated, although, as Penelope Corfield points out, this raises the question of exactly when this process of domestication occurred, and whether women had ever been in the public sphere.¹³ My specific focus here engages with this debate in looking at female access to public urban space and leisure facilities in the shape of parks, gardens and walks, and at how the natural imagery conjured by the site and applied to the female keyed into the delineation of public and private realms.

As John Barrell elucidates in his essay on the public prospect, and as discussed in chapter 2, being closer to, or a part of nature disavows the subject of detached perspective and comprehension. This not only informs differentiation between the vulgar and the refined in terms of ability to understand and appreciate the landscape, but has a gender dimension too. The conception of a woman as a part of nature renders her more an object of contemplation within creation, 'inside' the landscape, than as an observer able to display elevated appreciation and comprehension of the natural world. Male abstraction and overview signalled a superior judgement that served to define the public interest, and

¹³ Penelope Corfield, 'The Public and the Private in Eighteenth Century Britain', seminar held at the German Historical Institute, London, 17 June, 1996

reinforced the fixing of women within the private realm. This delineation of roles manifests itself in both literary and visual portraits of the urban landscape. The Buck prospects of English provincial towns frequently position spectators in the foreground overlooking the town. In some, such as the views of Warwick, Hereford, Maidstone, and Berkshire these observers are exclusively male, but more often than not the groups are mixed. In such cases, the men are depicted actively looking towards, drawing, pointing to and discussing the panorama, as elevated and informed observers of the urban landscape. The women, however, are not shown in contemplation of the vista unless under male direction. Not only were they not far enough removed from nature to be able to see the whole, but, in common with the vulgar masses, they did not receive the appropriate education deemed necessary in order to frame a landscape and exercise true aesthetic appreciation. In the prospects of Bristol, Burton Upon Trent, Stafford, Canterbury, Camarthen, Norwich, Oxford, Pembroke, Sheffield, Winchester, and York one finds the females depicted in passive mode, having the prospect explained and interpreted for them by their male companions (see figs.7.2 &7.3). As this notion of an exclusive, and gendered appreciation of landscape and the natural environment had currency in town through the language and perception of taste applied to urban parks, gardens and walks, so it had a bearing on the level of participation granted women; this is the ground covered in the later sections on representations of women in the town garden.

Accounts of nature in the town capitalise on the theme of male intellectual capacity and physical vigour in the use of natural sites.



Fig.7.2 Samuel & Nathaniel Buck, 'The East Prospect of Burton Upon Trent in the County of Stafford', 1732 (section showing a male directing his female companions in appreciation of the view)



Fig.7.3 Samuel & Nathaniel Buck, 'The South-West Prospect of the City of Canterbury', 1738 (section showing male guiding his female companion in appreciation of the townscape)

Besides utilising parks and gardens as public arenas, male use of nature in the town is also represented as premised on the need for a release from the demands of public life. As a part of his promotion of city gardens, Thomas Fairchild argued the felicity of green space within the urban fabric on the grounds that the garden and gardening recharged and improved the mind, and thus served as parallel asset to public city life, 'a Mind so improv'd, found always the nearest Way to do Business, and fill the Purse'.¹⁴ In Deering's account, as far as gentlemen were concerned 'Examination of the vegetable World' and outdoor exercise offered release for 'the Mind fatigued with intense thinking'.¹⁵ The natural world could emblemize wisdom and ennoblement, might serve as welcome retreat from the rigour of public life, or else provide a removed and elevated forum for the contemplation of office and the exercise of power, as discussed in chapter 5. But that was for men. The interaction of women and nature was largely recommended in terms of harmless distraction and moral restraint. Taking to the public town garden alone, deep in thought and in retreat from the bustle of worldly business is not considered applicable to the domestic female. The theme of retirement and wise contemplation is a male preserve. Without this kind of justification, the image of a woman alone in a public garden is questionable, and leads to a suspicion of sexual impropriety. The use of private gardens was another matter. These formed part of the domestic realm, and were deemed a safe and virtuous enclave within the town in which the woman of the house might pass her time innocuously.¹⁶ The *Spectator* advised its readers that passive enjoyment of private gardens was more suited to the female temperament than involvement in public life, 'What a delightful Entertainment must it be to the Fair Sex, whom their native Modesty, and the Tenderness of Men towards them, exempts from publick Business, to pass their Hours in imitating Fruits and Flowers, and transplanting all the Beauties of

¹⁴ Fairchild, *City Gardener*, p.43

¹⁵ Deering, *Catalogus Stirpium*, Preface to the Reader

¹⁶ See Gowan, 'The London Town Garden', pp.126-7

Nature into their own Dress, or raising a new Creation in their Closets and Apartments'.¹⁷

But, more than this, a restrained and domestic relationship with nature might serve as a kind of moral guardianship. Ladies of leisure might gain several advantages in casting their eyes 'upon the flowry Progeny of the Earth', according to Deering, namely,

The Exercise would prove beneficial to them in preventing the many Disorders to which their Sex makes them subject, and which are caused and nursed by Inactivity. Their Thoughts being harmlessly Employed about the fixed Inhabitants of the Fields, Meadows &c. would take Place of many less innocent ones, which else might too often turn to the Detriment of their own Character or that of others of their Sex.

Plant life calmed 'the irregular Hurry of the Spirits' to which females were rather more liable than males.¹⁸ As for the actual practice of gardening, the male is permitted an active engagement, through manual labour, through design, transforming and moulding the land, whilst women, on the whole, dabble at the edges, prune, pick and display. Their involvement is considered limited to floral displays in private gardens.¹⁹ This kind of emphasis served to reinforce the image and role of women as inactive consumers rather than producers. It is the males who produce land and garden scape, and are productive in the landscape as public social beings embodying and oiling the civility of the town, whilst women adorn and ornament.

Town parks, gardens and walks were also used to exhibit a natural male virility and vigour, a physical interaction that was unbecoming to women without moderation, to take into account their more delicate natures. Waller had Charles display his and his new administration's strength in his healthy pacing around the Park, 'His manly posture and his graceful mine/Vigor and youth in all his motion seen/His shape so comely and his

¹⁷ Bond, *Spectator*, vol.V, no.606, 13 October, 1714, p.72

¹⁸ Deering, *Catalogus Stirpium*, Preface to the Reader

¹⁹ See Susan Groag Bell, 'Women Create Gardens in Male Landscapes: A Revisionist Approach to Eighteenth-Century English Garden History', *Feminist Studies*, XVI, no.3, (1990), pp.476-479

limbs so strong/Confirm our hopes we shall obey him long'.²⁰ Vigorous walking as an exercise in the park was used as a way of criticising womens involvement as unnatural. Satirists picked up on the spectacle of determined parading up and down and traded on the associations of masculine virility that physical activity implied to mock the women out to take the air. The character Mrs Straddle is thus ridiculed, 'with what a Masculine Agility of Limbs, and glorious Stride, you measure the utmost Dimensions of the Park, at least Six Times in a Morning'.²¹ Similarly, usually sedentary ladies are depicted speeding up and down the Mall; 'Ladies will walk four or five Miles in a Morning with all the Alacrity imaginable, who at home think it an insupportable Fatigue to journey from one end of their Chamber to the other'.²² Conversely, the masculinity of men that did not conform to this display of hearty physical exertion in natural sites was thrown into question. The stress in the opening sections of an anonymous diatribe against sodomy is on the strength and manliness derived from vigorous exercise; 'athletic Exercises; wholesome, as well as pleasant', and the dangers inherent in not participating, namely a feminine pampered weakness.²³ Physical health was equated with moral health, and so emphasis on outdoor exercise and sport served to affirm masculinity, and marked a correct use of natural space compared with the luxury and idleness displayed by the fop in the park, significantly indicted as effeminate behaviour. Walks and open spaces provided grounds for 'manly exercises'.²⁴ Deering employs a clear division between female and male outdoor recreational activities in Nottingham. The men may go walking and riding, take in the prospects, play bowls, hunt and have good company in numerous green sites around the town. The 'Fair Sex', not straying quite so far, are recommended the green court of the castle, where shelter is available, whilst the more active might make it to St Anne's Well, where they would then find a convenient resting place, 'where

²⁰ Waller, *St James's Park*, p.6

²¹ P.Q., *St James's Park*, p.vi

²² Anon, *A Trip from St James's*, p.6

²³ Anon, *Plain Reasons for the Growth of Sodomy, in England* (London, nd), p.4

²⁴ BH, Nottingham, Deering MS., Gunthorpe, 'Description of Nottingham'

they may refresh themselves, (as they do at Home in an Afternoon) with Tea'. Running the Shepherds Race at Sneinton was suggested, though, to build up an appetite, and in the summer the ladies might indulge in discreet swimming in the Trent.²⁵ In Henry Jones's portrait of the Quarry Walks, the men are manly and physically energized, and the women comely and virtuous, 'Your ruddy sons for manly worth renown'd/...With soul elated, and exalted mien,/They bound exulting by the fair one's side'.²⁶ The latter parts of this chapter pay specific attention to the question of female access to parks, gardens and walks and the ways in which representations of women frequenting them are informed by the nature of the sites. But before this, I want to address expressions of sexuality in the town garden.

Sexuality and the garden

The association between town parks and gardens and sexuality derives not just from the fact that liaisons were easily forged in public social arenas. Sexual imagery is implicit in the green site, of a natural procreation based around notions of natural bounty and fruitfulness, and of an erotic kind, premised on the rude, bestial side of nature summoning sexual animalistic urges. Keith Thomas describes the fixation on brutish lust as an expression of anxiety over maintaining the boundaries between mankind and the animal kingdom. In order to make clear the distinction, it was crucial that behaviour be kept within the bounds of rationality and decency.²⁷ Since women were perceived as closer to nature, and more susceptible to temptation, the danger of transgressing the bounds of decorum and giving in to natural lust was particularly acute, particularly since the family line and property was to be perpetuated through the off-spring. The territory of parks and gardens had to be carefully negotiated, for honourable courtship amongst the groves was

²⁵ Deering, *Nottinghamia*, pp.72-75

²⁶ Jones, *Shrewsbury Quarry*, p.10

²⁷ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, pp.38-9

not far removed from base sexual gratification in the bushes. In the context of a natural setting, sexuality might be expressed as the innocent beauty of courtship, playing on pastoral imagery in which women are vital, blooming maidens and men honourable swains, or in which the female represents ripeness, offering up a natural bounty to be reaped by the husbandman. At the other end of the scale, and without due constraints, this sexuality becomes a wild and threatening impulse.

When Rochester set the debaucheries of the Restoration court in St James's Park he presented both the violated, corrupt core beneath the surface of London and the monarchy's outwardly wholesome new showpiece, and also highlighted the flip side of nature, the wildness and eroticism that skulked in the shadows of pastoral order and virtue. This stood in complete and pointed contrast to the natural imagery used by Waller in his portrayal of Charles' Restoration.²⁸ Both make political capital from the site of St James's Park, Waller in naturalising Charles's Restoration, Rochester in depicting a wild sexual climate that acts as a critique of the King's court as the seat of gross debauchery. Whilst Waller paints innocent pastoral scenes, 'Me thinks I see the love that shall be made,/The Lovers walking in that amorous shade,/The Gallants dancing by the Rivers side', Rochester, fully participant in the lasciviousness of the court circles himself, conjures a different kind of physical and moral landscape.²⁹ St James's Park becomes an 'all-sin-sheltering grove'. The natural surrounds are overtly erotic, brutishly so; the trees 'lewd tops fucked the very skies', and 'Each imitative branch does twine/In some loved fold of Aretine,/And nightly now beneath their shade/Are buggeries, rapes, and incests made'. The company here are wild both in their sexuality and in the randomness of their couplings, regardless of status, so that the violation of social order is twofold, 'Whores of the bulk and the alcove,/Great ladies, chamber-maids, and drudges,/The rag-picker, and

²⁸ Dustin Griffin, *Satires against Man. The Poems of Rochester* (L.A., 1973), pp.28-9

²⁹ Waller, *St James's Park*, pp.4-5

heiress trudges;/Car-men, divines, great lords, and tailors,/Prentices, pimps, poets, and jailers,/Footmen, fine fops, do here arrive,/And here promiscuously they swive'. And although the male narrator has ventured into the Park with lecherous intentions himself, his disgust and criticism is levied at the whoring of his lover Corinna, whom he discovers picking up men there, 'Gods! That a thing admired by me/Should fall to so much Infamy'.³⁰

The crude, animalistic side of nature is also aligned with sexual behaviour and levied as a criticism of errant social conduct in a poem on the Spring Gardens as their reputation stood prior to Tyers' overhaul. In a portrait that dwells on the garden as a sexual site, the promiscuity exercised by visitors, including the married, mirrors the indiscriminate sex that characterises the base instincts of the brute creation, 'Here dwells no Care, no Matrimonial Strife,/The peevish Husband, nor the bawling Wife;/Here's no Restraint to make our Pleasures cloy,/We part at will, and as we please enjoy./See how the Birds by Nature taught do rove,/...With careless ease they hop from Tree to Tree'.³¹ To follow nature is not always necessarily to find virtue. According to an anonymous work of 1708 'cundums were sold openly in St James's Park, in the Mall and Spring Gardens'.³² In some accounts the park exhibits a split personality epitomised by its daytime and night-time use. In the light the stress is on the charming aesthetic appeal of the grounds, and a public persona of civility, but after dark the walks assume a less decorous air. In Wycherley's *Love in a Wood* frequenting the park at night translates as sexual freedom. A man 'May bring his bashful Wench, and not have her put out of countenance by the impudent honest Women of the Town...And now no woman's modest, or proud, for her blushes are hid'. The concealing of identity for the preservation of one's reputation was

³⁰ John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, 'A Ramble in St James's Park', reproduced in Paddy Lyons (ed.), *Lord Rochester* (London, 1996), pp.51-55

³¹ 'Spring Gardens', printed in the *Gentlemen Magazine*, June, 1732

³² Anon, *Almonds for Parrots* (London, 1708), p.6

an important factor. Darkness and the cover of trees and bushes had obvious appeal, shielding the grave and honourable public reputation of men of business and office. Mrs Joyner addresses Alderman Gripe, 'there are as grave men as your worship; nay, men in office too, that adjourn their cares, and businesses to come and unbend themselves at night here, with a little vizard mask'.³³ After hours the site offers a retreat from the everyday and being on show, an alternative to polite, civil and rational codes of behaviour that informed daytime use of the park. For the male, this is represented as an alternative use of nature in the town as release from public city life, 'These are the busy men that fill the Park,/And scour the Mall as soon as e'er 'tis dark'. In Browne's portrayal the city fops slosh drunkenly up the Mall and pick up whores.³⁴ James Boswell found it easy to pick up whores in the Park, recording in his diary how he 'went to the Park [and] picked up a low brimstone...agreed with her for six Pence...went to the bottom of the park arm in arm'.³⁵

The fact that the Vauxhall Gardens were officially open in the evenings made the site prone to similar critiques of the motives of visitors, to contrast with innocent enjoyment of pleasant surroundings. In contrasting the moral tone of the Gardens pre and post Tyers Lockman deploys differing versions of natural imagery. The rude vulgarity of the garden before the imposition of rationality and civility is characterised as a 'rural Brothel', yet Lockman also uses rural as a by-word for innocence where it suits him. The proprietor was owed a debt by the public 'for his having chang'd the lewd scene above-mentioned, to another of the most rational, elegant, and innocent Kind'. The representation of sexual activity trod a fine line between the courtship necessary for the brokering of marriage, procreation and inheritance, aligned with a natural order, and the sexual temptation that

³³ Wycherley, *Love in a Wood*, pp.19, 79

³⁴ Browne, *St James's Park*, pp.10, 6

³⁵ James Boswell, *Boswell's London Journal, 1762-1763* ed. Frederick A. Pottle, (London, 1982), 25 & 31 March, 9 April, 4 June, 1763, pp.244, 248, 255, 293

tarnished a reputation. It was important that there were opportunities for the forging of liaisons without apparent loss of virtue.³⁶ And so the mirage of charmed romance amidst leafy groves provided a decorous setting for the workings of the marriage market, useful cover in perpetuating the image of the garden as virtue incarnate whilst less innocent activities were ardently pursued. Lockman's poems and lyrics, performed and sold within Vauxhall Gardens, paint a romantic idyll of swains, gentle maids and sweet love. The lovers walk is all about courtship, not sex, and the Rural Downs 'seemed to be the Rendezvous of Cupid'. This is a paradise restored, purged of the taint of mean lust, 'Eden this Spot, and we the happy Pair!'.³⁷ In the *Tatler* an assignation is discussed, 'he would certainly wait upon her at such an Hour near Rosamonds pond; and then-the Sylvan Deities, and Rural Powers of the place, sacred and inviolable to Love; love, the Mover of all Noble Hearts, should hear his Vows repeated by the Streams and Ecchoes'.³⁸ Different faces of nature were thus invoked in order to draw distinction between the sexuality of the common strumpet and the 'Noble Heart' operating within the same urban green space.

The well-lit and open central walks might have kept up a semblance of polite ceremony, but the shadowy extremities were rather more private. Alexander Pope described the gardens as 'those Amourous Shades'.³⁹ The clear disparity between a setting of natural harmony and virtue and the crude sexuality that violated this order provided a good deal of mileage for critics. The use of the public garden site was assumed to illustrate, very pointedly, the perceived tussle between the forces of decency and morality, and urban vices and depravity. In a piece in the *London Chronicle* in 1759, attributed to 'Decency',

³⁶ Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, pp.115-6; Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* 1st publ. 1977, (London, 1978), pp.315-16

³⁷ Lockman, *Sketch*, pp.27-8, 20-22

³⁸ Bond, *Tatler*, vol.I, 27 August, 1709, p.416

³⁹ Alexander Pope, *Letters of Alexander Pope* ed. John Butt (London, 1960), Pope to Henry Cromwell, 7 May, 1709, p.9

Tyers was acknowledged as having temporarily resurrected the sullied reputation of 'this beautiful spot of ground';

The Nightingales increased the W__s decreased. Guards were properly placed to prevent the prostitution of those pleasant groves, which Nature intended only for our amusement, and the innocent love songs of the feathered species. But alas! the best intended schemes submit, and give way to profit and fashion.-No Nightingales are now heard from those dark recesses of the grove; but shrieks and midnight Hollowing.⁴⁰

Tyers was obliged to attempt a clean up; 'Intimations having been made of Inconveniencies attending the keeping open the back Walks after the Lamps are lighted: The Proprietor takes this opportunity to assure the Public, that he has made such Dispositions in his Gardens as will prevent all future objections of that kind, and preserve the requisite Decency and Decorum'. However, the smashing of the lights and tearing up of the railings by 'near 150 young bloods' indicates that the stress on imposing decency did not fall in with everyone's notion of the gardens' attractions.⁴¹

As indicated, the line between courtship and impropriety was a fine one, with a great deal hinged on the preservation of reputation, especially for women. The masking of one's identity opened up room for manoeuvrability, a greater sexual freedom. Chapter 6 touched on this malleability in discussing the considered violation of status through the appropriation of the dress, behaviour and pursuits of those higher up the social ladder. The exercising of liberties and crossing of boundaries found particularly potent expression in the form of the masquerade. The following section deals with the use of disguise and the mask as the focus of much of the discussion over morality and sexuality in urban public gardens.

⁴⁰ *London Chronicle: or, Universal Evening Post*, 7-9 June, 1759. The piece refers back to Sir Roger De Coverley's parting shot following a visit to the Vauxhall Gardens 'That he should be a better Customer to her Garden, if there were more Nightingales, and fewer Strumpets', Bond, *Spectator*, vol. III, no.383, 20 May, 1712, pp.438-9

⁴¹ ML, Wroth scrapbooks, vol.III, newspaper advertisement, 1764 (source not cited); Minet Library, Lambeth, Vauxhall Gardens Archive, fiche 36, *Christians Magazine*, 11 May, 1764

Masquerading

The masquerade was not peculiar to the town park and garden, but its common staging there, particularly at Vauxhall, Ranelagh and Marylebone, forged a strong association and centred much of the debate on luxury, display and vice related to the sites. As large commercial events, masquerades were brought to London by J.J. Heidegger and Theresa Cornelys, inspired by continental models, to become very popular entertainments in the 1730's, 40's and 50's.⁴² For the participants, the masquerade appeared to compound the cover that the garden provided for less constrained interaction between the sexes. *The Adventures of Mr Loveill* relate that he was keen on attending a masquerade ball at the Ranelagh Gardens because 'All that he wanted was an opportunity of sounding the tempers and inclinations of the people he was to chuse a wife from among, unknown; and a masquerade was a means of doing this favourable beyond his utmost expectations; as he shou'd not only be conceal'd at it, but shou'd meet with the freest access imaginable to every body he cou'd wish to speak with'.⁴³ Women, in particular, were acknowledged as enjoying unfamiliar liberties there, 'The mask secures the Ladies from Detraction, and encourages a Liberty, the Guilt of which their Blushes would betray when barefac'd, till by Degrees they are innur'd to that which is out of their Vertue to restrain'. As Terry Castle puts it, 'A woman in masquerade might approach strangers, initiate conversation, touch and embrace those whom she did not know, speak coarsely- in short violate all the cherished imperatives of ordinary feminine sexual decorum...Most important, masquerading granted women the essential masculine privilege of erotic object choice'.⁴⁴ In response, hypocrisy-exposing satires, and exhortations on the parlous state of society, urban society in particular, latched onto these masquerading events as epitomising an

⁴² Terry Castle, 'The culture of travesty: sexuality and masquerade in eighteenth century England', in Rousseau and Porter, *Sexual Underworlds*, p.160

⁴³ Anon, *Adventures of Mr Loveill*, vol.II, p.140

⁴⁴ *Weekly Journal*, 19 April, 1718, quoted in Castle, 'The culture of travesty', p.161; Castle, 'The culture of travesty', p.169

urban moral malaise and a laxity that threatened dire consequences, and fictional writers exploited them as the regular backdrop to sexual indiscretions. Of interest here is the role that the garden site played in framing this debate on urban society, sexual behaviour and gender roles. On the one hand the green setting could be contrasted with urban folly as a contest between what was natural and unnatural. But criticisms also made play of the danger inherent in nature itself, the rude wildness that was the product of lack of restraint, of boundaries transgressed, pointing up where temptation lay and where it led in the parable of the Fall. Steele noted that 'the Devil first addressed himself to Eve in a masque, and that we owe the loss of our first happy State to a Masquerade, which that Sly Intriguer made in the Garden, where he seduced her'.⁴⁵

I will concentrate this discussion of the masquerade in the garden on the Ridotto al Fresco that officially opened the season at the revamped Vauxhall Gardens on 7 June, 1732, looking at some of the responses to the event as illustrative of the way that it focused general anxieties over appearance, sexuality, gender and morality, and the way that natural imagery was fed into the debate. Criticism hinges largely around the loss of virtue, the threat to women and from women behaving promiscuously, and the dangers of fluid identity. The 1732 launch did not spring either the Vauxhall Gardens or the masquerade as an event on an unsuspecting public. Masked balls were well known from the continent, had been held at the Haymarket theatre on numerous occasions in London, and had already acquired a rather dubious reputation. Likewise the Gardens were an established resort and one whose repute was not unimpeachable. Not surprisingly, Tyers' decision to herald a new beginning with a ridotto mobilised detractors before the event had even taken place. But this time the setting, al fresco, gave the satirists and critics fresh ammunition. The virtuous associations and aspirations of the garden and its new

⁴⁵ Richard Steele, *Guardian*, 142, 24 August, 1713, in *The Guardian* ed. James Calhoun Stephens, (Lexington, Kentucky, 1982), p.469

proprietor, dressing his grounds in the classical garb of ancient groves of wisdom and moral integrity, did not square with the frivolity and sexual licence that characterised the masquerade. This was corruption trading under the guise of innocence;

The delightful Place you have pitch'd upon for your excellent Instructions, recalls to our Minds the lovely Solitude, whence Academies receive their Name, in the Suburbs of Athens, where Plato taught his Philosophy. History informs us, that the generous spirited Cimon (the perfect Type of our modern Nobility) embellish'd it, in favour of the Literati, with embow'ring Groves, Chrystal Canals, and Mazy Walks....these sequester'd Scenes were not to be compar'd to the Paradisaical Ones of your Academy in Vaux-Hall.⁴⁶

In a letter addressed to 'Diana, Goddess of Chastity; Directress of the Midnight Academy at Vaux-Hall', the clash was satirised in discussing the forthcoming ridotto,

which the generality of Mortals are such Buzzards as to suppose a meer Masquerade; and by the Words al' Fresco, imagine there will be much Frisking in it. But, silly Creatures! How they will stare when they find, that, under the delicious Disguise of a Masquerade in the cool Shades, your real and genuine Design is, to instruct both Sexes in good Letters, good Manners, Writing, Needle-work, and a nameless Et cetera...your unparallel'd Endeavours to promote religion, Honour, Honesty, Modesty, and the whole Round of social Virtues.⁴⁷

Given the suspicions raised, Tyers was at pains to ensure that the occasion was carried off smoothly, stationing one hundred foot guards around the grounds. Reports of the evening are somewhat conflicting. The *Daily Advertiser* recorded that the turnout was disappointing, at around two hundred, but others put it at twice that. Similarly, in one account there were more women than men, whilst in another the men outnumbered the women ten to one. A third of the company were said to have been unmasked, 'the whole was managed with great order and decency', reports assured.⁴⁸ None of which prevented the censure that followed. By these readings, the thrills and attractions of this kind of entertainment were a gross kind of deception. With 'Virtue' as a guide the lurking danger behind all this apparent delight is revealed. This tour of the garden is of a paradise lost

⁴⁶ *Universal Spectator and Weekly Journal*, 3 June, 1732

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ *Daily Advertiser*, 21 June, 1732; *Gentlemen's Magazine*, June 1732

through temptation. 'The first of the four Fabricks she [Virtue] led me to was situate in a most delicious Garden; where as well as at the Windows were Multitudes of laughing, toying people of both Sexes...Nothing but Joy seem'd to reside amongst them...My Guide told me this was the House of Lust, and that Pain, Sorrow and Repentance harbour'd in the gloomy Recesses behind it'.⁴⁹ The association of the Ridotto with the Garden of Eden and fall of mankind through the temptation of Eve is made explicit in a piece in *Applebees Journal*;

Those who exclaim against polite Entertainments are apt to charge Masquerades with Novelty; but they are mistaken; and I find the contrary opinion supported by the famous Guevera, who in a sermon before the Emperor Charles V says "The Devil knowing the natural Curiosity of the Sex, and their Love of Finery, courted our Grandmother Eve in the gaudy Habit of a Serpent"...I was convinc'd that the Fall of Man was the Fruit of the first Masquerade; and considering the scene, the Garden of Eden, it may not improperly be stil'd a Ridotto al' Fresco.⁵⁰

Another piece has the birds in the trees, 'brute inhabitants' of the gardens, exercising clearer perspective and judgement than the masked cavorters stumbling blindly to their downfall, 'When they withdraw by Pairs, how many Snakes will lie conceal'd in the Grass?'.⁵¹

The marshalling of this kind of imagery against these garden masquerades, making explicit reference to the natural site and its associations of virtue compromised, mostly implicated women for indulging in such frivolous pursuits, warning of the temptations they would fall prey to. Certainly, in the face of all these criticisms levied and suspicions raised, it seems to have become difficult for women to attend unescorted without blighting their reputation. Reporting on the Vauxhall ridotto, an account in the *Daily Post* recognised the potential impact that these images might have, albeit defensively,

⁴⁹ *Weekly Register*, 17 & 24 June, 1732

⁵⁰ *Applebees Journal*, 24 June, 1732

⁵¹ *Applebees Journal*, 10 June, 1732

'The mean and malicious Artifices which were used, to give Apprehensions of Danger to the Ladies, either from the Outrage of the Populace, or Rudeness within Doors, happen'd to be entirely defeated; because no entertainment before this in England, was ever more quietly, decently, and magnificently continued'.⁵² That Tyers was sensitive to these reproaches, and that the negative press the ridotto received through association with masquerades might affect numbers and the reputé of the new venture is borne out by a change of tack in the advertising in an attempt to head off the criticism that masquerades provoked, 'By the Desire of several Persons of Quality and Distinction. The Entertainment of the Ball, or Ridotto Al' Fresco, at Spring-Gardens, Vaux-Hall, will be alter'd, on Wednesday the 21st Instant, to An Assembly, Where no Persons will be admitted without Tickets, or with Swords or Masks. The Diversions will be after the Manner of Bath and Tunbridge-Wells: With several Additions'.⁵³ It is interesting to note that the proceedings refer and defer to these provincial examples. At this early stage, when Tyers needed to rebuild the reputation of the gardens, it was evidently helpful to trade off the renown of these resorts and their well-established leisure facilities, and play down the depiction of this form of entertainment as a corruptive Italian import.

If the masquerade represented and offered scope for transgression, the opportunity encompassed homosexual and transsexual activity. Besides accounts that relate the presence of cross-dressing individuals at masquerades, town parks and gardens were used and identified as cruising grounds for same-sex encounters.

⁵² *Daily Post*, 9 June, 1732

⁵³ *Daily Post*, 12 June, 1732

Homosexuality

As already indicated, the promenades provided cover for liaisons in that they were popular social arenas in which to meet and talk freely and where one's idle presence could be conveniently framed as an innocent and righteous stroll to take the air and admire the beauties of nature. The opportunities provided for covert sex were equally applicable, and even more pertinent for homosexual experiences. One might suppose that the erotic undertones of the natural setting, and the privacy afforded by trees and bushes made for an environment particularly appealing in this respect; sociable and urban and yet also suitably secluded and rough-edged. Private space in which to meet and have sex was obviously important given the necessarily clandestine nature of these relationships. Parks and gardens were enclaves partially removed from the fabric of the town, both spatially and psychologically, but at the same time remained enough a part of the urban scene that they would be accessible to and known and frequented by others seeking same-sex contacts. Rants about sodomitical activity about the city were simultaneously advertising the places to go to interested parties. The anonymous pamphlet *Hell Upon Earth*, in detailing 'their Walks and Appointments, to meet and pick up one another' pin-points 'the Nocturnal Assemblies of great numbers of the like Vile Persons, what they call the Markets, which are the Royal Exchange, Lincoln's Inn Bog Houses, the South side of St James's Park, the Piazzas in Covent Garden, St Clements churchyard, etc.'. ⁵⁴ This identification of the major cruising grounds in London may well have been drawn from a front page editorial castigating sodomy in the *London Journal* the previous year, 1726, including Moorfields in the list of sites 'where they make their Bargains, and then withdraw into some dark Corners'. ⁵⁵ The Moorfields gained a particular notoriety, with

⁵⁴ Anon, *Hell Upon Earth; or the Town in Uproar* (1727), quoted in Patrick Higgins (ed.) *A Queer Reader* (London, 1993), p.86

⁵⁵ *London Journal, Or the British Gazeteer*, 7 May, 1726, quoted in Rictor Norton, *Mother Claps Molly House. The Gay Subculture in England 1700-1830* (London, 1992), p.66

the pathway in the upper fields becoming styled 'The Sodomites Walk'. St James's Park was the scene of the encounter in a number of cases brought against sodomites, most famously in the trial of Captain Rigby, who had picked up nineteen year old William Minton there in 1698. Apparently men frequenting Moorfields and St James's Park on the look-out for partners used a number of signs to help identify each-other. A guide to manners in high and low life of the 1780's noted that 'If one of them sits on a bench he pats the back of his hands; if you follow them, they put a white handkerchief through the skirts of their coat, and wave it to and fro; but if they are met by you, their thumbs are stuck in the armpits of their waistcoats, and they play their fingers upon their breasts'.⁵⁶ In 1757 a 'molly' charged with organising a prostitution service indicated that Kensington Gardens and 'the obscure Places in Hyde-Park' were other favoured sites.⁵⁷

Sodomy was perceived to be an 'unnatural and detestable Sin' in a wider sense than being an inversion of natural order, and non-procreative, a sterile spilling of seed.⁵⁸ It was also construed as unnatural in being a product of urban excesses, the outcome of the artifice and luxury and weakness that signalled a society (and nature) poisoned with artifice, politeness gone bad.⁵⁹ The masquerade, reputedly accommodating homosexuals and loose women, was merely a concentrated example.⁶⁰ In *Gullivers Travels*, those 'unnatural appetites', suspected amongst the Yahoos, are instead put down as 'entirely the productions of art and reason on our side of the globe'.⁶¹ In effect these estimations of

⁵⁶ From Randolph Trumbach, 'London's Sodomites: Homosexual Behavior and Western Culture in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Social History*, I, (Fall, 1977), p.15

⁵⁷ Norton, *Gay Subculture*, pp.58, 77, 44-5, 90, 169

⁵⁸ Anon, *Jubilee Masquerade Balls, at Ranelagh Gardens* (London, 1750), p.12

⁵⁹ This is illustrated in the association of the fop with an urbane affectation deemed effeminate that was increasingly assumed to indicate sodomitical tendencies, see Randolph Trumbach, 'The Birth of the Queen: Sodomy and the Emergence of Gender Equality in Modern Culture, 1660-1750', in Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus & George Chauncey Jr. (eds.), *Hidden from History. Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (London, 1991), pp.133-4

⁶⁰ 'How well calculated Assemblies of Persons disguised in Masquerades are for the carrying on this abominable Vice, need not be proved', *Jubilee Masquerade Balls*, p. 13

⁶¹ Jonathan Swift, *Jonathan Swift, Gullivers Travels* ed. Christopher Fox, (Boston/N.Y., 1995), book 4, p.240

homosexuality, as product of the urban environment and/or of nature gone wild, echo the nature/nurture debate. The association of nature in the town with homosexual activity again seemed to provide a microcosm of the delicate balance that was to be negotiated between civilization and the natural world, and the consequences of its upsetting.

Female access to nature in the town

Having considered the links between expressions of sexuality and town parks and gardens, the focus now shifts back onto gender, and how these associations and ideas of nature gendered were keyed into female use of these spaces. But before moving onto the final sections of the chapter, dealing with the types of representation of women in the town garden, it is worthwhile trying to build up some picture of female access to nature in the town. The principal difficulty here lies in the dearth of female voices on the subject, so that the account cannot lay any great claim to reflect female experiences of the town public garden. However, determining the presence and participation of women provides the context for reactions against this, and male anxieties over loss of control, extending a theme already broached in the section on masquerades.

Ironically, the natural associations of virtue and innocence that parks and gardens capitalised on and that were ultimately restrictive nonetheless played a significant part in promoting their acceptability for women in the first place, so that there need be little doubt that these spaces, and the pursuit of gardening, did provide a degree of freedom and opportunity for women in the town that would not otherwise have been theirs. The resort and leisure facilities of Bath apparently enabled women to be relatively free in their socializing, no longer 'reserved and inaccessible, but gentle and easy in their intercourse with strangers'. It seemed, to some male observers at least, that a spell in Bath lent women a particular kind of emancipation; 'In the first place, as Women they seek

compensation here in a month of liberty for the constraint and melancholy imposed upon them by the yoke of habit during the rest of the year in the capital...Women like to enjoy their rights, and if they are deprived of these by the injustice or the caprice of Men, by fashion or by prejudice, they make use of every means at their command to recapture them at the first opportunity'.⁶² Anstey's sharp satire, *The New Bath Guide*, picked up on this notion of the freedom from restraint that Bath permitted, with Miss Jenny writing to Lady Elizabeth confined at home, 'Forbid, by parents' harsh decree,/To share the joys of Bath with me./ Ill-judging parent! blind to merit,/Thus to confine a nymph of spirit!'.⁶³ Lady Luxborough was delighted to be able to walk around Bath unattended, 'And (what you will scarcely believe) we can offer you friendly solitude; for one may be an Anchorite here without being disturbed of the question Why?'.⁶⁴ During his stay John Penrose was moved to remark, 'It is inconceivable, what a number of Fine Ladies and Gentlemen (the Gentlemen far inferior in Numbers to the Ladies) pass before our Parlour Window, going to the Grand and South parades, which are the most public Walks'. He also relates that his daughter walked with Mrs Leigh about the city to Kingsmead and Queens Square, that Fanny and Mrs Penrose visited Prior Park, and that Fanny attended a public breakfast at the Spring Gardens in the company of Mrs and Miss Leigh. She also seems to have walked unescorted in Simpson's, formerly Harrison's Walks by the riverside, a privacy that Dudley Ryder records the ladies enjoying some fifty years earlier; 'After dinner I walked with the Ladies in Harrisons Walks, but they walked first alone, and Colonel Molesworth spoke to them as they were all alone in private, and told them it was a pity such fine creatures should conceal themselves from the world'.⁶⁵

⁶² L'Abbe le Blanc, *Lettres d'un Francois* (1745), vol. III, pp.312-313, quoted in A. Barbeau, *Life and Letters at Bath in the XVIII Century* (London, 1904), p.82

⁶³ Anstey, *New Bath Guide*, p.2

⁶⁴ Luxborough in a letter to William Shenstone in 1752, quoted in Marjorie Williams, *Lady Luxborough goes to the Bath* (Oxford, [1946]), pp.5-6

⁶⁵ Penrose, *Letters from Bath*, pp.29, 40, 45, 70, 133; Dudley Ryder, *The Diary of Dudley Ryder 1715-16* ed. William Matthews, (London, 1939), p.248

John Macky found a similar latitude on the walks of Tunbridge Wells, 'You engage with the Ladies at Play without any Introduction, only they do not admit of Visits at their Lodgings; but every Gentleman is equally received by the Fair Sex upon the Walks'.⁶⁶ In Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*, Melinda, a lady of fortune, and her maid Lucy walk together along the riverside in Shrewsbury's Quarry, enjoying free interaction and conversation with prospective suitors. Deering's account of Nottingham's walks and open spaces suited to and frequented by women indicates that these recreational pursuits were perfectly common. In London Swift commented on the large numbers of women frequenting St James's Mall in the evening.⁶⁷ Following one of his trips out to the Vauxhall Gardens, Pepys remarked upon 'two pretty women alone, that walked a great while', but not without hassles, 'discover'd by some idle gentleman, they would needs take them up; but to see the poor ladies, how they were put to it to run from them, and they after them; and sometimes the ladies put themselves along with other company, then the others drew back; at last the ladies did get off out of the house and took boat and away'.⁶⁸ Female interest in gardening and botany met with some encouragement. In 1739 the *Newcastle Journal* invited subscriptions for a course in botany to be run in the town, focusing on local flora and suitable for 'the Curious of Both Sexes'.⁶⁹ Horticultural advisers did not completely overlook a female readership, although on the whole they perpetuated flower gardening as the appropriate domain. Robert Furber's *Twelve Months of Flowers*, elaborate catalogues for his Kensington nursery, attracted one hundred and eighty female subscribers. The *Female Spectator* assured women that it was quite reasonable that they take an interest in gardening, and even to assist the male gardener in his work. In the 1750's ladies magazines imparted advice to their readers on nurturing flowers in season.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Macky, *Journey through England*, vol.I, p.90

⁶⁷ Swift, *Journal to Stella*, I, 15 May, 1711, p.270

⁶⁸ Pepys, *Diary*, VIII, 28 May, 1667, pp.240-1

⁶⁹ *Newcastle Journal*, 30 June, 1739

⁷⁰ Bell, 'Women Create Gardens', pp.476-478

The remainder of this chapter is not intended to categorically deny or re-affirm women's participation, but rather concentrates on the imagery constructed around female access to nature in the town. In Etherege's *She Wou'd if She Cou'd* two young women are chastised for their visit to the Mulberry gardens, at the head of St James's Park, 'without the Company of a Relation or some discreet body to justify your reputations'.⁷¹ Although town parks and walks appear to provide the space and opportunity for women to experience a degree of freedom of movement and social intercourse within an urban public forum, the language employed to *describe* women using these facilities draws on gendered concepts of nature to hedge their engagement as sexual/reproductive and/or domestic and ornamental. Representations of women within urban green space tend to gravitate towards images of purity, or rude and sullied sexuality. As the author of *St James's Park* put it, 'most of the ladies that walk here, being either of reputations above the hope of attainment, or below the gratification of it'.⁷²

Representations of women - predatory sexuality

'Then you are a Park-woman, certainly, and you will take it kindly if I leave you', Lady Flippant tells Lydia, in Wycherley's *Love in a Wood*, when she stops to talk with two gentleman.⁷³ The liberties that Lydia displays are cast as symptomatic of a lax morality, so that to be a park woman is to be of dubious character. Town parks and gardens provide a regular backdrop in seventeenth and eighteenth century literature. They were very popular social venues, after all. But the use of this setting also allowed for the exercising of conventional ideas on nature and gender characteristics, and for the making of clear points about what was natural and orderly, and artificial and aberrant about

⁷¹ George Etherege, *She Wou'd if She Cou'd* (London, 1668), p.25

⁷² P.Q., *St James's Park*, p.3

⁷³ Wycherley, *Love in a Wood*, p.24

society. Representations of women using and enjoying relative freedom in town parks, gardens and walks are run alongside warnings of the inherent threat of loss of control, and the particular destructiveness of untrammelled female sexuality. These exploit, implicitly or explicitly, the notion of women as dangerous temptresses, personified in the image of Eve. It is the male that is ascribed the ability to cast a discerning eye about, not just in terms of landscape, as discussed previously, but in sexual choice too, whilst the female was the observed. If a woman looked, then her exercising of something other than passivity in sexuality was depicted as potentially dangerous and predatory, threatening the natural order. This fitted within the context of what Lawrence Stone describes as the imperative on 'pre-marital chastity and post-marital monogamy'.⁷⁴ In his study of English sexualities, Tim Hitchcock sees a shift in social attitudes towards the middle of the eighteenth-century, exemplified in the representation of the prostitute, from the female as lustful, aggressive and the agent of her own downfall, to a model of passivity, manipulated by seductive males.⁷⁵ These stereotypes were articulated through and informed by conceptions of the natural environment as potentially wild and unruly, but increasingly pacified and contained, albeit within a guise of naturalness. The following depictions of women in town parks and gardens trade on the notion that females are naturally inclined towards an aggressive sexuality.

Many portraits of town parks, gardens and walks in the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century are based around revealing the real agenda behind female use of these spaces. Wycherley's female characters revel in the licence that St James's Park grants them after dark. Flippant consciously loses her female companion, 'for we women have always most courage when we are alone'. On encountering the coxcomb Sir Simon she dons her mask, and urges him to deal freely with her, 'I love of my life men should

⁷⁴ Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, p.315

⁷⁵ Tim Hitchcock, *English Sexualities, 1700-1800* (Basingstoke/London, 1997), pp.98-101

deal freely with me; there are so few men will deal freely with one... This is the time and place for freedom, Sir'.⁷⁶ Similarly, the character of Miss Forward, in *St James's Park* comments that were it not for the possibility and acceptability of walking in the park accompanied by two female friends 'I must sit all day at home...and scarce ever, but thro' a Window, see the Face of a Man that is not a-kin to me'. Sir Harry Peerabout enlightens his male companion as to the real motives of women frequenting the Park, disguised behind walking for pleasure and health;

Thou believest that nothing but taking the benefit of the fresh Air, brings so many tripping Fairies abroad-No, no, those high-crown'd Hats cover other designs. The Hours of Park-walking are times of perfect Carnival to the Women: She that wou'd not admit the Visits of a man without his being introduced by some Relation or intimate Friend, makes no scruple here to commence acquaintance at first sight...In short, no Freedoms that can be taken here, are reckon'd indecent.

This revelry amounted to an inversion of the usual order and constraint. The discussion continues, 'But do any Women of real Honour take these Liberties?', the reply, 'they pass for such among People that don't know the World'. The exercise of these freedoms is cast as suspect, sexualised and denigrated. Later in the text one gentleman muses 'Well, who wou'd suspect a Woman had any ill in her Head, in coming here for a Walk?', his companion concluding that the reason women favoured and frequented the park was 'because it carries so much the appearance of Innocence, yet at the same time has all the opportunities of Vice. Believe me, there are very few Ladies who walk constantly in the Park, without other views than the preservation of Health'.⁷⁷

The *Trip to Vauxhall* uses similar imagery. Here again the act of taking to the shades and groves is suggestive of more than just an innocent stroll. The supposed virtue and modesty of Fulvia is exposed, 'how demure she sits!/One Word indecent throws her into

⁷⁶ Wycherley, *Love in a Wood*, p.22

⁷⁷ P.Q., *St James's Park*, pp.7, 3, 57-8

Fits', and yet at displays of manhood 'her Eye-Balls roll, her Soul's on Fire./Nor Thames himself can quench her hot Desire'.⁷⁸ Critical observers invariably highlight the false virtue of the company at the Spring Gardens, hypocritically couched in a self-righteous package of physical and moral improvement. And so, they reveal, circuiting the walks is not really about quietly enjoying the natural charms of the gardens; 'The Ladies that have an Inclination to be Private, take delight in the close Walks of Spring Gardens, where both sexes meet, and Mutually serve one another as Guides to lose their way, and the Windings and Turnings in the little Wildernesses are so intricate, that the most Experienc'd Mothers have often lost themselves in looking for their 'Daughters'.⁷⁹ The female was so easily ensnared, and her downfall ensured, by the lure of freedoms and luxury, 'But pride of being great and gay /Tempt's her to deviate, by degrees,/From Virtue's Paths, and run astray/For gaudy plumes and lolling ease'.⁸⁰ The consequences of this licentiousness were dire, in a disapproving piece on women attending Ranelagh Gardens;

I will arise early and dress me in loose Apparel; I will go to the place of our Worship, and dance to the Sound of the Minstrel; I will give my Hand to the Man that I love, and shall forget my Husband and Brother, even my Family and Friends I will set at naught; for my Heart is set upon Pleasure, and my Soul abhorreth all Restraint.⁸¹

Rosamond's Pond was an area particularly associated with female sexualised use of St James's Park, trading off its private and comparatively semi-wild nature. This was apparently the site for assignations.⁸² Suspicions are therefore raised in a story related in the *Spectator* in 1712 in which a girl manages to give her overly restrictive father the slip, 'after above an hours search she returned of her self, having been taking a Walk, as she

⁷⁸ Anon, *A Trip to Vauxhall: Or, A General Satyr on the Times* (London, 1737), quoted in Coke, *The Muse's Bower*, pp.9-10

⁷⁹ Brown, *Amusements*, p.54

⁸⁰ Ward, *London Spy*, p.137

⁸¹ Anon, *The Ranelean Religion Displayed* (London, 1750), p.11

⁸² See Bond, *Tatler*, vol.I, 27 August, 1709, p.416 ; vol.II, 11 May, 1710, p.438

told me, by Rosamond's pond'. This single act of wilfulness is seen to undermine all the efforts taken by the gentleman regarding the protection of his eligible young daughter, forestalling her contacts and movements.⁸³ *Almonds for Parrots* speaks barbingly of females frequenting Rosamond's Pond, where a semblance of freedom carries the potential slur of sexual impropriety, 'Where Herds of happy Shes sometimes repair,/To take the Breezes of the Evening Air', but, within a few lines, 'Where Women do exchange themselves for Gold,/As Beasts at Smithfield are both bought and sold'.⁸⁴ The pond also acquired an association with female suicide, largely attributed to heartbreak, and playing up suggestion of the emotion, irrationality and danger inherent in female passion. It was filled in the 1770's.

The sexualised depiction of women in urban green space, in setting up scenarios of the dangerous, unleashed female, inverted the theme of male as hunter. Again it is the nature of the site that dictates the analogy. Hunting is ordinarily perceived to be a male province, a licence carried over to sexual choice, regardless of marital status. Mr Ranger heads for St James's Park 'upon some probable hopes of some fresh Game I have in chase', leaving his mistress at home so that 'she might not soil the scent and prevent my sport'.⁸⁵ But the same conduct by a female is presented as a good deal more destructive. In Joseph Browne's satire on St James's Park it is the male who is hunted down, 'the am'rous Spark,/That ev'ry Night is Martyr'd in the Park,...like a new-mark'd Deer...the Dart he can't remove...She blasts the Lover with her killing Eyes'.⁸⁶ The father reluctant to let his daughter Sally go off to the Forth in Newcastle, in *Easter Monday*, is worried about her reputation, 'She has been plaguing me, to permit her to go to the Forth; What has she to do at the Forth, amongst such a Number of rake-helly Catch-fortunes as are

⁸³ Bond, *Spectator*, vol.III, 26 February, 1712, p.125

⁸⁴ Anon, *Almonds for Parrots*, p.7

⁸⁵ Wycherley, *Love in a Wood*, p.11

⁸⁶ Browne, *St James's Park*, p.9

dandling there?'. The company are castigated as a 'detestable Nest of unclean Birds...see you don't associate with any of those abandoned Profligates, who are crawling there, like so many poisonous Serpents, to sting, nay bite, and eradicate the very Seeds of Virtue'. But in fact Sally is herself the temptress as well as the tempted, described as 'the littlest, wildest, wantonest, liveliest Thing that ever Man set Eyes on', stringing men along and breaking numerous hearts.⁸⁷ The recurring point was that courtship and sexual choice was a delicate business, conducted within a veneer of integrity and virtue that was easily tarnished by female forwardness, throwing into question their modesty and chastity. Whilst parks and gardens set up a natural backdrop of politeness and virtue to oil the machinations of the marriage market, it was felt that the necessary degree of levity was only precariously maintained on the right side of order, and that the natural inclinations of women, keyed into and taking advantage of the gardens' scope for untamed wildness, were apt to tip the balance. Along the promenades of St James's Park, 'Here's scarce one virtuous Maid in all the Pack...Give me the Girl of whom there is no dreading,/Who is not sent to Market for a Wedding;/'Tis dangerous venturing on the flirting fair,/Who walk for something else, than just for Air'.⁸⁸ In *A Trip to Vauxhall* it is not just the unmarried but the wives who are dissolute and predatory. 'The doating Cit here hugs his wanton Wife', but her attention falls elsewhere, 'to the Captain gives such am'rous Leers,/As shew her Heart in his, and not her Dear's./ Tho' to this Grocer but two Winters wed,/ Three 'Prentices at Home have shar'd his Bed;/Abroad Six honest Countrymen of mine,/And of the Army Blades some thirty-nine'. The grave danger here stemmed from the undermining of order and inheritance, 'Observe with what a fond paternal Care,/ yon courteous Knight beholds his Son and Heir,/...My Lady laughing in her Sleeve this while;/Casts on the real Dad an am'rous Smile'.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Anon, *Easter Monday*, pp.21-22, 10

⁸⁸ P.Q., *St James's Park*, p.xi

⁸⁹ Anon, *Trip to Vauxhall*, quoted in Coke, *Muses Bower*, pp.9-10

Whilst nature and female nature as fickle, unrestrained, and dangerously sexual was perceived as a threat to order and civility, alternatively, the framing of female/nature as retired, tame/d and aesthetically cultivated could be deployed to reinforce the projection of order and virtue.

Women as passive and as adornments

Corresponding with conceptions of the female character as private, modest and fashioned to please, women's relationship with nature in the town was also framed in a language of ornament and domesticity. The aspects of the natural world that conformed to this model were cultivated flowers and private gardens, and so these were the areas considered best suited to the female disposition. The danger lay in straying from this domestication, as Samuel Richardson complained of in 1752, 'the sex is generally running into licentiousness; when home is found to be the place that is most irksome to them; when Ranelaghs, Vauxhalls, Marybones, assemblies...and a rabble of such like amusements, carry them out of all domestic duty and usefulness into infinite riot and expense'.⁹⁰

It was better that the women amuse themselves in a more delicate and private manner, 'As they on Account of the Delicacy of their Fingers exceed us by far in many things which require a Nicety of Handling, so there is no Room for Doubt (would they set about it) but they might gather, dry and preserve Plants for a dry Garden to a much greater Perfection than any of our own Sex has hitherto done'. This would in turn furnish them with 'beautiful patterns for their curious Needlework', according to Deering's botanical compendium. The town of Nottingham was 'already blessed with one valuable Example of this Kind, an Ornament of her Sex, and most worthy of Imitation'. This woman, amusing herself at home with needle and flower bed, was a model of 'such female

⁹⁰ Richardson in a letter to Lady Bradshaigh, 17 August, 1752, quoted in Castle, 'Culture of travesty', p.178

society, where good Temper reigns and Detraction is a Stranger'.⁹¹ Charles Evelyn's gardening guide, *The Lady's Recreation*, is ostensibly supportive of active female involvement in gardening, but still articulates the gendered distinction to be drawn in interaction with the natural environment;

As the curious Part of Gardening in general, has been always an Amusement chosen by the greatest of Men, for the unbending of their Thoughts, and to retire from the World: so the Management of the Flower-Garden in particular is oftentimes the Diversion of the Ladies, where the Gardens are not very extensive, and the Inspection thereof doth not take up too much of their Time.

Once again, men are accorded an altogether more cerebral connection. The text itself, where it does specify the gender of its projected reader, addresses gentlemen, and by the conclusion the female audience has been decidedly relegated, 'I have now gone through the particular Branches of Gardening I propos'd, and I hope to the Satisfaction of all contemplative and ingenious Gentlemen, whose Favour only, with that of their fair Spouses, I desire'.⁹²

Since flower growing and arranging was recognised as part of the female domain of the decorative, male interest and involvement in this area was sanctioned by being given a public, clubbable, competitive and scientifically rationalised face. Deering considers the study of plants a princely study and promotes its elevation within the general spirit of enquiry as a worthy scientific pursuit rather than as a rustic commonplace, languishing in a limited female domain, 'the Business of Herbs is in many Places intirely left to Ignorant Women'.⁹³ Urban florists societies were certainly very popular pursuits for men. In 1747 an upcoming florists feast in Bath was pitched to 'all Gentlemen Florists', Norwich had a gathering for the 'Sons of Flora', and Newcastle's 'Annual Carnation Feast' of 1743

⁹¹ Deering, *Catalogus Stirpium*, To the Reader

⁹² Charles Evelyn, *The Lady's Recreation: Or, the Art of Gardening farther Improv'd*, 2nd. edn., (London, 1718), pp.1-2, 195

⁹³ Deering, *Catalogus Stirpium*, To the Reader

boasted of the 'largest Company of Gentlemen and Brother-Florists that was known for many years'.⁹⁴

As an adjunct to this perception of the female sphere of domestication and passivity, female nature was aligned with the aesthetic appeal of the chaste and pleasing landscape. Pastoral (and anti-pastoral) imagery pivoted around portraits of the natural world as benevolent, courtship as sweet and honourable and the women as obliging natural goddesses of beauty and virtue, 'Flora, goddess, sweetly-blooming,/Ever airy, ever gay,/All her wonted charms resuming/To Spring-Garden calls away...Here the queen of May retreats' (see fig.3.1).⁹⁵ Lockman deployed the conventions of the pastoral, of natural virtue, in his efforts to convey the moral integrity of the Vauxhall Gardens and the honour of the women in attendance. This was the realm of Diana, goddess of chastity, and Flora, of beauty and virtue. Henry Jones rehearsed the themes of harmony and order in his depiction of Shrewsbury Quarry, 'See, Severn, on your banks your daughters move / Daughters of virtue, elegance and love/Where blooming beauties with the graces blend...such blended charms the soul can never pall,/Where all Arcadia mingle with the Mall'. 'Salopian Maids' were fresh-faced and natural, 'For nature's happy pencil painted there,/And virtue keeps the lasting colours fair', while Salop's 'ruddy sons...bound exulting by the fair one's side/The comely Confort, or the future bride'.⁹⁶

The milkmaids stationed in St James's Park and dishing out glasses of milk fresh from the cow, and the depiction of milkmaids in the foreground of Buck's prospect of Nottingham also fitted within a pastoral reading of the landscape and womens place within it (see fig.7.4).

⁹⁴ *Bath Journal*, 25 May, 1747; *Norwich Gazette*, 12 July, 1729, & *Newcastle Journal*, 20 August, 1743, quoted in Duthie, 'English florists societies and feasts', pp.24-5

⁹⁵ Garrick Club, London, William Fraser Vauxhall Gardens scrapbook, on microfilm in London Guildhall, Mic.795, 4.6, John Lockman, 'Rural Beauty, or Vauxhall Gardens' songsheet

⁹⁶ Jones, *Shrewsbury Quarry*, pp.8-10



Fig.7.4 Jan Kip, 'View and Perspective of the town of London Westminster and St James's Park', c.1710-20 (section showing the milkmaids serving cups of milk fresh from the cow)

Charles Pythian-Adams's essay on the iconology of milkmaids and chimney sweeps in May Day celebrations in Stuart and Hanoverian London points out that milkmaids 'were sexually idealized by townsmen as the epitome of chastity, modesty and clean but hard country living', and that furthermore the milk they brought into the city stood for purity and health to contrast with the dirty and unhygienic produce associated with the city.⁹⁷ Just as the milkmaid could be envisioned as an aestheticised part of the natural scene, the women strolling up and down the promenades might be represented as passive, ornamental features of the parks and gardens, gazed on by male observers. In *A Trip from St James's* there is a gender distinction in the frequenting of the Mall, 'the Ladies to shew their fine Clothes and the product of their Toilet; the Men, to observe all the Beauties'.⁹⁸ This was the place 'where the Ladies in fine Weather display all their Ornaments', whilst the *London Spy* has it that court ladies 'walk into the Mall to refresh their charming bodies'.⁹⁹

Of course, as noted earlier, the supposed natural innocence and virtues of these sites and of the women that frequented them provided satirists with rich pickings. This was not, they revealed, the realm of Diana but rather of Venus, the goddess of passion, 'Now Venus in Vauxhall her altar rears,/While fiddles drown the Music of the spheres;/Now girls hum out their loves to ev'ry tree,/Young Jockey is the lad, the lad for me'.¹⁰⁰ These women were beguiling, bewitching, in the barbed acclamation of the *London Spy*;

the brightest stars of the Creation ... were moving here, with such an awful state and majesty that their graceful deportment bespoke 'em goddesses ... they were so free from pride, envy or contempt ... I could have gazed forever with inexpressible delight, finding in every lovely face and magnificent behaviour something still new to raise my

⁹⁷ Charles Pythian-Adams, 'Milk and Soot. The changing vocabulary of a popular ritual in Stuart and Hanoverian London', in Derek Fraser & Anthony Sutcliffe (eds.), *The Pursuit of Urban History* (London, 1983), p.99

⁹⁸ Anon, *Trip from St James's*, p.4

⁹⁹ Muralt, *Letters*, p.77; Ward, *London Spy*, p.135

¹⁰⁰ *Connoisseur*, vol.II, 15 May, 1755, p.147

admiration, with due regard to Heaven for imparting to us such shows of celestial harmony, in that most beautiful and curious creature, Woman.¹⁰¹

Saussure observed, in St James's Park, that 'many priestesses of Venus are abroad, some of them magnificently attired, and all on the look-out for adventures, and many young men are not long in repenting that they have become acquainted with such beautiful and amiable nymphs', yet another reminder offered up of the lasciviousness that lurked beneath seemingly decent and appealing exteriors.¹⁰² The vamp, converse of the innocent and passive female, was never far away. Exploiting the natural setting of park and garden, the imagery of untainted natural bounty could be twisted into a sexualised landscape of female ripeness and fruitfulness. Back in St James's Park, Sir Harry thunders 'Look about thee, Man! Cast thy Eyes yonder on that Cluster of Belles; fresh, ruddy, plump, and ripe as Corn in August wanting the Reapers Sickle'.¹⁰³ The language is resonant with the male taming and shaping of the feminized landscape articulated in garden and landscape literature, as discussed in the nature gendered section. In *The Citizen of the World* Goldsmith describes 'the virgins of immortality that hang on every tree, and may be plucked at every desire...As for virgins, cries my friend, it is true, they are a fruit that don't much abound in our gardens here; but if ladies as plenty as apples in autumn, and as complying as any *houry* of them all can content you, I fancy, we have no need to go to heaven for Paradise'.¹⁰⁴

And so the undercurrent of temptation, Eve falling away from paradisaical nature, is woven into descriptions of female virtue. In Lockman's eulogistic *Sketch*, 'the Maid to whom Honour is dear,/Uncensur'd may take off her Glass;/And stray among Beaux

¹⁰¹ Ward, *London Spy*, pp.135-6

¹⁰² Saussure, *Foreign View of England*, p.48

¹⁰³ P.Q., *St James's Park*, pp.1-2

¹⁰⁴ Oliver Goldsmith, *Goldsmith, Selected Works* ed. Richard Garnett, (London, 1967), p.423

without Fear,/No Snake lurking here in the Grass'.¹⁰⁵ The sheen of rural innocence and order is easily tarnished, or reveals its darker underside, 'Several gentlemen of finesse and ladies of delicatessen complaining of intolerable hot days, have agreed that the fields are wonderfully charming about twelve at night; but let them beware there be no snakes in the grass'.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

The main contention of this chapter has been that town parks, gardens and walks served as a medium for natural imagery that consequently had a bearing on the representation of gender roles and expressions of sexuality in the town. The conceptions of nature summoned in the garden, as discussed here and elsewhere in this thesis; those of virtue, spirituality, order, fertility, wildness and rudeness, were keyed into and used to articulate gender distinctions, and influenced the way that urban green space was represented as applicable to men and women. According to these conventional alignments, women were closer to nature, encompassing what was seen as its morality, beauty, passivity and fecundity yet at the same time reflecting its ambiguity in the capacity for untamedness. Masculinity, meanwhile, implied rationality, cultivation and control, as well as aggression and corruption, characteristics that were associated with culture or civilisation, and that were suggestive of and embodied in the city and its public, economic and cultural life. Carried over to the landscape, the male was credited with the ability to order and comprehend, whilst female engagement was considered delimited by an inherent inability to exercise the required detachment and thus elevated appreciation. Furthermore, the prescribed correct means of reading and engaging with nature and

¹⁰⁵ Lockman, 'The Adieu to the Spring-Gardens', 1735, reprinted in *Sketch*, p.28

¹⁰⁶ *The Female Tatler* ed. Fidelis Morgan, (London, 1992), 8-10 August, 1709, p.38

natural scape was constructed around a male oriented literary, artistic, and increasingly scientific education.

The chapter has illustrated the ways in which these alignments were deployed in accounts of male and female interaction with nature in the town, and in the social use of town parks, gardens and walks. This inevitably raises the thorny question of the impact that these images may have had on behaviour and access to nature in the town, following on from the previous chapter concerning attempts at intellectual and physical appropriation. The issue of the significance and influence of representations was something first addressed in the (re)presenting nature chapter. In its discussion of the difficulties inherent in drawing a clear line between image and reality, chapter 2 was not asserting that historical attempts to deduce what happens on the ground are automatically futile, but rather that the potency of imagery needs to be accommodated within this. This is especially pertinent with regards a subject like gender and natural imagery. A great deal of feminist and eco-feminist work has been in response to and/or reacting against restrictive representation derived from nature/gender associations. In the same way that natural imagery is deployed as a conservative means of affirming and endorsing the status quo, the female domain of reproduction, privacy and restraint is rooted in what is natural.

Accordingly, private gardens were presented as suited to female involvement in being an extension of the domestic realm, and a harmless distraction. Public town parks, gardens and walks posed a different dilemma. As social forums, and important courtship arenas, a certain degree of freedom was necessary, but within bounds. And so here again is the problematic of ensuring free interaction and yet avoiding corruption as discussed in chapters 5 and 6. And again, distinctions in levels of interaction with the natural world are deployed. Although women were able to access these urban public spaces, the *nature* of the site, whilst providing a degree of freedom of movement and expression in

suggesting virtue and modesty, was simultaneously used to articulate the boundaries of this freedom. The ideas and images of nature given currency via these garden sites served to hedge their engagement, characterising it as domestic, private and reproductive. The image of urban female in town parks, gardens and walks is essentially passive, ornamental, and/or sexual. Her participation in and access to this aspect of urban public and social life is rendered suspect if not couched in a suitably controlled framework of passivity and domesticity. The slur of sexual impropriety, of questionable reputation, was marshalled against women moving beyond the domestic realm, into the city, public space, male territory. It is clear that this chapter is trading in themes that have recurred throughout this thesis, those of the ambiguous imagery of nature, of the manipulating of the style and representation of nature in the town, of access to urban green space and its projection of harmony and yet articulation of distinction, and the concept of boundaries. These overarching themes will now be highlighted and the main strands of the thesis pulled together in the epilogue.

Epilogue: Pacing the boundaries

This thesis has looked at ways that ideas of nature were expressed through the medium of parks, gardens and walks, and interacted with and impacted on the town. It has shown that urban parks, gardens and walks occupy a buffer zone, a transitional meeting ground of town and surrounds. Under negotiation are the boundaries between the urban fabric and the 'natural' environment, an interaction in turn expressive of the perceived relationship between nature and culture/civilisation. The path trodden between nature and the town within these arenas fits within and contributes to the bigger picture of contemporary conceptions of the natural world and humankind's place within it. The notion of 'rus in urbe' stands as a key articulation of the character of this relationship. Representations of urban parks, gardens and walks reflect and respond to the intimacy of nature and the town meeting face to face, trading off the different images and associations that these environments summon. And so these sites need to be read not just as neutral spaces where people happened to congregate within the context of other urban social facilities, but as a means by which nature, in all its complexities, was brought into direct dialogue with an urban physical and social setting.

In the Introduction I indicated that the contours of this thesis were sketched from a suburban perspective. The ground paced is the ground commonly passed over in favour of the certainty of town and countryside as habitats and as compass points in the imagination. Inbetween is a shifting terrain, an interface of environments defined by what it is not, neither city nor countryside, but more a compromise settlement. The liminality of this territory has been a recurrent motif within this thesis. Nature in the town is, on many levels, a marginal subject. This has been evident from the outset, in trying to locate this research within traditional disciplinary frameworks. As a subject, town parks, gardens and

walks slip between the parameters of urban history and garden history and so are peripheral to both. In focusing this research on urban greening, these two fields have been drawn together, allowing for a more holistic approach that has opened up ground for me to explore the ways in which the town and the wider landscape were mutually interactive and influential. The town was, after all, an increasingly prominent part of the English physical and mental landscape from the seventeenth century. That urbanisation, in terms of both urban growth, identity and cultural vitality, is one of the key contributory factors in the fashioning of attitudes towards the natural world has been a principal tenet of this thesis. But, likewise, my thesis has found that ideas about nature were influential in the form and shape of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century English town. The impact of the expansion of conurbations and an increasingly urbanised population has certainly been given prominence in accounts of the interaction of nature and the town focused on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Retrospectively, it is the concentrated urbanisation and industrialisation of the late eighteenth century onwards that is recognised as crucial in generating the responses to environment exemplified by the romantic movement, the growth of the suburbs, and Victorian parks. But, in concentrating on the century up to 1760, this thesis addressed the significance of the early modern town, highlighting the scale and influence of urban greening substantially earlier than is generally credited, in the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century. More broadly, it has emphasised the impact that this period of marked growth and change had on attitudes towards the natural world, and the palpable urban sense of distinction from what was perceived as natural that fuelled the drive to re-connect with 'nature'. And so the value of this thesis, in dwelling on what has been portrayed as a peripheral subject matter, lies in underlining just how important urban attitudes are and the urban environment has been in shaping our experience and perceptions of the natural world. In turn, the thesis has asserted the influence of these perceptions on the topographical and cultural landscape of the town.

This conclusion reflects the importance of the boundary as a principal theme throughout this thesis, and is oriented around the concept of the ha-ha serving as a

fitting metaphor for the substance of this research. The effect achieved by the ha-ha in eighteenth century landscape/garden design is reflective and forms a part of a wider contemporary preoccupation, namely the impulse towards smoothing over partition at the same time as maintaining a divide. The ha-ha is a consummate manifestation of this desire, representing the endeavour to extend an impression of harmony, order and propriety beyond the contained foreground and out over the wider scape whilst seeking to restrict the flow of unruliness back into the inner sanctum. David Nicholson Lord, in his work on the greening of twentieth century cities, asserts that 'the spread of the ha-ha is an event of underestimated importance in the story of men's attitudes to nature'.¹ The invisible barrier keeps the potentially wild out whilst pedalling an illusion of openness, endeavouring, as Horace Walpole put it, to 'not draw too obvious a distinction between the neat and the rude'.² This is not just a landmark in garden design, but encapsulates the lionising of nature and fashioning of landscape to convey the impression that everything is fine, pleasing and controllable. The imagery of an harmonious relationship between humanity and the environment carries over to the boundary between town and country, and the desire to bridge the rift perceived because of, and aggravated by, the processes of urbanisation. The drawing of nature into the town, visually and spatially, is an expression and product of this need to pacify and reassure. Town parks, gardens and walks act as intermediaries, arenas in which a natural setting can be conveniently paced and, commonly, from which rural environs can be seen, but all from a safely detached perspective, contained, aestheticised, and not without bounds. In this sense, these sites represented ideal, accommodating terrain for the experiencing of a greater naturalism. The natural environment craved was not, after all, dirty, dangerous and rude, but a sanitized urban version of rurality, a sheltered, bright and orderly 'natural' enclave. These peripheral town parks and gardens act as a filter, open windows on the countryside that avoid getting mud on ones' shoes. The town dweller is literally

¹ Lord, *Greening of the Cities*, p.31

² Walpole, *Horace Walpole*, p.137

sitting on the fence, with one foot safely in the ordered and civil confines of the town, but with scope enough for the eye and the imagination to roam across a pleasantly detached informal natural scape. Forays beyond the bounds of the town, by carriage out to take the air, into box villas on the outskirts, do not much more than extend this urban perspective out into the countryside itself. The *Connoisseur* mocked the increasing fashion for securing a residence on some green site out of the city as a metropolitan rurality, 'Tis not the country, you must own/'Tis only London out of town'.³

If there is a current running through all this, it is that a marginal position is not an inconsequential one. Quite the reverse. A boundary is, after all, a defining point. Identity is forged through the establishment of limits, the setting of parameters. The dividing line between humanity and the natural creation is the tested and shifting boundary that shapes our world view, in magic, religion, science, geography. Keith Thomas discusses the importance of this boundary in terms of distinctions drawn between mankind and the animal kingdom.⁴ It is similarly the dividing line between nature and civilisation that is exercised in the symbolism and lure of the frontier. Lord refers to 'the increasing inability of human beings to find emotional significance in bounded space. Hence the progression from the medieval walled garden, with its sense of privileged enclosure, to the American national park, where the emphasis is specifically on the absence of walls'.⁵ The 'constant drive to the edge' conjures a 'middle ground between corrupt civilisation and chaotic wilderness' that holds the promise of a fresh start, redemption. It is a compulsion redolent of the urge to identify and recreate a lost harmony, to recapture Eden. But, as David Watson writes in an article on the frontier spirit, 'The romance of the horizon is a mirage', acting like pastoral landscapes in seeking to avoid 'the realities of urban growth and agricultural

³ *Connoisseur*, vol.I, no.33, 17 September, 1754, p.152

⁴ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, pp.36-41

⁵ Lord, *Greening of the Cities*, p.31

capitalism/enclosure'.⁶ The developing 'obsession with distant vistas' forms a part of and advances 'a fixation with unexplored frontiers and far horizons', but as 'wilderness...becomes vastly oversubscribed' the quest for a more authentic meeting ground between humankind and the natural world is extended ever outwards.⁷ The premium on identifying and exercising refined appreciation of natural landscapes, and seeking a temporary or partial removal from the urban world is still intact, but as these rarefied spaces become popular with and accessible to a wider audience, the yen to achieve a superior detachment fuels the drives out to increasingly far flung and/or selective destinations. In this sense, the imperatives behind the creation of urban parks and gardens in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries relate to and are significant within the overall schema of the negotiation between humanity and environment as well as informing subsequent urban development. In seeking to marry the advantages of town and accessible nature the suburb, like the garden city, inherits the mantle of striving towards a harmonious meeting ground of built and natural environment, nature and civilisation that was exhibited in and advanced by these town parks, gardens and walks.

Over and over, the themes dealt with in this thesis have been of boundaries, both physical and imaginary. Chapter 2 immediately confronted a line of demarcation in terms of the distinction commonly drawn between image and reality in the pursuit of history. Throughout this thesis I have intermingled so-called fictional and factual sources in recognition of the difficulties inherent in championing the validity of one representation over another, particularly when dealing with a subject so prone to manipulation whilst purporting to be 'true to nature'. Flagging certain images as not real not only begs the question as to which *are* real but also serves to detract from the significance and impact of those representations. Tracing the greening of English towns is very much about appraising the potency of imagery, about how perceptions

⁶ David Watson, 'On the Road to Nowhere', *New Internationalist* (April, 1995), pp.20-22

⁷ Lord, *Greening of the Cities*, pp.32, 35

of urban and natural environmental attributes and cultural characteristics interleave with the laying out and ordering of nature in the town. And yet all the readings and meanings that the thesis has identified and constructed still amount to a manipulation of nature. My own treatment of the subject re-affirms the apparent passivity of nature as a tool in discussing it as a social construct. In spite of the fact that the whole thesis has been involved in tracking the layers of meaning that frame experiences of nature, I am still instinctively resistant to what might seem the logical conclusion, that nature is only what we make it. Something remains, something intrinsic about nature that does not only take on presence in being socially constructed. A tree is, after all, a tree, beyond the meaning projected onto it.⁸

This chapter also introduced the ambiguity inherent in representations of nature and the town, and the tension between the contained and unrestrained that informs these. These representations do not function in a purely one-dimensional way, whereby the natural world signifies harmony and virtue keeping check on the excesses of civilisation. In looking at the contrary images of urbanism and rurality that inform the moulding and depiction of nature in the town, the chapter signalled the kind of imagery that undercut the crafting of urban green space as an expression of concord and good taste. The second section of the chapter considered the ways in which readings of nature in the town were constructed. It addressed the visual interaction of nature and the town, from rural environs overlooking the town, from within the fabric of the town looking out over the surrounding countryside, and within urban parks and gardens, in which the eye is bridging divides between built and natural settings. As a contact point between urban and rural the topographical limit of the town is recognised as a site of elevated perspective, where both the body of the town and the wider landscape comes into view and where their defining characteristics, topographically and as milieus with self-consciously distinct identities, are mapped.

⁸ See Clare Fisher, 'The geographies of craft production in west Wales', unpubl. PhD, University of Wales, Lampeter, 1997, esp. chapter 3 and the epilogue

In this sense, the boundary is perceived as a cognitive point, from which to observe and determine how town and country/civilisation and nature diverge, and how they interrelate. Occupying the high ground, with perspective over the town and its environs, provided a means by which to distinguish oneself amidst the urban scrum. The cultivating of what might be called the landscape way of seeing in relation to nature in the town was associated with the ability of overview and abstraction, therefore suggesting both detachment and a superior understanding and regard for the environment in its physical and social make-up. Parks, gardens and walks provided a convenient means by which to declare one's elevation above narrow urban interests and insight into the true nature of things, conferring social prestige on those possessed of this refined perspective.

Chapter 3 tracked along the fringes of the town detailing the setting out of these parks, gardens and walks. The sections of this chapter on their development and styling articulated a clear responsiveness to the physical and cultural context of the town that underlined the point that these spaces deserve particular attention, not just as gardens that happen to be in towns, or as urban leisure facilities that happen to be gardens, but as sites with a distinct identity. Here the primary contention was that these sites were not at the tail end of developments in garden and landscape design and cultural responses to nature, but played a key role in motivating and expressing the shift in favour of nature in its negotiation with civilisation. It was in the city, after all, that the distinction between the man-made and natural environment was most apparent, and felt most acutely. Whether characterised as rational, public, and civilised and/or polluted, claustrophobic and materialistic, the processes of urbanisation experienced from the late seventeenth century had the effect of encouraging the taste for a greater naturalism, and stimulated the desire to both draw nature into the town, and open up vistas from the town over the surrounding countryside. These extended sightlines form a tangible expression of the impulse towards forging and affirming a harmonious connection between the human and

natural estate. The principles embodied in this found their most potent expression in the practical form of the ha-ha in the garden estate. And, referring back to the points made earlier about the lure of the horizon, this vaulting of the town walls and promenading along the fringes of the town fits within and represents an important stage in this shift of perspective outwards.

In its review of the bodies responsible for the laying out and ordering of nature in the town chapter 4 also identified a responsiveness to the particular physical and cultural milieu of the town at the same time as a desire to trade off and incorporate the aesthetic attributes of garden/landscape. Both the company frequenting these sites, in being a mix of urban residents and landed visitors, and the bodies responsible for their development and management signal a path trodden between urbane recreational facility, and garden scape deliberately cultivated as evocative of rural estate and a pastoral, orderly and unspoiled world. However, the disjunction between the preferred image and the imposition of civility, harmony and order, and the random behaviour and individuality that comes with public access to these sites also becomes evident as efforts are made to police conduct, a theme given prominence in chapter 6.

Chapter 5, 'Middle ground', dealt explicitly with the theme of balance between the built and natural environment, primarily in terms of physical and moral well-being. Here the representation and use of nature in the town was situated within a wider framework of constitutional balance in which nature is the absolute standard from which the true order of things might be divined, and equilibrium achieved. Applied to the town, nature was imagined to have a positive and moderating influence, helping to create a refined urban environment, and offsetting the potential ills of civilisation in general and urbanisation in particular. This incorporated the idea of green space, and the associated components of air and water, cleansing the body of the town dweller as well as the physical fabric of the town itself; the tempering of excessive civility and artificiality by recourse to a natural model of ease and innocence; and the

enshrining, in the symbolic oasis of the garden, of virtue, spirituality, and order to override a lurch towards sin, profanity and anarchy in the city. During a period of urban growth and change, the development and frequenting of public space helped to offset disquiet at the individualistic and materialistic character of the town, and foster a sense of collective interest and social harmony.⁹ The evolution of this enlightened ideal, of the declaration of public spirit over private interest, was significantly reinforced by the use of parks, gardens and walks as urban public forums. Squares and collective residential gardens were of particular value in this respect, in that they managed to communicate an impression of communality and public good whilst remaining private and enclosed spaces. The ambivalence between the public and private function and use of these sites, and other public parks and gardens, lies not just in them simultaneously providing private and contemplative space and accommodating urbane sociability, but in also representing a public sphere actually constructed around a delimited notion of public. This is a theme pertinent to both chapters 6 and 7, effectively dealing with the definition and hedging of ostensibly public space. Whilst being deployed as means of articulating social distinction, parks and gardens were projects that could be represented as very much in the public, or general interest, improving the physical and moral constitution of the town and the town dweller. To step into these natural enclaves was imagined as embracing something beyond economic self-interest, beyond the tarnish of the everyday, to connect with something timeless. By playing up this aspect of ageless order they also served as excellent devices in offsetting the realities of rapid change, especially reassuring in these towns during a period of marked urbanisation and the attendant upheavals caused by demographic expansion and population influx, economic growth, and intensified building. In this way these representations of nature in the town traded on what Cosgrove calls the 'inherent conservatism' of the 'landscape idea, in its celebration of property and of an unchanging status quo, in its suppression of tension between groups...conservatism in presenting an image of natural and social

⁹ See Neale, *Bath*, pp.8,11

harmony'.¹⁰ On the basis of the appropriation of natural imagery as emblematic of superior quality, and harmonious order, the deployment of greenery and marshalling of such environmental criteria as good air and water emerged as influential factors in the social organisation of space within the town. The most desirable residential districts became the leafy, airy, spacious parts of town, capitalising on the associated moral and physical advantages suggested. But the desire for the refinement that was derived from circulation, both in terms of physical flows of air and water to purify the town, and of the social interaction that was necessary to polish the individual, and allowed one to see and be seen, also required careful management if it was to avoid becoming tainted. The negotiation between the appearance of unrestricted and harmonious interaction, and yet the retention of points of differentiation formed the background to the following chapter on contested access to town parks, gardens and walks.

Chapter 6 carried over and developed the points first made in chapter 2 concerning the use of nature as a means of articulating status in towns. The appeal of natural imagery as a marker of incontestable quality was particularly potent in an urbanising environment characterised as transient and worldly. The town was also considered to be a social environment increasingly vulnerable to the dilution of status through the malleability of identity and the crush of the nouveau riche, all trying to find ways to fix and announce their social standing. Private gardens were used to convey the translation of wealth into good taste, whilst in public gardens and walks one's ability to exercise learned and dignified appreciation of the natural surroundings was pitched as a mark of quality and refinement. The identification and derision of those who were deemed unable to engage in this way was used as a means of social demarcation. Again this conjures the core ambiguity of nature in the town, as expressed in the notion of ha-ha as boundary, whereby parks and gardens are seen to articulate both harmony and division or distinction. This parallel functioning is typical of the

¹⁰ Cosgrove, 'Prospect, perspective and the evolution of the landscape idea', p.58

boundary, where the most effort is expended in securing and yet blurring the limits. In this socio-political dimension to the smoothing over of division, 'rus in urbe' is marshalled not just as symbol of harmony between humankind and the natural world, town and country, but is also deployed to project an impression of harmony in social relations. This image of concord is constructed around a canon of supposedly shared and immutable values based on what is natural, and the depiction of town parks, gardens and walks as sites of virtue and order. And yet the surface appearance of openness and cohesion masks a policing of division according to levels of appreciation and engagement with nature and a willingness to conform to the polite, virtuous conduct that is designated natural. Correct or elevated ways of ordering and interacting with town parks and gardens are prescribed according to a model of virtue and harmony derived from the *nature* of the site. In illustrating this, the 'Keeping off the grass' chapter focused on the distinctions drawn between appropriate and inappropriate usage. Walking in an orderly manner along the paths was suitably restrained and deferential, running or lolling on the grass was not. Likewise, use of urban green sites and a relationship with nature identified as irrational, rude, superstitious, irreverential, boisterous and unruly that did not appear to display an informed, aesthetic regard for the finer points of nature was castigated and/or suppressed. The designation of what constitutes natural, and therefore good and rooted in a timeless order, is clearly a key factor in all this. In defining what is natural, the criteria for what might be deemed unnatural are also established, and so nature is wielded as a tool of exclusion as much as one of harmony.

This deployment of nature as a means of exclusion as well as harmony is demonstrated further in chapter 7, on the subject of gender and sexuality in town parks and gardens. Women, as well as the vulgar, were represented as being too close to nature to be able to enjoy true perspective of it, the kind that bespoke and lent authority and superiority. The account of the application of natural imagery to create and reinforce gender stereotypes in the town keys into feminist and ecofeminist work

on the way that gender roles are 'naturalised' to hedge behaviour, and gendered characteristics are grafted onto the landscape. An impression of harmonious relations and inviolable order was maintained by couching female use of these sites in the imagery of natural virtue, passivity, fruitfulness and aesthetic appeal. Deviations from this were represented as violating the natural order and unleashing a wildness that demanded restraint. Accounts of sexual levity in parks and gardens, drawing on a natural imagery of eroticism and unruliness, present an alternative imagery and use of these sites that appears to challenge the model of orderly refinement. Playing on the distinction between versions of nature, portrayals of indiscipline and sin, as well as the swarming of indiscriminate crowds within town public parks and gardens appear more damning for the contrast they highlight with that more idealised gardenesque imagery of harmony and refinement. Here, the nature of these sites offers an alternative to the rational, restrained and public town in conjuring images of wildness, disorder and sexuality. In the section on lighting parks, gardens and walks, chapter 3 discussed how the dark and cover of the garden site provided a degree of privacy, whilst chapter 6 identified efforts to contain disorder and banish the coarse, rough-edged aspect of nature from the town. The masquerading and covert sexual, including homosexual, activity detailed in chapter 7 was also couched in terms of an affront to the civilised public order of the town, and a dark warning of the dangers of nature and human nature left unchecked. And yet this negative imagery, in being cast around town parks and gardens, acted conversely as a reinforcement of order and virtuous conduct derived from what was 'natural' in defining anti-social behaviour as that which ran against this. So, for example, depictions of homosexual use of parks and walks as cruising grounds highlight its aberration and violation in setting it within the contrasting frame of 'natural' refinement, order and public civility. Furthermore, the use of parks and gardens as places of recreation meant that a certain degree of freedom could be accommodated, draining away tensions within the urban environment, but these temporary transgressions were still exercised within bounds, within the fixed and controllable limits of the garden site.

Driving the wild, sexual, and unruly out of the bushes was not only a matter of imposing order on a localised scale, but operated against the contemporary backdrop of a increasing confidence in managing the natural environment and in particular containing its dark and uncontrollable side. Scientific advances were geared towards comprehending and manipulating the natural world, an outlook mirrored in landscape and garden design and appreciation. Eighteenth-century enlightened sensibility nurtured belief in the ability to improve the human habitat and improve on human nature and society. These factors fuse in the self-conscious blending of urban and rural in town parks, gardens and walks. The crafting of these sites displayed conviction in the forging of perfectly balanced terrain, in which the virtues of nature might complement the civility, convenience and sociability of the town. Such attempts at (re)creating a harmonious interaction of nature and humankind/civilisation, and at imposing decency and order through the medium of carefully constructed parks, gardens and walks form the direct antecedents to Victorian investment in peoples parks as urban panaceas, and the utopian garden city visions of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries discussed in the introduction. The urban parks, gardens and walks of the late seventeenth and eighteenth century are staging posts in the move to the edge of the town, in pursuit of a halfway house, which brings me back full circle to the suburb from where I set out.



Appendix

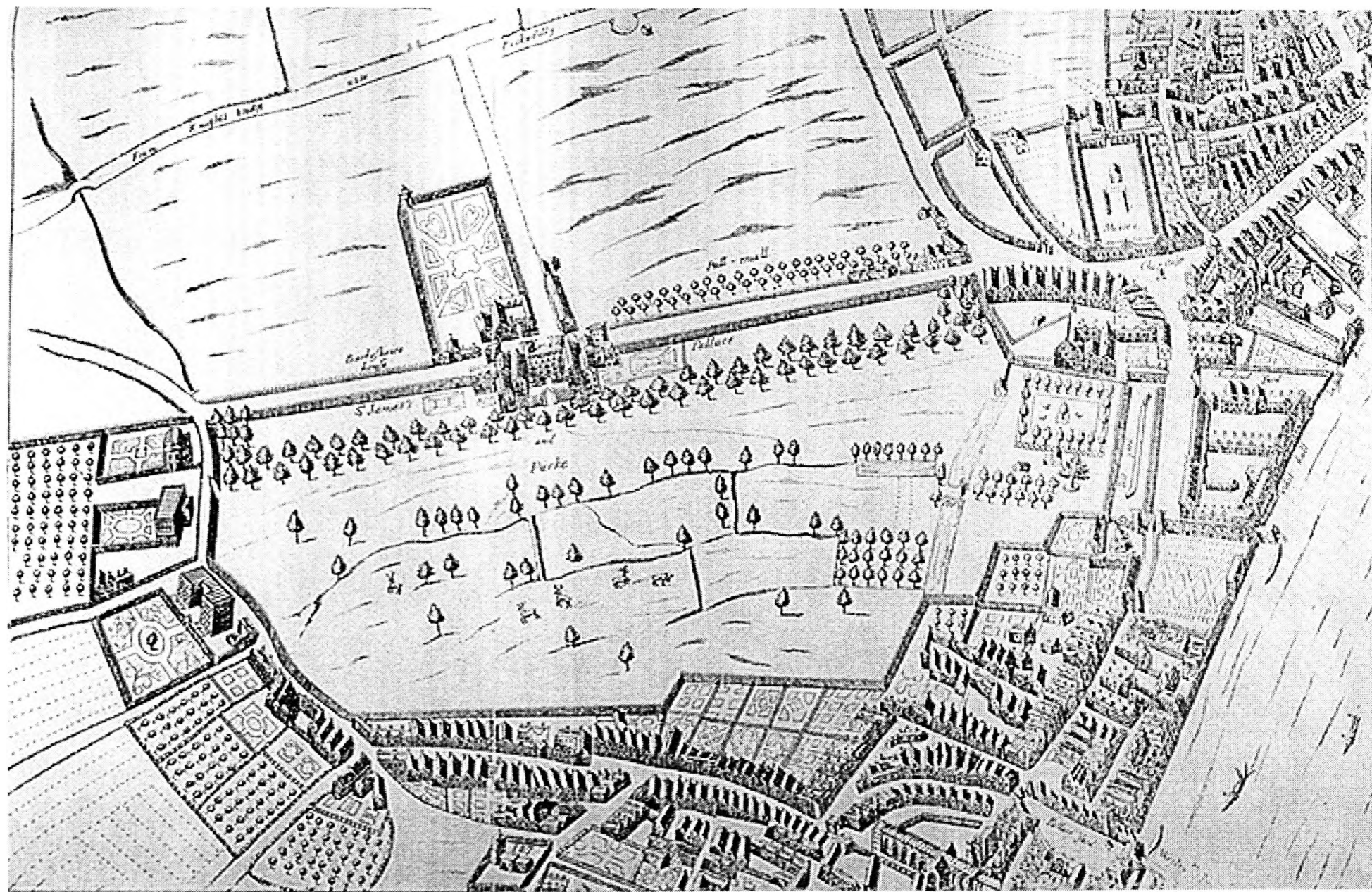


Fig.9.1 Faithorne & Newcourt, Map of St James's Park. 1643-7

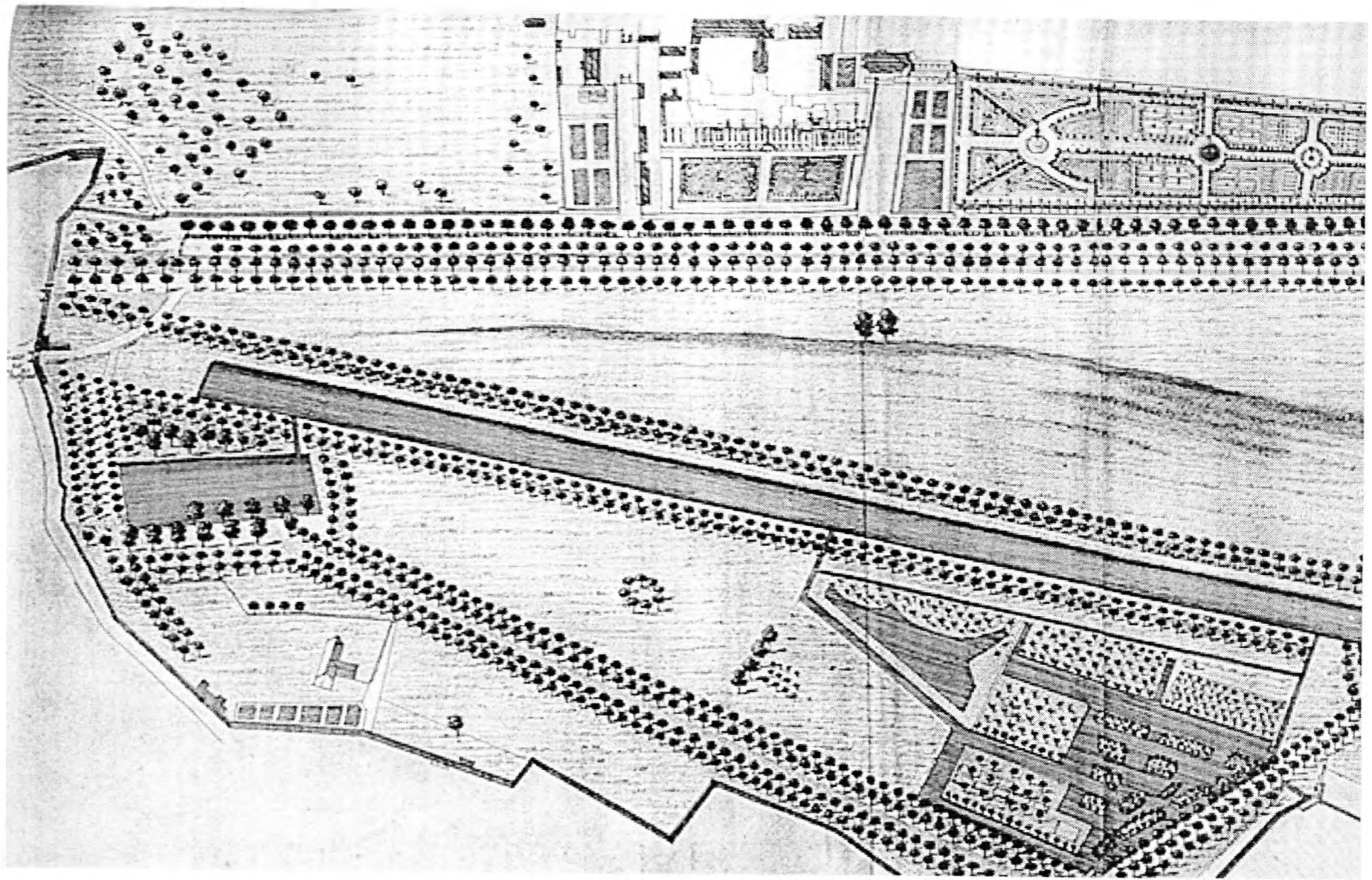
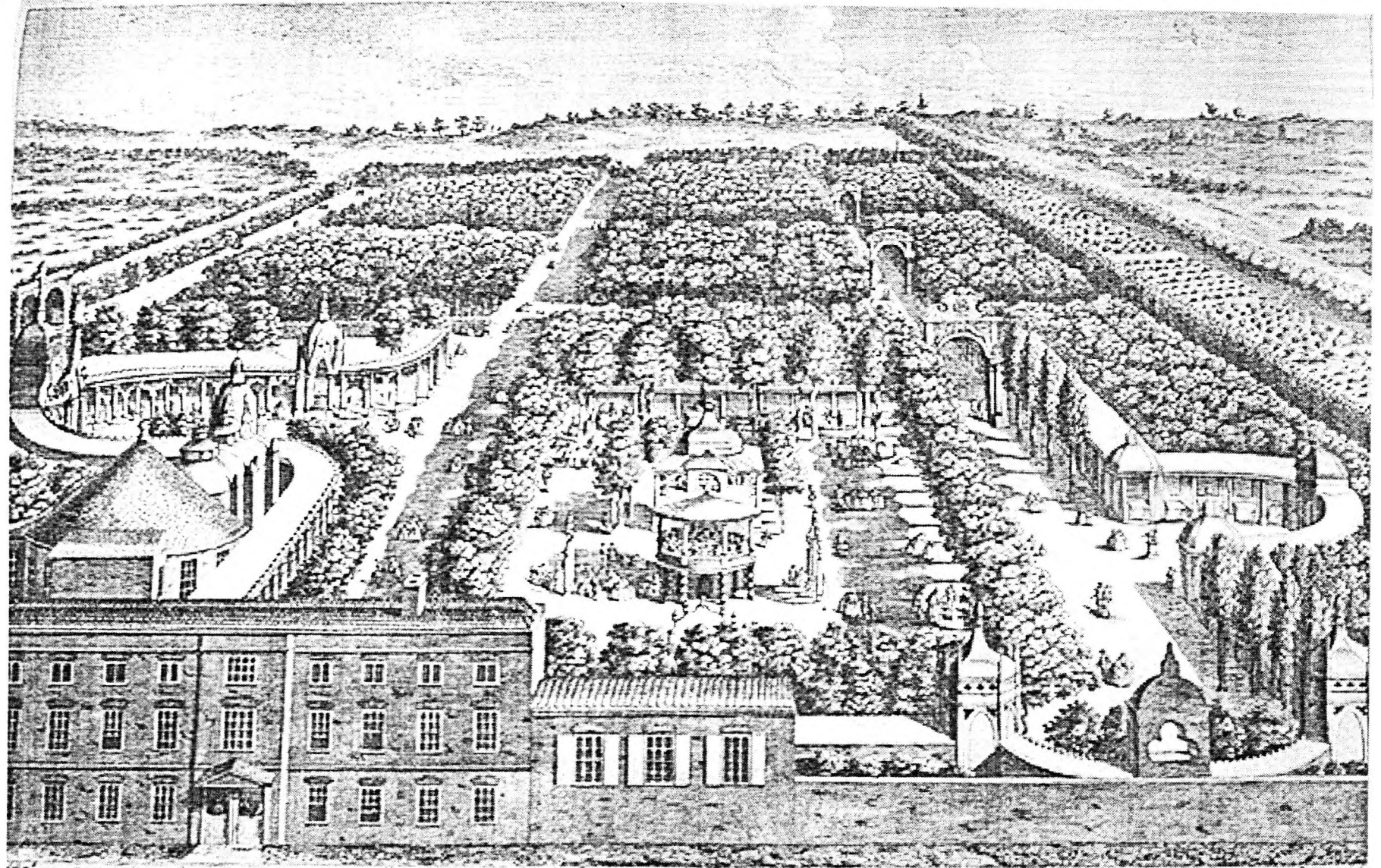


Fig.9.2 Jan Kip & Leonard Knyff, Plan of St James's Park, 1707



*A General Prospect of Vaux Hall Gardens.
Shewing at one View the disposition of the whole Gardens.*

*Vue Générale des Jardens de Vaux Hall.
— Peint par John Bowles at the Black Horse in Cornhill.*

Fig.9.4 S. Wale & L. Muller, 'A General Prospect of Vaux Hall Gardens shewing at one View the disposition of the whole Gardens', 1751



Fig.9.8 John Badder & Thomas Peat, 'A New Plan of the Town of Nottingham', 1744

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