

The Eden Project – gardens, utopia and heterotopia

To reference this essay:

Johnson, P. (2012) 'The Eden Project – gardens, utopia and heterotopia' *Heterotopian Studies* [<http://www.heterotopiastudies.com>]

Gardens and utopia

Utopias have 'frequently invoked the special and resonant spaces of gardens, just as gardens have often been utopian in impulse, design and meaning' (Hunt, 1987: 114):

The garden provides an image of the world, a space of simulation for paradise-like conditions, a place of otherness where dreams are realised in an expression of a better world. (Meyer, 2003: 131)

The garden features strongly in Thomas More's original account of utopia. The conversations that form the basis of the book take place in a garden in Antwerp (1965: 17); the narrative suggests that the founder of utopia must have had a 'special interest' in gardening; and the inhabitants of utopia are said to be particularly fond of their gardens (53). Bloch goes so far as to suggest that in More's utopia, 'life is a garden' (1986a: 475). Mosser and Teysot assert that 'nostalgia for the Garden of Eden has provided garden designers throughout history with a model of perfection to aspire to' (1990: 12). Elsewhere, Mosser claims that garden enthusiasts seem 'devoted to creating the impossible' (1990: 278). Bauman asserts that gardeners 'tend to be the most ardent producers of utopias' (2005: 4). A recent exhibition at the National Art Museum of China (2008) entitled 'Garden Utopia' articulates the traditional perspective of a Chinese garden as a space for 'contemplation, a borderland between reality and fantasy to escape the trappings of the modern world and reconnect humanity with nature'. Within his outlines of 'wishful images in the mirror', or manifestations of hope, Bloch includes a piece on 'castle gardens and the buildings of arcadia'. The garden outside a house is described as 'the open air shaped in accordance with our wishes' (1986b: 387). In particular, he traces the influence of the Arabian garden with its proximity to the pleasures of the harem and intricate mazes. Illustrating a much wider argument that he conducts elsewhere about the complexities and ambiguities of the notion of 'freedom' and 'control', he describes the Baroque park or garden as 'half mathematical entity, half tamed fantasy', a wishful world

that produced ‘an ensemble of both convention and strangeness’(1986b: 388) – see section on Jarman’s garden.

But what lies behind these persistent and prevailing links between the seemingly innocuous garden and some form of utopian space? The roots are perhaps found in the conception of paradise both as origin and destination and found in Greek, Roman and Oriental thought. Heinberg finds evidence of this myth in Mesopotamia, Iran, Egypt, India, China, Australia, North America and Africa (1995: 49-54). The word ‘paradise’ reaches us through Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus* in which Socrates recounts that Persian kings excelled not only in the art of war but also the creation of pleasure gardens ‘filled with all the fine and good things that the earth wishes to bring forth’ (King, 1979: 22). Socrates retells a story of Lysander’s visit to Cyrus the Younger at his palace in Sardis. Lysander was full of wonder at both the beauty and the order of his pleasure garden. Cyrus, who claimed to have both helped in the design and planting, called his garden *pairidaeza*.

On the other hand, in Christian tradition, the garden holds significance in relation to both Eden and Christ’s agony at Gethsemane. As Thomas argues, gardening was one form of labour which was deemed necessary even before the Fall, as Adam and Eve were placed there ‘to dress it and to keep it’ (1983: 236). As discussed earlier, this led to the notion that it might be possible to return to a state of pre-lapsarian grace through the cultivation of a garden or an earthly paradise which prefigured a heavenly one (Prest, 1981: 20). Through the Christian story, the Virgin Mary became associated with paradise through the notion of the *hortus conclusus*, or enclosed garden, of the Song of Solomon. As Prest explains the equation of the enclosed garden with the Garden of Eden had major consequences for the history of gardening (21). For example, in medieval England, Eden, earthly paradise, or the ‘perpetual Spring’, and the purity of the Virgin Mary all became centred upon a protected, or even secret space, surrounded by a hedge, fence, paling or wall.

The early botanic gardens are one clear example of an attempt to construct or reconstruct the scope and density of paradise. In Europe, Islamic scholarship helped preserve botanical learning from ancient Greece and established new forms of plant collection, identification and research (van Zuylen, 1995: 29). But the discovery of the New World heralded the great age of the botanic garden and notable instances from the sixteenth and seventeenth century were founded in Padua, Leyden, Montpellier, Paris, Oxford and Uppsala. Spanish and

Portuguese explorers believed they could discover Eden in central or southern America. As it happened their expeditions found new plants, fruits and animals which were brought home and were made to form an encyclopaedia of creation, a replica of the first Garden of Eden (Prest, 1981: 32). In 1500 there were about two hundred kinds of cultivated plants in England and yet by 1839 the figure was put at 18,000 (Thomas, 1983: 226). The botanic gardens identified the whole world of creation within a levelled and scrupulously ordered enclosure, usually rectangular and divided into four quarters. The ancient Persian garden plan that represented the four quarters of the world was now, since the discovery of America, specifically related to the four continents. In turn, each quarter was formally divided and subdivided to produce individually ordered and numbered units for each family of plant. Each plant could be named along with its nutritive and medicinal properties (Prest, 1981: 62). Schama, echoing Foucault's point about Persian gardens, claims that Renaissance botanical gardens were 'driven by the desire to reconstitute the whole world in a walled enclosure' (2004: 562). He also refers to Bernard Palissy, a protestant Platonist who produced a secret garden that was both scientific and mystical:

a garden where the totality of creation could be represented in its essentials, rather like the reduction of liquids to perfect crystals'.. (537)

Hunt (2000: 90) argues that botanical gardens reveal the most intense form of representation within garden history. Reiterating a key feature of heterotopias that was discussed in chapter two, he describes botanical gardens as the 'representation of the macrocosm itself within the smaller (epitomized) microcosm'. In summary, gardens are embedded in utopian myths concerned with our origins and destination as well as in attempts to capture and preserve forms of paradise in the present.

Gardens have also become prominent in more recent writings about utopia. Atkinson outlines how gardening has gained an 'unprecedented amount of narrative attention within the utopian imaginary' (2007: 237). She discusses various writers, for example, how Marge Piercy places gardens and gardening as a creative part of her utopian vision in *Woman on the Edge of Time* (see, for example, Piercy, 1979: 130- 131). Atkinson also looks specifically at Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars* trilogy where gardeners are aligned to an insurgent movement and suggest the 'possibility of a collective, open-ended and self created world' (2007: 242). She notes how in *Blue Mars* gardening itself becomes an 'epiphanic moment as a shorthand for

the whole process of terraforming', or planetary engineering (see Robinson, 1996: 89-91). The invention and production of a new planet is expressed through the creation of a dazzling range of gardens:

Some of the gardeners.... worked according to the precepts of Muso Soseki, others according to other Japanese Zen masters; others still to Fu Hsi, the legendary inventor of the Chinese system of geomancy called feng shui; others to Persian gardening gurus.... (Robinson, 1996: 90-91)

Terraforming illustrates for Atkinson Jameson's shift from 'the exhibit of an achieved Utopian construct' to the 'story of its production' (Atkinson, 2007: 217). With explicit reference to Levitas, Atkinson argues that gardening becomes the utopian 'process' itself, in this case, the never-ending attempt to generate a totally artificial paradise. Outside literary forms, Atkinson also outlines what she perceives as a utopian impulse in the recent development of 'guerrilla gardening', the often clandestine practice of creating gardens in neglected and derelict spaces, conceiving horticultural potential in the most unlikely places (2007: 248). Drawing parallels with the Situationist International movement, Reynolds a leading guerrilla gardener, suggests that the practice involves a utopian vision, transforming and recreating spaces in abandoned areas of cities (2008: 58-59). Such practices of terraforming are again about process as much as product, fleeting glimpses of what Schama might call 'shaggy' arcadia, produced playfully and daringly without permission. But as Reynolds admits, the attacks on these spaces requires planning, design and a protected enclosure.

The Eden Project

The Eden Project in South Cornwall, a contemporary botanical garden, builds up and illustrates further principles and features of heterotopia. Gardens, like other heterotopias, form an extensive network with other spaces, but they also work intensively in Foucault's somewhat formal depiction. Botanical gardens contain a particular formation of spatial ambiguity but they also link to Foucault's fourth principal in that they are examples of 'heterochronia'. Like museums, botanical gardens generally, and the Eden Project specifically, have the idea of:

accumulating everything, the idea of sort of constituting a sort of general archive, the desire to contain all times, all ages, all forms, all tastes in one place, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside time and protected from its erosion'. (Foucault, 1998: 182)

Both in relation to space than time, botanical gardens attempt to capture the whole world within a defined enclosure (Schama, 2004: 562) or, as Hunt argues, enfold the 'representation of the macrocosm itself within the smaller (epitomized) microcosm' (2000: 90). This is also a key feature of the third principle that Foucault encapsulates as juxtaposing in a single space several incompatible spatial elements, illustrated by the example of the Persian garden. This inclusive aspect of botanical gardens can also be conceived as a utopian project, but a heterotopian perspective looks at the inter-relations and multiple applications of this space, reinforcing Foucault's second principle concerning how these spaces mutate and develop specific operations. Overall, the botanical garden starts to provide a rich picture of various facets and dimensions of heterotopia.

The Eden Project, the product of the single-minded enthusiasm and endeavour of Tim Smit, is a contemporary version of the ideal garden. The Project advertises itself as a 'global garden' and a 'living theatre of plants and people'. Opened in 2001, the garden contains thousands of plants, the 'biggest greenhouse in the world' and a range of educational resources and amenities. It receives over a million visitors a year. Although the overall location of the project was partly determined by the closeness to Cornish ports where plant specimens arrived in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and filled large country houses such as Heligan (see Smit, 1997 and Levitas, 2003: 146-7), the specific site appears most unsuitable. It was originally a desolate and exhausted china-clay pit, a massive crater, some sixty metres deep with an unstable rim, liable to flooding and without any soil (Mabey, 2005: 205-206). Such a barren landscape has some similarities to Jarman's unlikely setting for his garden across the bleak shore of Dungeness. But in contrast, the Eden Project is hidden like a submerged island. The surrounding dense woodland gives it a sense of a 'lost world' (Pearman, 2003: 19). The construction of the garden mirrors the utopian process of 'terraforming' as described in Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars* trilogy. In *Blue Mars* 'great roofless rooms' with a diversity of plants were created through importing masses of soil (1996: 90). To produce the Eden Project the unsound faces of the crater were secured with massive rock bolts. One and a half million tonnes of spoil from around the quarry were

driven back into the crater and levelled off with thousands of tonnes of soil (Mabey 2005, 206).

Although I have visited the garden on three occasions, just after it opened and twice more recently, the huge biomes, or botanical 'bubbles' always surprise as they emerge from the bottom of the crater. The design of the biomes was influenced by the 1971 sci-fi classic *Silent Running* which depicted spaceships as botanical arks containing the last fragments of the Earth's forests (Pearman, 2003: 14). The architects admired Fuller, the American designer and 'Spaceship Earth' philosopher who in the 1940s developed the geodesic dome in an attempt to produce the 'most minimal form of large enclosure possible' (20). They modified Fuller's ideas through use of computer-aided design, resulting in a concept of intersecting domes made of light-weight hexagonal steel components and with 'pillows' of translucent foil. The high-tech solution mirrored natural forms such as honeycombs and the compound eyes of insects (Whalley, 2003: 116-17). The so called 'soap bubbles' approach was adaptable to the uneven contours of the site. The bubbles were calculated as pure sections of spheres, the domes envisaged as the 'tops' of an invisible underground whole (Pearman, 2003). In *Silent Running*, a future is portrayed in which Earth is so overdeveloped that plants can no longer survive. Spacecrafts, like giant domed greenhouses or museums, are filled with plants and trees waiting for the Earth to recover. Towards the end of the film, the government decide to concentrate on 'commercial' concerns and demand that the biomes are destroyed. After some heroism by a crew member, a single biome survives and is released to orbit alone, the enclosed gardens and forests tended by a single robot. The biome comes to symbolise a form of life rejected by Earth but containing the promise of endurance. In contrast, the Eden Project provides havens for plants to flourish and at the same time warns of the specific dangers of destroying natural habitats. The two enclosed biomes replicate 'Rainforest' and 'Mediterranean' climate zones and there is also an outdoor or 'roofless' biome which contains plants from temperate zones. Tellingly, Mabey describes the project as a process of 'fencing paradise'. In the traditions of botanical gardens, the Eden Project restores and improves nature, producing an ideal depiction or model, a form of utopia. (Mabey, 2005: 204).

As the title of the garden spells out, this space draws upon many of the utopian themes, but it also incorporates an intense range of spatial ambiguities. Within, for instance, the steamy tropical biome you find yourself inside a convincing but totally contrived jungle. Overall:

.....you know that this is a world of illusion, where you will see not so much the earth itself as its image, focused through a lens; where your **imagination** will be teased with memories and illusions, and prompted towards connections that might never have occurred to you. Yet it is, at the same time, very real. (5)

The teasing between the artificial and the real reverberates throughout the Eden Project, an ambivalence that stirs and provokes the imagination. To take one example from many, in the tropical biome I was particularly struck by a replication of a contemporary Malaysian 'home garden' or *kebun*. This garden within a biome within the overall Eden Project, with rows of vegetables and a line of washing, provides a dramatisation or 'botanical theatre'. It seems 'real' as the plants are actually growing, but it is utterly staged. But perhaps one of the most intense ambiguous symbols in the Eden Project is a simple sign-post to 'wild Cornwall'. I would concur with Mabey who suggests that this space is a 'mocked up exhibit of the county's green fringes, from which Eden has surfaced like an ambitious whale', a landscape of 'pure artifice'. He compares it to a hall of mirrors, an attempt to capture and represent the wildness from which the project emerged, to mimic what it has replaced (37). Within this artificial wilderness is a replica of the Cornish hedge. For Mabey, referring to something like the effect of Japanese *Kare-san-sui* gardens, 'the replica is framed, free-standing, out of context, and perhaps therefore a more suitable subject for reflection than the 'real' thing'. The project is a series of tricks, both self-contained, plant communities and ideal reproductions. Like all gardens, but with some intensity, Eden is an ambivalent space juxtaposing in a 'single real place several emplacements that are incompatible in themselves' (Foucault, 1998: 181).

Although the crowds that I jostled with on my first visit have lessened, the Eden Project continues to have mass appeal, becoming one of the most popular attractions in southern England for day excursions. The marketing of the garden and the facilities and amenities on offer such as car parks, restaurants, cafes and shops give it, in some respects, the appearance of a theme park or other popular leisure facility. Marking its similarities and differences from the latter may clarify its distinctness. Augé's distinction between place and non-places may help here (1995). For Augé, 'places' are concerned with a specific identity and are both relational and historical. He contrasts these with 'non-places' which lack these features and are a crucial aspect of what he calls 'supermodernity'. These non-places include above all 'mobile cabins' or means of transport by air, road and rail, airports and rail stations, hotel

chains, leisure parks, large retailers and communication networks. He finds an anticipation of the features of supermodernity in the work of artists and writers, mentioning specifically Benjamin's fascination with Parisian iron and glass architecture (93). Augé is concerned with non-places as specific spaces with certain functions (e.g. leisure) and the relations that people have, with themselves and others, within them. These relations are not necessarily linked directly with the purpose of the space.

One striking characteristic of these non-places is that they are defined partially by words and texts: instructions, prohibitions, information, advice, warnings found on signs, screens, posters, maps, guides and so on. Individuals interact with these texts and codes. This can be seen not just in confined places such as airports and supermarkets but also along motorways that no longer pass through towns but which have signs indicating historical and other sites that are nearby. We are informed of what we are missing. Such non-places create a shared identity of passengers, customers or drivers and a temporary anonymous identity, submitting perhaps with some pleasure to a passive, processed role. Individual identities, 'complicities of language', local references and 'unformulated rules of living know-how' are abandoned (101). The emphasis is on following the same procedures with the passenger, for example, following the same codes, receiving the same messages and responding to the same instructions. Such atopic spaces create 'neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude and similitude' (103). Any sense of history is lost unless it is a mere spectacle, usually provided by a text. What is interesting about the experience of non-places is their power to attract, 'inversely proportional to territorial attraction, to the gravitational pull of place and tradition' (118).

Some of my experiences of the Eden project - following the signs placed along all surrounding main roads, parking in an allocated car park, getting a shuttle bus to the entrance, buying your ticket, following maps, guides and signs, shopping for souvenirs and novelties, eating in a large self-service cafeteria, and so on - seem to mesh with those outlined by Augé in relation to non-places. We as customers, passengers and visitors are passively processed. In other respects, the Eden Project may seem to be the actual epitome of a non-place. The biomes, for example, lack specific identity as well as relational and historical roots; they could be transported anywhere. For example, the Malaysian home garden inside the tropical biome is not grounded or occupied, however realistically it is portrayed. Such placelessness is emphasised in the image of the released biome at the conclusion of *Silent Running*,

completely automated and endlessly orbiting Saturn. Within the Eden Project, there is a sense of being everywhere and nowhere. And yet this is not the whole story. Studying the principles and features of the Eden Project undermines Augé's simple dichotomy. It is a rich place and a complex non-place, an emplacement that creatively plays with the two sides of the equation. The garden includes a range of spaces and functions:

It is part fantastical entertainment, part real habitat, part teaching aid, part utopian model' (Mabey, 2005:7)

The site provides an opportunity to enter or encounter a different spatio-temporal composition, to loosen the grip of the ordinary. It may be utopian in design, but in practice it entails a precarious difference and spatial ambiguity that escapes Augé's classification and makes available, encourages, proposes and imposes a variety of activities and functions. The garden space deliberately informs, educates and provokes. The focus is upon protecting, sustaining and enhancing the natural environment, but there is also a pervading link with health concerns. On a recent visit in August 2008, there was a specific campaign aimed at children who it was claimed 'are spending less and less time outside'. Children were therefore suffering from 'health problems, poor social development and little understanding or interest in the environment'. The campaign, entitled, 'Mud Between Your Toes' (echoing somewhat the title of a song from the film *Silent Running*), set out to reconnect children with the outside world, encouraging play and countering growing levels of obesity and depression. As part of the programme, the Eden Project arranged 'den building' activities, providing a whole variety of materials and helpers in order to build imaginative dens, fortresses, wigwams and so on. The encouragement to build what Foucault once called 'local utopias' (1966) in his radio broadcast on heterotopia, deliberately links imagination, adventure, fun, education and health within what might be called a new therapeutic landscape.

A key component of heterotopia concerns the diversity, malleability and connectivity of certain social and cultural spaces. Heterotopias are particularly intensive, or concentrated spaces that are able to embrace multiple and changeable functions. They often rest on utopian principles, but they move in different directions forming varied relationships. They connect and break at the same time (see Porphyrios, 1982). For example, the Eden Project encapsulates a therapeutic function which emerged strongly in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century practices concerning the benefits of nature, gardens and the open air (see

Gesler 1992: 736-7). In a strange fashion, this botanical garden shares some of the concerns found in the history of other heterotopias such as prisons, asylums and cemeteries. It is capable of a rich variety of actual applications, an 'imaginary intensity' (Foucault, 1975: 205). The health message is apparent not only in specific campaigns at the Eden Project but also throughout the site. For example, in 'The Core', an exhibition centre, I came across an illuminated illustration that encourages you to "exercise in the fresh air" and more specifically claims that "hospital patients make quicker recoveries when they have views of trees" .

Although there is no reference to the source, the caption seems to link to an often quoted study in environmental psychology related to the improvement in surgical patients with views outside their hospital windows (Ulrich, 1984). The research suggests that patients with access to a view not only recover faster but also need less medication for pain. As with Jarman's garden and examples of Japanese gardens, but in a completely different register, this space, anchored to the history of utopian design, meaning and function, incorporates an ethical dimension that guides conduct, in this case working to improve our physical and mental health through contact with nature. As Faubion argues, heterotopian sites are both 'concrete technologies' and 'rhetorical machines', able to generate a plurality of applications and meanings (2008: 32). Jarman's space highlights how gardens are perhaps the most prevalent, varied and accessible mode of heterotopia. The Eden project, which contains a variety of different garden spaces, produces various examples of spatial intensities and ambiguities as well and as forming a general archive and a world in miniature. In Bennett's terms (2001: 5), it also formulates an implicit ethical sensibility, but here this meshes with an explicit function regarding conduct. "Hospital patients make quicker recoveries when they have views of trees" connects gardens to a specifically therapeutic role which promotes an imaginative link between heterotopia, conduct and the governing of people.

The Eden Project somewhat questions those who wish to argue that heterotopian sites always suspend normalcy (see Dehaene and De Caeter, 2008). This space, as a botanical garden, incorporates utopian themes and also operates as a museum, but it also includes a therapeutic dimension that attempts to guide conduct, in this case working to improve our physical and mental health through contact with nature. Highlighting both the adaptability, versatility and connectivity of heterotopias, the Eden Project involves a therapeutic function which emerged strongly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century practices concerning the benefits

of nature, and shares some of the concerns found in the history of other heterotopias centred on a 'crisis' or 'deviation' such as prisons, hospitals, asylums, old people's homes and cemeteries, which are mentioned by Foucault, but often neglected in interpretations of heterotopia. Heterotopias, which punctuate the continuities of life, are fluid, changeable, intense, unstable and ambiguous, and yet are deeply embedded in the way we conduct and imagine modes and stages of life. They are perhaps particularly effective in this way because they are both different and at the same time, intimately connected to their surroundings. 'Healing' gardens sit inside disciplinary institutions.

Afterword: spaces for 'comforting a troubled soul'

When you take some really rough and big prisoners who are doing some very careful tasks like pruning or potting up or pricking out, the prisoners have time to think when they're out there in nature and fresh air. Prison Service Manager. (Grimshaw and King, 2003: 52)

You can get very irate in prison, emotions are very high. People think about things in their cell, and gardening has a calming effect. Prisoner. (Grimshaw and King, 2003: 53)

Broad connections between gardens and how we govern ourselves, and others, are made by a number of writers. Cooper's 'modest proposal' for the garden as 'epiphany', emphasises how the experience of the garden evokes a 'co-dependence of creative activity and nature' (2006: 139). Mosser and Teyssot argue that 'the garden always has two roles, and it is as inseparable from its utilitarian function as it is from its aesthetic or ideal function (1990: 11). Berleant's Heideggerian reading of gardens draws a helpful and important distinction between observational and engaged landscape (2005). He asserts that the 'garden may be considered a microcosm of the world as it is understood by the culture in which it is located' and 'it can function as a model of experience that we may strive to emulate' (32). According to Berleant we have to 'inhabit' a garden in some way and even in the observational garden, we are 'in' it and move through it. A garden can therefore 'invite participation and entice one into active engagement' and 'teach the body how to live' (39).

I want to tease out a little the therapeutic features of gardens and start to link up a range of heterotopian sites both historically and within contemporary settings, including prisons, hospitals, asylums, old people's homes and cemeteries. In recent years, there has been a huge

increase in the use of gardens and related horticultural activities to promote 'physical and mental health and well being' (Wedderburn, 2009: 7 and see Larson, 2006). Projects are designed to help a range of people including: children with cerebral palsy, autistic teenagers and adults, victims of car accidents, patients with aphasia, schizophrenia, forms of dementia, people with learning disabilities, older people, juvenile offenders, prisoners, ex-offenders, long-term psychiatric patients, the unemployed, violent sex offenders and those recovering from a stroke (Sempik *et al*, 2005). These projects, within what is now usually termed, 'Social and Therapeutic Horticulture' (STH), can be based in secure settings, schools and colleges, hospitals, nursing homes and community schemes. In some ways, STH can be said to have a very long history. For example, ancient Egyptian physicians sent unhealthy courtiers to spend time in the palace gardens. In 1100s St Bernard described the benefits of a hospice garden at a monastery in Clairvaux, praising the virtues of privacy, green plants, birdsong and fragrance. In the fourteenth century monks cared for 'distressed souls' through gardening.

However, many writers on the subject, both academics and practitioners, propose Dr Benjamin Rush (1745-1813) as the founder of STH. Rush was appointed chair of the Theory and Practice of Medicine at the first medical school in the United States at the University of Pennsylvania. In the last of five books devoted to 'The Diseases of the Mind', he mentions horticulture twice, firstly as a remedy for 'hypochondriasis' or 'tristimania'. In this case, various forms of employment and agriculture are said to provide the greatest benefit by 'agitating the passions by alternate hope, fear, and enjoyment and by rendering bodily exercise or labour necessary' (Rush, 1812: 117-8). On the other hand, as a remedy for 'manalgia', Rush recommends the following activities, often quoted in STH texts:

It has been remarked, that the maniacs of the male sex in all hospitals, who assist in cutting wood, making fires, and digging in a garden, and the females who are employed in washing, ironing, and scrubbing floors, often recover, while persons, whose rank exempts them from performing such services languish away their lives within the walls of hospitals (226).

In 1817 the first private psychiatric institution in the United States, the 'Asylum for Persons Deprived of their Reason' opened in Philadelphia, and later became the Friends Hospital. It used 'horticultural pleasures to awaken patients' senses and redirect their feelings... an environment conducive to recovery' (Lewis, 1976: 1-6). Asylums ensured that patients

remained busy and provided ample opportunities for all kinds of work as part of their new moral treatment. The link between labour and recovery became the focus of many exemplary case studies. A typical example concerned a male patient who suffered from regular violent fits and was cured after applying himself to energetic gardening (Rothman, 1971:146). Whether such sentiments should be quoted so unquestionably as the foundation of the new profession of STH is debatable. In these mainly US texts on the subject of horticultural therapy, there is little if any mention of the wider and more thorough debates about the benefits of the countryside and horticultural activities for the insane that flourished in England and Scotland through the work of Tuke and, later, alienists such as Conolly and Browne. Despite some opposition and much debate, Philo shows how in England by the mid nineteenth century the rural setting for asylums had become the dominant vision within medico-moral discourse (1987: 410). There were economic and work ethic justifications for encouraging patients to farm and garden, but the chief argument surrounded its therapeutic function (407).

Foucault refers to the importance of Tuke's model for treating the mad at the Retreat in York at the end of the eighteenth century (Foucault, 2007: 463-472). Tuke's writing and his model asylum became a prevailing influence on all the major reformers in the following century (Scull, 1979: 102). According to Tuke, the Retreat is set 'in the midst of a fertile and cheerful country' and 'presents not the idea of a prison, but rather that of a large rural farm' (1813: 221). The garden 'affords an agreeable place for recreation and employment, to many of the patients' (94-5). As Foucault summarises, 'exercise in the open air, regular walks and work in the garden were thought to be of great benefit' (2007: 472). He argues that Tuke's regime of fresh air and his belief in the 'wisdom of gardens', illustrate the beginning of one of the major organising forms of nineteenth century psychiatry: 'Nature as Health' (473). Nature would help the patient return to a natural state. As is well documented, Foucault carries out a thorough re-evaluation of Tuke's 'liberation of the mad', revealing an approach that played on inmates 'desire of esteem' and encouraged self-consciousness and a sense of guilt through a series of rewards and punishments and a regime of observation and classification (484-511).

Building on Tuke's work, Browne furthered the role of nature in the treatment of madness in the mid nineteenth century. Browne dominated the Scottish alienists, mirroring John Conolly's role in England. Both were heavily influenced by the parliamentary inquiries of 1807 and 1815-16, which alerted the public to the harsh and physically degrading treatment

of the insane within traditional madhouses, and was sympathetic to Pinel and Tuke's alternative mild and 'moral treatment' (see Scull, 1991: vii). In his widely read and disseminated series of lectures entitled 'What Asylums Were, Are, and Ought to Be', Browne synthesised the reformers' arguments for establishing new regulated asylums with expert, medical supervision and intervention (1837). He argued that madness was a physical disorder that had increased with the rapid growth of 'civilisation'. Embracing Rousseau's notion of the 'noble savage', he asserts that:

'as we recede, step by step, from the simple, that is, the savage manners of our ancestors, and advance in industry and knowledge and happiness, this malignant persecutor strides onwards, signalling every era in the social progress by an increase, a new hecatomb of victims .(Browne, 1837: 52)

Browne describes in vivid and lurid detail the horrors of the old madhouses, where sex, maltreatment, murder and lunacy mingle freely, but as Scull confirms, the most striking images in Browne's collection are found in his final lecture, where he outlines an ideal asylum. He explicitly links 'what an asylum ought to be' with utopia: 'a perfect asylum may appear to be a Utopia; a sight to dream of, not to see' (Browne, 1837: 176). The environment for this perfect space is crucial for Browne. In many ways, his description mirrors health reformers plans for new suburban cemeteries as will be discussed in detail in the next chapters: an elevated, 'healthy' position, with 'dry cultivated soil and an ample supply of water', within the 'unpolluted atmosphere' of the country but not too far from the social amenities of the town (181-2). Importantly, the building should be on the summit or the slope of rising ground as the 'mere extent of country affords delight'. Outside the building, 'a wider sphere for physical exertion and means for multiplying pleasurable sensations must be procured'. Gardens, grounds and farms should be attached to each establishment and cultivated 'by or under the direction of the lunatics' (193). Overall:

Conceive a spacious building resembling the palace of a peer, airy, and elevated, and elegant, surrounded by extensive and swelling grounds and gardens. The interior is fitted up with galleries, and workshops, and music rooms. The sun and the air are allowed to enter at every window, the view of the shrubberies and fields, and groups of labourers, is unobstructed by shutters or bars; all is clean, quiet, and attractive' (229)

With the building and immediate environment carefully designed and managed, with the appropriate separation of different maladies, dispositions and social status and with a diverse

range of activities available to stimulate the mind and body, the asylum system would be a 'beautiful and self-operating' moral 'machine' (203). Browne conjures up a rich picture of heterotopia: an ideal, miniature world, which works spontaneously to restore patients to their natural state (see Scull, 1991: xxxviii). Scull outlines how Browne's idealism was quickly dented and how, despite the lack of success at 'curing' madness, the asylum generally became a 'convenient place to get rid of inconvenient people' (1980: 48) or 'reasonably well-tended cemeteries for the still breathing' (1991: xlix-l). But nevertheless some contemporary gardening 'schemes' trace their origins to this specific history, for example, a project in Scotland suggests that their work can 'comfort the soul' and : 'though we've lost much of the land attached to the vast asylums, therapeutic gardening projects flourish in smaller plots within communities' (Trellis Charity, 2008).

There are many contemporary texts on the relationship between horticulture, health and well-being, but many are anecdotal or paraprofessional, without detailed evidence and often assuming the benefits are implicit. Much of the popular justification for therapeutic gardening seems to rely on common assumptions about how gardening relaxes, reduces stress, eases problems, helps fitness, leads to healthier diets and generally promotes well-being. There is in all these documents an implicit supposition that horticultural activities are inherently pleasurable, or inherently 'good'. As one typical horticultural therapist remarks: 'we have an innate attraction and empathy with the natural environment' (Wedderburn, 2009: 7). In the UK, it is estimated that over 24, 000 people participate in horticultural therapy activities each week and there are over 1,000 garden projects, making a significant contribution to the provision of health and social care (Sempik and Spurgeon, 2006). The 'Secret Garden' which is part of the overall Trunkwell Garden Project located in the village of Beech Hill, near Reading, is not an untypical example. The project is set in a Victorian walled garden. Therapists work with more than 100 people with learning disabilities, mental health needs, or a physical or a sensory disability such as partial sight or deafness. The 'Secret Garden' has a summer house that can be used as a shelter, classroom or theatre space and also a small working area with potting benches (Trunkwell Garden Project, 2007).

In the publicity leaflet for the project, the title of the garden is explicitly linked to the popular children's book by Frances Hodgson Burnett, published in 1911, and also the subsequent film (Burnett, 1993). The author is quoted at the front of the leaflet: 'the characters in "The Secret Garden" show the importance of believing in ourselves and never giving up. The garden is a

place of hope, inspiration and intrigue'. In brief, the book concerns a young girl, who after the death of her parents in colonial India, is shipped off to England to live in an enormous, desolate manor, which is home to an elusive and introspective Lord and his seemingly invalid son. In this cold and unpromising environment, the children manage to find happiness after the girl discovers a totally enclosed garden hidden away for years. The garden's sensory features intrigue the children and provoke their imagination. As they learn to nurture plants, the sour natures of the children respond and begin to change. Playing and working every day in the secret garden magically improves their characters and health. Through the garden, Burnett seems to be celebrating the restorative and regenerative powers of nature and likewise the garden project attempts to 'unlock new possibilities for those who garden inside its boundaries' (Trunkwell Garden Project, 2007). The safe and secure enclosure is intended to offer a stark contrast with life outside the garden and like many such projects encourages physical and social skills, concentration and confidence.

'The Secret Garden' seems to anticipate and highlight some of the wider claims of horticultural therapy (Sempik *et al*, 2005). The practice of STH has recently provoked more rigorous academic research, particularly in the US. The most systematic research stems from environmental psychology and the competing theories of Kaplan and Ulrich. The details of this debate are beyond the scope of this section, but some of the assumptions are relevant. In recent studies, many environmental psychologists argue for the restorative benefits of nature. Kaplan claims that the evidence is so strong that there is 'no disagreement.... that stress reduction is aided by natural environment experience' (1995: 169). For Kaplan natural settings are rich in the four essential components of restorative environments: a sense of 'getting away', particularly from urban setting; a series of objects that provide concentration through 'fascination'; a coherent 'extent' or scope that engages the mind; and a sense of 'compatibility' or resonance (174).

Some of Kaplan's explanation specifically captures features of Foucault's account of heterotopia. The extent must be 'rich enough and coherent enough so that it constitutes a whole other world'. Some of his reasoning is platitudinous and there still remains an unquestioned assumption that the experience of nature is inherently interesting and stimulating, however, Kaplan does refer to various studies that point to a link between restorative experience and his main focus of enhanced information-processing skills or 'directed attention' (176). According to Sempik *et al*, other studies have argued that residents

living in apartments with nearby trees manifest less aggression against their partners than those living in apartments in barren surroundings'; prisoners with 'outside' views report sick less than those with 'inside' views; and patients recovering from gall bladder surgery, improve quicker if they have a view of trees from their hospital bed rather than a view of a brick wall (2003: 24-35).

In summary, researchers list various active and passive processes and outcomes of STH. These include the promotion of physical activity, rehabilitation, acceptance, interaction, esteem, social inclusion, employability, skills development, tranquillity, peace, spirituality, attention restoration, recovery from stress and nature appreciation (Sempik *et al*, 2003: 46). Research into STH in secure settings lists the following functions for inmates and patients: educational, occupational, recreational, material (e.g. reward, wages), psychological, physical and social. Overall, there is a mix of education, therapy and production. The hope of researchers is that studies will become more rigorous and accessible so that STH 'will find a place in the various government and local authority strategies that are regularly produced for improving health, well-being and social inclusion' (Sempik *et al*, 2003: 47). This last quotation is particularly interesting as, according to Rose, such therapeutic culture opens up in a space 'between the imposition of controls upon conduct by the public powers and the forms of life adopted by each individual' (1990: 257). STH can be viewed as part of what Rose calls the 'therapeutic culture of the self' (213). Such therapy focuses on resolving inner stress, a form or off-shoot of psychotherapy, but also entails physical benefits and the development of practical, useful skills. In the promotion of health in its widest sense, life becomes a 'skilled performance' (238) that embraces a spectrum of psychological, physical, moral, spiritual and aesthetic values.

References

- Atkinson, J. (2007) 'Seeds of Change: the new place of gardens in contemporary utopia', *Utopian Studies*, 18 (2): 237-260.
- Augé, M. (1995) *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, London: Verso.
- Bauman, Z. (2005) 'Living in Utopia' LSE Lecture [<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/LSEPublicLecturesAndEvents/pdf/20051027-Bauman2.pdf>, accessed 16/9/2008].
- Bennett, J. (2001) *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Berleant, A. (2005) *Aesthetics and Environment*, Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate.
- Bloch, E. (1986a) *The Principle of Hope, Volume One*, trans. Plaice, N. et al, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bloch, E. (1986b) *The Principle of Hope, Volume Two*, trans. Plaice, N. et al, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Browne, W.A.F. (1837) *What Asylums Were, Are, and Ought to Be*, Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, facsimile edition in A. Scull (1991) (ed.) 'The Asylum as Utopia: W.A.F. Browne and the Mid-Nineteenth Century Consolidation of Psychiatry', London: Tavistock/Routledge.
- Cooper, D. (2006) *A Philosophy of Gardens*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dehaene, M. And De Cauter, L. (2008b) 'The space of play: towards a general theory of heterotopia' in M. Dehaene and L. De Cauter, (eds.), *Heterotopia and the City*, London and New York: Routledge, 75-87.
- Foucault, M. (1998) [1967] 'Different Spaces', in J. D. Faubion (ed.), *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault Volume 2*, London: Penguin, 175-185.
- Foucault, M. (2006) [1961] *History of Madness*, London: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (2007) [1978] *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977-78*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (2008) [1979] *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gesler, W. M. (1992) 'Therapeutic landscapes: medical geographic research in the light of the new cultural geography', *Social Science and Medicine*, 34: 735-46.

Grimshaw, R. and King, J. (2003) *Horticulture in Secure Settings: a study of horticultural activities in prisons and secure psychiatric facilities*, London: Thrive and Centre for Crime and Justice Studies.

Heinberg, R (1995) *Memories and Visions of Paradise: Exploring the Universal Myth of a Lost Golden Age*, London: Wheaton, Quest Books.

Hunt, J. D.. (1987) 'Gardens in Utopia: Utopia in the Garden' in D. Baker-Smith and C. Barford (eds.), *Between Dream and Nature: Essays on Utopia and Dystopia*, Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Hunt, J. D. (2000) *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory*, London: Thames & Hudson.

Larson, J. M. (2006) 'What's so therapeutic about horticulture?' paper given to BGCI's 6th International Congress on Education in Botanic Gardens: 'Nature of Success: Success for Nature' [www.bgci.org/educationcongress/pages/authors/larson, accessed 1/10/08].

Levitas, R. (2003) 'Utopia Here and Now' in S. Meyer (ed.) *Midlertidige Utopier* [Temporary Utopia] Oslo: Museum of Contemporary Art, 142-148.

Mabey, R (2005) *Fencing Paradise: reflections on the myths of paradise*, London: Eden Project Books.

Meyer, S. (2003) *Midlertidige Utopier* [Temporary Utopia] Oslo: Museum of Contemporary Art.

More, T. (1965) *Utopia*, London: Penguin.

Mosser, M. and Teyssot, G. (1990) (eds.) *The Architecture of Western Gardens: A Design History from the Renaissance to the Present Day*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

National Art Museum of China (2008) 'Garden Utopia by Zhang Wang', [<http://www.e-flux.com/shows/view/5322> accessed 16/9/2008].

Pearman, H. (2003) 'The Other Eden' in H. Pearman and A. Whalley (eds.), *The Architecture of Eden*, London: Eden Project Books, 9-30.

Persson, A. and Richards, W. (2008) 'From closet to heterotopia: a conceptual exploration of disclosure and passing among heterosexuals living with HIV', *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 10 (1): 73-86.

- Philo, C. (1987) 'Fit Localities for an asylum: the historical geography of the nineteenth-century mad business in England as viewed through the pages of the Asylum Journal', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 13 (4) 398-415.
- Piercy, M. (1979) *Woman on the Edge of Time*, London: The Woman's Press.
- Prest, J. (1981) *The Garden of Eden: The Botanic Garden and the re-Creation of Paradise*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Porphyrios, D. (1982) *Sources of Modern Eclecticism*, London: Academy Editions.
- Reynolds, R. (2008) *On Guerrilla Gardening: a handbook for gardening without boundaries*, London: Bloomsbury.
- Robinson, K. S. (1996) *Blue Mars*, London: HarperCollins.
- Rose, N. (1990) *Governing the Soul*, Routledge: London.
- Rothman, D. J. (1971) *The Discovery of the Asylum*, Toronto: Little and Brown.
- Rush, B. (1812) 'Medical Inquiries upon Diseases of the Mind' republished in *The History of Medicine Series, Number 15*, (1962), New York: Hafner Publishing.
- Schama, S. (2004) *Landscape and Memory*, London: Harper Perennial.
- Scull, A. (1979) *Museums of Madness* London; Allen Lane.
- Scull, A. (1980) 'A convenient place to get rid of inconvenient people: the Victorian lunatic asylum' in A. D. King (ed.), *Buildings and Society*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Scull, A. (1991) *The Asylum as Utopia: W.A.F. Browne and the Mid-Nineteenth Century Consolidation of Psychiatry*, London: Tavistock/Routledge.
- Sempik, J. et al (2003) 'Social and therapeutic horticulture: evidence and messages from research', Loughborough: Thrive and Centre for Child and Family Research, Loughborough University.
- Sempik, J. et al (2005) *Health, Well-Being and Social Inclusion, Therapeutic Horticulture in the UK*, Bristol: The Polity Press.
- Sempik, J. and Spurgeon, T. (2006) 'Lessons learnt – Evidence from practice paper given to BGCI's 6th International Congress on Education in Botanic Gardens: Success for Nature' [www.bgci.org/educationcongress/pages/authors/sempek, accessed 1/10/08].
- Smit, T. (1997) *The Lost Gardens of Heligan*, London: Victor Gollancz.
- Trunkwell Garden Project (2007) 'The Secret Garden', Thrive Publications.
- Thrift, N. (2006) 'Space', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 23: 139-146.

Trellis Charity (2008) 'What is HT?' [<http://www.trellisscotland.org.uk/publications>, accessed 18/11/2008].

Tuke, S. (1813) 'Description of the Retreat', reprinted in *Psychiatric Monograph Series 7* (1964), London: Dawsons.

Turner, T (2005) *Garden History: Philosophy and Design 2000 BC-2000 AD*, London and New York: Spon Press.

Ulrich, R. S. (1984) 'View through a window may influence recovery from surgery', *Science and Children*, 22 (4): 420-421.

Van Zuylen, G. (1995) *The Garden: Visions of Paradise*, London: Thames and Hudson.

Wedderburn, T. (2009) 'Together We Can Grow in the UK', *Journal of Social and Therapeutic Horticulture*, (116): 7-9.

Whalley, A. (2003) 'Eden and the Glasshouse Tradition' in H. Pearman and A. Whalley (eds.), *The Architecture of Eden*, London: Eden Project Books, 104-117.

Heterotopian Studies

Peter Johnson (Heterotopian Studies, 2012)