

## Derek Jarman's Garden

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### **Introduction: the ambiguity of gardens**

The history of gardens is marked with complex cultural differences in both conception and perception (Tuan, 1974: 30), but evidence does confirm that gardens and gardening are entrenched in diverse ancient cultures (see, for example, van Zuylen, 1995: 12-24 and Turner 2005). The notion of a garden with aesthetic as well as utilitarian features spread to Europe from the East. Royal gardens in Mesopotamia date from the third millennium BC and the oldest images of gardens are found in Egypt. The Greeks were inspired by the pleasure gardens of Persia and in turn the Romans melded Greek, Egyptian and Persian elements into a 'sophisticated hybrid aesthetic' (van Zuylen, 1995: 19). Influenced by Persian conventions, the Islamic garden, an enclosure symbolising hope and abundance, spread from the eighth century into Africa, Asia and parts of Europe. In contrast, ancient Chinese culture gave a central place to gardens and, in turn, particularly through the influence of Buddhism, strongly shaped Japanese garden design.

Despite the heterogeneity in writing on gardens, Hunt (1999, 2000) attempts to provide a theoretical framework and begins his project by tracing the diverse etymologies that surround the concept of the garden through different eras and cultures (see also van Erp-Houtepen, 1986: 221-227). Hunt's analysis of comparative etymology focuses primarily on conceptions of gardens based upon some form of *emplacement* or marked off space (2000: 17-21). The Old Persian term *pairidaeza* derives from *pairi* (around) and *daeza* (wall). The word was Hellenised as *paradeisos* and then incorporated into various modern languages as 'paradise'. The derivation of the English word 'garden' itself is also closely associated with notions of a boundary: Old English *geard* (fence), Indo-European *gher* (fence) and *ghort* (enclosure), and Vulgar Latin *gardinum* (enclosure). The original Hebrew of the Old Testament also provides an insight into the ancient idealisation of the garden. Here the verbs 'to defend' and 'to deliver' have significance, for example, the protection by God is related to the way a tree in the desert protects people and provides security. The Hebrew origin of the word 'garden'

carries a range of connotations linked to enclosure: 'to protect, to shelter, to save, or to be passed over and survive as one survives a storm in the desert' (38). The sense of a space marked off for a particular protective purpose seems to be at the heart of all these definitions of gardens and supports Foucault's notion that they are perhaps one of the oldest examples of a special space marked off from the everyday.

Foucault notes a certain spatial incompatibility, but the history and philosophy of gardens indicate a much more complex and diverse sense of ambiguity and uncertainty. The most frequently discussed, commonplace notion concerns a tension, conflict or overlap between 'nature' and 'culture', or wilderness and order. This dualism was well established at the time of the Renaissance. Hunt traces the idea to Cicero, conceiving a hierarchy of intervention into the physical world with 'second' nature referring to agricultural land and 'first' nature to some formulation of 'wilderness' or totally unmediated nature (2000: 33). With regard to garden history, Prest provides many examples of how notions of order and wilderness were contrasted, combined or held in tension. (1981: 100-102). However, Dove emphasises how conceptions of nature vary between societies and change over time. (1992). Schama has also explored the ambiguities of the garden space. In teasing out layers of meaning across landscapes, he deliberately collapses the 'mutually exclusive character of Western culture and nature' and instead describes the 'links that have bound them together' (2004: 14). Schama attempts to find 'a way of looking; of rediscovering what we already have, but which sometimes eludes our recognition'. He does not produce another history of what we have lost but 'an exploration of what we may yet find' (see also Meinig, 1979). Within this exercise, Schama draws out two forms of arcadia:

There have always been two kinds of arcadia: the shaggy and smooth; dark and light; a place of bucolic leisure and a place of primitive panic (2004: 517)

He suggests that it is tempting to conceive these two arcadias as always opposing each other. But in tracing their history, he believes they are 'mutually sustaining' (525). This rich complexity of gardens is also emphasised by Frances and Hester (1990). They argue that traditionally the garden has been examined separately as an 'idea' by design theorists, theologians and philosophers, as a 'place' by historian, landscape architects and geographers and as an 'action' by medical researchers, psychologists and sociologists. But they argue that the power of the garden is found in its simultaneous existence of all three aspects, a 'complex

ecology of spatial reality, cognitive process and real work' (8). It is this mix of a rich intensity of form, function and meaning, along with a deep spatial ambiguity, that seems to characterise these marked off enclosures.

With regard to Japanese gardens, Keane notes the relationship between what Deleuze and Guattari (2004) might describe as rhizomatic and striated space:

... a map of time in the garden would develop that way: dizzy spirals, thousands of them, twisted around each other, intersecting, falling away, regrouping – in the end, mazelike scribbles.... (Keane, 2002: 25)

...the garden was a way to adjust the wild to the scale of human measurement (58)

These gardens seem to incorporate continuous variety and movement as well as a measured structure, both organised and stretched. An illustration of how gardens incorporate smooth and striated space can be seen in the wall around the famous dry landscape garden of Ryōanji Temple, Kyoto (Parkes, 1989: 132). The wall, having been made of clay boiled in oil, has produced over the centuries amazing, intricate patterns and landscapes as the oil gradually seeped out. The wall therefore divides and joins the outside world and the interior space of the garden. It formulates a Japanese aesthetic technique known as 'cut-continuance' (*kire-tsuzuki*). Keane suggests that this mixture of 'natural' and artificial beauty forms the aesthetic basis of all Japanese gardens (2004: 10-13). He draws evidence from the etymology of the two most common terms for garden: *niwa* and *sono*, which have striking similarities between smooth and striated space. *Niwa* is associated with the open territory of the semi-nomadic Jōmon tribes. The earliest written record is found in a poem from the eighth century, referring to the open sea. Hunting ranges (*kari-niwa*) as well as sacred places for events (*sa-niwa* or *yu-niwa*) have the same etymology. In the middle ages the term identified the area used by travelling musicians and actors. Overall, it has the implication of a space that is ownerless, rather than a controlled territory, for example, in modern usage *uri-niwa* refers to the sales area of 'foragers' in ties and suits. In contrast, *sono* originally referred to any form of structured or bordered agricultural landscape, including plots for crops, orchards, pens for animals, rice fields and medicinal herb gardens. Overall, Japanese gardens play with nomadic smooth space, associated with the sea, and forms of striated landscape, associated with agriculture (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004) - one of the themes to be taken up in the following study of Derek Jarman's garden.

### **Jarman's garden in Dungeness**

Derek Jarman was a filmmaker, theatre designer and painter. He was also a passionate gardener from a young age: 'flowers spring up and entwine themselves like bindweed along the footpaths of my childhood' (1991:7). His published journals are sprinkled with blissful childhood memories of gardens, in particular, those that are wild and uncultivated, but also to the 'secret gardens' near his school where he first experienced the rapture of sexual pleasure (38). He also often associates his childhood memories of gardens with daydreaming, a Bachelardian escape that he rediscovers in adulthood (44). He was never an expert or professional gardener, but traced his passion to the romantic literary tradition which he saw initiated by Blake and continued by such varied figures as Morris, Whitman, Carpenter and Hamilton Finlay - all in some way devoted to creating 'paradise on earth' (25). He insisted that they must be 'shaggy', that is, allowed to form spaces of wilderness, accidental charms, strange juxtapositions (Jarman and Sooley, 1995:41).

Dungeness, where Jarman built his garden, has the largest shingle formation, with Cape Canaveral, in the world. The setting is unique in the United Kingdom as it has the strongest sunlight and the lowest rainfall. The overall environment is bleak and desolate; the landscape dominated by the grim iron structure of two nuclear power stations (see fig 2, page 12). Prospect Cottage, bought by Jarman in 1986, stands alone at the sea's edge with striking black pitch timbers. Initially Jarman had not thought about building a garden around the cottage, as the immediate environment seemed impossible: a mass of shingle without any sub-soil and exposed to biting winds and salt spray. And yet despite its desert conditions, as a roadside sign indicates proudly, '600 varieties of plants grow in this shingle' and Jarman particularly noted the potential within the contrasting colours of the green sea kale, blue bugloss, red poppy and yellow sedum. He was originally drawn to the area because it had an 'otherworldly atmosphere', an 'extraordinary light' (64) and a 'symphony of colour I have seen in no other landscape' (1991:31). Jarman records how the garden was started by accident. A dog rose was transplanted and supported by a 'sea-worn driftwood staff topped with a knuckle of beach-combed bone' and seedling seakale was protected by 'an elongated low-tide flint'. From that point the garden evolved as treasures washed up by the sea were gradually added:

I saw it as a therapy and a pharmacopoeia. I collected more driftwood and stones and put them in. I dug small holes – almost impossible, as the shingle rolled back so that

two spadefuls became one – and filled them with manure from the farm up the road. The plants were just plonked in and left to take their chances in the winds of Dungeness. (Jarman and Sooley, 1995:12)

Jarman's film, *The Garden* (1990), provides another perspective on the way he anchored himself to the immediate landscape of Dungeness. He filmed the landscape over three years in different seasons, weathers and periods of the day and uses this footage as a constant backdrop in the film, highlighting changing moods, colours, light and shade as well as the bleak, wild and isolated expanse of the landscape. Interspersed are also shots of Jarman working in his garden and close-ups of the playful stone circles and sculptures. The film, amongst many other things, seems to undermine and reinterpret the English landscape tradition, for example, repeatedly incorporating shots of the nearby menacing power station. The fluctuating landscapes provide the setting for an exploration and reinterpretation of some of the abiding myths surrounding gardens, specifically the Gardens of Eden and Gethsemane. Overall, the space in itself encapsulates arguments about the role of verbal and visual depictions of gardens: forming and informing spatial art; playing with the differences between gardens and 'adjacent zones of human intervention'; celebrating the rich ambiguities of the natural and artificial; blending the functions of work, maintenance, design, pleasure, aesthetics and theatre; blurring of the boundaries of the private and public worlds; and embracing the magical, preternatural and sacred meaning of gardens (see Hunt, 2000).

The garden gradually evolved into an extraordinary limitless expanse, the plants introduced merging with and enhancing the natural fauna and flora: huge clumps of sea kale, circles of gorse, carpets of sedum, giant fennel, dazzling masses of poppies and marigold, drifts of borage, cornflowers and valerian. But also sculptures were introduced made from old twisted tools and utensils, stones, blanks of wood, branches and huge flints – mostly debris washed in from the sea. The garden somehow both mirrored and defied the barren environment and was also extraordinary in that it had no fences, hedges or walls to separate it from the rest of the coastline and the open sea. The garden's identity emerged, separating itself from its surroundings as it incorporated features of those surroundings. . Boundaries were blurred but within the garden simple, formal geometric patterns emerged, especially circles of stones, like dolmens, built to echo the mystery of stone circles, but also to provide pleasure in the winter when they and the dozens of sculptures, replaced the focus of the plants and flowers (Jarman, 1995: 47-48).

Reflections on the garden return to questions of distinguishing 'nature' and 'culture'. As already discussed, the tension across this binary is often mentioned as a crucial feature of gardens. Although Jarman's example does seem to expose a collapse of these two terms, without any possibility of knowing where one begins and ends, I do not want to rehearse this rather commonplace argument here. Nevertheless, I think reflections on Jarman's garden do lead to a central relational paradox of the garden space which Foucault hints at but does not develop. The garden can intensely dramatise a certain spatial ambiguity and ambivalence that I remarked upon in relation to formal Japanese gardens.

I argue that Deleuze's spatialisations offer a heterotopological analysis in that they allow a concentration on the actual event or existence of gardens. Part of Deleuze's exhilarating philosophical project radically questions a range of customary conceptual divisions. In his complex and perhaps most important book, *Difference and Repetition* (1994: 13), which he later acknowledged connected with all his subsequent work, he attempts to avoid all generalities of thought and instead presents a drama, a philosophy that moves, displays, acts and generates difference. In this endeavour, he crosses between the psychic, organic and chemical domains, presenting dramatizations that imaginatively capture the 'unity of mind and nature' (98 and 220). The project is difficult and sometimes bewildering partly because as Foucault remarks, there is no heart or centre, but only a problem or a distribution of points. We have to abandon our customary notions of order (Foucault, 1998: 343). For example, we are forced to concentrate on the 'event' before it is clothed as a fact within a proposition and familiar forms of representation and oppositional or dialectical modes of thought.

Above all, Deleuze refuses to reduce difference to identity, for instance, avoiding any sense of the Aristotelian categories of genus, species and individual (1994: 30). Such an approach is later taken up in collaboration with Guattari within their often quoted notion of rhizomatic thinking that replaces thought that divides, compares and judges. In part, this is an attempt to avoid all stratifications involving dualisms. Deleuze and Guattari do use many dualisms, including striation/smooth, tree/rhizome, state apparatus/war machine, sedentary/nomadic, but they argue, not always convincingly, that 'we invoke one dualism only in order to challenge another' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 22). Taking up a key point found in *Difference and Repetition*, they assert that 'unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to the traits of the same nature' (23). A rhizome is composed of dimensions, or 'directions in motion', rather than

units, involving no beginning or end, but only a middle from which it generates more rhizomes. It is the conjunction 'and' that connects and assembles in their philosophy human and non-human elements:

The wisdom of the plants: even when they have roots, there is always an outside where they form a rhizome with something else – with the wind, an animal, human beings (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 12)

Another important notion explored with Guattari and related to the figure of the rhizome concerns 'smooth' as opposed to 'striated' space. In many ways, these two terms include and diversify dualisms that are traditionally associated with gardens, for example, nature/nurture, freedom/control, wilderness/order or opening/closure. They borrow these terms from Boulez who uses them to explain a spatio-temporal relationship in music. Boulez suggests that 'in a smooth space-time one occupies without counting, whereas in striated space-time one counts in order to occupy' (527). For Deleuze and Guattari, the striated 'intertwines fixed and variable elements' whereas smooth is the 'continuous variation, continuous development of form': or 'the pure act of the drawing of a diagonal line across the vertical and the horizontal' (528). As well as a musical illustration, they provide various other 'models' of these spaces. Within the 'technological model', fabric, as in basketry and weaving, is conceived as striated, involving vertical and horizontal patterns that intertwine. Fabric is always closed on at least one side (infinite in length but not width), with top and bottom. 'Felt' in contrast is an 'anti-fabric' with no separation of threads or any intertwining. Felt is more an entanglement and, in principle, infinite, open, and mobile. As with a rhizome, there is no centre or fixed points. Presenting detailed historical examples, they discuss how the different constructions involved in knitting, crochet, embroidery, patchwork or quilt combined and reinforced each mode of space, furthering 'one through the other' (526). Turning to a 'maritime' model, they go on to explain how striated space in this instance works from point to point, whereas smooth space is the 'trajectory', the path or process of the journey, filled with events and intensive affects rather than properties, dimensions and perceived things. If for Foucault the ship is the heterotopia *par excellence*, for Deleuze and Guattari the sea is the smooth space *par excellence*. Moreover, navigation of the sea provides an 'extended confrontation' between the two spaces (529). The sea is both the archetype of all smooth space and also the first to be gradually striated. In contrast, the city is the epitome of striated space, although it leaks smooth space through eruptions of shanty towns, 'sprawling and temporary'.

Importantly:

What interests us in operations of striation and smoothing are precisely the passages or combinations: how the forces at work within space continually striate it, and how in the course of its striation it develops other forces and emits new smooth spaces' .(551)

In fact, the two spaces 'exist only in mixture': 'smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space' (524). There is no 'other' space, no neutral space.

Jarman's garden is a rich dramatisation of the generative contest between these two types of space, which goes well beyond debates about the tension or entanglement of nature and culture. A Deleuzian perspective can deepen Foucault's tantalisingly brief comments on the spatial ambiguities of the garden, without relying on conceptions of the 'other'. Initially, the space was produced by accident across an 'impossible' environment open to the sea and the piercing wind. All gardens literally contain rhizomes but here the elements of the garden, including plants, are deliberately encouraged to form a rhizome with something else (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 12). For instance, in Jarman's account, it is an utterly inclusive space, open to the sea and stars but also embracing the nearby nuclear power station, a 'wonderment' that looks like 'a great liner or a small Manhattan ablaze with a thousand lights of different colours'(1995: 67). Such a hugely powerful symbol of striation forms a backdrop within a stage that generates new connections. Debris washed up on the shore is amalgamated into fantastic 'plant' sculptures of flint, drift wood, tools, utensils and twisted, spiralling metal, forming an assemblage of human and non-human elements that are open and fluid. There are stark spatial contrasts such as the geometric patterns of gorse and stones at the front of the house and more 'shaggy' planting towards the back, but there is also an overall sense of continuous variation of form. Often deeply striated, it is exposed, vulnerable, and open to chance and continuously in process. It is a varying, ever escaping, or journeying assembly of things, plants, animals, birds, tools and people (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 161). Gardens generally and Jarman's specifically, manifest a series of paths or trajectories, combining and reinforcing smooth and striated space. Jarman has imaginatively composed a garden as 'process' which, like the desert mentioned by Deleuze and Guattari, is a space that is both 'organised and at the same time stretched'.



In Jarman's garden there is also a disruption in space-time. Like Saint-Preux in Rousseau's (1997: 101) meditation on the garden, Jarman finds himself there as if 'dropped from the sky':

The gardener digs in another time, without past or future, beginning or end....As you walk in the garden you pass into this time – the moment of entering can never be remembered .(Jarman, 1991:30)

The practice of gardening and the garden itself produce or induce an interval or punctuation that is perhaps something like the 'smooth space-time' described by Boulez, a process 'without counting'. Deleuze and Guattari use the term 'haecceity' to pinpoint something similar: a 'mode of individuation' that is distinct from a person, subject, thing or substance (2004: 287). Examples include a season, an hour or a day designated by a combination of elements (wind, rain, heat, fog) or relations of movement (speed, slowness) . This is not a phenomenological notion of 'inside' or subjective space, but on the contrary a 'space outside', an assemblage with speeds and affects that is independent of subjects, belonging to a different plane. In this conception of the garden 'climate, wind, season, hour are not of another nature than the things, animals or people that populate them, follow them, sleep and awaken within them' (290). In this way, taking a walk in Jarman's garden is a haecceity, an indeterminate time, without beginning or end, origin or destination. It forms a particular non-place, a gap or interval: an opportunity or 'a rupture in ordinary life' (Defert, 1997:275). In the garden, we can lose ourselves, we 'let ourselves go' as we do in different ways, either willingly or unwillingly, in brothels, old people's homes, theatres, prisons, saunas or, the most extreme example, cemeteries. In his earlier radio broadcast about heterotopia, Foucault refers to children's games as places of escape and imagination – in attics, backyard corners, Indian tents, the parents' bed and so on (Defert, 1997:274). Prospect Cottage and its garden capture something similar:

.... the last of a long line of 'escape houses' I started building as a child at the end of the garden: grass houses of fragrant mowings that slowly turned brown and sour; sandcastles; a turf hut, hardly big enough to turn round in... (Jarman, 1991:276)

The garden forms an intimate refuge that imaginatively mirrors and transforms the world outside. It forms a bridge between Bachelard's poetics of space and Foucault's spiralling examples of heterotopia which form a range of inter-related inventive spaces within the realities of harsh eroding time.

Jarman's garden perhaps manifests an example of Bennett's 'enchanted materialism' (2001). She argues against the rather commonplace notion of the disenchantment of modern life dominated by instrumental rationality, science, secularism and bureaucracy. Avoiding any theological or other teleological perspective, she presents an alternative narrative by tracing moments of enchantment that punctuate the modern world and argues that such moments 'might be deployed to propel ethical generosity' (3). She considers that these moments can be found in unexpected places but may also be nurtured and enhanced through various strategies. With 'ethical potential' rather than utopian promise, Bennett suggests that to be enchanted is to be unsettled by the extraordinary in the midst of the familiar and everyday. It entails pleasure and disruption of usual habits, including 'the temporary suspension of chronological time and bodily movement'. We are jolted out of our 'default sensory-psychic-intellectual disposition' (5). As an illustration she uses Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a 'Body without Organs', the human body wrestling itself out of its usual forms of organisation. In some ways this captures Jarman's actual garden and the use he made of it in words and film: the 'desire for mobility, for the space to become otherwise, to exercise your faculties, play around, shift the scene, shuffle the deck, change places..' (28).

Jarman's wonderful space highlights how gardens generally are the most prevalent, varied and often accessible formations of heterotopia. Faubion contrasts heterotopias to the 'mundane monotony.... of everyday life' and suggests they are 'brighter, darker or more complex' (2008: 32). Gardens appear in hugely diverse forms and many are actually part of the everyday routine of life, but they also have the capability of producing a spatial intensity and forming a certain world in miniature. Admittedly, this analysis takes us far from Foucault's brief thoughts that heterotopias such as gardens 'juxtapose in a single real place several emplacements that are incompatible in themselves', or a simply reveal a 'contradictory emplacement' (1998: 181), but the analysis does expose the underlying spatial complexity and ambiguity of the garden. The complexity will run in different ways through the other examples discussed by Foucault, but other heterotopian features will also come into play. Whatever the specific format and purpose, all gardens demonstrate, or produce a concentrated formation of, an extraordinary spatial contest or play. Gardens are striated spaces that provide possibilities of 'escape' and they are smooth spaces that can be endlessly organised. They can be intense spaces of 'affects' or a 'Body without Organs'. The complexity is illustrated well by any visit to Dungeness, where the smooth 'song of the sands' is measured or 'canopied by the sky' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 529).

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