VOL I

THE GARDEN IN VICTORIAN LITERATURE

Two Volumes

by

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Volume I

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Volume I includes the Introduction to PART ONE and chapters 1 to 8

Volume II includes chapters 9 to 11, the Conclusion, NOTES AND REFERENCES and the BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Abstract

As subject, setting and signifying landscape, the garden figures prominently in Victorian imaginative literature. Through their descriptions of and comments upon gardens, imaginative writers proffered ideas of what a garden is or ought to be, and heightened the garden-consciousness of their garden-minded readers. At the broadest level, the presentation of the garden in imaginative literature reflects the stylistic diversity of contemporary horticultural practices, though certain styles and features are consistently privileged. In addition, gardens tended by their owners are in general preferred to those maintained by paid professionals. The fact that many Victorian novels are domestic novels helps to account for the prominence of gardens within them. Many fictional scenes have garden settings, and the garden is in many ways associated with the concept of home and the middle-class idolisation of domestic values. Moreover, imaginative writers played a part in scripting the garden as a social arena by defining the activities appropriate to particular features of it. They contributed also to the mediation, construction and promulgation of garden-related codes. Gardens frequently function as texts expressive of the personalities, attitudes and values of their owners, and fictional characters are defined in terms of their attitudes towards gardens. As a rule, only sympathetically presented characters cherish gardens for their own sakes. Through their persistent identification of women with flowers and gardens, imaginative writers played a part in beautifying and naturalising the domestic and ornamental roles of women. The significance of the garden in Victorian imaginative literature has also to be understood in terms of its complex and variable relations with nature and with non-garden landscapes such as mountains and cities. Finally, the garden is important also as an internal(ised) landscape used to articulate a range of intrapersonal and subjective experiences and concerns.

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Note on Textual References

In view of the great number of works I have cited, I felt it encumbent upon me to avoid wherever possible the duplication of textual references. To this end, the majority of imaginative works are cited in the text with their dates of publication, but full bibliographical details are given only in the Bibliography. Page numbers in parethesis are to the editions cited in the Bibliography. This strategy has made it possible to reserve the sections on Notes and References largely for references to works other than poems and works of prose fiction.

Preface

This study has a two-part structure. In Part One the emphasis is upon the garden itself. I consider what Victorian poets and novelists had to say about gardens, the styles and theories of gardens privileged in their writings, and the relations between the garden elements of imaginative texts and the theories and practices of contemporary horticulturalists. In Part Two the emphasis is upon the functions and significations of the garden in Victorian imaginative literature. I consider the multifarious uses to which gardens are put, and the effects and significances of these uses. I focus upon both the intra-textual relations of garden elements, that is, upon their relations with other elements of the texts in which they occur, and their extra-textual relations, that is, upon their relations with other elements within the Victorian cultural milieu.

Although the two parts of this study differ in emphasis and content, they overlap and interconnect at many points. This is nowhere more evident than in the chapter on Floral Codes (chapter 6). I have placed it at the head of Part Two, but clearly it straddles the boundary between the two parts.

In spite of the organisational framework I have imposed upon it, I have tried to allow the subject to speak through me. To this end, I have resisted the temptation formally to define the concept of "garden", with the effect that my use of the term is consonant with its multiplicity of applications in Victorian imaginative literature.

Since this study is proffered as a contribution to scholarship rather than to literary theory, I have refrained in the main

(Cont.)

from commenting explicitly upon the critical theories which have informed it. I ought to point out, however, that my policy has been to make use of whatever critical ideas and practices have seemed to me appropriate to a subject both diverse and culture-specific. This has led me to make assumptions to which some modern critics are likely to take exception. For instance, it will be obvious that I have granted literary texts a high degree of referential stability, and that I have refused to reduce the author to a decentred function of the text. If these procedural practices make some aspects of my study seem old-fashioned, then I can say only that the kind of work I set out to produce would have been impossible without them.

PART ONE

Introduction

I wish to address myself to a subject largely neglected by literary scholars and garden historians[1] alike: the contributions of Victorian imaginative writers to contemporary garden theory. I am concerned with what poets and novelists have to say about gardens, with their ideas of what gardens are or ought to be, and with the styles and features favoured or disfavoured in their writings. In the main, their contributions are bitty, brief and widely scattered, and in no sense add up to a fully coherent informal version of garden theory which we can place securely beside the formal version as expounded in the substantial body of technical garden literature. Rather, they can be regarded as an eclectic but highly interesting and possibly influential collection of comments, opinions and descriptions which seem sometimes to articulate and support, sometimes to challenge and interrogate, the ideas and practices expressed in Victorian horticultural texts - both written and topographical.

The Victorian period was one of eclectic garden styles. No one style dominated the age; preferences and possibilities varied socially and at different times. At the broadest level, Victorian imaginative literature mimes this stylistic diversity in that poets and novelists presented their readers with a wide range of garden types, some suggesting actual or typical "real" world equivalents. Even so, the relations between the practical gardening of the period and imaginative "garden" literature are far from simple.

For one thing, certain kinds of Victorian gardens, particularly those of more exotic or experimental design (Chinese and Egyptian

gardens, for example) and the more specialised types (such as rock and Alpine gardens) rarely if ever figure in poetry and fiction. Conversely, some fictional gardens have no exact extra-textual correspondences. For instance, the gardens in Disraeli's novels tend to be exaggerated and romanticised versions of the display gardens upon which they are loosely based. Moreover, many of the gardens described in fiction owe more to the predilections, values and desires of their authors than they do to the faithful documentation of social reality. This is egregiously the case with cottage gardens, copiously and affectionately described in the literature of the age, and frequently in terms more closely resembling, if not a literary stereotype, actual cottage gardens of an earlier period, or the gardens of the genteel cottager of modest means, than the genuine cottage gardens of the contemporary rural Labourer.

If Victorian garden styles were diverse, so also were the terms by which they were linguistically mapped. Different theorists proposed different systems of classification, and often applied the same label to gardens with dissimilar formal features. As Brent Elliott notes, "no system of nomenclature was universally accepted, not even Loudon's although his probably had the greatest authority."[2] This uncertainty over labels complicates the task of determining the precise structure of relations between fictional and historically specific gardens. The absence of a common and consistent vocabulary means that we cannot always be certain that garden writers and imaginative writers shared common frames of reference. Even when they used the same appellation, such as "picturesque", "geometric" or "Italian", it is not always safe to assume commonality of definitions and applications.

These problems are compounded by the general absence in imaginative literature of explicit references to contemporary garden theorists, and to the traditions of garden design in which they felt themselves to be working. Consider the case of John Claudius Loudon. Though the most

prolific and influential garden writer of his time (he died in 1843, but his influence was enduring) Loudon, qua garden theorist, is cited by none of the novelists I have consulted.[3] More significantly, no novelist appears ever to have employed his most famous coinage - "gardenesque". In one respect, this can be counted a blessing, for there was (and still is) confusion over its exact denotation, though it is generally taken to refer to a style in which plants are separated and cultivated as individual specimens so as to make each worthy of careful inspection. On the other hand, since a number of fictional gardens are clearly constructed in the gardenesque mode, at least some Victorian novelists must have been familiar with the notion of a style "calculated for displaying the art of the gardener",[4] even if they did not or could not put a name to it. Consider the following description of a villa garden from Bulwer Lytton's Ernest Maltravers (1837).

> Through an Ionic arch you entered a domain of some eighty or a hundred acres in extent, but so well planted and so artfully disposed, that you could not have supposed the unseen boundaries inclosed no ampler a space. The road wound through the greenest sward, in which trees of venerable growth were relieved by a profusion of shrubs and flowers gathered into baskets intertwined with creepers, or blooming from classic vases, placed with a tasteful care in such spots as required the filling up, and harmonised well with the object chosen. Not an old ivy-grown pollard, not a modest and bending willow, but was brought out, as it were, into a peculiar feature by the art of the owner. Without being overloaded, or too minutely elaborate (the common fault of the rich man's villa), the whole place seemed one diversified and cultivated garden. (p. 70)

Clearly, this garden is intended to display the "peculiar feature" of each plant and, by implication, the wealth, skills and tastes of its owner, the rich, fashionable and highly cultivated Mr. Cleveland. It might best be described as a gardenesque garden in the Italian mode exemplifying, perhaps, what Richard Gorer has identified as the tendency to historical pastiche in the gardens of the 1830s and 1840s.[5]

Another kind of gardenesque planting is described in Disraeli's Lothair (1870). The subject is Chart, a park planted in the early years of the century

> ... entirely with spruce firs, but with so much care and skill, giving each plant and tree ample distance, that they have risen to the noblest proportions, and with all their green branches far-spreading on the ground like huge fans.... It was a forest of firs, but quite unlike such as might be met with in the north of Europe or of America. Every tree was perfect, huge and complete, and full of massy grace ... (p. 61)

Here the separatist use of trees contrasts with the Brownian mode of planting in belts and clumps, and might almost have been written to bear out Loudon's declaration that the gardenesque "may now be seen in its most decided character, as far as respects trees and shrubs, wherever Arboretum have been properly planted."[6]

Gardenesque-like plantings appear elsewhere in Lothair in, for example, the description of Belmont with its "exquisite turf studded with rare shrubs and occasionally rarer trees" (p. 126). However, it is impossible to be certain that Disraeli was fully conscious of writing in terms specifically supplied by exponents of the gardenesque. It is not improbable that he described trees as individual specimens because that is how he, with his fondness for trees, preferred to see them, for in all such descriptions particular species and specimens are distinguished even when they do not constitute recognisably gardenesque plantings. (There are excellent examples of tree descriptions, and of Disraeli's separatist mode of vision, in Coningsby and Endymion).

There are, then, difficulties in establishing direct connections between what imaginative writers had to say about gardens and what garden writers had to say about them. These difficulties should not prove unduly bothersome, for although I shall made cross-references when it seems legitimate to do so, I intend to treat imaginative "garden" literature and technical garden literature as separate but historically parallel message systems. My main concern is to discuss imaginative literature within the context of Victorian garden theory and practice, not to dovetail it to them.

If it were possible to reconstruct the textual encounters of a Victorian garden-enthusiast, probably conversant with contemporary garden

theory, and widely read in Victorian poetry and fiction, what should we discover? Almost certainly, that he would not have found one kind or style of garden consistently and unanimously extolled to the neglect and deprecation of others. Given that Victorian authors differed in their tastes in, attitudes towards, and uses of the garden, and given also the generally mimetic orientation of nineteenth century fiction, this is just what we should expect to find.

That nineteenth century garden designs were diverse was attributable in part to uncertainty over and toleration towards choice of styles. Many Victorians congratulated themselves for a want of bigotry in this respect. With reference to gardens, an anonymous contributor to the Quarterly Review of 1855 wrote: "If we can flatter ourselves that the taste of the present age is better than that of the past, it is because it is more tolerant".[7]

The sympathies of many imaginative writers were certainly not unduly narrow. Indeed, the sharp-eyed garden-minded reader may even have wondered how Trollope could square his admiration for trimness and order with, in Orley Farm (1862), his obvious affection for the "commodious, irregular, picturesque and straggling" Orley Farm with its equally "large, straggling trees" (I, 7); or how Bulmer Lytton could in one novel, Kenelm Chillingly (1873), denounce the "pretentious" modern garden in favour of the old-fashioned farmhouse garden with "its straggling old English flowers" (p. 91) and, in another, Eugene Aram (1832), defend "those magnificent gardens, modelled on Versailles" against the opinion that "beauty is always best seen in deshabille" (p. 93); or how Disraeli in Lothair could lavish description upon grandiose versions of the High Victorian Display Garden, and yet devote the concluding section of the same novel to a compelling repudiation of its motivating aesthetic.

None of these writers could match Tennyson for sheer catholicity.

His garden-conscious readers (and there were many of them) were presented with descriptions of and allusions to a considerable range of garden types. The rectory gardens of his Somersby home are suggested in Song, "A spirit haunts the year's last hours", and figure in sections of Ode to Memory and In Memoriam (notably CI and XCV). There are rose gardens in Maud and The Gardener's Daughter, and terraced gardens in The Roses on the Terrace. There are aristocratic parks and garden estates in The English Idylls; those in Audley Court were "partially suggested by Abbey Park at Torquay in the old times" (Tennyson).[8] According to Tennyson, Sir Walter Vivian's "broad lawns" were based upon the Lushingtons's grounds at Park House, near Maidstone.[9] Also in the outer frame of The Princess are Gothic ruins, and in the poem's inner frame, the gardens of the Women's College have some of the distinguishing characteristics of mid-century Italianate gardens: fountains, peacocks, statues, stonework, a balustraded terrace of high elevation and exotic vegetation. Enclosed medieval gardens and bowers provide settings for consequential exchanges in the Idylls of the King, and there are references to the hortus conclusus in The Princess and Maud. Cottage gardens appear in a number of poems, including Aylmer's Field and Enoch Arden. In addition, there are sensuous eastern gardens in Recollections of Arabian Nights, and sacred bowers in The Poet's Mind and The Hesperides. As Robert G. Stange observes "Imaginary places analogous to the Eden garden are abundant in Tennyson's poems".[10]

In itself, a catalogue of this sort does not mean very much; but it does at least suggest that, like that of many of his contemporaries, Tennyson's concept of the garden was plastic, and that he recognised the aesthetic appeal and semiotic possibilities of different kinds of gardens.

Though the motivated reader would not have found in Victorian imaginative literature a single, consensually acclaimed garden ideal, he would have perceived a privileging of certain styles, features and qualities.

That is, he would have noted that delightful, lauded gardens were likely to be certain things and unlikely to be certain other things. This observation provides the structural framework for Part One.

Among the qualities commonly privileged in literary texts are fragrance, old age or the appearance of old age, visual appeal, picturesqueness and the potential for pictorial representation, and a moderate but not excessive degree of artifice. I begin with the latter quality, exhibited in what for convenience can be called the trim garden.

1

The Trim Garden

If any one principle dominated the aesthetics of Victorian garden theory, then it was expressed in the view that the garden ought to be considered a work of art rather than an attempt to copy the "natural" landscape. Sir Walter Scott gave it its simplest formulation when he declared that "Nothing is more completely the child of art than the garden".[1] Loudon contended that a garden ought to be natural in content but artificial in form. Likewise, Shirley Hibberd exhorted "every cultivator of taste in gardening" to bear in mind "that a garden is an artificial contrivance ... not a piece scooped out of a wood", and that art rather than nature should be "the basis of every arrangement".[2]

From what did this emphasis on artificiality stem? Chiefly from a general disapproval of the eighteenth century landscape garden: for its lack of imaginative variety; for its aesthetically displeasing and socially inconveniencing disconnection of house and garden; and for its deception of the spectator, who was misled into believing that what he saw before him was a "realistic" if improved version of the natural scene. Most Victorian garden theorists held that in perpetrating this fiction, the landscape school had displayed a want of aesthetic integrity. Since nature was an abstraction, no garden could provide a mimetic representation of it. All gardens codified nature; all were subject to the rules and conventions of art. Moreover, as Loudon argued, if a garden excited the spectator's "emotions of taste", it was not by virtue of its inherent properties but, as Archibald Alsion had contended, "by the associations which may have connected these with the ordinary affections or emotions of our nature".[3] Hence, it was the gardener's job to provide designs which could not be mistaken for works of nature, and which were sufficiently imaginative to connect with the associations of the viewer.

This insistence upon artifice and variety was motivated by other considerations. Loudon and his followers believed that "the hand of man should be visible in gardens" because they are "intended to show that they are works of art, and to display the taste and wealth of the owner".[4] Loudon wanted the credit for a good garden to go to the gardener or garden owner rather than to nature. Similarly, many theorists reasoned that since the garden is "one of the last refinements of civilised life", to attempt "to disguise wholly its artificial character is as great a folly as if men were to make their houses resemble as much as possible the rudeness of a natural cavern".[5]

The emphasis upon artifice was ensured by at least two other developments. First, by the influx of new plant materials, including those which became the staple of the bedding-out system, which many Victorians of means were eager to exhibit. Second, garden writers turned their attentions to the suburban gardens of the middle classes, and to the gardens of country "residences" as opposed to country "seats" (the distinction is Loudon's). Thus they were concerned with garden designs appropriate to grounds of comparatively modest size. To lay them out to effect demanded skills quite different from and, as Loudon insisted, often more exacting than those required for the construction of landscape parks.

Many mid-century novelists seem to have been aware of the views and developments I have outlined, and frequently imply a qualified approval of the kind of garden that wears its artifice upon its floral sleeve; "qualified" because they were aware also of the excesses and extravagances to which the stress upon artificiality could in practice lead. More of this later. Here I wish to quote a passage from Trollope's Can You Forgive Her? (1864-5). It is a description of John Grey's house and gardens at Nethercoats.

> But though Nethercoat's possessed no beauty of scenery, though the country around it was in truth as uninteresting

> as any country could be, it had many delights of its own. The house itself was as excellent a residence for a country gentleman of small means as taste and skill together could construct. I doubt whether prettier rooms were ever seen than the drawing-room, the library, and the dining-room at Nethercoats. They were all on the ground floor, and all opened out on to the garden and lawn.... But perhaps the gardens of Nethercoats constituted its greatest glory. They were spacious and excellently kept up, and had been originally laid out with that knowledge of gardening without which no garden, merely as a garden, can be effective. And such, of necessity, was the garden of Nethercoats. Fine single trees there were none there, nor was it possible that there should have been any such. Nor could there be a clear rippling stream with steep green banks, and broken rocks lying about its bed. Such beauties are beauties of landscape, and do not of their nature belong to a garden. But the shrubs of Nethercoats were of the rarest kind, and had been long enough in their present places to have reached the period of their beauty. Nothing had been spared that a garden could want. The fruit trees were perfect in their kind, and the glass-houses were so good and so extensive that John Grey in his prudence was sometimes tempted to think that he had too much of them. (I, 124-5)

There is nothing in this passage which could not have pleased almost every contemporary garden theorist. The details and emphases are exactly right: the happy interconnection of house and garden; the exclusion of nature in its wildest forms; the felicitous combination of means, taste and horticultural expertise conspiring to produce rare and perfect botanical specimens.

Trollope's novels are punctuated by similar and often exemplary descriptions. Though few include such explicit remarks on garden theory as the one quoted above, most suggest that he was in touch with and sympathetic to prevailing attitudes towards garden design. To draw attention to some mutualities of more general significance, I should like to focus upon some interesting points of contact between Trollope's descriptions and the ideas of the garden theorists with which they tend to concur.

Trollope is at his most Reptonian in his descriptions of substantial country houses squatting in unrelieved acres of turf. As Repton saw it,

"placing a large house, not only on a naked lawn, but in the centre of it ... so that the park might surround it in all directions ... one of the greatest errors in modern gardening".[6] The result, he says, is that the gardens, the pheasantry, etc., "become so many detached establishments"[7] banished to an inconvenient distance. Repton and his Victorian successors considered this a violation of the unity of the house-garden-park composition. Repton's response was to advocate the reintroduction of flower-beds and specialised flower-gardens near the house. This, he believed, would restore not only the art of gardening but also the social functions of the garden. That this was Repton's major contribution to the history of garden design is occasionally acknowledged in Victorian fiction. In Kenelm Chillingly he is credited with having originally planned the flower-garden and pleasure-ground of Leopold Travers's country estate. Trollope doesn't mention Repton by name, but Reptonian attitudes consistently inform his garden descriptions.

The gardens of the huge and "uselessly extensive" Desmond Court in Castle Richmond (1860) are half a mile off from the house. "There is no garden close up to the house, no flower-beds, in nooks and corners, no sweet shrubs peeping at the square windows", and "the great hall door opens out upon a flat, bleak park, with hardly a scrap around it which courtesy can call a lawn" (pp. 5-6). In An Eye For An Eye (1879), theElizabethan Scroope Manor is set in an extensive but unattractive park where "there was none of that finished landscape beauty of which the owners of 'places' in England are so justly proved ... To a stranger, and perhaps to the inmates, the idea of gloom about the place was greatly increased by the absence of any garden or lawn near to the house" (p. 3). Similarly, Bragton Park in The American Senator (1877) "is somewhat sombre, as there is no garden close to the house" (p. 14) and because the flower-gardens of Clavering Park in The Claverings (1867) are some 300 yards removed from the house, "the cold desolate park came up close

around the windows" (p. 370).

Trollope's judgemental descriptions are by no means peculiar. In Mrs. Oliphant's A Country Gentlemen and his Family (1886), the substantial country seat of Markland suffers more even than most of Trollope's gloomy houses from the lack of modern horticultural improvements. For commercial reasons, the plantations of Markland "had been wantonly and wastefully cut" so that the house "stood almost unsheltered upon its little eminence". Because it lacked ornamental gardens, and could boast but a scattering of immature beeches, it stood "in a nakedness which made the spectator shiver" (I, 59).

If a flower-garden close to the house is Trollope's first requirement of a first rate garden, scarcely less essential are well-tended lawns and gravel paths. His agenda is strikingly compatible with those of mid-century garden writers. An anonymous contributor to the Quarterly Review of 1842 wrote: "The smoothness and verdure of our lawns is the first thing in our gardens that catches the eye of the foreigner; the next is the fineness and firmness of our gravel-walks".[8]

Consentience is suggested also by a common vocabulary - by the word "trim" in particular. It is Trollope's favourite "garden" adjective, and a term much favoured by garden writers. Though "trim" has a cluster of significations, Trollope consistenly applies it to tidy, tasteful, well-tended arrangements. In the technical literature, it is sometimes used with specific reference to the contents as opposed to the overall design of gardens: to plants trimmed to perfect shape characteristic of the gardenesque style. In Trollope, this sense seems cognate with but subordinate to its larger, more general application. "Trim" is used also for the strictly regular and symmetrical garden, but not by Trollope, who denotes severe symmetry and connotes stuffy propriety with the epithet "prim". Thus, with a glance at Pope, he describes Mrs. Winterfield's

gloomy plot at Perivale in The Belton Estate (1865) as "a square, prim garden, arranged in parallelograms, tree answering tree at every corner" (p. 87).

The referential variations of "trim" are interesting but less significant than its affective stability. In common with most mid-century garden and imaginative writers, Trollope uses "trim" to express approval, and almost all the gardens he presents positively have the quality of trimness. In The Small House at Allington (1864) we learn that about the Great House at Allington "there were trim gardens, not very large, but worthy of much note in that they were so trim, - gardens with broad gravel paths, with one walk running in front of the house so broad as to be fitly called a terrace" (p. 5). Lily Dale, we are told, took pride in her lawns at the Small House, and considered them finer than those of her uncle. In Framley Parsonage (1861) we learn that the gardens of Framley Court "were trim and neat beyond all others in the country" (p. 9), and those of the house at Noningsby in Orley Farm "were trim, and the new grounds around them trim, and square, and orderly" (p. 215).

Trollope's notion of trimness was evidently broad enough to license the incorporation of a certain amount of stonework close to the house; in this respect, also, his views are consistent with those of contemporary garden theorists. In Barchester Towers (1857) he describes the Thornes' old fashioned garden at Ullathorne. The windows of the with-drawing room "opened on to the full extent of the lovely trim gardens; immediately beyond the windows were plots of flowers in stiff, stately, stubborn little beds, each bed surrounded by a stone copping of its own; beyond, there was a low parapet wall, on which stood urns and images, fawns, nymphs, satyrs, and a whole tribe of Pan's followers; and then, again, beyond that a beautiful lawn sloped away to a sunk fence which divided the garden from the park" (p. 187).

But in Trollope's estimation, even the finest of terrace gardens is aesthetically inferior to a well-kept lawn. Of Greshamsbury House, "said to be the finest specimen of Tudor architecture of which the country can boast", we are told: "It stands in a multitude of trim gardens and stone-built terraces, divided one from another: these to our eyes are not so attractive as that broad expanse of lawn by which our country houses are generally surrounded; but the gardens of Greshamsbury have been celebrated for two centuries, and any Gresham who would have altered them would have been considered to have destroyed one of the well-known landmarks of the family" (Dr. Thorne, 1858, p. 10).

One wonders on behalf of which particular community Trollope considered himself to be speaking here. Not, one assumes, on behalf of those tradition-conscious members of the gardening fraternity who had for more than half a century been lamenting the destruction of architectural features like those of Greshamsbury. That Trollope's remarks were proferred at a time when many Victorians were reviving Tudor and Italian garden designs in the search for historical authenticity, makes them even more difficult to square with contemporary attitudes - notwithstanding Trollope's acknowledgement of historical appeal. What his use of the democratic "we" does suggest is that his views about the indispensability of a "broad expanse of lawn" were widely shared - at least among the country house community.

In general, Trollope's predilections are far from idiosyncratic or narrowly sectional, and he is by no means the only novelist to confer literary status upon garden features considered by theorists appropriate to evince a desirable degree of artifice. In Wives and Daughters (1864-6) Mrs. Gaskell more than once refers with approval to the "trim lawn" of Hamley Hall, and she also uses "trim" with reference to the

vicarage garden at Helstone in North and South (1854-5), and to the gardens of Cranford (Cranford, 1853). In Mrs. Oliphant's Salem Chapel (1863) the reader is told, again by way of commendation, that in Lady Western's autumnal garden "everything is in the most perfect order in the trim shrubberies" (p. 56). The perceived attractiveness of modest artifice is registered in poems as well. In Austin Dobson's A New Song of The Spring Gardens, the speaker hails Londoners to "the trim gravelled walks" of Vauxhall Gardens.[9]

Many novelists evidently shared with garden writers the suspicion that what attracted foreigners to English gardens was the trimness of their features.[10] Disraeli's Colonel Campion is pleasantly struck by the "art-fulness" of English gardens. He says to Lothair: "What I admire most in your country, my lord, are your gravel walks" (Lothair, p. 101). A real American abroad, Henry James, expressed similar sentiments in his travel essays and novels, as here in a description from The Ambassadors (1903) detailing Strether's experience in the garden of his hotel at Chester: "The ordered English garden, in the freshness of the day, was delightful to Strether, who liked the sound, under his feet, of the tight fine gravel, packed with chronic damp, and who had the idlest eye for the deep smoothness of turf and the clean curves of path" (p. 26).

On numerous occasions, James writes admiringly of English lawns, as when he sets the scene at Gardencourt in the opening chapter of The Portrait of a Lady (1881), or describes a "charming old rectory" in Warwickshire, set down "upon its cushiony lawn and among its ordered gardens",[11] which also brings to his mind George Eliot's Gwendolen Harleth and Mallinger Grandcourt. He was thinking, presumably, of the "carefully-kept enclosure" of the archery ground at Brackenshaw Park, with its "gravel walks and the bit of newly-mown turf where the targets are placed ..." (Daniel Deronda, 1876, p. 72).

In the last thirty years of the century, the term "trim" acquired new applications and connotations. Some garden writers gave it a derogatory twist. Chief among them was William Robinson who, in 1870, formally launched in The Wild Garden his quest for a system of gardening that "will enable us to grow hundreds of plants that never yet obtained a place in our 'trim gardens', nor ever will be admitted therein".[12] Robinson associated trimness with the architectural features of mid-century Italianate gardens, with a restricted and unimaginative use of plant materials, and with the bedding system he denounced as "base and frightfully opposed to every law of nature's own arrangement of things".[13] He argued instead for what he rather misleadingly called the "wild garden".

I shall show later that some contemporary poets and novelists shared Robinson's preference for comparatively simple and "natural" garden styles. Here I wish to mention only one novelist: George Gissing. Like Robinson, Gissing had a passion for the English countryside and for what he took to be nature undeformed. His use of the term "trim garden" is distinctly Robinsonian in its pejorative connotations. With regard to the thwarted ambitions of Clara Hewett, the narrator of The Nether World (1889) says: "Never yet did the rebel, who had burst the barriers of social limitations, find aught but ennui in the trim gardens beyond" (p. 277). Here, I think, "trim gardens" has a more than figurative force - is very much a metonym of the tediously conventional social world of the privileged classes. But it is in The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft (1903) that Gissing's Robinsonian proclivities are most in evidence. Henry Ryecroft, in some respects like Gissing himself, is released from the servitude of his life as a struggling city writer by an unexpected legacy. His final years are spent in a privileged

pastoral retreat, where he supervises the construction and stocking of his garden - about which he has some definite "peculiarities". Ryecroft informs the reader that his gardener is puzzled because he "will not let him lay out the flower-beds in the usual way, and make the bit of ground in front of the house really neat and ornamental".

Ryecroft explains:

> The only garden flowers I care for are the quite old-fashioned roses, sunflowers, hollydocks, lilies and so on, and these I like to see growing as much as possible as if they were wild. Trim and symmetrical beds are my abhorrence, and most of the flowers which are put into them - hybrids with some grotesque name - Jonesia, Snooksia, - hurt my eyes. On the other hand, a garden is a garden, and I would not try to introduce into it the flowers which are my solace in lanes and fields. Foxgloves, for instance - it would pain me to see them thus transplanted (p. 100).

On this last point, Ryecroft seems to differ from Robinson, who proposed the naturalisation in gardens of hardy plants, including non-native species. Otherwise, their likes and dislikes are very similar.

Robinson had opponents. Of these, the most extreme was Reginald Blomfield, the most level-headed, J.D. Sedding.[14] Like Robinson, they abominated the Italianate taste for carpet-bedding and elaborate parterres of vivid bedded-out flowers. But in contrast to Robinson, who wished to make trim gardens things of the past, his opponents wished to make trim gardens because they <u>were</u> things of the past. That is, they located the trimness they desired not in the immodest formality of Italianate compositions, nor in the look-alike plots of suburban London with, in Ruskin's words, their "exactly similar double parallelograms of garden, laid out in new gravel and scanty turf, on the model of the Crystal Palace",[15] but in the small, modestly formal gardens of the Renaissance, and of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries: enclosed, rectangular, axial, pleached and pergolaed, with cubicle flower-beds edged in clipped box.

William Morris was one writer favourably disposed to such gardens. He was especially charmed by the simplicity and orderliness of the medieval pleasure-garden with its enclosed plot and trellises, its fruit trees and flower closes.[16] He believed that all (pre-Utopian) gardens should be enclosed - with almost "anything but iron" -[17] and that inside the walls there should be a tidy arrangement of small, square, boxed-in beds. He constructed his own gardens on medieval lines.

Morris's writings bristle with references to and descriptions of medieval gardens and gardens of medievalist inspiration. Almost all of them are distinguished by their trimness, which for Morris meant more than simply tidiness - important though this was to him.[18] Morris's notion of trimness is recoverable from his imaginative writings, where the term is usually clarified in relation to its opposite. Thus, in many contexts "trim" contrasts with "tumbledown". In A Dream of John Ball (1888) the Victorian dreamer, accustomed to the "tumbledown, bankrupt-looking surroundings of our modern agriculture", awakes to find himself in an unfamiliar (medieval) landscape. He is struck by "a certain unwonted trimness and hardiness about the enclosures of the gardens and orchards", "surprised" by "the garden-like neatness and trimness of everything."[19] In News from Nowhere (1890) the contrast is provided by the "tumbledown picturesque". "Such things", Old Hammond tells Guest, "do not please us even when they indicate no misery. Like the medievals, we like everything trim and clean and orderly and bright."[20]

Morris's use of trim is implicitly opposed to the Robinsonian applications of the term to a nature made ugly by coercion and architectural subjugation. It suggests, on the contrary, a nature both subdued and superabundant. In The Story of the Unknown Church (1856) the gardens of the medieval abbey and church look, as Morris in a paper entitled "Making the Best of it" (1882) said every garden should look,

"both orderly and rich."[21] Their beauty is enhanced by the welcomed intrusion of wild flowers. Near the Piccadilly of past-Revolutionary England, the visitor to Nowhere finds himself "in a region of elegantly built much ornamented houses" with trim gardens, each one "carefully cultivated and running over with flowers."[22]

It is significant that Morris applies "trim" to homes and interiors (in News from Nowhere, to "dwellings, sheds, and workshops,"[23]) as well as to gardens and exteriors. It suggests that Morris, like other Victorian proponents of the formal garden, believed in the harmonious integration of house and garden. Indeed, he held that a garden "should by no means imitate either the wilfulness or the wildness of nature, but should look like a thing never to be seen except near a house. It should look, in fact, like part of the house ..."[24]

For Morris, this happy union of house and (formal) garden came to serve as a paradigm of the relations between people and nature under ideal conditions - the conditions which obtain in the socialist Utopia presented in News from Nowhere. Here, men are masters, and "won't stand any nonsense from Nature in their dealings with her,"[25] "Trim" is the footloose adjective which sums up this ideal state of affairs.

So far, I have focused upon the protean term "trim", and plotted some changes in its application and associations. This has served to reveal some significant areas of agreement between Victorian garden theorists and contemporary imaginative writers. In particular, it has revealed that many fiction writers subscribed, in broad terms at least, to the idea that a garden should be "robed, dressed and beautiful" (Hibberd's words) rather than a deliberate replication of the "natural" scene.

Writers who upheld the idea of the garden as a composed landscape tended also to privilege gardens with a potential for pictorial

representation. In many instances, this potential is "realised" through articulation, so that the reader is asked to collude with the fiction that the garden described has already been painted on canvas. Of course, Victorian novelists often described objects in such a way as to imply an anterior representional status; by this means, they sought to achieve an illusion of reality. (Consider Barthes' assertion that realism consists "not in copying the real but in copying a 'painted' copy of the real".[26]) But the effect of treating a garden as a kind of visual quotation is not simply to verify its authenticity and likeness to the real; it is also to acknowledge its visual merits, and to affirm its status as a work of art.

When garden theorists argued that a garden should be a work of art they usually meant that it should be a landscape designed with regard to the general principles of artistic composition, not one designed consciously to look like or imitate a picture. Indeed, they took their eighteenth century predecessors to task for not having "questioned whether a picture should be the ultimate test of laying out gardens and grounds".[27]

Between them, Repton and Loudon largely redefined the relations between painting and gardening. Repton distinguished between the two arts, while Loudon drew attention to the underlying principles common to both. In the very first volume of The Gardener's Magazine (1826), Loudon declared that "the principles of composition are the same in all the arts of taste"; hence, all should be "guided by unity of expression as the whole or general effect, and by the connection and cooperation of the component parts. . ."[28] Subsequently, he reiterated and expanded upon these principles. Since they appear to be evinced in many fictional gardens privileged by a pictorial frame of reference, it will be useful to look at them in some detail.

Loudon's repeated insistence upon "unity of expression" stems from his conviction that the mind can attend to only one thing at a time.

Hence, "when a multiplicity of objects are placed before it, they must be so disposed as to form one object or picture, so as to be seen at one glance, otherwise the mind would be distracted, and deprived of that repose which is essential to comprehension and enjoyment". Loudon acknowledges that "the want of unity of expression is a prevailing error in most public gardens; and, indeed, in most private ones. Not only are there too many objects crowded into one scene, so that the spectator does not know to which to direct his attention first, but even so many walks offer themselves to his choice, that he is at a loss to know which to take".[29]

Loudon's second principle is "variety". He writes: "to excite attention and to keep alive interest, one kind of scene must succeed another".[30] Finally, he emphasises the importance of "Relation or Order". "Scenes in a garden should not succeed one another at random, but according to some principle of succession, founded on the nature of the scenes to be exhibited; and this order of succession should be recognisable from the first by the spectator.... The spectator ought never to be taken violently by surprise, or startled; for that is the character of the lowest degree of art".[31]

Let me quote the description of a garden which seems to meet Loudon's requirements. It is from G.J. Whyte-Melville's Tilbury Nogo (1854). The titular hero arrives at the door of Mr. Cotherstone's villa

> ... through a sort of half-shrubbery and half-garden, studded with evergreens and fragrant with roses. Nothing could be prettier than the house and grounds - the former a long, low building, standing so white and level on its smoothly-shaven lawn, with French windows opening in all directions on the well-kept flower-garden, now in all its midsummer beauty, from whence winding gravel-walks with heavy borders of box, allure you into the picturesque and luxuriant shrubberies, whose dwarfish proportions formed a pleasing contrast, shut in as they were by the noble oaks of Windsor Forest, which completed the picture. (p. 72)

The final sentence wraps up the description at the same moment as it wraps up the scene by imposing, retrospectively as it were, a frame upon it.

But it is clear from the confident manner in which the scene is unfolded that the speaker/spectator has all along envisaged the garden as a visual image in which all the constituent features are available for simultaneous inspection. The simple arrangement, together with the harmony of house and grounds, preserves unity of composition, while within the frame there is the requisite variety and contrast.

Of special interest is the succession of the scenes and their relation to the whole. This succession is based upon the principle of gradual transition: the idea that scenes should advance from the highly artificial and formal in the immediate vicinity of the house, towards semi-"natural" scenes in the more distant or irregular parts of the grounds.

In mid-century, this mixed or composite style was both popular (as Loudon observed[32]) and favoured by many garden theorists for its optimisation of visual effects. The eye (and mind) of the spectator, initially excited by the effects of highly-coloured formal displays, is then relieved and rested by the more open and chromatically subdued prospect. In the case of Mr. Cotherstone's garden, these horizontal effects are heightened by a "pleasing" vertical contrast.

In many other fictional gardens, the advancement of the spectator's eye through a gradual succession of contrasting scenes is identified as the source of his or her aesthetically pleasing landscape experience. In Wives and Daughters, Elizabeth Gaskell describes the experience of the young Molly Gibson on the occasion of the garden party at Cumnor Towers. Molly is simultaneously pained and delighted by the brilliant scenes near the house, by the flower-beds, "scarlet, crimson, blue, orange; masses of blossom lying on the greensward" (p. 45). The prospect affords her relief: "Green velvet lawns, bathed in sunshine, stretched away on every side into the finely wooded park; if there were divisions and ha-has between the soft, sunny sweeps of grass, and the

dark gloom of the forest-trees beyond, Molly did not see them; and the melting away of the exquisite cultivation into the wilderness had an inexplicable charm to her" (ibid., p. 45).

Later, she has a similar experience of landscape from an upstairs window of Hamley Hall, itself a visually appealing structure of old red brick. Molly sees "A flower-garden right below; a meadow of ripe grass beyond, changing colour in long sweeps, as the soft wind blew over it; great old forest trees on one side; and, beyond them again,... the silver shimmer of a mere, about a quarter of a mile off (ibid., p. 95).

It is interesting to compare the zonal structure of the scene available to Molly Gibson with the landscape upon which Aurora Leigh could gaze from the bedroom of her aunt's country house. By pushing her head out of the window, she had "the privilege of seeing"

> First, the lime ... past the lime, the lawn,
> Which, after sweeping broadly round the house,
> Went trickling through the shrubberies in a stream
> Of tender turf, and wore and lost itself
> Among the acacias, over which you saw
> The irregular line of elms by the deep lane
> Which stopped the grounds and dammed the overflow
> Of arbutus and laurel ...
> Behind the elms,
> And through their tops, you saw the folded hills
> Striped up and down with hedges ...[33]

What distinguishes the scenes unfolded in this description is their near inversion of the normal sequence from artificial to "natural". The garden immediately about the house is robbed of formality by the signifiers which render it a "natural" landscape: "sweeping", "trickling", "stream", "dammed" and "overflow". The significance of the reversed succession is clarified a little further on when the speaker contrasts the wild and "palpitating" landscapes of Italy with those of contemporary England, a "nature tamed".

In England

All the fields

> Are tied up fast with hedges, nosegay-like;
> The hills are crumpled plains, the plains parterres,

> The trees, round, wooly, ready to be clipped,
> And if you seek for any wilderness
> You find, at best, a park.[34]

Presumably, the free-flowing forms of the garden serve to compensate for the visual deficiences of a gardenised nature - a nature parcelled and tidily transformed by the packing projects of agrarian capitalism.[35]

To turn from Gaskell's treatment of garden landscapes in Wives and Daughters to Disraeli's presentation of them in Coningsby (1844), Endymion (1880) and (in particular) Lothair, is not to be greatly surprised. Both novelists privilege gardens enhanced by non-random internal differentiation, and by the fortuitous conditions of their situations. Both acknowledge the visual appeal of gardens with strong zonal structures. There are differences. Gaskell, who conceives of landscape in domestic and economic terms, stresses topographical continuities: gardens proper grade gently into the surrounding countryside. Disraeli's contrasts are more emphatic: his foregrounds more glaring, his backgrounds more savage. But neither novelist is as much concerned with the itemisation of particular features as with the general effects of the whole. In Disraeli's case, these wholes are enormous. Brentham, home of Lady Corisande in Lothair, is a "vast, ornate" palace rising from "statued and stately terraces".

> At their foot spread a gardened domain of considerable extent, bright with flowers, dim with coverts of rare shrubs, musical with fountains. Its limit reached a park, with timber such as the midland countries only can produce. The fallow deer trooped among its ferny solitudes and gigantic oaks; but beyond the waters of the broad and winding lake the scene became more savage (p. 4)

Disraeli's treatment of Brentham, his emphasis upon effective colour contrasts and topographical encompassment, implies a pictorial paradigm. Lothair's own ancestral estate, Muriel Towers, is an even more coherent visual structure. Its gardens are

> formed in a sylvan valley enclosed with gilded gates. The creator of this paradise had been favoured by nature, and had availed himself of this opportunity. The contrast between the parterres blazing with colour and the sylvan background, the undulating paths over romantic heights, the fanes and the fountains, the glittering statues, and the Babylonian terraces, formed a whole much of which was beautiful, and all of which was striking and singular (p. 196).

Vernon Bogdanor has written that "At Brentham and at Muriel, nature beyond the ordered confines of the house is savage and unfriendly".[36] Bogdanor's coupling of adjectives is misleading, for Disraeli's use of "savage", in its aesthetic applications, is always positive and commendatory. Nature may be savage, but it is also cooperative; it can be appropriated by the landscape gardener to complement his production.

Though Disraeli has often been cited as a champion of the blazing parterre characteristic of the High Victorian Display Garden,[37] it is clear from his fictional descriptions that his approval of brilliant effects is conditional upon their being offset by the subdued colours and irregular forms of the encincturing wildscape.[38] Had he been asked to justify the kaleidoscopic flower-bed of formed design, he might well have quoted Hibberd: "Even when the garden slopes away to a splendid prospect of open country, flowers should embellish the foreground, not to draw the eye from natural scenes, but to combine happily the efforts of nature and art in the production of a living picture".[39]

What Disraeli and Hibberd appear to share is a sense of distinction between visual composition and mere visual impact, or the view that a garden can be highly colourful and of intricate design without necessarily being pleasing to the eye, and without combining "happily the efforts of art and nature in the production of a living picture".

As regards mere visual impact, Hibberd had two main targets. The first was the bedding-out system, which set the flower-garden ablaze for three months and kept it a "dreary blank" for the remainder of the year.

Hibberd was of the opinion that "A few simple borders, well stocked with mixed herbaceous plants ... would in many instances, afford more real pleasure and ever-changing interest than the most gorgeous display of bedding plants hemmed in between two glaring walls, or exposed on a great treeless, turfless place like the blazing fire at the mouth of a coal-pit".[40]

Hibberd's other target was the "Tudor" knot. In the middle decades of the century, some gardeners, searching for historical authenticity, revived features considered characteristic of Tudor gardens. One such feature was the intricate parterre filled with coloured earths and gravels. Hibberd had no time for them. He wrote: "The working out of a great design in coloured earths and flower-beds is the most complicated and generally, the least satisfactory form of the parterre. It has this advantage, that during the winter it affords 'something to look at', and the corresponding disadvantage that nobody wants to see it".[41]

In the concluding section of Lothair, which includes some of the most explicit comments on contemporary garden theory and practice to be found in Victorian fiction, the conversation of Disraeli's upper-class characters centres on "modern gardens". The views they express echo and endorse the sentiments of Hibberd and many other contemporary garden writers. The speakers are in a room at Brentham which looks out "on a garden of many colours".

> "How I hate modern gardens", said St. Aldegonde. "What a horrid thing this is! One might as well have a mosaic pavement there. Give me cabbage-roses, sweet-peas, and wallflowers. That is my idea of a garden. Corisande's garden is the only sensible thing of the sort".
> "One likes a mosaic pavement to look like a garden", said Euphrosyne, 'but not a garden like a mosaic pavement".
> "The worst of these mosaic beds", said Madame Phoebus, "is, you can never get a nosegay, and if it were not for the kitchen-garden, we should be destitute of that gayest and sweetest of creations" (p. 463).

The "modern gardens" which St. Aldegonde detests - elaborate, dazzling and declamatorily artificial - are far from prominent in Victorian fiction. Though many novelists appear to have accepted the logic of the argument that a garden, qua a work of art, ought recognisably to contrast with nature in the raw, their latitudes of acceptance - what they were willing to legitimate through favourable comments and descriptions - were reasonably narrow. As a rule, trim orderly arrangements of modest scale, flower-beds of mixed forms and colours, and designs highlighting internal variety and contrast, tend to fall within the parameters of acceptance; extreme formality and symmetry, elaborate geometrical beds of flaming and homogeneous plant materials, and predominantly architectural designs in which the free forms of nature are subordinated or excluded altogether, fall outside them.

Within this catalogue of proscriptions, one would logically have to place the Italian(ate) garden, in mid-century the most widely adopted of the architecturally-dominant historical styles. Christopher Thacker points out that the Italianate style came "from the formal gardens of Italy, with a side-glance at Versailles".[42] Provenance is pertinent here, for it was principally with reference to the prototypical models from which contemporary examples derived that Victorian novelists most clearly glossed the "architectural" garden.

There are many references to "Italian gardens" in Victorian fiction, but few are sufficiently developed to yield much in the way of attitudinal information. By contrast, Le Notre's work at Versailles defied perfunctory dismissal. Some Victorians were impressed by it, and struggled to perceive its shadowy presence in contemporary English compositions.[43] Bulwer Lytton was one of the few novelists to sally a spirited defence of its derivatives. The narrator of Eugene Aram describes a Ducal garden with terraces, statues and fountains.

> It was one of those magnificent gardens, modelled from the stately glories of Versailles, which is now the mode

> to decry, but which breathe so unequivocally of the palace. I grant that they deck Nature with somewhat too prolix a grace; but is Beauty always best seen in deshabille? And with what associations of the brightest traditions connected with Nature they link her more luxuriant loveliness! (p. 93)

When Bulwer Lytton wrote this, the terraces of Shrublands had yet to be laid out, and the zenith of the High Display Garden in England was two decades away. Experience, perhaps, led him to revise his ideas, for in the later Alice; or the Mysteries (1838) he remarks, with reference to Ernest Maltravers's improvements to the gardens of Burleigh, that "Nature was just assisted and relieved by Art, without being oppressed by too officious a service from her handmaid" (pp. 139-40).

For most Victorian writers, the Versailles gardens were neither stately nor glorious. Loudon declared them to be "dreary beyond what can be imagined when they are not filled with company" since there was "not a spot or corner in them to exercise the imagination, unless it be the orangery".[44] Robinson was distressed by the "indescribable emptiness of the scene".[45] As Edward Malins and Patrick Bowe explain, "his dislike for the formal garden is linked with his advocacy of the landscape as the gardener's model ..."[46] For Robinson, a dearth of painterly possibilities and the subjugation of nature were concomitant demerits. The author of an article in the Leisure Hour of 1886 laid emphasis upon the latter. The gardens of Louis XIV formed, he wrote, "a striking illustration of the French style, resembling their owner in irksome pomp and formality, and like him lacking the 'touch of nature' which, in gardens or men, should never be wanting".[47] It is to this "want of the 'touch of nature'" that imaginative writers most frequently directed attention. Here is how G.J. Whyte Melville opens his historical novel, Cerise: A Tale of the Last Century (1866).

> In the gardens of Versailles, as everywhere else within the freezing influence of the Grand Monarque, nature herself seemed to accept the situation, and succumbed inevitably under the chain of order and courtly etiquette. The grass grew, indeed, and the Great Waters played, but the former was rigorously limited to certain mathematical patches, and permitted only to obtain an established length, while the latter threw their diamond showers against the sky with avenues stretched away, straight and stiff like rows of lately-built houses; and the shrubs stood hard and defiant as the white statues with which they alternated, and the very sunshine off blinding gravel glared and scorched as if its duty were but to mark a march of dazzling hours in square stone dials for the Kings of France" (p. 1)

Nature, said Hibberd, ought in every garden to be "robed, dressed, and beautified"; here it is straitjacketed by a rigid and suffocating formality. But, of course, this chilling passage cannot be read simply as an aesthetically motivated denunciation of excessive architecture and uncompromising axiality, for the gardens of Versailles as here described are a symbolic topographical reflection of their owner's absolutist ideology.

Though there were no Sun Kings and no gardens quite like Versailles in Victorian England, Whyte Melville's judgemental description was not without contemporary relevance. There were among the affluent classes those who felt inclined to channel their considerable resources into a conspicuous display of wealth and power. And there were those who felt the need to counsel them against it.[48] Moreover, the dream of total environmental control, though no longer the expression of autocratic monarchy, was far from dead. Indeed, the view that nature itself was and ought to be controlled was central to the mid-Victorian belief in progress and to Gradgrindian versions of Utilitarian philosophy. Perhaps the most striking thing about the opening paragraph of Cerise is its ideational similarity to the opening chapter (and many other parts) of Dickens's Hard Times (1854). The specific targets differ, but the equation of extreme formality with emotional frigidity and doctrinal inflexibility obtains in both. Like Louis XIV, though for dissimilar

reasons, Gradgrind attempts to override or replace organic nature with a mathematical travesty of it. In the grounds of his house, that "uncompromising fact in the landscape", geometric regularity rules (in both senses) the "lawn and garden and infant avenue" (p. 17). The garden gives topographical expression to his "botanical account-book" view of nature.

Like Dickens, Tennyson attaches negative meanings to gardens lacking a touch of nature. His description of the gardens of the Women's College in The Princess (1847) is a case in point. On the face of it, their classical grandeur would appear to be poles apart from the barren geometricity of Gradgrind's garden. And yet, both are rigid (architecturally so in Ida's case), and both betray their owner's want of "natural" feelings and, by extension, their want of social sympathies. And in both, symbolic topographies help to define an attitude towards the theories of social progress they reveal or proclaim.

We first encounter Ida's gardens when the Prince and his companions in drag arrive at the College, and enter

> ... through the porch that sang
> All round with Laurel, (which) issued in a court
> Compact of lucid marbles, bossed with lengths
> Of classic frieze, with ample awnings gay
> Betwixt the pillars, and with great urns of flowers.
> The Muses and the Graces, grouped in threes,
> Enringed a billowing fountain in the midst. (Poems, p. 759)

Already the emphasis is upon stonework, statuary and architectural ornamentation, reinforced later by references to a marble bridge, a balustraded terrace and statues. The effects of this are not entirely negative. Some of Tennyson's contemporaries may have noted, in addition to some formal similarities between Ida's garden and those of newly-constructed Italianate gardens, a motivational similarity, for just as the latter served to channel classical impulses in a form acceptable to their Victorian owners,[49] so the gorgeous adornments of the College gardens serve as vehicles for the expression of Ida's noble aspirations.

In regard to her inspirational statuary, the Princess herself declares that "to look upon noble forms/Makes noble through the sensuous organism/ That which is higher!" But as Robert Pattison observes, the statues also "stand as a metaphor of the bad metamorphosis brought about by the Princess's fixed attitudes and rigid adherence to a principle not fully in accord with the plastic impulse of nature".[50] Statues also play a direct part in the action. One of the most blatantly symbolic moments in the poem occurs when the Prince is trapped between the two great garden portals of Art and Science. Thus, Tennyson appears to make use of the predominantly negative signification of abundant stonework, current at the time of the poem's compostion, to imply an attitude towards the "unnatural" inflexibility of Ida's social doctrines.[51]

Disraeli was probably the only Victorian novelist of any reputation persistently to have lavished description upon the grand and elaborate gardens of the Victorian upper-classes.[52] Among his many fulsome descriptions of aristocratic gardens, Beaumonoir in Coningsby and Brentham in Lothair contend for pride of place. In describing Brentham, Disraeli was almost certainly thinking of Trentham, the Staffordshire seat of the Dukes of Sutherland, and one of the most magnificent of the Italianate gardens constructed by Charles Barry assisted, perhaps, by William Nesfield. Within Disraeli's version of it, are fountains, "statued and stately terraces" and a flower-garden "so glowing and cultured into patterns so fanciful and finished that it had the resemblance of a vast mosaic" (p. 1). Lothair's own estate of Muriel Towers (probably inspired by the remarkable gardens of Alton Towers) resemble Kubla Khan's pleasaunce extended to encompass the mighty chasm. But with all its diversity of romantic scenery, "What charmed Lothair most ... were the number of courts and quadrangles in the castle, all of bright and fantastic architecture, and each of which was a garden, glowing with brilliant colours, and gay with the voice of fountains or the forms of gorgeous

birds" (p. 186).

Disraeli's enthusiasm for opulent, aristocratic gardens would not seem hard to explain. While many writers doubtless found them irritants to their democratic consciences, to Disraeli they were metonyms of a social order based on landed inheritance or, as Vernon Bogdanor has it, "representative symbols of that ordered society which Disraeli devoted his political life to preserve".[53] Disraeli himself acquired Hughenden so that he might live the lifestyle of, and in the surroundings of, an English country gentleman; and by the time he came to describe Brentham, he had been a guest at some of the great country estates - Raby, Lowther, Ashridge, Woburn, and Stowe among them. His fictional descriptions were intended, no doubt, to imply his familiarity with the models upon which they were loosely based.

Whether Disraeli's predilection for showy display led him to exaggerate their opulence, is a matter for debate. Certainly, his emphasis upon glittering architectural splendour is an expression of his "fascination with the ornaments of affluence" which, as Tom Braun observes, "always accompanied his rise through society".[54] And it is also true, as Robert Lee Wolff reminds us, that "some contemporaries were quick to accuse Disraeli of a Jewish taste for tawdry decoration". But as Wolff goes on to say, "in fact, Disraeli was hardly exaggerating the external pomp and show displayed by the great nobles of his day ..."[55]

On aesthetic grounds, Disraeli's attitude towards the magnificent display garden might best be characterised as one of fascination rather than of unqualified admiration. I mentioned earlier that Disraeli seems to approve of brilliant colour schemes and abundant stonework only when their effects are offset by more "natural", open and reposeful vistas. This seems to be the case with Theodora Campion's estate of Belmont. The rear of this "stately mansion" opens "on a terrace adorned with statues and orange trees, and descending gently into a garden in the Italian

style, in the centre of which was a marble fountain of many figures" (Lothair, p. 128). So far, all very formal. But then we were told: "The grounds were not extensive, but they were only separated from the royal park by a wire fence, so that the scene seemed alike rich and illimitable" (p. 128). The beholder's sense of visual gratification appears to require this more expansive vista. One feels that Disraeli would have concurred with the sentiments expressed by James Groom in an article entitled "Draw-backs of Geometrical Gardens", who had this to say of the Italian garden: "The system, though not wholly without merit, is too artificial in character to make any lasting impression. During the summer, it is, in fact, a gigantic bouquet, enclosed with stone edgings ... and one instinctively turns to the fresh green turf, and the ever-welcome aspect of tree and shrub life for lasting enjoyment".[56]

Disraeli was also sensitive to an excess of exuberant conceits. On beholding the gardens of Muriel Towers, Lothair murmurs, "Perhaps too many temples" (p. 196), a charge often levelled at Alton Towers. The Rothschildean opulence of Hainault House gardens in Endymion, is all too much for the attractively-presented Mrs. Neuchatel. She much prefers the unpretentious gardens of the Rectory at Hainault. Taken together with Theodora Campion's reservations about the "art-fulness" of Blenheim's formal gardens (Lothair, p. 99) and Lady Corisande's antipathies towards the intricate display garden, Mrs. Neuchatel's rejection of architectural grandeur suggests that Disraeli was able to view the High Victorian Display Garden from a critical perspective.

An integral feature of Italian and grand display gardens was the elaborate and dazzling parterre. Its principal aesthetic function was to highlight expanses of turf, stonework and gravel paths. Because of their expense to stock and maintain, parterres were especially conspicuous in municipal gardens and the gardens of the upper-classes. But

they were not confined to such gardens. Many smaller gardens, by and long after the middle years of the century, boasted highly-coloured flower-gardens of regular or symmetrical design. Depending on space, tastes and resources, brightly-coloured annuals were crammed into tiny plots, packed into scattered flower-beds on the lawn or in ribbon-borders around its edge, or massed into a more elaborate arrangement to be viewed from a drawing-room or upstairs window.

Stimulated by (inter alia) the availability of suitable plant materials and the emphasis on artifice in garden design, "barren geometry", as Robinson dubbed it, became immensely popular in the middle decades of the period. We have only to turn the pages of the horticultural magazines published between the 1840s and 1860s to appreciate this. When the reaction to bedding-out set in, possibly as early as the mid-1860s,[57] its detractors, far from underplaying its importance, insisted tirelessly that its monopoly had still to be broken.

It is open to argument whether the bedding-system ever achieved the stranglehold that its opponents claimed. If it did not, then the imaginative writers of the period offer a less systematically distorted picture of contemporary garden practices than does Robinson in the pages of The Garden. What is certain, is that these garden writers could not have rifled literary texts to substantiate their claims. Put another way, we cannot recover from mid-Victorian fiction anything approaching an accurate idea of the popularity of the practices against which Robinson and his allies were to tilt, since Victorian novelists do not reflect contemporary manias in a welter of lovingly-detailed descriptions of kaleidoscopic flower-beds, geometric designs and massed plantings. With few exceptions, those novelists who do grant such features textual space are usually ambivalent if not adversely critical in the attitudes they imply towards them.

This is an interesting fact, but one not altogether easy to

explain. Novelists must have known that geometric flower-gardens and carpet-bedding arrangements were popular, and at least some must have sensed the semiotic mileage to be gained from describing them. One can imagine, for example, a host of fictional contexts in which the description of a glaring, geometric flower-garden, liberally laced with pejorative epithets, might have served as a "text" for signifying, let's say, the vulgarity and imaginative bankruptcy of the Philistine bourgeoisie. Moreover, there must have been novelists for whom display gardens of massive scale and indubitable splendour offered irresistible opportunities for lavish and comprehensive presentation, and a chance to show off their botanical knowledge.

A rare example of the kind of thing I have in mind is Charlotte M. Yonge's highly particularised account of a High Victorian Display Garden in Heartsease (1854). As a social "text", this garden is indexical of the wealth and expressive of the tastes of its owners - the respectable and wealthy upper-class Martindale family. Its initial effects upon Violet, the young and socially inferior wife of Arthur Martindale (the owner's younger son) are over-whelming.

> Violet held her breath. The grand parterre, laid out in regular-shaped borders, each containing a mass of one kind of flower, flaming elschochias, dazzling verbenas, azure nemophilas, or sober heliotrope, the broad walks, the great pile of building, the innumerable windows, the long ascent of stone steps, their balustrade guarded by sculptured sphinxes ... reminded her of prints of Versailles, by the sparkling fountains rising high in fantastic jets from its stone basin, in the midst of an expanse of novel turf, bordered by terraces and stone steps adorned with tall vases of flowers. On the balustrade stood a peacock, bending his blue neck, and drooping of his gorgeous train, as if he was 'monarch of all he surveyed'. (p. 22)

Violet is amazed to discover that there are at Martindale "gardens" as well as the "pleasure-ground" she took to be the gardens.

> There spread out before her a sweep of shaven turf, adorned with sparkling jets d'eau of fantastic forms, gorgeous masses of American plants, the flaming of the

> snowy azalea, the noble rhododendron, in every shade of purple cluster among its evergreen leaves; beds of rare lilies, purely white or brilliant with colour; roses in their perfection of bloom; flowers of forms she had never figured to herself, shaded by wondrous trees; the exquisite weeping deodara, the delicate mimosa, the scaly Himalyan pines, the feathery gigantic ferns of the southern hemisphere. (p. 36)

How might Miss Yonge have expected her readers to respond to these descriptions? Not simply, one suspects, and certainly not upon purely aesthetic grounds, for in the conversational scenes in which they are embedded, the reader's attention is drawn ineluctably to the social determinants of aesthetic (landscape) experience. Violet's response - a kind of immobilising awe - is determined not simply by the visual splendour and intensity of the scenes before her but by their very unfamiliarity: " I did not know there could be anything so beautiful! " she exclaims. Though the Martindales regard the gardens with pleasureless indifference (" The natives never have any sport out of a showplace ", says Arthur) or tedious disdain ("'It is simply a bore', said Theodora; 'a self-sacrifice to parade'",) their responses seem no less socially motivated. The narrator's position is more ambivalent. She leaves no doubt that the Martindale gardens provide an opulent but joyless display of their owners' wealth but, in contrast to the Martindales, who seem capable only of responding to what the gardens signify, she attends also to what they are, to their inherent "textual" properties. Hence, a degree of botanical specificity which surely exceeds the minimal functional requirements of the descriptive passages. At the same time, this referential attentiveness distinguishes the narrator's perspective from Violet's purely affective involvement. The narrator is able to impose upon the garden text a grid of differences because she is equipped with a specialised vocabulary which is simply unavailable to the socially unprivileged Violet.

Since the same gardens are assessed from three quite different

perspectives, and since these do not correspond simply to a set of alternative aesthetic positions, it is by no means easy to decide how contemporary readers would have been expected to respond. If we assume, however, that their positions were aligned with the narrator's, it seems likely that they would have taken the view that, ultimately, the gardens fail as gardens because they succeed as show-places. They are visually intense, they "parade" as they are intended to parade, but they are not fully integrated, visually gratifying compositions. The effects of individual features are powerful and impressive, but collectively they are homogenising, and dysfunctional in that they militate against relaxed social intercourse. Plant material is various, but there are no marked contrasts and, in particular, little rest for the eye. In the terms supplied by Jay Appleton's conceptual scheme, all is prospect, nothing refuge.[58] Note especially how the piling up of details in paratactic units replicates both the internally differentiated but pictorially "ungrammatical" structure of the garden text, and the accumulative effects by which the unfamiliar spectator is overwhelmed.

Of course, the narrator is impressed by the magnificence of the garden she produces in description; impressed, but not delighted. She doesn't decry them, possibly because what Margaret Mare and Alicia C. Percival call her "weakness ... for the stately houses of England"[59] precludes her from explicit deprecation, but mainly because her respectful tone and technical vocabulary are sufficient to gesture the reader towards the appropriate response: qualified admiration without genuine affection. Later in the century, Alfred Austin points to the same limited response when he says that "for a garden that was always and everywhere equally gaudy ... you might entertain wonder, but you would hardly cherish affection".[60]

As I have said, descriptions of display gardens of the Martindale ilk are rare in Victorian fiction. Where brightly-coloured flower-beds

are not described with obvious distaste, they invariably form part of a balanced and differentiated composition. This is the situation in Gaskell's fiction. On the occasion of Mr. Lennox's visit, the "small lawn" of Helstone vicarage "was gorgeous with verbenas and geraniums of all bright colours" (North and South, p. 60). But the brightness of the garden is emphasised only to contrast with the faded interior and, in any case, the brilliance of the formal beds is offset by the "peeping" honeysuckle and clustering roses. Exactly the same contrast, though on a grander scale, obtains at Cumnor Towers, where the flower-beds are both drained of artificiality by an image that redeems them as natural (they are "masses of blossom on the greensward") and diminished as a cynosure by the "inexplicable charm" of the wilder prospect (Wives and Daughters, p. 45).[61] In the absence of a topographical contrast, it is less easy to determine the attitude implied. This is the case at Hamley Hall, where the drawing-room opens onto "the prettiest bit of flower-garden in the grounds - or what was considered as such - brilliant-coloured, geometrically-shaped beds, converging to a sun-dial at the midst (ibid., p. 99). The parenthetical disclaimer of authorial approval points in one direction; the fact that Molly Gibson borrows from the Hamley gardens the idea of laying out her own bed of scarlet geraniums, points in the other.

Another female novelist, Rhoda Broughton, describes many colourful gardens. Significantly, however, their colour tends to come from the mixing of various plant materials, and she evidently had a low opinion of massed plantings. Tucked away in one of her garden descriptions is the remark that "the scentless flowers of the geraniums and calceolarias fills, without satisfying, the eyes".[62] Gissing's Ryecroft also confesses an anathema for geometric flower-beds and for the glaring plants which fill them.[63] Gissing's occasional descriptions of small municipal flower-gardens are consistent with Ryecroft's attitude. In Thyrza (1887)

we find a description of a small public garden in Lambeth - actually a converted graveyard. In summer, its bright flower-beds had little intrinsic beauty, and served merely to "enhance the ignoble baldness of the by-way" (p. 25).

I have argued that a content analysis of Victorian imaginative literature would reveal little in the way of mirroring of or support for the emphatically artificial garden styles then in vogue. The inference would seem to be that imaginative writers were either unsympathetic to or unenthusiastic about highly formal arrangements in general and fashionable colour-schemes of kaleidscopic or homogeneous brilliance in particular. There is extensive evidence to suggest that they would have subscribed to the views of a contributor to The Cornhill Magazine who in the early 1870s lamented "an undue tendency in these days towards too much uniformity and regularity in gardening", who said he liked to see "a flower-bed with a variety of colours and forms in it - not a great patch of scarlet, or pink, or yellow, or purple" and who wished to "encourage a style of natural wildness".[64]

Much of this evidence is of a negative kind. For example, it is significant that most fictional flower-gardens of the more formal kinds are presented in only the most general terms. The absence of specificity is the hallmark of Trollope's flower-garden descriptions. As a rule, Trollope tells us where they are situated in relation to the house, how big they are, and whether or not they are of recent construction. But a single adjective - often "trim", occasionally "ugly" - is usually all we are given by way of description and evaluation. Trollope rarely proffers details regarding the number, shape and disposition of flower-beds, and he is generally unspecific about their contents. This cannot be put down to ignorance; Trollope was something of a gardener, and he sometimes displayed in his novels his knowledge of and interest in

garden-related matters. Moreover, Trollope was attentive to the indicative and representational functions of gardens; descriptions of greater fleshiness could only have enriched their signifying possibilities. That he didn't produce more elaborate descriptions suggests, perhaps, that he didn't much care for the horticultural enthusiasms of many of his contemporaries; and that while he subscribed in theory to the principle of artifice, he was disinclined to endorse its working out in practice. If this is so, then his use of "trim" is a strategy of evasion: it conceals more than it gives away.

The diction in which flower-gardens in fiction are in general cast is similarly untechnical and referentially indeterminate. The chances are that, had Victorian novelists been excited by bedding-out and its sister practices, they would have dipped into the special language register of its exponents. As it is, terms such as "carpet-bedding", "ribbon bordering", "clock" and "dial" gardens, "cone beds" and "select" (i.e. specialised) flower-gardens, occupy little or no textual space in novelistic descriptions. Instead, borders are described as "sunny", beds as "gay" or "exquisite", and colour more frequently appears in "bulk" than in the by no means synonymous in-term "mass". Furthermore, in the majority of fictional garden descriptions, the favourite bedding plants of the period, verbenas, calceolarias, lobelias, zonale geraniums, and strikingly coloured "foliage plants", are unnamed rather than overtly deprecated. Even Dickens, who "loved all flowers, but especially bright flowers, and scarlet geraniums were his favourite of all",[65] only occasionally betrays his predilection in his writings.

This preference for exoteric, non-specialised and predominantly affective descriptive items appears to signal an orientation towards contemporary garden fashions that cannot easily be aligned with the orientation of the technical garden writers who supported and promulgated them. I intend to discuss the reasons for this more fully in the

section on floral codes. Here it is necessary only to point out that any explanation must take account of the social and cultural as well as the aesthetic and horticultural significance of brightly-coloured fashionable flowers in highly regular arrangements. Put simply, if novelists and poets were disinclined to celebrate the most fashionable of contemporary garden practices, then it was not only because they found them imaginatively unappealing, but also because they had doubts about the social values and aspirations that these practices seemed to proclaim.

2

The Scented Garden

One of the qualities of gardens most conspicuously and persistently privileged in Victorian imaginative literature is the quality of odorousness. Throughout the poetry and fiction of the age, fragrance - or the lack of it - serves as an extraordinarily reliable index of general merit. Put baldly, if a garden is sweetly-scented, there is unlikely to be much wrong with it in other respects. Their insistence upon and unconcealed predilection for odiferous flowers placed imaginative writers in positions of opposition to some of the more popular horticultural practices of (in particular) the middle decades of the century. At least some writers were conscious of this and commented explicitly upon it.

It is fair to suppose that some writers stocked their imaginary gardens with fragrant flowers because, in part, fragrance is what they found most sadly wanting in the dazzlingly-coloured gardens around them. The staple flowers of the bedding-out system, including calceolarias, petunias, verbenas, scarlet salvias, dwarf geraniums and blue lobelias were, in the main, low-growing (or, at least, unlikely to stray) and highly-coloured - that is, suitable for ornamentation, but not for filling the nostrils with agreeable perfumes. Since the massing of plants in showy colour schemes grew rapidly in popularity from about the mid-forties onwards (Gorer takes 1845 as a "convenient pivot"[1]), stimulated by the influx of foreign plant materials, the hybridisation of already available species (including dwarf varieties of "older", straggling plants), and the introduction of greenhouses "in which immense numbers of tender annuals could be raised for wholesale use",[2] brilliance of colour became "the top requisite of the mid-Victorian garden".[3]

A related reason that imaginative writers championed sweet-scented

flowers is that they associated them with the cottage and old farmhouse gardens in which they continued to flourish - or so it was thought. In so doing, they subscribed to and, in this specific respect, may even have helped to write the crude version of garden history which posits that in the middle years of the century, odiferous hardy plants were ousted by exotic display plants from all gardens but those in which the owners were too poor or too wise to indulge in the excesses of bedding-out. Since nurserymen and seedsmen continued to stock and sell a great variety of plant materials, including hardy herbaceous plants, this reductionist version of garden history will not stand close examination.

Nonetheless, poets and novelists were tilting at odourless gardens long before William Robinson bewailed their ubiquity with characteristic exaggeration. In 1870 he wrote: "... a great mistake has been made in destroying all our sweet old border flowers" (my italics).[4] The association of fragrant flowers and out-of-fashion rural gardens is clearly established in a novel by Bulwer Lytton written when the bedding system was barely a twinkle in the nurseryman's eye. In Kenelm Chillingly he describes "a pretty, quaint farmhouse" garden "rich in those straggling old English flowers which are now-a-days banished from gardens more pretentious and infinitely less fragrant" (p. 91).

The connection between sweet-smelling flowers and the modest rural garden is cemented by just about every other Victorian writer, and always in tones of approval and delight. The "court" (i.e. the garden) of Hope Farm, principal setting in Gaskell's Cousin Phillis, is evidently so thick with scented vegetation that the young narrator, Paul Manning, "fancied that [his] Sunday coat was scented for days afterwards by the bushes of sweetbriar and fraxinella that perfumed the air" (p. 10). Adam Bede's garden is no more than a "patch" by the side of his cottage, but through the windows of his cottage "the morning air brought with it the mingled scent of southernwood, thyme, and sweetbriar" (Adam Bede,

p. 101). Dickens's Mr. Boythorn has a larger but no less fragrant country garden: its "smell of sweet herbs and all kinds of wholesome growth ... made the whole air a great nosegay" (Bleak House, p. 260). William Beach Thomas has observed that Tennyson highlights "The English cottager's insistence on sweetness of scent".[5] Thomas was thinking of Aylmer's Field, in which Tennyson describes the labourers's cottages tended by Edith, each of which is festooned with fragrant growths. Of one, we are told,

> The warm-blue breathings of a hidden hearth
> Broke from a bower of vine and honeysuckle.
>
> (Poems, p. 1165)

Rosetrees, jasmine, and a "sea of gillyflowers" bedeck the other cottages.

Fragrant flowers constituted an integral element of the Victorian cottage dream - a fiction partly mediated, partly constructed, and sometimes exploded by novelists and poets. There are, for example, numerous moments in Victorian fiction when the perceived attractiveness of the humble cottager's existence - usually for characters who had never experienced anything like it themselves - is heightened by their consciousness of a delicious scent, real or fancied, drifting from some cottage garden. One such experience is presented by Mrs. Oliphant in Miss Marjoribanks. It centres upon the politically ambitious and, at this moment, disconsolate, Mr. Cavendish, who is sauntering along a row of cottages in the small country town of Carlingford.

> By this time it was getting dark, and it was very pleasant in Grove Street, where most of the good people had just watered their little gardens, and brought out the sweetness of the mignonette. Mr. Cavendish was not sentimental, but still the hour was not without its influence; and when he looked at the lights that began to appear in the parlour windows, and breathed in the odours from the little gardens, it is not to be denied that he asked himself for a moment what was the good through all this bother and vexation, and whether love in a cottage, with a little garden full of mignonette and a tolerable amount of comfort within, was not, after all, a great deal more reasonable than it looked at first sight. (pp. 67-8)

(Note the specification of mignonette. Anne Scott-James, who quotes this passage, says that "Scarecely any other flower is so often mentioned in Victorian Literature".[6] If we exclude the rose, she is probably right.)

In an age in which brilliance of colour seemed to many to take precedence over sweetness of scent, imaginative authors ascribed to odorous gardens an almost limitless number of virtues and positive environmental and experiential possibilities. Above all, they granted them the powers of restoration and revitalisation traditionally associated with the countryside itself. The underpinning assumption seems to be that only a garden that is both floriferous and odiferous is capable of engaging and gratifying all the relevant senses and, thus, of affording optimum conditions for therapeutic experiences. Oliver in Oliver Twist (1839) recovers his health and strength in the environs of the Maylies's country cottage, where he is surrounded by "rose and honeysuckle" and "garden flowers [which] perfumed the air with delicious odours" (p. 289). When Violet Martindale in Heartsease falls ill after the birth of her first child, she is sent away from the dazzling gardens of the family mansion to convalesce in a cottage on the Isle of Wight. The fragrance of myrtle, rose, honeysuckle, lilac, laburnum and clematis play an important part in her recovery (Part 2, ch. 4).

Sweetly-scented gardens invigorate the mind as well as the body. When Maggie Tulliver in The Mill on the Floss (1860) is first "launched into the higher society of St. Ogg's" after "her years of privation", the "intoxicating effect on her" comes partly from the "new sense of leisure and unchecked enjoyment amidst the soft-breathing airs and garden-scents of advancing spring" (p. 377). The spiritual oscillations of the mourner in Matthew Arnold's Thyrsis are both charted and regulated by the annual sequence of flowers in a country garden. "When the year's primal burst is o'er" he is close to despair: "The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I". Then he reminds himself that the garden is about

to proffer a new and unparalleled peak of fragrance:

> Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,
> Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
> Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragons,
> Sweet-William with its homely cottage-smell,
> And stocks in fragrant blow;
> Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
> And open, jasmine-muffled lattices. (Poems, p. 541)[7]

The anticipated feast of blooms, rich in colour and sweet of scent, is sufficient to restore his spirits.

Here, as elsewhere in Victorian poetry, the capacity to respond to the odorous life of the garden implies and impels a responsiveness to life itself. Its antithesis, olfactory insensibility, is typically symptomatic of a general state of enervating disengagement from life. Contrast, for example, the insentient speaker of Tennyson's early poem Youth, who sits among "scentless flowers", unable to act in or upon the world he sees and hears revolve, with those more numerous moments in Tennyson's poetry in which flowers, heavy with scent, initiate or are intimately bound up with experience of a heady, exhilirating or mystical kind. Take as an instance the point in the inner frame of The Princess when the male intruders in the college gardens, having left the court

> gained
> The terrace ranged along the Northern front,
> And leaning there on those balusters, high
> Above the empurpled champaign, drank the gale
> That blown about the foliage underneath,
> And sated with the innumerable rose,
> Beat balm upon our eyelids. (Poems, p. 776)

This is a pure and exquisite landscape experience, not unfamiliar to the small minority of Victorians with privileged access to a terrace disposed to catch the scents of shrubs and roses.[8] For something altogether rarer, consider the much commented-upon XCV section of In Memoriam in which Tennyson records his mystical, trance-like experience in the gardens of Somersby on a summer evening shortly before his departure from them.

After the epiphanic evening, when "The dead man touched [him] from the past", comes the "doubtful dusk":

> And sucked from out the doubtful gloom
> A breeze began to tremble o'er
> The large leaves of the sycamore,
> And fluctuate all the still perfume,
>
> And gathering freshlier overhead,
> Rocked the full-foliage elms, and swung
> The heavy-folded rose, and flung
> The lilies to and fro, and said
>
> 'The dawn, the dawn', and died away;
> And East and West, without a breath,
> Mixt their dim lights, like life and death,
> To broaden into boundless day. (Poems, p. 947)

Though critics vary in their interpretation of these stanzas (which I have shamefully plucked from their informing context) almost all attach a very special significance to the perfumed wind. For James R. Kincaid, it is "a symbol of transcendance of ... intellectual uncertainty", a breeze that "spreads sweetness and beauty everywhere".[9] For W. David Shaw, "the sacramental breeze and flowers ... are an adjective of spirit, hiding the face of God even as they reveal his prescence".[10] Both appear to intimate this: that perfume privileges and permits a metaphysics of presence, permits, that is, a far more direct, unmediated and mysterious communion with the life of the garden, the earth and, at special moments, of "something far more deeply interfused" than is possible through visual channels alone. As Richard J. Dunn, in a recent re-examination of the XCV section, has rightly stressed, it is only when the poet becomes the "receiver of multiple sensations"[11] that his senses are awakened to the powers of the natural world.

Though the perfumes of the Somersby vegetation, animated and released by the vocal breeze, clearly play some part in its statement-making function, there is, of course, no question of reducing the stanzas I have quoted to a piece of polemic about the putting-in-touch-with-the-spirit-of-nature possibilities of fragrant gardens. This is

not to say that imaginative writers did not contemplate or drawn attention to these possibilities, for they certainly did. Consider the episode in the late and short Gissing novel, Will Warburton (1905), in which Will, a city dweller, visits the family home in the country, and finds his sister in the kitchen garden early one morning. She is "sparkling with pleasure [at] the heavy clusters of dark-green [bean] pods, hanging amid leaves and scarlet bloom".

> "Doesn't the scent do one good?" went on his sister.
> "When I come into the garden on a morning like this,
> I have a feeling - oh! I can't describe it to you -
> perhaps you wouldn't understand -"
> "It's as if nature were calling out to me, like a friend,
> to come and enjoy what she has done. I feel grateful
> for the things that earth offers me". (p. 59)

The sentiment implied here and elsewhere in Victorian fiction is simple: scent is indispensable in a garden, for scent is nature's most direct way of hailing her human friends.

Odorous gardens are connected also with Proustian forms of temporal experience - with past times and the recollection of past times. The garden of childhood, particularly in its literal sense, can more easily be recalled or recaptured by the adult who in former times imbibed its associated scents. Yi-Fu Tuan compellingly speculates that "Odor has the power to evoke vivid, emotionally-charged memories of past events and scenes" probably because "as children, not only were our noses more sensitive, but they were closer to the earth, to flower beds, tall grass, and the damp soil that gave it odors".[12] This "lesson" can be read in many Victorian poems treating of loss or childhood, and we can take it as a further point in favour of the fragrant garden. It is not an argument for the scented garden, still less an argument motivated by aesthetic or horticultural considerations, but rather a perception - that gardens are places with associations that we may wish to recall - that emerges naturally from the poetic contexts in which it is verbalised.

Scented flowers play a notable part in Matthew Arnold's poems of

nostalgia and recollection. Amidst an austere mountain landscape and the general oppressiveness of the monastery, the speaker in Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse notices a

> garden, overgrown yet mild,
> See fragrant herbs are flowering there! (Poems, p. 304)

As William A. Madden notes, "the garden flowers suggest the theme of childhood explored elsewhere in the poem".[13] In Arnold's The Youth of Man, the aging couple's memory of the past, as interpreted by the speaker, is dominated by the remembrance of a childhood spent in the sheltered seclusion of an old-fashioned garden retreat:

> ... the castled house, with its woods,
> Which sheltered their childhood - the sun
> On its ivied windows, a scent
> From the gray-wall'd gardens, a breath
> Of the fragrant stock and the pink,
> Perfumes the evening air. (Poems, p. 267)

(It is interesting to note that in his intelligent discussion of the Matthew Arnold "tormented by the impermanence of experiences, feelings, and thoughts", J. Hillis Miller uses the following sentence to encapsulate Arnold's apprehension of the "bad times" in which he lived: "The flowers have no perfumes, and each man is an island cut off from his fellows".[14])

Scents and memory are similarly linked in a number of Austin Dobson's poems. In a poem called Pot-Pourri, one of many by Dobson concerning garden-related experiences, it is the scent of vegetable matter in the garden in which the speaker is located that triggers his recollection of a happy youth, spent among "old parterres/And 'flowerful closes'" with a group of beautiful girls now dead.

The poem begins:

> I plunge my hand among the leaves:
> (An alien touch — but dust perceives,
> Nought else supposes;)
> For me those fragrant ruins raise
> Clear memory of the vanished days
> When they were roses.[15]

Perfumed gardens are conspicuous also in Tennyson's recollection poems.

For example, in Recollections of Arabian Nights the speaker finds refuge from the "forward flowing tide of time" by succumbing to the anamnesic surge within him, and entering on an imaginary voyage which takes him through dream-like landscapes heavy with exotic perfumes of "deep myrrh thickets" and other "eastern flowers large". (Poems, p. 207)

Here, as in conservatory scenes in Victorian fiction, fragrant exotics add considerably to a sense of sensuous other-wordliness. Though normally redolent of domesticity, odorous gardens are sometimes used to establish a fairy-world atmosphere freer and more heady than the atmosphere of the near-scentless bedded-out display garden. The "sacrifice of incense" from "sweet-briar, southern-wood, jasmine, pink and rose" in the Thornfield garden on Midsummer-eve, contrives to create an atmosphere of paradise and unreality in or against which Rochester proposes to Jane in chapter 23 of Jane Eyre (1847). A less famous but not dissimilar episode is described in Gissing's The Nether World. In the garden of a farmhouse in Essex, away from the oppressiveness of London, Sidney Kirkwood realises for the first time his feelings of love for the young Jane Snowdon. In the garden are "sunflowers and hollyhocks and lowly plants innumerable". Their fragrance is such that he feels the "flowers mingling with his blood and confusing him with emotion" (p. 168). It is by means of the dizzying, head-turning powers of scented flowers that the literary gentleman in The Aspern Papers (1888) hopes to solicit the cooperation of Miss Bordereau and her younger female companion. At an early stage in his quest, when his hopes are high, he confidently speculates that "their door would have to yield to the pressure when a mound of fragrance should be heaped upon it" (p. 153).

The odorous garden has one other virtue to which nineteenth century novelists frequently draw attention. That is its ability to invade the house, to bring the garden indoors. By implication through description and occasionally by explicit statement, Victorian imaginative writers in general subscribed to the idea, persistently averred by garden theorists,

that a house and its garden should be as closely connected and as continuous as possible. They appear to have sensed that the most natural means of entwining two environments was by encouraging the fragrance of the garden to waft into the house. Hence, the perceived attractiveness of scented gardens. Elizabeth Gaskell appears to have appreciated the benefits of minimising or confusing the house-garden distinction. As W.A. Craik has observed, "she has frequently set her scenes outdoors, or with that domestic mixture of in and out of doors which comes from open windows or changes from room to garden".[16] The same can be said of Rhoda Broughton. In Doctor Cupid (1886) she has one of her doting male characters cherish the "fairest and most hopeless dream" of dining with the girl he adores "in her own still house, amid the old and homely surroundings, with the summer evening tossing them in its lavish perfumes through the wide-opened windows" (p. 277).

Occasionally, invigorating odours emanate from coniferous sources. Gissing appears to have appreciated the Victorian enthusiasm for conifers, and for what many believed to be their health-enhancing properties. The opening chapter of A Life's Morning (1888) includes a description of The Firs, "a delightful house in the midst of Surrey's fairest scenery". The scene is developed as follows:

> We find the [Athel] family assembling for breakfast at the Firs one delightful morning at the end of July. The windows in the room were thrown open, and there streamed in with the sunlight fresh and delicious odours, tonics alike of mind and body. From the Scotch firs which the dwelling took its name came a scent mingled with wafted breath from the remoter heather, and the creepers about the house-front, the lovely bloom and leafage skirting the lawn, contributed to the atmosphere of health and joy. (p. 5)

If fragrant flowers could transport the garden into the house, they could also import the garden into dreary city apartments. During the course of the century, garden writers paid ever-increasing attention to the use of plants indoors; and in imaginative literature, a myriad scraps of

description testify to the power of fragrant flowers to even-out differences between discrepant environments. Tennyson's painter-narrator acquires from his beloved gardener's daughter "roses, moss or musk,/To grace (his) City rooms" (Poems, p. 518). Gissing's "feminised" London apartments - among them, Miss Nunn's in The Odd Women (1893) and grandfather Snowdon's in The Nether World - are sweetened by the delicate scents of flowers which serve as substitute gardens.

Throughout the nineteenth century, then, poets and novelists persistently bore witness to the virtues of scented gardens and flowers, and consistently associated them with happy, invigorating and life-enhancing experiences. One effect of this must surely have been to foster or keep alive in the minds of many readers partialities and predilections which might not have found practical expression in their own horticultural enterprises. This curious discrepancy has recently been noted by Charles Van Ravensway:

> Victorian ladies professed a liking for delicate, modest, and fragrant plants, but the grounds landscaped in the new romantic style surrounding the boldly designed new Italian or Gothic-styled country villas included flower-beds intended as eye-catching ornaments amid the greensward.[17]

Did fiction writers do anything to bring attitudes and behaviour into closer alignment? Some of those writing in the 1870s and 1880s very probably did. That is, their descriptions and comments contributed something to the revival of interest in fragrant border and "cottage" plants which those garden writers who reviled the pervasiveness of the bedding-out system placed high on their agendas. In 1823 William Robinson wrote:

> Of the many things that should be thought of in the making of a garden to live in, this of fragrance is one of the first.... Apart from the groups of plants in which all or nearly all, are fragrant, as in Roses, the annual and biennial flowers of our gardens are rich in fragrance - Stocks, Mignonette, Sweet Peas, Sweet Sultan, Wallflowers, double Rockets, Sweet Scabious, and many others. These,

> among the most easily raised of plants, may be enjoyed by the poorest cottage gardeners.[18]

In the previous year, William Morris had spoken out against the absence of scent in the flowers "improved" by florists.[19] And three years after Robinson published The English Flower Garden (1883) Richard Jefferies opened Amaryllis at the Fair bemoaning that "There are many grand roses, but no fragrance - the fragrance has gone out of life" (p. 201). By the 'eighties, such remarks were commonplace in fiction and garden literature alike and, perhaps, redundant, since the sentiments they expressed had already been trumpeted in the much-acknowledged passage in Lothair concerning Corisande's garden.

Corisande's own garden practices are perfectly consistent with her "theory, that flower-gardens should be sweet and luxurious, and not hard and scentless imitations of works of art" (p. 464). In the ancient garden over which she presides

> flourished abundantly all those productions of nature which are now banished from once delighted senses: huge bushes of honeysuckle, and bowers of sweet-pea and sweet-briar, and jessamine clustering over the walls, and gillyflowers scenting with their sweet breath the ancient bricks from which they seemed to spring. There were banks of violets which the southern breeze always stirred, and mignonette filled every vacant nook. (p. 464)

Disraeli had not always given such prominence to fragrance. His lavish descriptions of Walter Gerard's cottage garden in Sybil are almost devoid of specific references to scent, though the garden contained scented flowers. The conspicuous shift of emphasis (Lothair was published a full quarter century after Sybil) is a measure, perhaps, of the degree to which, by 1870, fragrance had acquired an urgent and renewed importance for Disraeli and for his many sympathetic admirers in the gardening world.

Although I have abstracted fragrance for individual consideration, I have also endeavoured to suggest its connections with other textually privileged garden qualities, among them, old age and the absence of

regimentation in the arrangement of plant materials. It is significant that in the imaginative literature of the period, the most frequently privileged garden qualities tend both to occur together and to be the qualities least conspicuous in gardens composed in the more egregiously fasionable styles of the time. It is to gardens that exhibit these qualities in aggregate that I now wish to devote attention.

3

Old-Fashioned Gardens

> The old gardeners, we are told, thought little of beauty, and chiefly of genera and species. Why, then, should the poet find that, with all its faults, the old garden stirs him in those depths which the modern one can seldom reach?[1]

So wrote Forbes Watson in 1872 - and with considerable justification. Watson chose to illustrate his observation with quotations from the poetry of Clare; he might just as easily have turned to any other nineteenth century imaginative writer for textual support. Regardless of their attitudes towards modern gardens, the majority of novelists and poets betrayed a susceptibility to the charms of old and old-fashioned gardens, one effect of which was to afford readers with Watson's proclivities a repository of sustaining and inspiratory descriptions.

The privileging of gardens of, or reminiscent of, the past, was a rather complicated phenomenon. For one thing, different writers assigned the labels "old" and "old-fashioned" to gardens of different ages and styles. Very often these adjectives served not as precise historical tags at all, but as surrogates for bundles of intersubjectively recognised qualities and associations. Moreover, in literary texts "old-fashioned" could signify either "that which has endured" or "that which has been lost". Trollope, for example, tends to use "old-fashioned" in the first sense, to stress historical continuity and tradition. Hence, he sometimes supplies ratifying details of age. Greshamsbury House (in Dr. Thorne) is Tudor, while its gardens "have been celebrated for two centuries" (p. 10). The fine old gardens of Carbury Manor House (in The Way We Live Now) date from the time of Charles II (ch. 14). By contrast, in the many Victorian poems of recollection in which old gardens play an important part, the emphasis is usually upon temporal disjunction, and upon that which exists in memory only. In Edwin Coller's poem Bessie and I, the speaker's happiest memories are of his gambols in the "quaint

old garden" of his childhood. Similarly, in Will Carleton's Death-Doomed, the young man about to die on the gallows, recalls "The flowers that bloom in the dear old garden".[2] In poems like these, what matters is the perception rather than the fact of age. Details of exact age are irrelevant, and might even ruin the sense of distance from the past.

When "old-fashioned" is used in its historical (as opposed to its phenomenological) sense, the gardens invoked tend to be either of a remote past, or of a recent ("living memory") past. In Victorian literature, three historical styles are especially favoured: the enclosed medieval garden; the modestly formal country-house garden dating from (in particular) the seventeenth century; and the cottage or farmhouse garden of the early years of the nineteenth century, or of a little before.

Victorian literature abounds in affectionate descriptions of cottage and cottage-like gardens. Most fall into one of three categories: those which are genuinely old; those which are of the past; and those which are old-fashioned in appearance and feeling, though not necessarily in age. An example of the first type is Overcombe Mill in Hardy's The Trumpet-Major (1880). It is, as Michael Irwin has shown, a "powerful presence in the novel",[3] and its history, like that of the ancient family of its owner, Miller Loveday, "is lost in the mists of antiquity" (p. 10). Because of its role in the action of the novel, its features are disclosed bit by bit. The following passage reveals its main qualities.

> It was a quaint old place, enclosed by a thorn hedge so shapely and dense from incessant clipping that the mill boy could walk along the top without sinking in - a feat which he often performed as a means of filling out his day's work. The soil within was of that intense fat blackness which is only seen after a century of constant cultivation. The paths were grassed over, so that people came and went without being heard. The grass harboured slugs, and on this account the miller was going to replace it by gravel as soon as he had time; but as he had said this for thirty years without doing it, the grass and the slugs seemed likely to remain. (pp. 23-4)

There is little in this description for nostalgic temperaments to feed

upon. The emphasis is upon the age and unalteredness of the garden, not upon its aesthetic merits. Though it is a garden of the past (the novel is set against the background of the French Wars), it is essentially timeless - afashionable rather than old-fashioned. By contrast, the old-fashioned garden has, by definition, some degree of historical specificity. This time-bounded quality is fundamental to its appeal.

The chief distinguishing characteristic of the old-fashioned fictional cottage garden is its abundant variety of vegetable life. It is not declaritorily artificial, and evinces no fastidious division or chromatic uniformity of plant materials.[4] (Recall that many Victorian gardens did, and prompted garden writers to express the opinion - here expressed by Bright - that look-alike bedded-out gardens "are a poor substitute for the varied beauty of an old garden".[5]) Rather, forms, scents and colours mix in disorderly but delightful confusion, and everything points to the maker's intuitive grasp of the painterly.

George Eliot wrote fondly of such gardens, and regretted what she took to be their virtual extinction. The picture of the very late eighteenth century Hall Farm garden in Adam Bede is probably the most particularised garden description that Eliot ever produced. A similar garden is described in the story of "Janet's Repentance". It is the pride of the retired corn factor, Mr. Jerome: the narrator is out to show why.

> The garden was one of those old-fashioned paradises which hardly exist any longer except as memories of our childhood: no finical separation between flower and kitchen-garden there; no monotomy of enjoyment for one sense to the exclusion of another; but a charming paradisiacal mingling of all that was pleasant to the eye and good for food. The rich flower-border running along every walk, with its endless succession of spring flowers, anemones, auriculas, wall-flowers, sweet-williams, campanulas, snap-dragons, and tiger-lilies, had its taller beauties such as moss and Provence roses, varied with espalier apple-trees; the crimson of a carnation was carried out in the lurking crimson of the neighbouring strawberry beds; you gathered a moss-rose one moment and a bunch of currants the next; you were in

> a delicious fluctuation between the scent of jasmine and the juice of gooseberries. Then what a high wall at one end, flanked by a summer-house so lofty, that after ascending its long flight of steps you could see perfectly well that there was no view worth looking at; what alcoves and garden-seats in all directions; and along one side, what a hedge, tall, and firm, and unbroken like a green wall! (Scenes of Clerical Life, 1858, pp. 319-20)

Like Hall-Farm garden, Mr. Jerome's has a fullness to which the comprehensiveness and specificity of the description do justice. But there is a difference. The Poysers's garden is fecund almost to the point of being feral. Its vegetables grow together in "careless, half-neglected abundance". Its flowers are "all large and disorderly for want of trimming". Its grass walks are uncut, and its rose trees "looked as if they grew wild" (p. 188). Though equally fertile and fluid in texture, Mr. Jerome's garden is the work of an artist, albeit an artless and unselfconscious one. We are not actually told so; that would have been gross. Subtle effects require subtle hints - and these are what we get. There is, for instance, the suggestion of a cannily unobtrusive colour motif: "the crimson of a carnation was carried out in the lurking crimson of the neighbouring strawberry-beds". Still more subtle is the hint of synaesthetic manipulation in the "delicious fluctuation between the scent of the jasmine and the juice of gooseberries". Like the garden itself, the description ends with a "green wall" - which strikes the perfect balance between natural freedom and aesthetic control.

Thus, for all its apparent spontaneity and profusion of plant forms, Mr. Jerome's garden is not a work of raw nature, but a delicate work of art. It is an art which conceals art. As such, it contrasts with the blantant, unprepossessing artifice of mid-century garden styles. Eliot draws attention to the contrasts. In her "paradise" of the mid-1820s there is "no finical separation between flower and kitchen garden". She follows this with the deictic "there", leaving her readers to supply the suppressed "as here". And there is "no monotony of enjoyment for

one sense to the exclusion of another" - quite possibly an oblique swipe at the palling visual impact of bedding-out.

That old-fashioned gardens recall old-fashioned worlds is obvious enough, and has often been noted. What has not sufficiently been recognised is that the qualities of the gardens like Mr. Jerome's - variety, simplicity, harmony, unforced abundance and the vegetable equivalence of natural generosity - are precisely the qualities which so many Victorians associated with pre-industrial England or, rather, with their highly selective, organic community model of it. Of all the old rural scenes the arts had to offer, that of the old-fashioned cottage garden afforded the most coherent, complete, and readily apprehensible symbolic version of the world it at once recalled, ratified, and rendered in miniature. It was also the most bounded and idyllic of these scenes, an image that bracketed off the complicating and discordant realities of agrarian capitalism and rural labour, with a potential for disguising material poverty as natural wealth.

George Eliot did not exploit this potential. She makes it clear that Mr. Jerome has the time and the money to construct his "old-fashioned paradise", and there is no reason to think that she thought it a microcosm of the pre-Victorian rural world. Many of her readers undoubtedly did. R.A. Forsyth, building upon the remark of a contributor to Blackwood's Magazine of 1881 who praised the novelist for "preserving" the "quiet, old-fashioned, easy going life of the last century", avers that among many of her readers, Eliot was "greatly appreciated and praised for the accuracy and delineation of rural culture. Her pictures of English rural life in the 1820s were considered to be authentic reconstructions, and were admired nostalgically as much for this as for their being masterly works of art. Her descriptions of rural scenes and

manners, so recently faded from English life, recalled past glories, and became a mean by which the tempo and extent of contemporary social change could be measured".[6]

Fictional characters also have needs which images of old-fashioned gardens are able to gratify. In Dickens's Little Dorrit (1857) Mrs. Plornish, the wife of a poor plasterer, lives in what is virtually an urban pigsty. To escape from or tolerate the drudgery of her existence, she has a scene-painter paint a mural on the wall that leads from her shop to her parlour. This "little fiction" represents the exterior of a thatched cottage, about which old-fashioned flowers, "the modest sunflower" and the hollyhock were depicted as flourishing with great luxuriance" (p. 544). For Mrs. Plornish, this "wonderful deception" is nothing less than "a perfect Pastoral ... the Golden Age revived". Dickens neither mocks her coping strategy, nor (here) protests about the social conditions which make it necessary. Instead, he draws attention to it by excessive exultation: "No Poetry and no Art ever charmed the imagination more than the union of the two in this counterfeit cottage charmed Mrs. Plornish" (p. 545).

Elizabeth Gaskell, too, acknowledges the fantasy-script possibilities of old-fashioned gardens - however incongruously transformed and two-dimensional they may be. In the miserable milliner's workshop, the young Ruth Hilton in Ruth (1853) finds comfort in the comtemplation of a faded but still magnificent wall-drawing, on which is painted,

> "with the careless, triumphant hand of a master - the most lovely wreaths of flowers, profuse and luxuriant beyond description, and so real-looking, that you could almost fancy you smelt their fragrance, and heard the south wind go softly rustling in and out among the crimson roses - the branches of purple and white lilac - the floating golden tressed laburnum boughs. Besides these, there were stately white lilies, sacred to the Virgin - hollyhocks, fraxinella, monk's-hood, pansies, primroses; every flower which blooms profusely in charming old-fashioned country-gardens was there, depicted among its graceful foliage, but not in the wild disorder in which I have enumerated them" (pp. 6-7).

During the Victorian period as a whole, compensatory uses of the old-fashioned cottage garden were paramount. From fictional versions, readers with a rosy-eyed view of the recent past and a passion for the English countryside, were able to derive the vicarious satisfactions they actively sought. But from about the 1860s onwards, old-fashioned cottage gardens were appropriated for more specific uses. Garden writers began increasingly to accredit them with a preservationist function. They saw the unspoiled cottage garden as a place of refuge for old garden plants, and applauded novelists and poets for keeping alive their names and charms. At the same time, these gardens came to be valued as models and sources of inspiration for all garden-makers. Artists, supporters of the Arts and Crafts movement, Old-England worshippers like Alfred Austin, and garden writers like William Robinson and (later) Gertrude Jekyll, were attracted to their simple designs, colour combinations, and dependence on hardy plants. The admirers of old cottage gardens were indebted to imaginative writers for inspiration, convenient frames of reference, and examples.

This debt was made possible only because imaginative writers consistently turned their backs upon contemporary developments in cottage garden design. Even when they did not look back in their texts to a pre-industrial past, Victorian novelists continued to produce descriptions congruent with popular images of the old-fashioned cottage garden. Of course, this does not mean that they painted a wholly idyllic and mythical picture of cottage life. Most of the major novelists, including Eliot, Dickens, Kingsley, and Hardy, confronted their readers with demystifying depictions of the cottage idyll. The issue here is not whether the "poet's picture of the cottage scene [was] fatuously unrealistic, untrue or unrepresentative" - what George H. Ford has coined the "cottage controversy"[7]- but rather why they consistently privileged one

kind of cottage garden style - that which seemed reminiscent of the past - to the neglect of more contemporary styles. Why, more specifically, did they not respond in a positive way to the major change that occurred about the middle of the century when, as Anne Scott-James has shown, "many cottage gardeners copied their richer neighbours and switched from mixed planting to carpet bedding"?[8]

The obvious reason is that the survival of the cottage garden idea(l), both as an imaginatively compelling visual image and as a concentrated store-house of old-fashioned values, depended precisely upon its lack of modernity and sophistication. For novelists to have tricked out their fictional gardens with the fashionable geometric beds that came to characterise many actual cottage gardens, would have been to drain away the anachronistic charms that alone ensured their position within a signifying system of internally differentiated garden types. There are exceptions, but they only go to show the effects of weakening the opposition between the old and the new. In some of Bulwer-Lytton's novels, for example, there are descriptions of old cottages which have had their traditional significations "improved" away. For instance, quite early in Night and Morning(1841)there is a description of Fernside cottage, which is "as rural and sequestered as if a hundred miles distant from the smoke of the huge city". If this cues us to expect an ancient, time-forgotten haunt, then we are in for a disappointment.

> Though the dwelling was called a cottage, [its owner] had enlarged the original modest building into a villa of some pretensions. On either side a graceful and well-proportioned portico stretched verandas, covered with roses and clematis; to the right extended a range of costly conservatories, terminating in vistas of trellis-work which formed those elegant alleys called rosaries, served to screen the more useful gardens from view. The lawn, smooth and even, was studded with American plants and shrubs in flower, and bounded on one side by a small lake, on the opposite bank of which limes and cedars threw their shadows over the clear waves ... It was one of those cottages which bespeak the ease and luxury not often found in more ostentatious mansions" (pp. 30-31).

That many of Bulwer Lytton's readers would have found this attractive is beside the point. The point is that its appeal is quite obviously not that of the old-fashioned cottage garden. As I have said, most novelists steered clear of describing modern or modernised cottage gardens decked out in the most blantant of contemporary styles. That they did so without a striking loss of artistic integrity, without incurring charges of unrepresentativeness and myth-making, and without violating mimetic expectations, is attributable to their selective choice of subjects. Most fictional cottage-type gardens are either situated in remote country districts to where, it could reasonably be assumed, horticultural innovations had failed to penetrate, or else acclaimed for their very lack of typicality.

I should like to cite some familiar examples. None pre-dates the effective influence of bedding-out by more than 30 years; some, in theory, might have been affected by it. The most temporally remote are the "old-fashioned gardens" of Raveloe in George Eliot's Silas Marner (1861). At the time of Eppie's wedding, their "great lilacs and laburnums ... showed their golden and purple wealth above the lichen-tinted walls" (p. 241). At this point in the novel, Eliot is harking back to the 1820s or early 1830s. Had the novel concluded in mid-century, it seems fair to assume that she would have described them in much the same way.

When Hardy describes the gardens of Casterbridge, he is thinking of the late 1840s, but the gardens themselves are much older. They are visible "through the long, straight, entrance passages" that connect the "old-fashioned fronts" of the houses with their "older than old-fashioned backs". They are "mossy gardens ... glowing with nasturtiums, fuchsias, scarlet geraniums, 'bloody warriors', snap-dragons, and dahlias, this floral blaze being backed by crusted grey stone-work remaining from a yet remoter Casterbridge than the venerable one visible in the street".[9] Hope Farm in Gaskell's Cousin Phillis is similarly unaffected by contemporary garden fashions, and has all the undisciplined plenitude of the

old cottage garden. It was "so full of flowers that they crept out upon the low-covered wall and horse-mount, and were even to be found self-sown upon the turf that borded the path to the back of the house" (p. 10).

The garden of Dickens's Mr. Boythorn is a rather different case. It is not, strictly speaking, a cottage garden, and it has what appear to be some modern "improvements". But again the emphasis is upon age, abundance, and a pleasing absence of regimentation - the definitive characteristics of the fictional cottage garden. Here is Esther Summerson's fulsome account in Bleak House:

> He lived in a pretty house, formerly the parsonage house, with a lawn in front, a bright flower-garden at the side, and a well-stocked orchard and kitchen-garden in the rear, enclosed with a venerable wall that had of itself a ripened ruddy look. But, indeed, everything about the place wore an aspect of maturity and abundance. The old lime-tree walk was like green cloisters, the very shadows of the cherry-trees and apple-trees were heavy with fruit, the gooseberry-bushes were so laden that their branches arched and rested on the earth, the strawberries and raspberries grew in like profusion, and the peaches basked by the hundred on the wall. Tumbled about among the spread nets and the glass frames sparkling and winking in the sun there were such heaps of drooping pods, and marrows, and cucumbers, that every foot of ground appeared a vegetable treasury.... Such stillness and composure reigned within the orderly precincts of the old red wall that even the feathers hung in garlands to scare the birds hardly stirred; and the wall had such a ripening influence that where, here and there high up, a disused nail and scrap of list still clung to it, it was easy to fancy that they had mellowed with the changing seasons and that they had rusted and decayed according to the common fate (pp. 259-60).

Even in later nineteenth century works of fiction there are descriptions of cottage gardens, the old-fashioned appearance of which is legitimated on the grounds of geographical remoteness. There is a simple, rather stock, example in Gissing's short story, "A Victim of Circumstances". The main events take place in an "out-of-the-way place" in Somerset in 1869. The hopeful young artists of the story live in "one of a row of simple cottages, old and prettily built; in the small garden were hollyhocks, sunflowers, tall lilies, and other familiar flowers blooming luxuriantly, and over the front of the house trailed a vine" (p. 6).

However, in novels of the 1860s and onwards, the recusantly unfashionable cottage or farmhouse garden is more often explained in terms of the peculiar tastes of its owner. This is the legitimating strategy adopted by Meredith and Jefferies. In Rhoda Fleming (1865) Meredith tells us that Mrs. Fleming "cherished the old-fashioned delight in tulips" and other such flowers, but forfends the charge of unrepresentativeness with the remark that "perhaps her taste may now seem questionable" (p. 2). To reinforce the point, the narrator points out that Mrs. Fleming's neighbours were critical of her unorthodox tastes. Likewise, in Amaryllis at the Fair, Jefferies glories in the idiosyncratic and anachronistic character of Farmer Iden's garden:

> No other garden was planted as Iden's garden was, in the best of old English taste, with old English flowers and plants, herbs and trees. (p. 290)

Iden's garden, Jefferies suggests, deviates from the contemporary country garden norm, though he does not define the particular norm he has in mind.

Though wonderfully productive gardeners, Mrs. Fleming and Farmer Iden are conspicuously impractical and inefficient in other respects - as critics of Meredith and Jefferies have not been slow to point out.[10] While in debt to the grocer, Mrs. Fleming "would squander her care on poppies", and "could not see" that her gardening activities "drained" and "distracted" the farm, and "most evidently impoverished" her husband (p. 7). Iden is no more practical. He is "like the great engineer who could never build a bridge, because he knew so well how a bridge ought to be built" (p. 342). His inability to manage his affairs takes its toll on his wife, and strains their life together.

But it is because, not in spite of, their impracticality that Mrs. Fleming and Iden are the authors of uncommonly "poetic" old-fashioned gardens. In other words, there is a direct link between their inefficiency on the one hand, and their old-fashioned tastes and feelings on the other.

To grasp the significance of this link is to understand why the majority of cottage and farmhouse gardens in Victorian literature are untouched by modern "improvements". For within the Victorian cultural context, "efficiency" came to be associated with utility and pragmatic modern methods, "inefficiency" with an older, less rigorously systematic, and altogether more homely and "human" system of values. Translated into garden terms, "efficiency" suggested that sophisticated and progressive character of modern horticulture, "inefficiency" the antique quaintness of the picturesque.

Many Victorians were acutely conscious of this opposition, which they experienced as a contest between the competing claims of the head and the heart. Basil Willey has stated, correctly I believe, that while practical Victorians approved of modern advances, "their affections were still with things past or passing",[11] though George Eliot didn't see it quite like this. In "Amos Barton" she observes that "the well-regulated mind, which unintermittingly rejoices in ... all quarantees of human advancement ... has no moments when conservative-reforming intellect takes a nap, while imagination does a little Toryism by the sly revelling in regret that dear, old, brown, crumbling, picturesque inefficiency is everywhere giving place to spick-and-span new-painted new-varnished efficiency, which will yield endless diagrams, plans, elevations, and sections, but alas! no picture" (my italics).[12]

Other novelists made the same point more pithily. In Clergymen of the Church of England, Trollope observed: "In seeking the useful, we are compelled to abandon the picturesque" (p. 28). In Barchester Towers he places - physically and symbolically - the "inefficient" Mr. Harding in the "antiquely picturesque" gardens of his beloved Hiram's Hospital, and manoeuvres Eleanor Bold and Mr. Arabin into the equally old-fashioned gardens of Ullathorne. Mr. Arabin opines:

> "There is something about old-fashioned mansions, built as this is, and old-fashioned gardens, that is especially delightful".
> "I like everything old-fashioned", said Eleanor; "old-fashioned things are so much the honestest." (p. 429)

Hardy's view of old-fashioned things was more complex, but in The Dorsetshire Labourer he remarks, sententiously, that "progress and picturesqueness do not harmonize".[13] Hardy puts his thesis to work in his novels - in The Mayor of Casterbridge, in particular. Michael Henchard, who conducts his corn business by "the rugged picturesqueness of an old method" is pitted against the efficient improver, Donald Farfrae.

And then there is Dickens. No other Victorian novelist did more to validate "old-fashioned" as an affective term of implosive compactness. As F.S. Schwarzbach has pointed out, in Dickens's early works (Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby and Pickwick Papers) "the word 'old-fashioned', applied to Pickwick, Brownlow and the Cheerybles, among others, is given a particularly positive, connotative value, equivalent to virtuous, cheerful, generous and sincere rolled into one. Since the past was paradise, anything old must be good".[14]

There is one more point to make about old-fashioned inefficiency: somehow - up to a point - it worked. At least, Victorians who cherished the past supposed or liked to believe that it did. Pickwick muddled through. Hamfisted Henchard built up a thriving business by "rule o' thumb". The old-fashioned cottage garden of fiction provided a synechdoche of a world that had achieved unforced abundance. The charm of the recent past was heightened by the miracle that it had worked at all.

R.D. Blackmore, whose passion for fruits and flowers, and unbusiness-like mind, invites comparison with fictional gardeners like Mrs. Fleming and Iden,[15] marvelled time and again at the success achieved by "inefficient" gardeners of the past. Consider the following passage from his novel, Alice Lorraine.

> Master Martin Lovejoy [a fruit grower in the Vale of Medway] had, in the month of October 1812, as fine a crop of pears as ever made a fountain of a tree.
> For the growers of old did not understand the pruning of trees as we do now. They were a benighted lot altogether, proceeding only by rule of thumb, and the practice of their grandfathers ... and yet they grew as good fruit as we do! They had no right to do so; but the thing is beyond denial.[16]

For many Victorians, then, the term "old-fashioned garden" suggested the delightfully abundant cottage or farmhouse garden of, or reminiscent of, the recent rural past as they perceived it. The majority of Victorian novelists shared and consolidated this particular historical sense of the term. In so doing, and irrespective of their wishes and intentions, they helped to shape and maintain the fiction of a paradisaical world scarcely remote than their readers's earliest memories.

But for some imaginative writers, this was not nearly remote enough. To those with a medievalising imagination, "old garden" evoked something altogether more distant - conceptually as well as temporally - than the cosy cottage garden.

In the early novels of Bulwer Lytton and Disraeli, the descriptions of medieval gardens is in part an expression of the aristocratic fashion for picturesque Gothic, and a reactionist idealisation of the feudal past. Two remarkably similar examples are the quadrangle gardens of Godolphin Priory in Bulwer Lytton's Godolphin , and Cadurcis Abbey in Disraeli's Venetia (1837). The latter is "an ancient Gothic building", formerly an abbey, but for two centuries "the principal dwelling of an old baronial family". In the inner court of the Abbey is "a curious fountain, carved with exquisite skill by some gothic artist in one of those capricious moods of sportive invention that produced those grotesque medley's for which the feudal sculptor was celebrated" (p. 8).

As they wander in the garden of a modern villa at Richmond, Lord Cadurcis and Venetia encounter "a marble fountain of gigantic proportions and elaborate workmanship, an assemblage of divinities and genii, all

spouting water in fantastic attitudes". Plantagenet Cadurcis comments: "Old days ... are like old fountains at Cadurcis, dearer to me than all this modern splendour" (p. 305).

The old baronial or manorial garden was one synechdoche of the Middle Ages, but its currency was historically circumscribed. It belongs very largely to the neomedievalism of the 1830s and 1840s, and to Disraeli's Tory and tinsel view of the medieval paradise in particular.[17] In general, later medievalists placed less emphasis upon the patriarchal social structure of the Middle Ages and, consequently, less emphasis upon the gardens of its most palpable physical symbols. Like the gardens of Trollope's Miss Thorne in Barchester Towers, post mid-century irruptions of this feudalistic neomedievalism tend to be quaint or bizarre.

In and after the 1850s, artists and writers "discovered" more inspiratory images of the medieval garden; in particular, the medieval pleasure garden as portrayed in illuminated manuscripts such as the fifteenth century Roman de la Rose (1485).

For the Pre-Raphaelities, and for writers like Ruskin and Morris, whose medieval social nostalgia was characterised by a marked anti-industrialism, and a stress on the ugliness and joylessness of modern life, the medieval pleasure garden - bright and orderly, rich yet simple - was a peculiarly expressive symbol of the lost "gothic Eden".[18] It was associated, not with the abbey or the festive great hall, but with the cathedral or workshop, and with Ruskins's and Morris's model medieval man - the anonymous craftsman whose art was pleasurable labour. Moreover, for Morris, it brought to mind a time when the elements of the cultural landscape were as integrated and unfragmented as art and labour, when town and country interpenetrated, and when the non-coercive spirit in which natural materials were subjected to human architecture made it possible to welcome the intrusion of wild flowers into well-kept

gardens. In his youth, Morris channelled his celebratory response to the pre-Renaissance past in his description of a medieval garden, in the Story of the Unknown Church, first published in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine of 1865. The narrator, appropriately enough, is a master mason.

> The old Church had been burned, and that was the reason why the monks caused me to build the new one; the buildings of the Abbey were built at the same time as the burned-down Church, more than a hundred years before I was born, and they were on the north side of the Church, and joined to it by a cloister of round arches, and in the midst of a cloister was a lawn, and in the midst of that lawn, a fountain of marble, carved round about with flowers and strange beasts; and at the edge of this lawn, near the round arches, were a great many sun-flowers that were all in blossom on that autumn day; and up many of the pillars of the cloister crept passion-flowers and roses. Then, farther from the Church, and past the cloister and its buildings, were many detached buildings, and a great garden round them, all within the circle of the poplar trees; in the garden were trellises covered over with rose, and convolvulus, and the great-leaved fiery nasturtium; and specially all along by the poplar trees were there trellises, but on these grew nothing but deep crimson roses; the hollyhocks too were all out in blossom at that time, great spires of pink, and orange, and red, and white, with their soft, downy leaves. I said that nothing grew on the trellises by the poplars but crimson roses, but I was not quite right, for in many places the wild flowers had crept into the garden from without; lush green briony, with green-white blossoms, that grew so fast, one could almost think that we see it grow, and deadly hightshade, La bella donna, O! so beautiful; red berry, and purple, yellow-spiked flower, all growing together in the glorious days of early autumn.[19]

The emphasis here is upon the richness of the garden. Morris believed that every garden should be "rich", but it is important to be clear about what he meant by this. He did not mean opulent, for he despised the bedded-out garden with its showy display of social wealth, and in his lecture on "Art in the Future" (which Robinson printed in The Garden[20]), he exprobated "luxury", and called instead for "honesty and simplicity ... two virtues much needed in modern life". Nor did Morris apply "rich" to the fecundity of nature in the raw. As Nicholas Gould has explained, "Morris did not want a natural world, totally free from human influence: he was not a man for wilderness. He loved England, a land without

'great wastes overwhelming in their dreariness, great solitudes of forests, terrible untrodden mountain-walls'. His ideal was a comfortable symbiosis between man and nature".[21]

For Morris, "rich" meant bristling or, to use a term of Ruskin's, "Quick-set" - but always as a metaphor for, or within the context of, joyful and spontaneous human labour. As K.B. Valentine has noted, Morris was heavily influenced by Ruskin's essay of the "Nature of Gothic" (in Stones of Venice, 1853), in which Ruskin "praised Gothic workmanship because it was always energetic and luxuriant ..."[22] Significantly, when Morris spoke about gardens he always coupled "rich" with "orderly". It was the orderliness of the medieval garden that he tried to replicate in the gardens of his own homes. With the assistance of Philip Webb in the early 1860s the Red House at Upton was "spaced formally into four little square gardens making a big square together; each of the smaller squares had a wattled fence round it, with an opening by which one entered, and all over the fence roses grew thickly".[23] Later, at Kelmscott in Hammersmith, Morris fashioned the garden into "separate spaces" described by old clipped yew hedges, and there were also trellises over which grew raspberries, "so that they look[ed] like a medieval garden".[24]

Morris also liked the rich but never glaring colours of the medieval pleasure garden. This is evident from his description of the garden in The Unknown Church, which Philip Henderson considers "very Pre-Raphaelite in its detail and its feeling for primary colours".[25] The garden described in the first 12 lines of "Golden Wings"(from The Defence of Guinevere, 1858) is also strong in elementary colours.

> Midways of a walled garden,
> In the happy poplar land,
> Did an ancient castle stand,
> With an old knight for a warden.

Many scarlet bricks there were
  In its walls, and old grey stone;
  Over which red apples shone
At the right time of the year.

On the bricks the green moss grew,
  Yellow lichen on the stone.
  Over which red apples shone;
Little war that castle knew.[26]

Yeats considered these lines the finest description of happiness he knew.[27] But the poem as a whole is anything but happy; in the words of Peter Faulkner, it "belongs to the chivalric world, but it moves inexorably from the beautiful mood in which it opens".[28] He is, of course, right, for "Golden Wings" is the story of the "Fair Jehane de castel beau" who, despairing of finding the lover for whom she calls in song, commits suicide, while her castle is stormed and destroyed. The final lines of the poem fully justify R.C. Ellison's assertion that "Golden Wings" "does not belong to a romantic dream of the Middle Ages - but presents a quite different vision of that period".[29]

The apples now grow green and sour
  Upon the mouldering castle-wall,
  Before they ripen there they fall:
There are no banners on the tower.

The draggled swans most eagerly eat
  The green weeds trailing in the moat;
  Inside the rotting leaky boat
You see a slain man's stiffen'd feet.[30]

"Golden Wings", then, prompts us to consider the question of how Morris's predilection for the enclosed medieval garden was related to his vision of the Middle Ages in general. To put it simply, did Morris idealise the medieval pleasure garden because of or inspite of its historical determinations? Probably for both. He associated it with all that he admired in the medieval world. As the product of an art ancillary to Gothic architecture, it was for him as for Ruskin, "the organic expression of the faith, values, and talents of the European peoples".[31] But Morris did not idealise the Middle Ages as a whole, for he was sensible

not only of its beauty and simplicity, but also of its brutality and turbulence - to which the castle garden in "Golden Wing" falls victim. Moreover, as is clear from The Dream of John Ball, "Morris associated his revival of crafts not with the social structure of the Middle Ages, but with the revolt against it."[32]

But it is clear also that Morris was delighted and inspired by the sheer forms and appearance of medieval gardens, responses which did not require him to endorse the culture from which they derived. And because he could envisage the medieval garden extricated from its less appealing contextual determinations, Morris was able to construct his own gardens on medieval lines and, in News from Nowhere, imagine a socialist Utopia thickly scattered with medieval-looking gardens, but without the enclosing walls of the original versions.

The medieval pleasure garden that Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites helped to make familiar, provided one of the inspiratory models for the revival of interest in the old-fashioned formal garden during and after the 1860s. Other models were provided by formal gardens of a less remote past, including the small trim gardens associated with the red brick architecture of the 1630s and, more generally, trim formal gardens of the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century. These were especially favoured by gardeners of the so-called "Free Classic" or "Queen Anne" movement which burgeoned in the 1870s and 1880s. In his illuminating study of the Queen Anne garden, Mark Girouard notes that its exponents reacted against the two main traditions of mid-Victorian gardening: the formal Italianate garden, and the "gardenesque" garden. They "accepted and enjoyed formality, but only the modest formality of the 'old-fashioned' gardens of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. They preferred clipped hedges and topiary to temples and balustrades, and borders of 'old-fashioned' flowers to parterres of bedded-out ones".

Girouard goes on to point out that the Queen Anne garden "was inspired more by painters, poets, and architects than by professional gardeners",[33] and mentions, among others, Tennyson, the late Pre-Raphaelites, and William Bell Scott, whose sonnet sequence The Old Scotch House (c. 1874) includes a sonnet commemorating an old-fashioned garden in Ayrshire.

Mid - and later - Victorian literature offers many approving descriptions of modestly formal old-fashioned gardens. Some are specifically intended to symbolise old-fashioned values and traditions, particularly those associated with the conservative English gentry. Trollope's Carbury Manor House, in The Way We Live Now, has "that thoroughly established look of an old country position", and its large gardens are "screened from the road by a wall ten feet high", and include "yew and cypresses said to be of wonderful antiquity" (p. 111). Trollope presents it as a pocket of resistance, as aloof from and impervious to ephemeral fashions in garden design as is its owner, the "dependable" Roger Carbury, from the ugly materialism by which he is surrounded.

Other old-fashioned gardens of unpretentious formality are associated with a more personal past. Gaskell's Ruth Hilton returns with Mr. Bellingham to Millham Grange, the "picturesque" home of her childhood, and shows him the little garden she has often spoke about. It is "pretty" and "old-fashioned". "There was a sunny border just under the windows, and clipped box and yew-trees by the grass plat, further away from the house; she prattled again of her childish adventures and solitary plays" (Ruth, p. 49). Doubtless many of the writers and artists who gave an impetus to the revival of the old-fashioned garden drew, like Ruth Hilton, upon their own early experiences of old gardens that had survived unscathed the swingeing effects of successive garden fashions. This seems to have been the case with Kate Greenaway, whose book illustrations of the 1870s and 1880s, to The Quiver of Love (1876), Under the Window (1879), Mother Goose or The Old Nursery Rhymes (1881), and Marigold Garden (1885) depict trim,

symmetrically patterned little old-fashioned gardens sporting dwarf trees in tubs and neat rows of tulips and other flowers. Though her depiction of garden foliage owed much to her training in ornamental design, the original inspiration for and love of the old-fashioned garden can perhaps be traced to her childhood experiences in the large backgarden of mother's millinery shop, and in the farmhouse garden in the Valley of the Trent, in which she spent many happy days in the 1850s. Like other enthusiasts of old-fashioned gardens, she tried to invest her own imaginative work with something of the enchantment she herself had discovered. Rodney Engen notes that Ruskin praised Kate Greenaway's work because he believed that "her flowers and young children restored the element of fantasy and beauty fast disappearing from industrial England".[34]

Perhaps one indication of the mounting interest in old-fashioned gardens at this time is their description in the works of writers not in themselves directly connected with the formal garden revival. The stylistic diversity of these fictional gardens anticipates, even if it is not directly connected with, the tolerance and historical electicism which came to characterise turn of the century garden design.[35] And it is further evidence of the sympathy shown by imaginative writers throughout the Victorian period towards garden styles not easily accommodated within the mainstream traditions of contemporary garden design.

Four examples will have to suffice. The first is from Wilkie Collins's novel, The Evil Genius (1886). In Chapter 9 the narrator provides details of the gardens of the old Scottish mansion of Mount Morven, one of the main settings in the novel. At the limits of its lawn there are two paths. One leads to a grassy walk and, thence, to a thick shrubbery - a very typical Victorian feature. The other path leads to something more interesting and unusual: "a quaintly pretty enclosure, cultivated on the plan of the old gardens at Versailles, and called the

French garden" (p. 75). "Quaintly pretty" implies approval, modest formality and, perhaps, old age, though towards the end of the century gardens were again being constructed on the French plan. At the same time, there was an even greater upsurge of interest in Dutch and topiary gardens. An appealing fictional example is Dr. Fitzpiers's garden in Hardy's The Woodlanders (1887).

> The cottage and its garden were so regular in their plan that they might have been laid out by a Dutch designer of the time of William and Mary. In a low dense hedge was a door, over which the hedge formed an arch, and from the inside of the door a straight path, bordered with clipped box, ran up the slope of the garden to the porch, which was exactly in the middle of the house-front, with two windows on each side. Right and left of the path were first a bed of gooseberry bushes; next of currant; next of raspberry; next of strawberry; next of old-fashioned flowers; at the corners of the porch being spheres of box resembling a pair of school globes. Over the roof of the house could be seen the orchard on yet higher ground, and between the orchard the forest-trees, reaching up to the crest of the hill. (pp. 140-1)

The age of Fitzpiers's garden is difficult to determine. It looks old, but Hardy tells us that it is "comparatively modern". He doesn't tell us who constructed it. He may have had in mind one of the early-or pre-Victorian champions of topiary. But since Fitzpiers's dwelling lies plumb in the wooded heartland of rural Wessex, it seems more likely that Hardy had in mind the traditional craftsmanship of the country gardener oblivious or indifferent to the vicissitudes of garden fashions.

At any rate, Fitzpiers's garden would have delighted contemporary enthusiasts of the old formal topiary garden, and slightly later advocates like J.D. Sedding, Inigo Triggs, and E.S. Prior. Significantly, Hardy conflates his description of house and garden, thereby suggesting that they are constructed on a single architectural plan, which in turn provides the spatial continuity and order so dear to the formal gardeners. The axial path divides as it holds together the discrete, symmetrically-patterned plots of fruit-bushes and flowers, and its "clipped box" makes the garden seem an extension of the "small, box-like cottage". Moreover,

the ornamental topiary work is offset by more "natural" and useful elements, while the whole is embedded in an "undressed" landscape of fruit and forest trees. These features should have appealed to gardeners like Gertrude Jekyll who sought a reconciliation of the formal and the freer or more "natural" approaches to garden design.

A still less pretentious old-fashioned formal garden is described in Tennyson's Enoch Arden. Behind Philip Ray's dwelling

> Flourished a little garden square and walled:
> And in it throve an ancient evergreen,
> A yew tree, and all around it ran a walk
> Of shingle, and a walk divided it. (Poems, p. 1147)

Internal evidence suggests that this simplest of small formal gardens dates from well before the end of the eighteenth century. There is nothing remarkable about it; but readers who admired such gardens for what Gertrude Jekyll called their "homely dignity",[36] and perhaps modelled their own gardens upon them, may have been struck by its simple geometrical plan and its ancient evergreen, just as topiary enthusiasts picked up the detail of the "peacock-yewtree" mentioned elsewhere in the poem.

My final example is Corisande's garden in Disraeli's Lothair. Before describing it, Disraeli accounts for its survival.

> When the modern pleasure-grounds were planned and created, notwithstanding the protest of the artists in landscape, the father of the present Duke would not allow this ancient garden to be entirely destroyed, and you came upon its quaint appearance in the dissimilar world in which it was placed, as you might some festival or romantic costume upon a person habited in the courtly dress of the last century. It was formed upon a gentle southern slope, with turfen terraces walled in on three sides, the fourth consisting of arches of golden yew. (p. 464)

As we soon discover, the garden is stocked with "all those productions of nature which are now banished from once delighted senses" - Disraeli mentions a dozen kinds of old-fashioned flower - and with two other living features thought typical of ancient country gardens: peacocks and bee-hives.

To garden writers of the 1870s and 1880s, Corisande's garden was the most interesting and important garden in contemporary fiction. It is not hard to see why. It appeared at exactly the right time to attract attention. Robinson's first really influential book, The Wild Garden, was published in the same year (1870); his magazine, The Garden, followed on its heels. As the revolt against "barren geometry" and carpet-bedding gathered momentum, garden theorists began to cast around for models of the kinds of garden they wished to see revived or established. Disraeli proferred them a paradigm, while Corisande's theory, "that flower-gardens should be sweet and luxuriant, and not hard and scentless imitations of works of art", was entirely consonant with their own. Moreover, Corisande's garden survived, not in some sequestered rural spot but, remarkably, in the very midst of a modern display garden of stupendous grandeur. The incongruity of this juxtaposition, and the peculiarity of the garden itself, was painful, yet at the same time heartening, to those who sought a radical shift of emphasis in garden design.

I wish to conclude this chapter with some remarks about "old-fashioned" flowers, and the part imaginative writers played in reflecting, maintaining and, in some cases, consciously promoting, interest in them.

Contrary to what some historians of the visual arts appear to suggest, novelists, poets, and artists did not suddenly discover old-fashioned flowers somewhere around the 1860s. Nor was the taste for these flowers confined to writers associated with the Arts and Crafts movement, and to those who spoke up for the old-fashioned formal garden. The enthusiasm for old-fasioned flowers burgeoned, but did not begin, in the latter part of the century. Consider the following passage from Emily Eden's highly successful comedy of manners, The Semi-attached Couple, published in 1860, but written some thirty years earlier.

> When Lord Teviot despatched his letters, he found [his wife] in her garden; not one of the old-fashioned gardens, full of roses and honeysuckles, and sweet peas, suggestive of the country, and redolent of sweetness - but in a first rate gardener's garden, every plant forming part of a group, and not to be picked or touched on any account; all of them forced into bloom at the wrong time of the year; and each bearing a name that it was difficult to pronounce, and impossible to remember. (p. 77)

In this fascinatingly precursive passage, Emily Eden not only betrays her fondness for old garden flowers with pronounceable names, but also rehearses some of the principal objections to the gardenesque garden and to modern horticulture made familiar by a later generation of garden writers. The point to stress here is that the taste for old-fashioned flowers was by no means either narrowly sectional or historically specific.

Even so, there is no denying the intensification of interest in old-fashioned flowers in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. There were, concomitantly, three significant qualitative developments.

First and foremost, the enthusiasm for old-fashioned flowers became increasingly motivated and purposive as the century progressed. Many imaginative artists either inspired, or more directly participated in, efforts to re-establish the status of flowers eclipsed by those more suited to carpet-bedding. Juliana Ewing's story Mary's Meadow was (in part) dedicated to just this project. The excitement it aroused led to the idea of forming a "Parkinson society"; one of its main objects was "to search out and cultivate old garden flowers which have become scarce".[37] (The Natural History and Gardening Society of Bedford Park, formed at the same time, 1883, had precisely the same object.[38]) Morris was an even more influential advocate of old-fashioned flowers. As Peter Davey has pointed out, it was through Morris that "the Arts and Crafts garden inherited an affection for English cottage plants, such as sunflowers and stocks".[39] Morris's commitment to old-fashioned flowers was heightened by, and, in part, a response to, his acute distaste for carpet-bedding, and the "over-

artificiality" of florists's flowers.

In addition to having fairly specific causes and goals, the movement to revive interest in old garden plants in the second half of the Victorian period was also decidedly collaborative in character. It can properly be called a movement because poets, painters, architects, and book illustrators collaborated in and shared a collective perception of the projects in which they were engaged. Their tastes were shaped by similar values (simplicity as opposed to elaborateness and ornamentation for its own sake); they favoured the same kinds of garden flowers, and the same sources of literary, and artistic inspiration. As Girouard points out, Tennyson was much admired in Pre-Raphaelite circles, as was Blake, who influenced the later style of Rossetti, the art work of Walter Crane, and Art Nouveau.[40] Both poets probably influenced the floral preferences of later Victorian imaginative artists.

One of these artists was Walter Crane, whose series of flower books was, clearly, informed by and produced within a framework of common interests and influences. Some of the designs in Flora's Feast: A Masque of Flowers (1889) - Crane's first and most successful flower book - suggest the influence of Blake (one page is headed "Lilies turned to Tigers"), and indicate a Pre-Raphaelite and Tennysonian attention to the details of plant forms. (He had produced a Tennyson set in 1859.) His second book was Queen Summer of the Tournay of the Lily and the Rose (1891). The floral opposition, and the theme of a tournament of floral suitors for the favour of Queen Summer, again recalls Tennyson (in particular, The Idylls of the King). The medieval style, what Isobel Spencer calls "a kind of decorated Gothic",[41] may also owe something to Pre-Raphaelite subjects, and to Morris, with whom Crane was closely associated. In 1893 Crane furnished the decorations for Margaret Deland's Old Garden and Other Verses, and six years later produced A Floral Fantasy in an Old English

Garden, the cover design of which depicts symmetrically placed and severely simple Art Nouveau trees in tubs, with what appear to be rectangular hedges and topiary peacocks. The design would doubtless have pleased the architect and formal garden exponent, J.D. Sedding, with whom Crane came into contact during his (Crane's) periods as president of the Arts and Crafts Society.

Finally, the revival of interest in old-fashioned flowers was distinguished by a certain selectivity of plant materials. Though all old-fashioned flowers were favoured, if not always for themselves, at least for the values they were thought to symbolise, a few were positively idealised. Chief among them was the sunflower. Walter Hamilton observed in 1882, that the sunflower is "as distinctively the badge of the true Aesthete as the green turban is among the Mohammedans".[42] Oscar Wilde once claimed the credit. He told Punch (New York, January 1882): "I believe I was the first to devote my subtle brain-chords to the worship of the sunflower".[43] His claim seems weak. Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and Morris had popularised the plant in the 1850s and 1860s, taking their inspiration, perhaps, from Blake's brief poem, and from the two instances in which Tennyson speaks of the sunflower: in Song, "A spirit haunts the year's last hours", and In Memoriam, ci.

Like the tall madonna lily - exalted by the aesthetes - and the more widely popular holyhock, the sunflower was markedly different from the plants which stocked the parterres of contemporary display gardens, not only in its historical and literary associations, but also in its towering form. At least some of the later Victorian poets discerned in its physical characteristics associations of an old-fashioned nobility. Swinburne was one of these poets. I'll close this section by quoting part of "The Mill Garden" section of his long poem A Midsummer Holiday.

> Stately stand the sunflowers, glowing down the garden side,
> Ranged in royal rank arow along the warm-grey wall,
> Whence their deep disks look at rich midnoon afire with pride,
> Even as though their beams indeed were sunbeams, and the tall,
> Sceptral stems [illegible] whose reign endures, not flowers that fall.[44]

4

The Picturesque Garden

According to Christopher Hussey, "the picturesque became the nineteenth century's mode of vision".[1] Certainly, the word itself appears frequently and prominently in Victorian fiction, in essays, letters, and journals, and in the voluminous technical literature on gardens, architecture, and the visual arts. But what a purely statistical analysis of the term does not reveal is its semiotic complexity.[2] It is this which makes the picturesque an infuriatingly difficult concept to unpack.

Some things are certain. First, that picturesque scenery and picturesque modes of perception appealed to many Victorian novelists. Second, that in applying the term not only frequently but freely, such writers as Disraeli, Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, and George Eliot, reflected and reinforced the interests of many of their readers and, at the same time, participated in the process of diluting and diffusing the significations of the term itself. And third, that at least some novelists, including Dickens and Eliot, were conscious of the dangers of certain kinds and certain applications of the picturesque. Their misgivings must be seen as contributions to a wider critical interrogation of the picturesque, conducted from aesthetic, social, and ethical points of view.

For some curious reason, very little has been written about the picturesque in relation to Victorian literature.[3] Perhaps Christopher Hussey's dismissive assertion that after Scott "only second-rate writers continued ... to be conscious of the picturesque",[4] has been given far more credence than it deserves. Perhaps it has also been too widely assumed that imaginative writers ceased to take an interest in parks and gardens built in the picturesque tradition because as David Watkin points out, the tradition itself "ceased to dominate garden landscape design after the early nineteenth century".[5] Whatever the reasons, the subject has been neglected, but quite undeservedly so.

As far as possible, I wish to confine my discussion to picturesque gardens, though a narrow focus is not always possible nor, given the multiplicity and inter-relatedness of picturesque phenomena, always desirable.

The picturesque garden was an eighteenth century development. Its most vocal exponents were two Herefordshire landowners, Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price, whose bête noire was the Brownian pastoral garden (which, to make things more confusing, has also been labelled "picturesque"), with its stock devices of "clumps" and "belts" of trees scattered on gently undulating turf. For Knight and Price, the qualities to be sought in landscapes - irregularity, ruggedness, surprise, and fidelity to (untamed) nature - were the qualities which lent themselves to pictorial representation; and in the late eighteenth century and after, gentlemen of fashion with means to travel in search of pictorially composed scenes, looked at landscapes with models derived from their favourite painters: Claude Lorrain, the Poussins, Salvator Rosa, and seventeenth century Dutch artists.

This eighteenth century cult was channelled into nineteenth century literature in various ways, though not without some significant modifications and developments. It was kept alive partly because it had and produced the right associations: with medievalism, antiquarianism, and associationism.

The historical, philosophical, and emotional connections between the picturesque and the Gothic revival have often been acknowledged. J. Mordaunt Cook has described the picturesque as "the essence of Gothic taste",[6] and Kenneth Clark as "an amplification of the mood of the Gothic poets".[7] Alice Chandler also has traced the origins of the Gothic revival to the picturesque,[8] while Edward Malins has noted that the picturesque came into the Victorian period through the landscapes and architecture of the eighteenth century, when it meant precisely a "mixture of historical and pictorial", with particular reference to "mossy cells, old castles on

cliffs, and gloomy pines ... a ruin, ivy-clad and mouldering", and all that was especially "capable of being illustrated in painting".[9]

Like the Gothic, the picturesque, and landscape gardening in general was brought into the nineteenth century through its connections with associationist philosophy. The main associationist treatise on aesthetics, Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste (1790), was the work of the Scottish rationalist, Archibald Alison, who held that beauty is not intrinsic to objects, but exists in the mind of the beholder. Alison has much to say on the Picturesque, which for him, as apparently for Knight and later for Loudon, was a subdivision of the Beautiful, not an alternative aesthetic category. The picturesque objects he instances as "familiar to everyone's observation" include old towers in the middle of deep woods, bridges flung across chasms beyond rocks, and cottages on precipices. He writes: "If I am not mistaken, the effect which such objects have on everyone's mind, is to suggest an additional train of connections beside what the scene or description itself would have suggested; for it is very obvious that no subjects are remarked as picturesque which do not strike the imagination by themselves".[10]

From the first, then, picturesque scenery was valued not simply as an end, but as the means to an end. Picturesque parks with their striking contrasts, their desuetude inspiring romantic melancholy, and their signs of age and decay had, as Witemeyer observes, "a power to stimulate in the viewer a piquant mixture of painful and pleasurable impressions and associations";[11] and as Chandler points out, the ladies and gentlemen who retired to the sham ruins they had erected in their parks and gardens "were presumably helped by them to meditate more seriously on change, mortality, and time".[12] Since the picturesque love of ruins naturally encouraged what David Lowenthal and Hugh C. Prince describe as the "habit of seeing landscapes through past associations", and "the valuation of

places according to their connections with a presumed or inferred history",[13] the picturesque was also connected with antiquarianism, nostalgia for the past, and rejection of the present.[14]

Historical conditions in general, and industrialisation in particular, did much to ensure the survival of picturesque predilections and associations, especially among those early Victorians who looked back to a "happier" past - historical or mythical, their country's or their own - and who turned to landscape scenes to reflect on what George L. Hursey characterises as "the battle of ideal beauty against time and man's vandalous nature".[15]

Unsurprisingly, descriptions of picturesque gardens of the grander kind are prominent in the early novels of Bulwer Lytton and Disraeli, both of whom gave romantic treatment to aristocratic subjects. The high-born heroes of Bulwer Lytton's novels - meditative, restlessly introspective, sensitive to history, and indifferent to conventional social ambitions - are temperamentally predisposed to picturesque parks. Ernest Maltravers, for example. At one moment in the novel, the titular hero decides to flee "the gay metropolis" for his ancestral home of Burleigh, in which he will spend the next two years virtually in solitary confinement. His arrival, "one lovely evening in July" is desribed as follows:

> What a soft, fresh delicious evening it was! He had quitted his carriage at the lodge, and followed it across the small but picturesque park alone and on foot. He had not seen the place since childhood - he had quite forgotten its aspect. He now wondered how he could have lived anywhere else. The trees did not stand in stately avenues, nor did the antlers of the deer wave above the sombre fern; it was not the domain of a grand seigneur, but of an old, long-descended English squire. Antiquity spoke in the moss-grown palings, in the shadowy groves, in the sharp gable-ends and heavy mullions of the house, as it now came in view, at the base of the hill covered with wood - and partially veiled by the shrubs of the neglected pleasure-ground, separated from the park by the invisible ha-ha. There gleamed in the twilight the watery face of the oblong fish-pool, with its old-fashioned willows set at each corner - there, grey and quaint, was the monastic dial - and there was the long terrace walk, with discoloured and broken vases, now filled with orange or the aloe, which, in

> honour of his master's arrival, the gardener had extracted from the dilapidated green-house. The very evidence of neglect around, the very weeds and grass on the half-obliterated road, touched Maltravers with a sort of pitying and remorseful affection for his calm and sequestered residence". (p. 217)

Disraeli's attachment to the picturesque is suggested by many passages in his novels of the 1830s and 1840s. One example is the description of the fictional St. Genevieve in Coningsby (1844). It captures, as David Rubenstein has remarked, "the picturesque, romantic style favoured by many early Victorian architects of country houses (though opposed by other) ..."[16] Rubenstein points out that St. Genevieve was in reality Garendon Hall in Leicestershire, an eighteenth century Palladian house, remodelled on Gothic lines by E.W. Pugin in 1866, though the original plans had been drawn up by Pugin senior in 1841. In the same novel is Beaumanoir, probably a fictionalised version of the picturesque Deepdene, estate of the wealthy supporter of the Young England movement, Henry Hope, with whom Disraeli often stayed. For Disraeli, it almost certainly suggested the romantic aspirations, and the concern with past traditions, of the Young England movement itself.

Perhaps Disraeli's most exuberant and romantic picturesque park is Armine, described in Henrietta Temple, which was published in the same year (1837) as Ernest Maltravers.

> In one of the largest parks of England there yet remained a fragment of a vast Elizabethan pile, that in the old days bore the name of Armine Place ... It was now thickly covered in moss and ivy which rather added to than detracted from the picturesque character of the whole mass.... Long lines of turreted and many windowed walls, tall towers, and lofty arches, now rose in picturesque confusion on the green ascent ...
>
> Armine Place, before Sir Ferdinand, unfortunately for his descendants, determined in the eighteenth century on building a feudal castle, had been situate in famous pleasure grounds, which extended at the back of the mansion over a space of some hundred acres. The grounds in the immediate vicinity of the buildings had of course suffered severely, but the far greater portion had only been neglected; and there were some indeed who deemed, as they wandered through the arbour-walks of this enchanting wilderness, that its beauty had been enhanced even by this very neglect. It seemed like a forest in a beautiful

> romance; a green and bowery wilderness where Boccaccio would have loved to woo, and Watteau to paint. So artfully had the walks been planned, that they seemed interminable, nor was there a single point in the whole pleasaunce where the keenest eye could have detected a limit. Sometimes you wandered in those arched and winding walks dear to pensive spirits; sometimes you emerged on a plot of turf blazing in the sunshine, a small and bright savannah, and gazed with wonder on the group of black and mighty cedars that rose from its centre, with their sharp and spreading foliage. The beautiful and the vast blended together; and the moment you had beheld with delight a bed of geraniums or of myrtles, you found yourself in an amphi-theatre of Italian pines. A strange exotic filled the air: you trod on the flowers of other lands; and shrubs and plants, that usually are trusted only from their conservatories, like sultanas from their jalousies to sniff the air and recall their bloom, here learning from hardship the philosophy of endurance, had struggled successfully even against northern winters, and wantoned now in native and unpruned luxuriance. Sir Ferdinand, when he resided at Armine, was accustomed to fill these pleasure-grounds with macaws and other birds of gorgeous plumage; but these had fled away with their master, all but some swans which still floated on the surface of a lake, which marked the centre of this paradise. (pp. 10-11)

Needless to say, this description owes little to Disraeli's first-hand observations of picturesque parks. In fact, Disraeli would have been hard-pressed to have found real world models of sufficient grandeur, for few such gardens were constructed. (The grounds of Scotney Castle, Kent, created from 1835 by Edward Hussey and W.S. Gilpin, is a rare approximation.) Nonetheless, it is interesting for two reasons. First, because it expresses one form of the picturesque ideal, which might be termed the aristocratic or magnificent picturesque to distinguish it from the rural or homely picturesque. Second, because it illustrates, for Disraeli's purposes, the perfect compatibility of picturesque subjects and attitudes with earlier, more traditional images of enchanting topographies. For what we have in the description of Armine is a fantasy script pastiche, a flamboyant medley of literary and artistic landscape images: from medieval romance, from Milton's Eden (strongly echoed in "wantoned" and "luxuriance"), from early eighteenth century French landscape paintings, from images of the exotic East - within an exaggeratedly romanticised version of the aristocratic picturesque ideal.

It is important to note that Armine, like Burleigh, is not of recent construction. It is an ancient park, fortuitously neglected, and so picturesque by default rather than by design. This gives it the "right" (i.e. genuine) historical associations, important because, as Nicholas Taylor reminds us, the picturesque was "largely an appeal to the landed aristocracy's sense of heredity and ownership, particularly now that it was found pleasing actually to possess one's park by riding or promenading through it ..."[17] The emphasis on old age also enables Disraeli to avoid any suggestion of the too-obviously contrived or the sham, and hence of guilt by association with Gilpin who advocated deliberate destruction for picturesque effects - to the embarrassment of his Victorian successors.

This insistence upon authenticity is evident also in descriptions of picturesque ruins and their gardens. Such places are especially prominent in early Victorian novels. One example is in Bulwer Lytton's Godolphin, the events of which span the years between the Prince Regent and the Reform Bill of 1832. The picturesque ruins of Godolphin Priory - ancient seat of the Godolphin family - are initially described from the point of view of two female tourists - Lady Erpingham and the beautiful Constance Vernon, heroine of the story.

> The scene as they approached was wild and picturesque in the extreme. A wide and glassy lake lay stretched beneath them: on the opposite side stood the ruins. The large oriel windows - the Gothic arch - the broken, yet still majestic column, all embrowned and mossed with age, were still spared, and now mirrored themselves in the waveless and silent tide. Fragments of stone lay around, for some considerable distance, and the whole was backed by hills, covered with gloomy and thick woods and pine and fir. (p. 27)

There is nothing counterfeit about these ruins. They include a genuine Elizabethan garden: a smooth green lawn, surrounded by shrubs and flowers, ornamented in the centre by a fountain and, a little to the right, an old-monkish sundial, the whole designed to be viewed from a small room above. When Constance encounters Percy Godolphin at the ruins, she exclaims upon

their "romantic and picturesque beauty". Percy, though by no means impervious to its venerable associations, points out that the place is now fit only for sight-seers; his impecunious father is forced to live in a cottage in the grounds. And when Lady Erpingham remarks that "It wants nothing but a few deer", Percy provides her with a simple lesson in land economics: "it is not" he says "for the owner of a ruined priory to consult the aristocratic enchantments of that costly luxury, the Picturesque" (p. 31).

Costly (and destructive) it was. Perhaps Bulwer Lytton was thinking of Gilpin, who said that to turn "a piece of Palladian architecture" into "picturesque beauty ... we must beat down one half of it, deface the other, and throw the mutilated members around in heaps. In short, from a <u>smooth</u> building we must turn it into a <u>rough</u> ruin".[18]

Gilpin's prescription and Uvedale Price's fascination with associations of pain and humiliation would seem to confirm George L. Hersey's assertion that the whole cult of the picturesque was in some sense "a sadomasochistic pleasure in vandalism, dismemberment and ugliness".[19] This may be true of the cult in the eighteenth century, but the pleasure of painful perceptions is much less in evidence, and more complex where it does occur, in Victorian fiction. This is partly because of the insistence upon genuine picturesque ruins, and hence, upon authentic emblematic significance. As Wilkie Collins comments in <u>Blind Love</u> (1890): "Age is essential to the picturesque effect of decay: a modern ruin is an unnatural and depressing object" (p. 32). It is also because fictional ruins are conducive to the production of effects beyond the more gratification of sadomasochistic proclivities. In particular, they stimulate the socially responsible visitor to question the relations between past and present, and provide the atmosphere in which he can ponder the social problems of the day.

These are the functions which the picturesque ruins of Marney Abbey serve for the disenchanted aristocratic hero of Disraeli's Sybil (1845). The place itself is similar to Godolphin Priory.

> The desecration of a spot once sacred, still beautiful and solemn, jarred on the feelings of Egremont. He sighed and turned away, followed a path that after a few paces led him into the cloister garden. This was a considerable quadrangle, once surrounding the garden of the monks; but all that remained of that fair plesaunce was a solitary yew in its centre, which seemed the oldest tree that could well live, and was according to tradition, more ancient than the most venerable walls of the Abbey". (p. 76)

It is through his musings in Marney Abbey that Egremont gropes towards a realisation that the poor are a separate "Nation", a nation created by working-class resentment of aristocratic power without responsibility; and it is here that he first encounters the two men who are to play such a large part in his subsequent development: Walter Gerard and Stephen Morley.

Sybil is a novel of the 1840s, of and partly about the social problems of an industrial era; and yet Disraeli has his hero ponder these problems in the picturesque ruins of a monastic garden. There is nothing incongruous about this, for it was the Industrial Revolution and the changes it brought about - in landscape, in social relations, in sentiments and consciousness - which guaranteed the persistence of picturesque attractions in the Victorian period. Even so, it would be misleading to give too much emphasis to the particular preferences of Bulwer Lytton and the young Disraeli, for it was not the cloister, or the neglected park of the landed ruling class which provided the principal subjects of picturesque interest in Victorian fiction, but rather the sketchable country scene and the modest cottage garden. Through their attraction to these subjects, Victorian novelists played an instrumental part in domesticating, miniaturising and, sometimes, in sentimentalising a concept originally associated in its sublimer aspects with the very antithesis of cosy rurality.

These processes were well under way by the 1830s and 1840s, a period that A. Dwight Culler has described, albeit in lyrical and transcendental

terms, as the "perfect pastoral moment" when "the impulse from a vernal world which had been renewed by Romanticism met with the new industrialization and the urbanization of early Victorian years ... On the one hand was the sense of a complex and sophisticated culture, of pressing national problems, and, on the other, of an older and greener world which was rapidly fading away but had not yet altogether been lost".[20] The impetus for the homely picturesque was provided by the desire to capture pictures of "an older greener world" not yet dead (if it had ever existed![21]) on the part of writers unable or unwilling to acknowledge the harsh realities of agrarian capitalism and, in some cases, happy to arrange rural life into a cosy idyll.

Cottage and farmhouse gardens furnished perfect subjects for the picture-like forms of the prose idyls, revived and developed between the 1820s and 1840s, and popular for long after. Mary Mitford's Our Village, written between 1824 and 1832, was one of the first and most influential of the prose idylls or sketches. (It is sub-titled, "Sketches of Rural Characters and Scenery".)

Most of the cottage gardens Miss Mitford describes are "pretty". "Pretty" is one of her favourite adjectives; of one garden - the "old place" from which she was wrenched - she uses the word three times. In her sketches, "pretty" modifies or implies "picture". Of the gardens of Hillhouse she declares: "What a pretty picture they would make; what a pretty foreground they do make to the real landscape!" (p. 21).

The gardens of her village are pretty pictures by virtue of their size, form and contents. The majority are reasonably small, and some are miniature. Though they vary in shape, each is discrete; collectively, they have the requisite irregularity, and resemble a group of "close-packed" "islands" (p. 3). Each is well-stocked, and the majority are immaculately tended and visually pleasing.

Historically and conceptually, Miss Mitford's notion of the picturesque cottage garden is proto-Victorian. On the one hand, she anticipates and possibly influences the domestication and Anglicisation of the picturesque in Victorian literature through her definition of the typically homely English cottage. This is evident by contrast in her response to the atypical, to Tom Cordery's "uncouth and shapeless cottage" which stands in a wooded defile.

> It is a scene which hangs upon the eye and memory, striking, grand, almost sublime, and above all, eminently foreign. No English painter would choose such a subject for an English landscape ... It might pass for one of those scenes which have furnished models to Salvator Rosa.[22]

On the other hand, she preserves the received distinction between the artlessly picture-like, or what I have termed the homely picturesque, and the self-consciously picturesque - a distinction which has all but collapsed by mid-century. Hence, she uses "picturesque" sparingly and with specific reference to cottages constructed by wealthy landowners for the express purpose of having something fancy to look at. In Our Village there are two such cottages. One, now the rat-catcher's, is built on a steep knoll outside the village as a "point of view" from the local great house of Allonby Park. This was almost certainly "copied from some book of tasteful designs for lodges or ornamented cottages". It is a "fantastic rustic building" with suitable trees forming "a noble background behind, and all the prettinesses of porches garlanded with clematis, windows mantled with jessamine, and chimneys wreathed with luxuriant ivy, adding grace to the picture" (p. 103). Self-consciously rustic it may be, but it is also habitable and undeniably pretty. Not so the Gothic cottage orné a few miles from the village. For this, Miss Mitford has nothing but contempt. The estate agents describe it as a "unique bijou"; in fact, it is a bad joke: cramped, damp and stair-less, distinguished only by its superfluous ornamentation. Its ludicrously grand garden has all the

knick-knacks of the showy picturesque, including conservatories, roseries, rustic seats and Gothic dairies, but it is totally unproductive.

If, as seems certain, Miss Mitford shaped the picturesque preferences of her many Victorian readers, she did so in favour of the artless artistry of the homely cottage garden, and to the detriment of the picturesque both in its excessively embellished and in its tumbledown forms. What of the descriptions themselves? Miss Mitford's presentation of country life as a whole is cosy, selective and, as Gillian Darley suggests, "cleverly unspecific".[23] Overall, her depictions of cottage gardens contribute to the warm glow; but individually they are neither mawkish nor idealised. In contrast to the eighteenth century lover of the picturesque "bent upon discovering", as Samuel H. Monk points out, "not the world as it is, but the world as it might have been had the Creator been an Italian artist of the seventeenth century",[24] Miss Mitford appears to describe what she has seen rather than what she should like to have seen. Hence, she describes not only the pretty but the downright ugly and messy (the poacher's garden, for instance). Hence, her descriptions are particularistic; individuality and variety are the qualities she most admires and adduces. The retired publican's garden is "long" and "well-stocked" (p. 5). The shoemaker's is also long "with a yew arbour at the end" (p. 7). The mason's "pretty white cottage" stands "in a garden full of flowers", including prize chrysanthemums and dahlias (p. 19). The mole-catcher's garden is carved from the waste, and is "well-stocked with fruit trees, herbs and flowers" (p. 19). Miss Mitford's own cottage-cum-"miniature house" is "covered with hollyhocks, roses, honeysuckles, and a great apricot tree" with "casements full of geraniums". The "little garden behind [is] full of common flowers, tulips, pinks, larkspurs, peonies, stocks and carnations, with an arbour of privet, not unlike a sentry-box, where one lives in a delicious green light, and looks out on the gayest of all flowerbeds" (p. 11).

One of the interesting differences between Our Village and William

Howitt's Rural Life of England (1838) - the two are frequently coupled - is Howitt's freer, less discriminating use of "picturesque". This has something to do with the broader scope of Howitt's book: it purports "to present to the reader a view of the Rural Life of England at the present period, as seen in all classes and all parts of the country" (p. viii). But it is attributable also to the fact that Howitt, like Southey before him, uses the idyllic country cottage as a contrast to the dwellings of the industrial poor.

> There is not a more beautiful sight in the world than that of our English cottages, in those parts of the country where the violent changes of the time have not been so sensibly felt.' There, on the edges of the forests, in quiet hamlets and sweet woody valleys, the little grey-thatched cottages, with their gardens and old orchards, their rows of beehives, and their porches clustered with jasmines and roses, stand ... and give one a poetical idea of peace and happiness which is inexpressible ... and it is the ideal of these picturesque and peace-breathing English cottages that have given the origin to some of the sweetest paradises in the world, - the cottages of the wealthy and the tasteful. (pp. 411-12)

Howitt interweaves with his encomiums on the country cottage comments upon the troubles and sufferings of the country labourers, so that the whole, as Shelia M. Smith has remarked, "hovers uncertainly between the realistic and the picturesque view of the countryside and its inhabitants".[25] In applying the picturesque as he does - to almost any pretty cottage, and to countless other country scenes - Howitt pushes it towards one of its dominant functions in Victorian literature: as the locus for a cluster of intersubjectively recognised concepts, values, and myths. Under the pressure of its many significations and associations, the earlier, more specific and comparatively trivial referents of "picturesque" - the cottage orné and the point de vue - were progressively subsumed. That they constitute but a minor part of the domestic picturesque, and even distract from its larger meanings, is a point that Howitt himself developed from his observation that there is more to cottage life "than ever inspired the wish to build cottage ornies, or to inhabit them" (p. 410).

Early-and mid-Victorian fiction is fairly packed with descriptions of picturesque country dwellings and their gardens. Here are three examples. The first, from Henrietta Temple, is a description of the farmhouse encountered by Ferdinand Armine on Ducie Common. The second is Gaskell's description in Ruth of Milham Grange, childhood home of Ruth Hilton. (It is followed in the text by a description of the pretty old-fashioned garden at the rear of the Grange.) And the final passage, from Charlotte Bronte's Shirley (1849), is the word-picture of Shirley's house of Fieldhead.

> Its picturesque form, its angles and twisted chimneys, its porch covered with jessamine and eglantine, its verdant homestead, and its orchard rich with ruddy fruit, its vast barns and long lines of ample stacks, produced altogether a rural picture complete and cheerful. (p. 135)

> It was a house of afterthoughts; building materials were plentiful in the neighbourhood, and every successive owner had found a necessity for some addition or projection, till it was a picturesque mass of irregularity - of broken light and shadow - which as a whole gave a full and complete idea of a "Home". All its gables and nooks were blended and held together by the tender green of the climbing roses and young creepers. (p. 45)

> If Fieldhead had few other merits as a building, it might at least be termed picturesque: its irregular architecture, and the grey and mossy colouring communicated by time, gave it a just claim to this epithet. The old latticed windows, the stone porch, the walls, the roof, the chimney-stacks, were rich in crayon touches and sepia lights and shades. The trees behind were fine, bold, and spreading; the cedar on the lawn in front was grand, the granite urns on the garden wall, the fretted arch of the gateway, were, for an artist, as the very desire of the eye". (p. 160)

In Bronte's description, the focus is primarily upon the first-order significations of "picturesque". In other words, the narrator draws attention to "picturesque" as a label for pictorially-appealing physical and surface characteristics. (Robert Bernard Martin suggests that Shirley's house is made to resemble a Girtin water-colour.[26]) But in the first two descriptions, "picturesque" acts also as a stimulus word for a chain of associated concepts and expressive values. These second order significations include rural plenitude, age and the idea of growth by gradual and unplanned accretion, homeliness, purity, tranquility, and the perfect

comingling of nature and architecture.[27]

Milham Grange and the farmhouse in Henrietta Temple are "complete" - as pictures, and as pictorial representations of an ideal mode of rural existence. All three dwellings are irregular, an essential spatial quality of picturesque gardens and architecture, but significant also for what it connotes: an emotional expressiveness opposed to the logic and symmetry of the rationalism evinced by the village laid out in regular rows, and the too-evidently planned garden of geometric design.

Because of its multiplicity of positive significations, the picturesque provided the paradigmatic frame of reference in many descriptions of fictional houses and gardens; their demerits are measured in terms of how they deviate from or fall short of the picturesque ideal. The rectory garden of Dr. Marsham in Disraeli's Venetia, though not without its attractive features, "was altogether a scene as devoid of the picturesque as any that could well be imagined; flat, but not low, and rich, and green, and still" (p. 52). Thorpe-Ambrose, one of the principal physical settings in Wilkie Collins's Armadale (1866), is negatively defined in terms of its absence of picturesque associations:

> Nothing picturesque, nothing in the slightest degree suggestive of mystery and romance, appeared in any part of it. It was purely conventional country-house - the product of the classical idea filtered judiciously through the commercial English mind. (p. 160)

The same might be said of the Italian and various other gardens of Thorpe-Ambrose through which the reader is whisked perfunctorily by the narratorial guide.

It would be easy enough to cite scores of similar descriptions, since there is scarcely a Victorian novelist who does not invoke the picturesque at moments when it seems necessary either to affirm its reality in specific instances, or to have some mythic yardstick by which to measure the distance between what is and what was or might have been.

At the same time, the cult of the picturesque did not go unchallenged. By mid-century, it was evident to discerning novelists that "picturesque" did not so much denote a class of objects with an invariant set of distinguishing characteristics, as a particular, fundamentally aestheticist, mode of perception. It was equally obvious to them that this mode of perception had its dangers. It could be superficial. It could sentimentalise. It could make pictures of pigstys. Hence, Victorian novels bristle with comments and accounts specifically intended to mock, demystify and discourage the practice of making pictures when the effects of that practice were morally reprehensible and socially undesirable.

George Eliot was especially alert to the deleterious consequences of uncritical picture-making. She was not against the cult of the picturesque as such. As Witemeyer notes, her novels "from the start to the finish of her career, abound with picturesque descriptions in an eighteenth-century vein".[28] Her target was, rather, the lover of the picturesque who derived visual gratification from the hovels of the poor, and whose picture-making practices "transformed" country life into a pretty fiction. Her principal concern was to render explicit the conditions under which the fiction could be maintained. She specifies three prerequisites. The first is the observer's physical separation from the object of his picturesque perceptions. She was not the first writer to recognise this precondition. When George Eliot was just a child, Macaulay had pilloried Robert Southey for his hill-top view of some traditional labourers's cottages. This viewpoint, Macaulay had suggested, made it possible for Southey to entertain the belief that "the body of the English peasantry ... lived in substantial or ornamental cottages, with boxhedges, flower gardens ... and orchards".[29] George Eliot's service was to formulate the enabling possibilities of physical disengagement in a general principle. In Daniel Deronda, she stated: "Perspective, as its inventor remarked, is a beautiful thing. What horrors of damp huts, where human beings languish, may not become

picturesque through aerial distance" (p. 114).

For Eliot, physical disengagement implied social, moral and imaginative disengagement. Only an observer oblivious or indifferent to the poverty concealed by the floral facades of tumbledown cottages, and imbued with what she called "cockney sentimentality",[30] and what Ruskin termed the "lower picturesque ideal" could delight in making pictures of pigstys. Eliot's views ran on parallel lines to Ruskin's, whose aesthetic - moral critique of the picturesque in Modern Painters IV (1856) shaped her own. Though Ruskin thought the lower picturesque ideal "an eminently heartless"[31] one, he did not entirely condemn the lover of the lower picturesque, whom he characterised as "kind-hearted, innocent of evil, but not broad in thought; somewhat selfish, and incapable of acute sympathy with others", misguided and in need of "humane" rather than of "artistic" education.[32]

This is the kind of person Eliot has in mind when in Middlemarch (1871-72), she prefaces her description of the ironically named "Freeman's End" with the following remark: "It is true that an observer under the softening influence of the fine arts which makes other people's hardships picturesque, might have been delighted with the homestead called 'Freeman's End'". When she describes the cottage (its owner is the miserly Mr. Brooke) Eliot concentrates upon externals: upon the chimneys "choked with ivy", the shutters "about which the jasmine-boughs grew in wild luxuriance", and "the mouldering garden wall with hollyhocks peeping over it [which] was a perfect study of highly mingled subdued colour ..." (p. 422). As George H. Ford points out,[33] we are given no specific account of what life inside the cottage was like, though it must have been squalid. Eliot was testing her readers; if they settled for her presentation of its surface appearance, they failed.

Eliot's third precondition for heartless picture-making was the over-generalised or ideal-typical frame of reference. It was possible, she

believed, for a "heartless" observer to produce a dishonest picture of a cottage and its garden, irrespective of his physical point of view, if he was bent on reconstructing actual landscapes according to a normative model. Like Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites, with their preference for particular truths over general ones,[34] Eliot as Witemeyer observes, "preferred a sense of unique place and abundant local detail in landscape descriptions".[35] In her review of Modern Painters, she wrote:

> The truth of infinite value that he [Ruskin] teaches us is realism - the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of human nature, and not by substituting vague forms, bred by imagination as the mists of feeling, in place of definite substantial reality.[36]

In the light of this, Witemeyer's interesting suggestion that "the convention of the Gilpinesque tourist-guide may help to account for the annonymous observer who opens so many of George Eliot's stories",[37] should not be accepted uncritically. Witemeyer himself notes that the technique was often Claudian. Would Gilpin, one might ask, have distinguished, as does Eliot's stagecoach passenger in the Introduction to Felix Holt (1866), between two contrasting hamlets, the one comprising dark and dingy labourers' cottages, the other of cheerful cottages, with "bright transparent windows showing pots full of balsams or geraniums, and little gardens in front all double daisies or dark wallflowers" (p. 3)? In the same novel, we find a picturesque description which exemplifies perfectly Eliot's attention to particular details.

> The Rectory was on the other side of the river, close to the church of which it was the fitting companion: a fine old brick-and-stone house, with a great bow-window opening from the library on to the deep-turfed lawn, one fat dog sleeping on the door-stone, another fat dog waddling on gravel, the autumn leaves duly swept away, the lingering chrysanthemums cherished, tall trees stooping or soaring in the most picturesque variety, and a Virginian creeper turning a little rustic hut into a scarlet pavilion. (p. 208)

Eliot's novels are crammed with similar descriptions, and justify Peter Conrad's claim that "she raises the picturesque to the dignity of an intellectual system".[38]

Though no novelist contributed more than Eliot to the moral critique of the picturesque, there were many who echoed and endorsed her sentiments. For example, Disraeli anticipated her strictures on the enabling (or disabling) possibilities of aerial distance. In Sybil he describes the rural town of Marney from two perspectives. He begins with a prospective view, from which Marney, "surrounded by meadows and gardens, and backed by lofty hills" appears "delightful" (p. 68). This "Beautiful illusion" is shattered when the observer approaches Marney and discovers the disease-ridden hovels of the labourers' dwellings. In the words of Sheila M. Smith, "Disraeli destroys the prospect of Marney as seen by 'that gentlemanly spy upon Nature, the picturesque traveller', to use Lamb's words, by coming in close to the place".[39] Much later in the century, Meredith in Sandra Belloni (1886) provides something like an ironic contrast to the discerning stagecoach passenger of Felix Holt. On the evidence of "the cottage children whose staring faces from the garden porch and gate flashed by the carriage windows", Adela Pole declares to her sisters "that a country life was surely the next thing to Paradise" (p. 10). And there is at least a hint of disdain in Bulwer Lytton's reference in the opening chapter of Night and Morning to "those luxurious amateurs of the picturesque who view Nature through the windows of a carriage and four" (p. 1).

The stereotypic image of the picturesque cottage, for which George Eliot had little sympathy, is mocked in Gaskell's North and South by Mr. Lennox when Margaret Hale offers him a description of Helstone hamlet.

> "There is a church and a few houses near it on the green - cottages, rather, with roses growing all over them".
> "And flowering all the year round, especially at Christmas - make your picture complete", said he.
> "No", replied Margaret, somewhat annoyed. "I am not making a picture, I am trying to describe Helstone as it really is. You should not have said that".
> "I am penitent", he answered. "Only it really sounded like a village in a tale rather than in real life".
> "And so it is", replied Margaret eagerly. "All the other places in England that I have seen are so hard and prosaic-looking, after the New Forest. Helstone is like a village in a poem - in one of Tennyson's poems". (p. 42)

Most cottages fell short of the picture-like ideal. A few, like Helstone, approximated to it. But it was hard even to take these seriously for, as Mrs. Gaskell seems to suggest, the very pervasiveness of picturesque myths had made it virtually impossible for any intelligent and socially responsible Victorian to be anything other than sceptical and critical.

Dickens, like Eliot, was both, and knew well that the observer's picturesque was likely to be the occupant's pigsty. As Will Fern in The Chimes (1844) reminds Sir Joseph and his guests: "there ain't weather in picters, and maybe 'tis fitter for that, than for a place to live in".[40] This was Dickens's view. He wrote to Forster in 1845: "I am afraid the conventional idea of the picturesque is associated with such misery and degradation that a new picturesque will have to be established as the world goes onward".[41]

The most direct and unsparing attack on heartless picture-making in Victorian fiction, is that launched by "Mark Rutherford" in Catherine Furze (1893). He begins with a highly detailed account of a labourer's cottage. He then proceeds as follows:

> Miss Diana Eaton, eldest daughter of the Honourable Mr. Eaton, had made a little sketch in water-colour of the cottage. It hung in the great drawing-room, and was considered most picturesque.
>
> "Lovely! What a dear old place!" said the guests.
>
> "It makes one quite enamoured of the country", exclaimed Lady Fanshawe, one of the most determined diners-out in Mayfair. "I never look at a scene like that without wishing I could give up London altogether. I am sure I could be content. It would be so charming to get rid of conventionality and be perfectly natural. You really ought to send that drawing to the Academy, Miss Eaton".
>
> That we should take pleasure in pictures of filthy, ruined hovels, in which health and even virtue are impossible, is a strange sign of the times. It is more than strange; it is an omen and a prophecy that people will go into sham ecstasies over one of these pigstyes so long as it is in a gilt frame; that they will give a thousand guineas for its light and shade - light, forsooth! - or for its Prout-like quality, or for its quality of this, that, and the other, while inside the real stye, at the very moment when

> the auctioneer knocks down the drawing amidst applause, lies the mother dying from dirt fever; the mother of six children starving and sleeping there - starving, save for the parish allowance, for the snow is on the ground and the father is out of work. (pp. 313-14)

I have devoted a lot of space to the myth of the picturesque cottage, and to the parts played by novelists in its promulgation, interrogation and demystification; and rightly so, for it was through their contributions to what Ford has called "the cottage controversy"[42] that the bulk of these writers signalled their interest in the idea of the picturesque garden. What they all seem to have appreciated was the immensely important part played by the cottage garden in encouraging and, from one point of view, permitting and legitimating, the practice of picture-making. For without their gardens and their floral facades, many pretty cottages, both in and out of fiction, would have stood out as eyesores, resistant to the pictorialising operations of even the most determined seeker of picturesque beauty. This is a point that Nathaniel Hawthorne made explicit. In his English Note-Books (1883), he recorded his impressions of some ancient cottages scattered about a modern villa in a suburb of Liverpool: "These cottages are in themselves as ugly as possible, resembling a large kind of pigsty; but often, by dint of the verdure on their thatch and the shrubbery clustering about them, they look picturesque".[43]

At the same time, Victorian writers did not confine either their critical appraisal of the picturesque, or their application of the term itself, to the country cottage garden. This is particularly true of garden writers, though novelists also played a part in extending both the significations of "picturesque", and the scope of the critique of the picturesque garden which centred principally upon the relations between gardening and painting.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, a number of garden theorists saw the need to re-think these relations. Most believed that

too close an identification of the two arts flattered neither. On one hand, they acknowledged the limitations of a picture-based garden aesthetics. Loudon, himself a landscape painter, admitted that "no comparison between the powers of landscape-painting and those of landscape-gardening can be instituted, that will not evince the superior powers of the former". The gardener "may and ought to aim for the highest degrees of beauty which his own imagination, the genius of the place, and the views of the owner, will admit; but let him not proceed with, or hold out to the world, mistaken views of what his art can or cannot perform".[44] On the other hand, most garden theorists objected to the hegemony of the picturesque in practice. An anonymous contributor to the Quarterly Review of 1842 complained of the "encroachments which the natural and picturesque styles have made upon the regular flower gardens".[45] He castigated, also, the abuse and misapplication of the label itself: "this unfortunate word 'picturesque' has been the ruin of our gardens. Price himself never dreamt of applying it, in its present usage, to the plot of ground immediately surrounding the house. His own words are all along in favour of a formal and artificial character there in keeping with the mansion itself".[46] Complaints about the physical encroachments of the picturesque were not uncommon even in the 1820s. In 1829, George M'Leish wrote: "Of all the artificial scenery, a flower-garden should be the least disfigured by any kind of ruggedness". He regarded as inappropriate, and "in many instances ridiculous [the] erection of artificial rocks, as an accomplishment of the flower-garden".[47]

This situation had come about, Loudon believed, because too many gardeners had mistakenly assumed that picturesque beauty was the only beauty to be aimed at in the laying out of grounds. In his review of Sawrey Gilpin's Practical Hints in Landscape-Gardening (1832) - a book which set out to put into practice the ideas of Price - Loudon wrote: "There are various other beauties, besides those of the picturesque, which

ought to engage the attention of the landscape-gardener; and one of the principal of these is, what may be called the botany of trees and shrubs ... Mere picturesque improvements is not enough in these enlightened times: it is necessary to understand that there is such a character of art as the gardenesque, as well as the picturesque".[48] Elsewhere, he distinguishes the picturesque style, "as an art of design and taste" from the gardenesque style, "as an art of culture".[49]

As a plantsman, Loudon was concerned with the science as well as with the art of gardening. In neglecting science, gardeners who recognised only picturesque styles were behind the times, as well as blind to other sorts of beauty. One such beauty was the beauty of "convenience". Loudon appreciated that the picturesque garden, though pleasing to the eye, could be inimical to comfort and use. He was all for the appropriation of gardens to man, and would have endorsed the view of one of his contributors, that "we must engraft upon our own romantic harshness something that will accord better with the equipment of the interiors of our residencess ..."[50]

By mid-century, arguments in favour of the plantsman's garden, the regular flower-garden, and the garden of convenience, were largely redundant. Gardens in the gardenesque and architectural styles had been firmly established, and where picturesque irregularity was admitted, it was more often than not reserved for remoter parts of the grounds. Many fictional gardens conform to this pattern.

To complicate matters, by the 1850s, "picturesque" was being increasingly applied to any garden which pleased the eye of the onlooker. In part, this reflected continued uncertainties over nomenclature. "Picturesque" was popular because it afforded a label of convenience - exotèric, intersubjective, and connotatively richer than alternative stylistic labels. Moreover, as anxieties abated over the territorial encroachments of the rugged picturesque, and with the repeated affirmation of the principle that <u>all</u> gardens are to some degree necessarily artificial, mid-century

theorists were able to expose the picturesque/gardenesque opposition as an essentially false dichotomy. As the Quarterly Review of 1855 put it: "The principle of the picturesque, properly understood, should be applied to the arrangement of the most formal garden, not less than to the treatment of the most romantic scenery".[51] Since all gardens should please the eye, and since there was no place in a beautiful garden for negligence either "studied or unstudied", the term "picturesque" could serve "to denote any kind and every degree of beauty".[52]

In Victorian fiction it came close to fulfilling this function. Indeed, if novelists as a whole contributed anything really positive to the fate of the "picturesque" as a signifier, it was in the direction of extending its reverberative range. Well-tended rectory gardens and thoughtfully laid out villa gardens were almost as likely to be lauded for their picturesque attractions as were homely cottage gardens and romantic rural landscapes. I quoted earlier the description of a villa garden from Tilbury Nogo, part of which is described as "picturesque" (see p. 21). In Lothair, Disraeli takes the term to its referential limits - and, perhaps, beyond - when he sums up the private garden of Blenheim as "ornate yet picturesque" (p. 99).

Some novelists extended or canalised the denotations of "picturesque" in more particular directions. Emma Marshall and others availed themselves of the opportunity afforded by the Victorian enthusiasm for coniferous trees to apply the "picturesque" in new ways. In In the City of Flowers (1889) Marshall describes a row of towering fir trees that lead to the old manor of Cruttwell Court. She writes: "Nothing could be more picturesque than the far-stretching avenue, as the sun pierced the dark plumes of the firs, and shot bright beams of golden light across the drive, at the farther end of which the house was seen -" (p. 10). George Eliot's partiality was for "pretty bits" of landscape. Like a latter-day Scott, Wilkie Collins reserved the term largely, though not exclusively, for old

Scottish manors and their grounds: for Mount Morven in The Evil Genius; for Swanhaven in Man and Wife (1870). He opposes the latter to the "monotonous" and "perfectly common-place English scenery" of the "perfectly common-place English country seat" of Hall Farm (p. 230).

Other novelists "imported" the picturesque. Both Henry James and George Gissing pushed back their readers's horizons through their scene-setting descriptions of Roman gardens - versions of the picturesque a long way removed from home-bred varieties. In Roderick Hudson, James describes the "mouldly little garden house", the "high stemmed pines", and the other features which contributed to the "magical picturesqueness" of the immense gardens of the Villa Ludovisi (p. 63). He expands upon these impressions in two essays written at about the same time (spring 1874). As the first of these essays suggests, the gardens of the Villa Ludovisi are, for James, impressively picturesque though markedly un-English in their constituent features and in the visual experience they offer.

> The stern old ramparts of Rome form the outer enclosure of the villa, and hence a series of picturesque effects ... The grounds are laid out in the formal last century manner; but nowhere to the straight black cypresses lead off the gaze into vistas of a more fictive sort of melancholy ... [Nature leaves you] nothing to do but to lay your head among the anemones at the base of a high-stemmed pine and gaze crestward and skyward along its slanting silvery column.[53]

In a short story entitled "The Ring Finger", Gissing describes, with greater attention to detail though in very similar terms, the "varied beauty and picturesqueness" of the garden of the Villa Medici.

> Along the terrace, great pines, leading the gaze upward; and slim trunks of eucalyptus, with leafage flashing white in the sun-glare; amid the green lawns and cropped box hedges, a dreaming palm, winter-touched with yellow. In front, the medieval pleasure-house; behind, the ramparts of the old world's fallen majesty.[54]

There is little textual evidence to suggest that fiction writers recognised, let alone worried over, the incursions of the picturesque - territorial or linguistic - about which some garden writers had been so testy. But there are some indications that they sympathised with the

Loudonian sentiment that the picturesque garden, as conceived by its eighteenth century exponents, was not the be and end all in landscape design. For example, it is significant that even the wild and romantic beauty of Armine Park in Henrietta Temple could not, apparently, gratify all the needs of its owners, for they take the step of calling in an expert gardener to construct a flower garden in the vicinity of the house. Trollope and other novelists were, it would seem, in favour of trim gardens about the dwelling place to ensure the functional interconnectivity and the visual harmony of house and grounds. In the novel, The Belton Estate (1866), where Trollope does describe a picturesque park in the eighteenth century vein, the park of Belton Castle, he stresses its resistance to human appropriation: it is lovely to look upon but depressingly unproductive. And when in Ayala's Angel (1881) Trollope describes Drumcaller, a picturesque cottage on the side of Loch Ness, it is the discomfort of the place that he emphasises. It was an "inconvenient rickety cottage", perched "on the edge of a ravine, down which rushed a little stream". "It was also a beautifully romantic spot". "Those who knew the cottage of Drumcaller were apt to say that no man in Scotland had a more picturesque abode, or one more inconvenient".[55]

On the "evidence" of the language of landscape in Victorian poetry, Pauline Fletcher concludes that there was "a steady decline in the cult of the picturesque" associated with a decline of interest in mere scenery and a movement away from "the wilder and more rugged types of romantic scenery" towards "men and society".[56] Fletcher's conclusion is not entirely invalid, for as a cult, the picturesque not only declined in the Victorian period, but was also interrogated from a variety of perspectives. But what Fletcher ignores, possibly because she confines herself almost exclusively to the language of poetry, are the processes by which "picturesque" became

steadily unhinged from its provenance in an eighteenth century cult. As "picturesque" became increasingly drained of its referential specificity and increasingly severed from its association with, as Rosemarie Bodenkeimer puts it, "a descriptive vocabulary which predetermines what is to be seen and valued",[57] it acquired an increasingly wide currency and an extension of its reverberative range.

Rather than rejecting it, many novelists exploited and enhanced its felicitous connotations, relocated it within the humanised landscape,[58] and applied it, it would seem, to just about any garden for which they hoped to elicit a positive response.

5

Imaginative Literature and Garden Consciousness

In this chapter, I wish to confront the question I have tried to keep in my sights throughout the preceding chapters: in what ways, and to what extent did Victorian novelists and poets influence the thinking of contemporary garden enthusiasts?

The first thing to establish is whether they tried to exert an influence, or whether the implication of conscious intent is misleading. The main problem here is deciding what to count as evidence of persuasive intent. Of obvious relevance are the more or less explicit authorial comments on garden theory and pratice with which Victorian fiction is peppered. Bulwer Lytton, Trollope, George Eliot, Rhoda Broughton, Charlotte Yonge, George Gissing and many other novelists hold up the narrative flow or protract descriptions to express opinions on what a garden should or should not be. Many of these observations are, arguably, dispensable interpolations serving no significant textual function. When Trollope lists the features that are not found in John Grey's garden, because they are "beauties of landscape, and do not of their nature belong to a garden", he is not so much presenting the reader with information directly relevant to the object he is describing, as voicing an opinion he expects his readers to share or to consider. The very gratuitousness of the authorial intrusion is indicative of such a purpose.

Fictional characters also proffer opinions on gardens and gardening, usually in exchanges with other fictional characters. But their opinions are generally inadmissable as evidence of persuasive intent since we cannot normally be certain that they reflect the author's attitudes, or that they are meant to affect the attitudes of garden-minded readers. Their intended functions may be quite different. The same uncertainties pertain to descriptions of gardens in which the author's views may appear to be manifest or smuggled in. We can make judgements about the garden styles he or she appears to favour and disfavour; we cannot convert these judgements into

declarations of desired-for attitudinal or behavioural effects.

Perhaps there are some relatively minor exceptions. Mrs. Ewing's garden writings for children, whatever their aesthetic merits, are barely disguised exercises in proselytism. The relations between Morris's lectures and essays on gardens, and the gardens he idealises in his imaginative writings, are unmistakably incestuous. The same can be said of the writings of Richard Doddridge Blackmoor. And then there are the garden books of Alfred Austin - The Garden That I Love (1896), and In Veronica's Garden (1897) - leisurely discourses on Austin's favourite subject - gardens in general, and his own secluded and informal garden in particular - though they also include poetic interludes, and what The Times described as "genial colloquies".[1] Though informal in style and confidential in tone, they bristle with forcefully-expressed opinions, sufficiently strident to suggest that the author is out to instruct and convert as well as to charm and please.

If there is limited evidence of persuasive intent, there is still less to indicate that imaginative writers were effective in influencing the horticultural practices of their garden-minded readers. (Again, Morris may be the one notable exception.) As a rule, the commendations and adjurations of novelists or their narrators were too brief and too occasional to have been picked up - let alone, acted upon - by any but their most perceptually-sensitised garden-conscious readers. And, of course, exposure to a persuasive comment is not of itself a sufficient condition for attitudinal change.

For these reasons, it is generally more valid to think in terms of the effects (as opposed to the effectiveness) of fictional descriptions and comments or, better still, perhaps, to shift the focus from a sender - to a receiver-oriented perspective of literary discourse, so as to identify the uses to which garden-minded readers put these descriptions and comments.

Even these approaches present problems, the chief of which is tracing changes or continuities in garden design to the presumed predilections of

imaginative writers. In general, we are compelled to speculate on the basis of textual "evidence" alone. In effect, this means identifying the ideas and precepts available to Victorian garden enthusiasts conversant with contemporary fiction. The ideas that they would have been hard pressed not to have encountered include the following: that the attractiveness of a garden does not normally depend upon its size; that gardens tended by their owners tend to be more delightful than "gardeners's gardens"; that gardens which appeal only to the eye are inferior to those which engage all the relevant senses; and that old-fashioned gardens possess charms only seldomly matched by fashionable modern gardens.

We can be reasonably certain, also, that poets and novelists did a lot to arouse their readers's interests in gardens, and that their descriptions and encomiums served to keep alive interest in the plants and gardens squeezed out by the devotees of contemporary fashions. Garden writers frequently plundered literary texts for illustrative and supportive material, though some of their favourite authors - including Shakespeare, Milton, Cowley and Crabbe - were not (of course) Victorian. In addition, many garden writers overtly acknowledged the valuable part that imaginative writers played in promoting a love of gardens and gardening. The following panegyric is typical:

> The poets, blessings on them! have done more to awaken a love of nature and of flowers; and to cherish a taste for horticulture, than all the professional horticulturalists.[2]

The implication here - a very important one - seems to be this: that the poet's power to enthuse is based upon resources of power different from but more potent than those of the professional horticulturalist. The poet stimulates by virtue of his ability to reward the reader with imaginatively appealing descriptions, though the reader's sympathetic identification with the poet is also a salient factor. By contrast, the power of the professional gardener is based upon his expertise, and upon the amateur's

acceptance of it. The corollary is that while the professional horticulturalist has the power to affect the cognitions of garden-minded readers, the poet has the edge when it comes to arousing interests and emotions. If Victorian garden essayists were correct in their assumption that the uses and effects of imaginative "garden" literature were primarily non-utilitarian and non-instrumental, then it follows that the direct effects of fictional descriptions upon garden practices were likely to have been negligible or non-existent, though they may have fostered a "taste for horticulture" and heightened what can only but inadequately be termed garden consciousness.,

There is a good deal of truth in this - as I hope to show with reference to the uses and effects of Tennyson's "garden" poetry. But there are also complications. In the first place, Victorian garden writers were less scrupulous than modern literary theorists in distinguishing between fictional gardens and gardens in the "real" world. Their apparently implicit faith in the mimetic nature of imaginative literature led them to refer to fictional gardens as though they were ontological facts accessible to physical inspection rather than as textual constructs. So although they granted that fictional gardens were peculiarly effective in generating interests and feelings, they tended to ascribe these powers simply to the "fact" that they were more delightful or exemplary versions of the gardens that existed in the physical world.

In the second place, it is conceivable that imaginative "garden" literature had effects and uses for garden-minded readers comparable to the effects and uses of technical garden literature. It may have provided a fund of practical ideas and models, formed, reinforced or channelled the attitudes and tastes of readers with a calculative and instrumental orientation, in much the same way as did technical garden books and manuals. (As I shall show in the following chapter, there is evidence to suggest that in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, "garden" poets were

accorded much the same status as old garden authorities like Bacon, Gerard, and Parkinson.) To assume, for want of concrete evidence to the contrary, that the effects of fictional descriptions were exclusively affective, amorphous, and inspiratory, may be seriously to underestimate its perceived use value.

In one or two instances, there is sufficient documentary evidence to tie in a particular garden description with a specific set of attitudinal and behavioural changes. Disraeli's description of Corisande's garden in Lothair is perhaps the most striking case. As I have already pointed out, the publication of Lothair coinsided with a tide of change in the gardening world. The reaction against bedding-out and highly formal geometric gardens in the mid-Victorian mode could only have enhanced the perceived attractiveness of Corisande's old-fashioned garden. Many garden writers latched onto Disraeli's description, elevated it to an exemplar, and sometimes alluded to it as though it existed in fact. There are references to it in Robinson's magazine The Garden. In an article entitled "The Graphic on Flower Gardening" - another diatribe against the practice of making small suburban gardens "doleful places" empty between "crocus time and bedding out" - the unnamed author rues that "too many ... of Bacon's favourites are almost confined to old-fashioned gardens like the Lady Corisande's in 'Lothair'".[3]

It is remarkable how swiftly Corisande acquired an almost mythical status as the Alcinous of later Victorian fiction. When in 1885 Bright referred to "her garden of every perfume",[4] he did so in the confidence that her name was a sufficient referent in itself. Even less motivated garden-minded readers sang the praises of her garden. After his first reading of Lothair, Thomas Longman wrote to Disraeli:

> "... permit me to say that the grace and refinement of the concluding chapters has much struck me. The atmosphere of cultivated mind and manner pervades the whole story, and is as delightful, and refreshing, as the air of those charming old gardens full of roses, wallflowers,

> and sweet peas, that you describe, and not the less because all perfectly natural, though nature appears in her most graceful mode.[5]

Some garden writers went so far as to suggest that Disraeli's description had a direct impact on contemporary horticultural practices. Just two years after the publication of Lothair, H.W. Sargent had this to say:

> Though this [the Italian] style still has many advocates, yet the tide has commenced to turn and is slowly rolling back to the good old herbaceous borders of the past. Mr. Disraeli, in his charming description of Corisande's garden, in Lothair, has perhaps contributed to this change.[6]

If Disraeli did contribute to the change, then it was because Lothair attracted plenty of attention (being the first novel by an ex-British Primeminister), not because Disraeli was the first novelist to describe an old-fashioned garden.

If any imaginative writer had an impact on garden-minded readers, then it was Tennyson, who made extensive use of the garden as symbol, setting, image and theme. Tennyson himself was an enthusiastic practical gardener, and he took a keen interest in trees and flowers.[7] His own gardens occasioned comments, and many of his visitors recorded their impressions of them;[8] his garden at Farringford was one of the more remarked about private gardens in Victorian England. Some gardeners held it up as a model of the "careless order'd garden";[9] George Milner considered it a skilful example of "the blending of unobstrusive gradations by the artificial with the natural".[10] Gardens also played an important part in Tennyson's social, personal and imaginative experiences; in turn, his garden-related experiences found their way into his poems". Significantly, Tennyson often imaged poetry and poetic processes in terms of gardens and gardening.[12]

In spite of all this, Tennyson's poetry probably made only a slight impression upon the ideas of garden designers and theorists. Unlike, say, Morris, Tennyson did not write prescriptively about gardens; there is no

evidence that he ever made fully explicit his idea of what a garden should be. Only in one poem, the early Amphion, did he stare contemporary horticulture in the face.

Nevertheless, Tennyson was widely regarded as (to borrow Geoffrey Taylor's tag) "the most garden-conscious of all Victorian poets",[13] and the one Victorian poet significantly to have heightened garden-consciousness. Esteemed, absorbed, and textually redistributed, not only by technical garden writers but by poets, novelists, and painters, Tennyson was made into the most quoted "garden" writer of the age. The reasons for which he was quoted suggest the ways in which he affected garden-consciousness.

The notion of garden-consciousness is difficult to define and, in terms of the psychological and imaginative processes involved, hard to pin down. But not inappropriately so, for Tennyson's "garden" poetry appears to have worked upon receptive readers in subtle ways, slipping easily into their minds, and sometimes resurfacing only in response to specific stimuli. Garden writers were forever testifying to its almost subliminal resonance and its anamnesic potential. For example, when Henry Arthur Bright wrote about spring flowers, the subject brought to his mind the crocus that "'broke like fire' at the foot of the three goddesses, whom poor Oenone saw on Ida".[14] When the Rev. B.G. Jones wrote a piece on roses, his first thought was Tennyson. His article opens with the following lines:

> The flower ripens in its place
> Ripens, and fades, and falls, and hath no toil
> Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.[15]

Such were its insinuating effects, that only at moments of reproducing Tennyson's "garden" poetry were some Victorians conscious ever of having consumed it - and sometimes not even then. Alfred Austin had to have it pointed out to him that his "favourite phrase" (which also furnished the title for his most successful book) came from two of the best known lines

in the English Idylls:

> Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite
> Beyond it, blooms the garden that I love.

Austin comments:

> What an insidious way with it has beautiful verse, creeping without effort, and without observation on one's own part, into one's heart, and dwelling in our memory, like some fair, winsome, indispensable child. Of course I have for years known The Gardener's Daughter, yet I was unaware, till accurate Veronica reminded me, that the phrase "The Garden that I love", is thus to be found there" (p. 22).

If the more or less passive assimilation of reverberative units from Tennyson's poetry intensified garden-mindedness, the more active uses to which it was put directed and structured it. Garden-conscious Victorians were able to use it to articulate their own experiences, moods and states of mind - either those directly connected with gardens, or those which Tennyson poetically structured in garden terms. As an example, consider the famous farewell to Somersby section of In Memoriam (C1), in which Tennyson's sense of time passing, and his feeling of regret and finally of resignation, are registered proleptically by a predominantly autumnal garden landscape. Here are stanzas one, two and five.

> Unwatched, the garden bough shall sway,
> The tender blossoms flutter down,
> Unloved, that beech will gather brown,
> This maple burn itself away;
>
> Unloved, the sun-flower, shining fair,
> Ray round with flames her dusk of seed,
> And many a rose-carnation feed
> With summer spice the humming air;
>
> Till from the garden and the wild
> A fresh association blow,
> And year by year the landscape grow
> Familiar to the stranger's child. (Poems, p. 954)

As Donald S. Hair points out, leaving Somersby "is not just a matter of leaving home, but also a separation of the poet's thoughts and feelings from the familiar landscape with which he associated them".[16] Each of the first four stanzas begins with a word which emphasises separation:

"Unwatched", "Unloved", "Unloved", "Uncared for". In the rest of the description, the poet focuses upon the natural forms of the garden he has lovingly observed and which he recalls wistfully in "literal, botanical terminology".[17]

Within a few years of the publication of In Memoriam, section C1 became, in effect, the standard poetic structure through which to articulate the experience of parting from a garden of familiar and pleasing associations. Elizabeth Gaskell borrowed it for Margaret Hale's farewell to Helstone.[18] George William Curtis chose it for his memorial to the great American garden writer, A.J. Downing.[19]

That Tennyson was consensually defined as the preeminent garden poet of the age is evident from the uses to which he has put by other writers. Some of the garden scenes and garden-related experiences he wrote about acquired an almost mythical or archetypal status. For example, Audley Court became almost a by-word for picknicking in the grounds of an untenanted country house. In Tennyson's poem, the lawn beside the porter's lodge of the abandoned Audley Court provided the setting for the singing contest between Francis Hale and the narrator. When Charlotte M. Yonge, in The Pillars of the House (1893), came to relate the episode in which the poor clergyman, Mr. Underwood, brought his frail wife and many children from the dirty town of Bexley to the "extensive plantations and exquisite vistas" of the untenanted Centry Park, she explicitly acknowledged her frame of reference. The relevant chapter (2) is headed "The Picnic" and opens with the following lines from Audley Court:

> There, on a slope of orchard, Francis laid
> A damask napkin wrought with horse and hound,
> Brought out a dusky loaf that smelt of home,
> And, half cut-down, a pasty costly-made,
> Where quail and pigeon, lark and leveret lay,
> Like fossils of the rock, with golden yolks
> Imbedded and injellied; last, with these,
> A flask of damask of cider from his farther's vats,
> Prime, what I knew.

When Victorian writers sought an image of the enclosed garden, a garden to which access was strictly controlled, it was to the gardens of the women's college in The Princess that they sometimes turned. There is an episode in one of Emma Marshall's novels, in which a young man is asked to join some ladies in the garden of a country house. The man replies:

> I did not know whether I might set my foot on this enchanted ground. It is, I know, a forbidden territory, like the garden of Princess Ida.[20]

The gardens of Ida's college were associated not only with the principle of exclusion, but also with poetry, romance, and the delgihtful landscape experience of the male intruders. It is these associations that Henry James evoked in Roderick Hudson. On the verge of his departure for Italy, Roderick breaks out in a snatch of song from The Princess, which Rowland Mallet later echoes when his experience of landscape from the Belvedere in the garden of the Villa Ludovisi in Rome leads him to declare that it "looked like the prospect from a castle turret in a fairy tale" (p. 63). The least attractive garden that Tennyson ever described was probably also the most prototypically influential. I refer, of course, to the monotonous, rotting, wasteland garden of Mariana's moated grange. To account for this we need to consider its functions within the text as well as its details. In contrast to, say, the rose-garden in The Gardener's Daughter, or the cottage gardens in Aylmer's Field, the garden in Mariana is, as a garden or a verbal picture of a garden, intrinsically uninteresting. The "glooming flats", the "blackened waters" and "blackest moss", the pear-tree unhunged from the gable-wall, and the single poplar, "all silver-green with gnarled bark" are either an embodiment or a secretion of the perceptually over-whelming consciousness of the maiden. As John Dixon Hunt comments: "All the landscape images ... are designed to lead us into a state of consciousness; they are not there for their own sakes".[21]

That Mariana is a superb example of what John Stuart Mill called Tennyson's "power of creating scenery, in keeping with some state of human

feeling; so fitted to it as to be the embodied symbol of it",[22] helps to explain why Mariana's garden became the master script for many other fictional gardens. Dickens, who read and enjoyed Tennyson's poetry, was fascinated by the mood-scape garden of the blighted bride.[23] Harry Stone suggests that the rank and neglected garden of Miss Havisham's Satis House has a precursor in "The Bride's Chamber". The moss was allowed "to accumulate on the untrimmed fruit-trees in the red-walled garden, the weeds to over-run its green and yellow walls".[24] There is also the description of the red-brick mansion on the outskirts of the small market town where Scrooge had gone to school as a boy. As Kathleen Tillotson has noted: "The whole impression and half the details, come from Tennyson's 'Mariana'".[25] Later anti-garden or wasteland garden poems - Swinburne's A Forsaken Garden,[26] for example - may also owe something to Mariana.

Tennyson's poem served not only as a model for rotting garden poems, but also as a negative model for delightfully abundant and visually pleasing gardens. This has something to do with Tennyson's method of description. Geoffrey Tillotson has remarked that it was from his reading of Tennyson's Poems of 1842 that Dickens "learned how to build up a great description of external nature".[27] The subject matter is also important, for the details of Mariana's garden can function as objective correlatives of her emotional and spiritual condition only because they negate, distort and parody the myths and ideals which constitute the poem's implicit frames of reference. It is these that the derivative versions of Mariana's garden share and positively transform. The primary frame of reference is the pastoral myth of a Golden Age. Kincaid finds in Mariana "bitterly distorted" references to beauty, order and hope, an inversion of the "usual image of comedy and the pastoral". The opening lines, he says, "give a parody of beauty that is ordered and controlled. Man's capacity for both enjoying and arranging nature is mocked in the image of the sluggish decay overcoming the flower-pots, rust and disorder invading the carefully

controlled growth of the ornamental pear tree. The image of man as master of nature's beauty is thrown against that of man as victim of nature's anarchy".[28]

The parodic pastoral landscape is cognate with another negated paradigm: the country house and garden estate as a symbol of historical continuity, order and community. In Mariana, the historical continuity function of the country house is subverted by the substitution of the normative model of temporal processes - gradual, "natural", organic - with one in which all distinctions between past and present are grotesquely collapsed, while Mariana's isolation and social dislocation provide a mocking counter-symbol to the social collectivity function of the country house, in which ordinary social affairs are transformed into ritual enactments of community.

Fictional descriptions which "derive" from Mariana in topic and technique, reaffirm the ideals that Tennyson's poem negatively transforms. An example is Dickens's account of Mr. Boythorn's garden in Chapter 18 of Bleak House in which the emphasis is upon venerable "vegetable treasury". Like Mariana's garden, Mr. Boythorn's has a wall in which are lodged disused nails and scraps of list. But these are the products, not of unnatural corrosion and stagnation, but of "ripening influence", and "it was easy to fancy that they had mellowed with the changing seasons and that they had rusted and decayed according to the common fate" (p. 260). Morris's "Golden Wings", as Henderson has noted,[29] also "derives" from Mariana. Morris's poem opens with a description of an enclosed medieval garden, old, colourful and abundant, the converse of Mariana's garden, and the perfect synechdoche of an apparently organic and stable community. But by the end of the poem it has suffered the same terrible fate as the castle community. Morris's description of its rankness and decay leaves little doubt of the textual prototype he had in mind.

Tennyson's attention to details, so evident in his description of

Mariana's house and garden, is a characteristic of his garden poetry in general, and one of the reasons he was so frequently quoted by contemporary garden writers to illustrate or support the points they made. The author of an unsigned article in The Floral World (1867) observes that some of "our hardiest and cheapest trees and shrubs ... die gloriously ... to justify that sublime passage in 'In Memoriam', where he speaks of

> - Autumn laying here and there
> A fiery finger on the leaves".[30]

Adolphus H. Kent referred to the twice-mentioned detail of the "peacock yew-tree" in Enoch Arden to illustrate a piece on the revival of topiary craftsmanship.[31] Tennyson's acuity as a botanical observer made it possible for Ruskin to take snatches from Tennyson's poetry to illustrate his own observations in Proserpina. For instance, in his discussion of the thorn, Ruskin borrows the following lines from the Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington:

> Thou shalt see the stubborn thistle bursting
> Into glossy purples, which out redden
> All voluptuous garden roses.[32]

Having in him, as Basil Willey has identified, "the ingredients of both landscape painter and field naturalist",[33] Tennyson was in a peculiarly strong position to sensitise the perceptions of his readers to details of the natural world. The experience of Mr. Holbrook, the "Old Bachelor" in Gaskell's Cranford, who confessed that though he had lived all his life in the country he had not realised that ash buds were black till "this young man [Tennyson] comes and tells me" (p. 52), could not have been unique.

Because he observes closely, describes carefully, and, to use Ian Fletcher's nice phrase, "anxiously botanizes",[34] Tennyson was (and is) compared with the Pre-Raphaelites. In 1870 Von Karl Elze wrote:

> Mr. Tennyson's Nature differs from Byron's as a flower-piece by Von Huysum, or an English Landscape by Creswick differs from a Salvator Rosa or a Caspar Poussin. In the elaborate minuteness of his finish he may be compared to the painters of the pre-Raphaelite school, who ... convert their backgrounds into foregrounds, and make you look more at the roses and apple-blossoms than at the damsels who

are embowered in them.[35]

Tennyson's foregrounding technique was appreciated by his nature- and garden-loving readers. Andrea Rose explains:

> Tennyson, like Millais in his Pre-Raphaelite phase, rewarded his public with an attention to natural detail that was almost biological. It was what the middle-class public demanded. They themselves, only half a century ago, had belonged to the countryside, and in their urban world of exile, they wanted reminders of the imaginary demi-paradise. In faultless images, Tennyson provided them.[36]

The painterly structures of Tennyson's garden poetry furnished artists no less than writers with subjects, techniques, and frames of reference for their own "picturesque delineation of objects". Millais's Mariana, in which the garden encroaches threateningly upon the casement of the moated grange, is possibly the best known example. The swirling, lashing floral forms depicted in Burne-Jones's Briar Rose series of pictures, produced between 1870-90 recalls passages from "The Sleeping Princess" section of Tennyson's The Day-Dream, "a poem that Burne-Jones would certainly have known, as it was included in Moxon's illustrated edition of Tennyson's poems published in 1857".[37]

With regard to The Gardener's Daughter; or the Pictures, John Dixon Hunt points out that the "scenery that leads the men [the narrator and Eustace] into a Victorian rose-garden has a precise visual focus that is strangely reminiscent (or prophetic) of Holman Hunt's Love at First Sight in its landscape of slanting meadow and 'dark-green layers of shade' beyond".[38] A single line from a Tennyson poem could offer inspiration and the tag for a "garden" painting. When Sir John William Inchbold exhibited his Mid-Spring at the Royal Academy in 1856 he accompanied it with a one-line quote from Tennyson: "You scarce can see the grass for flowers".[39]

While Victorian artists drew inspiration from Tennyson's garden poetry, garden theorists drew encouragement from it. Two of the most prestigious and prolific garden writers, Shirley Hibberd and William Robinson, found in Tennyson's poetry what they were looking for and, more importantly

perhaps, an absence of what they were not looking for. What they were not looking for was the poetic celebration of the bedding system. Fortunately for them, they didn't find it; they found, instead, descriptions of old-fashioned, traditional flowers disposed in visually appealing structures. There is surely significance in the fact that Hibberd opened his "Introduction" to The Amateur's Flower Garden by quoting the famous "Maud has a garden of roses" stanza of Maud (in which two other long-established flowers, lilies and passion-flowers, also figure), and then promptly proceeded to complain of the "constantly increasing tendency to superficial glare and glitter in garden embellishment, to the neglect of more solid features that make a garden interesting and attractive .... all the year round".[40] Like Hibberd, Robinson claimed Tennyson as an ally in the battle against bedding-out. In The Wild Garden, Robinson quoted four lines from Amphion which, he claimed, articulated a widely shared opinion that "a pretty plant in the wild state is more attractive than any garden denizen:

> Better to me the meanest weed
> That blows upon its mountain,
> The vilest herb that runs to seed
> Beside its native fountain".[41]

Tennyson was probably the chief, but by no means the only, Victorian imaginative writer to be put to illustrative and supportive uses by contemporary garden theorists and enthusiasts. These uses seem to suggest that novelists and poets most potently influenced garden-enthusiasts, if often unwittingly, in two major directions: first, in reflecting and promoting their garden-mindedness; second, in preserving or keeping alive an interest in those qualities and features of gardens eclipsed by the more prominent contemporary fads and practices. In the light of the evidence available, it is possible only to conclude that the direct impact of imaginative literature on actual garden practices was generally negligible, beyond accurate measurement, or arguable only in specific instances.

PART TWO

6

Floral Codes

Victorian Britain was characterised by industrial and commercial expansion, and by an unprecedented rate of urban development. In spite of, and partly because of, these processes, a great many Victorians, including many imaginative writers, were flower-oriented. More people then ever before spent their leisure time growing and displaying plants. Developments in plant breeding, together with the influx of imported exotics, ensured the availability of an unprecedented variety of plant materials. Advances in glass-house engineering and the repeal of the tax on glass (in 1845) made it possible to construct more efficient greenhouses and hot-houses, which in turn permitted or impelled the production of huge quantities of plants for bedding-out.

Quantitative measures of the Victorian flower boom are less interesting and less significant than the qualitative dimensions of what might be called the Victorian flower culture. Indeed, the emphasis on numbers - of plants, of plant-enthusiasts - distracts from the complexity, diversity, and fragmentation of that culture. Put baldly, many Victorians were flower-minded, but flower-mindedness and flowers themselves meant different things to different people.

Percipient observers commented upon this heterogeneity. Some, like John Ruskin and Juliana Ewing, fashioned their observations of the disparate ways of knowing and relating to plants into evaluative classifications of flower-enthusiasts. Ruskin's is rather depressing. In Frondes Agrestes (1874) he dilates on the thought that "flowers seem intended for the solace of humanity". Then he ponders upon the actual state of things:

> Yet few people really care about flowers. Many, indeed, are fond of finding a new shape of blossom, caring for it as a child cares about a Kaleidoscope. Many, also, like a fair service of flowers in the greenhouse, as a fair service of plate on the table. Many are scientifically interested in them, though even these in their

> nomenclature, rather than the flowers; and a few enjoy their gardens.... But, the blossoming time of the year being principally spring, I perceive it to be the mind of most people, during that period, to stay in the town.[1]

Mrs. Ewing's classification, though addressed to children, is a more elaborate version of Ruskin's. She identifies four types: those who "like to have a garden ... and like to see it gay and tidy, but who don't know one flower from the next"; scientists "acquainted with botany and learned in horticulture" for whom "every garden is a botanical garden"; those who "fully appreciate the beauty and scent of flowers" but "who can't abide to handle a fork or meddle with mother earth"; and those who, like herself, "love not only the lore of flowers, and the fragrance of them, and the growing of them, and the picking of them, and the arranging of them, but also inherit from Father Adam a natural relish for tilling the ground from whence they were taken and to which they shall return".[2]

All of these types are represented in Victorian imaginative literature and, broadly speaking, each has a value equivalent to that which Ewing gives it. So, for example, fictional gardeners who cherish flowers for their own sakes tend to be more positively and warmly evaluated than those who look upon plants merely as botanical specimens. In one respect, however, the literary representation of flower enthusiasts corresponds neither to Ruskin's nor Ewing's breakdown of types. Neither of these writers is specific about relative numbers. By contrast, in contemporary fiction, scientifically-interested flower enthusiasts are greatly out-numbered by those whose interests lie elsewhere. Thus, imaginative literature tends to lead away from rather than towards Ruskin's conclusion that "few people really care about flowers".

Nonetheless, Ruskin, Ewing, and the majority of imaginative writers were attitudinally at one, especially with regard to the scientifically-inclined enthusiast - who fares rather badly all round. Ruskin is not emphatically deprecatory in the passage quoted above; but elsewhere he

speaks of the "great difference between the botanist's knowledge of plants, and the great poet's or painter's knowledge of them. The one notes their distinctions for the sake of swelling his herbarium, the other, that he may render them vehicles of expression and emotion".[3]

As a rule, the erudite botanists of Victorian fiction are minor characters whose proclivities are damned rather by faint praise than by explicit criticism. They are given a negative stress by the functions they serve - many are foils to genuine or ingenuous flower-lovers - and by the arcane codes in which they indulge. For example, in Wives and Daughters, Molly Gibson's innocent response to the flowers in the conservatory of Cumnor Towers forms a contrast to Lady Agnes's "more scientific taste". Lady Agnes "expatiated on the rarity of this plant, and the mode of cultivation required by that, till Molly began to feel very tired and then very faint" (p. 45). Similarly, in Heartsease, Violet's delight at the flowers in the Martindale gardens is opposed to the chilly insouciance of the floriculturally knowledgeable Theodora.

At the opposite pole to the scientific gardener is the "genuine" flower-lover. He grows his own plants - for pleasure rather than profit - and develops a close attachment to them. He cares little for mere display, still less for change for the sake of change. His art is one of imagination, not one of imitation or "improvement", though he never forgets his partnership with nature. He cares more for sentiment than for professional expertise, more for simplicity than for sophistication, more for variety than for uniformity.

A further hallmark of the genuine flower-lover is his ability to make things grow without recourse to modern "improving" or forcing practices. His primary skills are intuitive or acquired informally from grass-roots experience, as it were, rather than received from books or formal instruction. Like the titular hero of Tennyson's Amphion, who moved nature at his pleasure, and "left a small plantation" "Wherever he sat

down and sung", there is something almost magical about his powers. The dejected speaker of Tennyson's poem laments that modern horticulturalists have lost this magic. They depend instead upon knowledge culled from horticultural manuals, which is both a symptom of and a response to living in a "brassy age" in which conditions are unpropitious for any kind of creative activity. As Tennyson's speaker makes plain, book learning is no substitute for native genius:

> But what is that I hear? a sound
> Like sleepy counsel pleading;
> O Lord! - 'tis in my neighbour's ground,
> The modern Muses reading.
> They read Botanic Treatises,
> And works on Gardening through there,
> And Methods of transplanting trees
> To look as if they grew there.
>
> The withered Misses! how they prose
> O'er books of travelled seamen,
> And show you slips of all that grows
> From England to Van Diemen.
> They read in arbours clipt and cut,
> And alleys, faded places,
> By squares of tropic summer shut
> And warmed in crystal cases.
>
> But these, though fed with careful dirt,
> Are neither green nor sappy;
> Half-conscious of the garden-squirt,
> The spindlings look unhappy.
> Better to me the meanest weed
> That blows upon its mountain,
> The vilest herb that runs to seed
> Beside its native fountain. (Poems, p. 687)

As Jerome H. Buckley notes, with all their second-hand knowledge of horticulture, the "withered Misses" are "quite unable to elicit from their gardens the response of a happy green abundance".[4]

The "natural" gardeners in Victorian literature are conspicuously more successful. Some are expert botanists who, in contrast to the "withered Misses" have managed to retain a fructifying and innocent rapport with nature. Eugene Aram is one, as evidenced by his capacity to instil in others a love of gardening and flowers.[5] Another is Glastonbury in Disraeli's Henrietta Temple, the multi-talented scholar, whom the Armines invite to construct for them a rich and beautiful flower-garden. We are

told that "Under his auspices the garden of the fair Constance soon flourished" (p. 19), and he is frequently pictured in the company of his beloved plants.

Other genuine flower-lovers are more firmly placed, both socially and within the Victorian horticultural fraternity. For example, Sergeant Cuff in Wilkie Collins's The Moonstone (1868) is anything but a Bohemian scholar. He is a professional man who grows flowers to gratify the needs which his occupation cannot fulfil. But where roses are concerned, he combines a prosaic concern for practicalities with a high level of erudition - he proves a "mine of learning" on the subject, and at one point travels to Ireland to inquire after a rosarian's innovation - with a touching, almost child-like affection for the flower that blooms everywhere in his own cottage garden. This mixture of pragmatism, science, and honest sentiment comes out strongly in the following passage:

> "Ah, you've got the right exposure here to the south and south-west", says the Sergeant, with a wag of his grizzled head, and a streak of pleasure in his melancholy voice. "This is the shape for a rosery - nothing like a circle set in a square. Yes, yes; with walks between all the beds. But they oughtn't to be gravel walks like these. Grass, Mr. Gardener - grass walks between your roses; gravel's too hard for them. That's a sweet pretty bed of white roses and blush roses. They also mix well together, don't they? Here's the white musk rose, Mr. Betteredge - our old English rose holding up its head along with the best and the newest of them. Pretty dear!" says the Sergeant, fondling the Musk Rose with his lanky fingers, and speaking to it as if he was speaking to a child. (p. 88)

Although there are other Sergeant Cuffs in Victorian literature, other broadly middle-class characters for whom a scientific or improver's interest in plants is perfectly compatible with a personal attachment to them, the majority of "genuine" flower-lovers are humble farmers and country cottagers. Some are in a position to eschew modern horticultural practices; many country labourers, as opposed to the middle-class occupants of country cottages, are not. The rural labourer may grow flowers for love, or from a spirit of poetic communion with nature; this is the explanation implied

in many cottage garden descriptions. But some have no choice. Lacking the means and the education to garden scientifically, or with the self-conscious sophistication of the better-off, they either garden for love, or not at all.

This is something like the case with Meredith's Mrs. Fleming in Rhoda Fleming. The wife of an indigent Kentish farmer, she pours all her energies into the flower-garden of which she has sole charge. Her floral displays are famed, and she has "gained a prize at a flower show for one of her dahlias". She spends money on her garden, but it is money which her husband can ill afford. Her economic resources are clearly limited, and the effects of her "unrivalled garden" are achieved in spite of rather than because of them. What she brings to her gardening activities, and what places her poles apart from the pragmatic and profit-minded horticultura-list, is an irrepressible imaginative vitality. Her garden "gave vivid sign of youth". "The joy of her love for it was written on its lustrous beds as poets write. She had the poetic passion for flowers". Her taste in flowers ran counter to prevailing fashions, and "may now seem question-able. She cherished the old-fashioned delight in tulips ... She liked a bulk of colour; and when the dahlia dawned upon our gardens, she gave her heart to her dahlias" (p. 2). Whether economic constraints influenced her choice of flowers is uncertain; "her admission of great poppy-heads into her garden" (p. 3) suggests that they may have done.

Of all the genuine flower-lovers in Victorian literature, none is more "natural" than farmer Iden in Richard Jefferies's Amaryllis at the Fair. To scrape a living he plants potatoes - methodically, but with tender soli-citude: "had he been planting his own children he could not have been more careful" (p. 203). For farmer Iden, nature is the combatant with whom he has constantly to struggle. For Iden the gardener, nature offers a spiritual partnership, the issue of which is marvellous prodigality:

> Flowers, and trees, and grass seemed to spring up wherever Iden set down his foot: fruit and flowers fell from the

> air down upon him. It was his genius to make things grow - like sunshine and shower; a sort of Pan, a half-god of leaves and boughs, and reeds and streams, a sort of Nature in human shape, moving about and sowing Plenty and Beauty. (p. 309)

The avatar of Pan - or Amphion - Iden is the antithesis of the sophisticated Victorian horticulturalist. His language declares his lineage. He spoke of garden products "with a simplicity of language that reminded you of Bacon and his philosophy of the Elizabethan Age.

Iden in a way certainly had a tinge of the Baconian culture, naturally, and not from any study of that author, whose books he had never seen. The great Bacon was, in fact, a man of orchard and garden, and gathered his ideas from the fields". (p. 220)

It is not hard to see why Jefferies should have privileged Iden's intuitive, mystical, experience-based kind of competence. Jefferies spurned book learning, and his vital force view of Nature approximated to the Wordsworthian view. If his field-level focus on man in nature, and his repudiation of urban and urbane culture set him apart from many other Victorian writers, he was not alone in celebrating a floricultural competence based not upon textual study, but upon direct experience and imaginative engagement. That this may have been the only kind of competence possible for the educationally and economically disadvantaged rural labourer appears not to have disturbed the scores of minor writers who applauded the cottager's knowledge of plants. Typical of this sentimental laudation are the following stanzas from Mary Howitt's mid-century poem, The Poor Man's Garden.

> He knows where grow his wall-flowers,
> And when they will be out;
> His moss-rose, and convolvulus
> That twines his poles about.
>
> He knows his red sweet-william;
> And the stocks that cost him dear, -
> That well-set row of crimson stocks, -
> For he bought the seed last year.

- - - - - - - -

And there, before the little bench,
O'er shadowed by the bower,
Grow southern-wood and lemon thyme,
Sweet-pea and gilliflower;

And pink and clove-carnations,
Rich scented, side by side;
And at each end a hollyhock,
With an edge of London-pride.[6]

Between the extremes of the scientific gardener and the genuine lover of plants, there are various grades of flower-enthusiasts. Towards one group of floricultural "improvers", imaginative and garden writers alike were generally sympathetic. These were the amateur cultivators, who spent what time and money they had on bringing their favourite flowers (often the "old favourites") to the highest states of perfection.

According to the contemporary observers, many of the most devoted amateur flower-specialists were rural labourers and factory workers rather than affluent middle-or upper-class gardeners.[7] Late in the century, Alfred Austin expresses nothing but approbation for the dedication of the amateur of modest means and small pretensions. He picks out for special commendation the exhibits of a railway mechanic whose particular pride is a giant Echeveria of exceptionally hearty growth.[8]

But in Victorian fiction, the majority of amateur flower-specialists are well-to-do ladies. Charlotte Yonge provides a number of examples. In the opening pages of The Heir of Redclyffe (1853), she captures the excitement of Amy Edmonstone who, having cultivated a camellia, "a perfect blossom, so pure a white, and so regular!" declares herself "proud of having beaten mamma and all the gardeners" (p. 2). There are also examples in Thackeray's novels, including Madame de Florac in The Newcombes (1855), who "won prizes at the Newcombe flower and fruit shows" (p. 626).

Some garden writers had doubts about flower shows. They feared that amateurs might neglect their gardens in order to secure prizes and reputations with their choicest specimens. There is little suggestion of this in Victorian fiction. Mrs. Fleming's garden is a joy to behold; Madame de

Florac's is "pretty". And Amy Edmonstone's solicitude for flower-show exhibits does not attenuate her respect for "undressed" flowers. On taking cuttings of a wild rose to transplant at Hollywell House, she says: "I don't know that the grand roses will be equal to these purple shoots and blushing buds with long whiskers" (p. 132).

The amateur flower-specialist was one thing; the professional horticulturalist or floriculturalist, driven by commercial imperatives and/or a preoccupying concern for botanical "progress" was another. In imaginative literature, the latter are conspicuous by their relative absence, as are the institutional infrastructures by which they were supported. Where professional "improvers" are permitted textual space they are, with few exceptions, coolly received. Consider the following example from Trollope's Orley Farm. The narrator informs us that about the "commodious, irregular, picturesque, and straggling" (I, 7) Orley Farm, stand ancient fruit trees, "large, straggling trees, such as do not delight the eyes of modern gardeners; but they produced fruit by the bushel, very sweet to the palate, though probably not so perfectly round, and large, and handsome as those which the horticultural skill of the present day requires" (I, 8). Trollope does not explicitly condemn horticultural authorities for setting exacting critical standards; but he hints very strongly that their standards are arbitary, and vitiated by the positivistic assumption that bigger necessarily means better. Who were these authorities? Trollope doesn't say. Perhaps he had in mind the horticultural societies, whom the Rev. Thomas James had already identified as the villains. In 1839 he had written: the effect "that horticultural societies have had on our fruits [has been] to make us entertain the vulgar notion that size is a virtue".[9] But more likely Trollope was thinking of what R.D. Blackmore was later to call the [commercial] "middlemen". In a letter to The Times (22 Sept. 1894) he wrote: "These [middlemen] know little concerning the merits of this or that variety, but call for something large and showy, and, above all, something whose name they

know".

Needless to say, the flower consciousness of the Victorians did not develop spontaneously. Rather, it was generated, often purposively, by a congeries of institutional formations, practices and texts. Since different institutions tended to irrigate the channels of flower consciousness in different directions, the nature of the individual's flower-mindedness was in part determined by the sources of influence to which he was predominantly exposed. Nursery firms and other commercial enterprises of (sometimes) substantial capital investment, endeavoured to extend the range of floral interests and, in particular, to stimulate interest in the novel and "improved". The horticultural press, the proliferation of which is one of the principal facts of Victorian garden history, tended also to privilege the flower consciousness of the progress-minded plantsman. This tendency was particularly prominent in the middle decades of the century, though it needs to be said that throughout the period, technical garden literature was multifarious and by no means exclusively technical in content. In magazines specifically directed at gardeners, and more so in general interest magazines as different as Blackwood's, The Quarterly Review, The Leisure Hour, and The Quiver, articles on the dynamics of contemporary floriculture included or nestled among ruminative morsels on the moral and poetic qualities of plants. At the very least, these pieces suggested alternative conceptualisations of flower consciousness to those predicated upon the "science" of improvement.

For many Victorians, the most compelling of these alternatives issued from religious institutions and from particular Christian writers. Through flower sermons, their equivalent printed tracts, and books on the language of flowers imbued with Christian imagery, religious writers promulgated a floral ideology based upon an emblematic interpretation of nature, and encouraged their readers to dwell upon the eternal verities of flowers as opposed to their strictly botanical properties or merely quotidian uses.

The belief that flowers are vehicles for transcendant truths is expressed by one of Trollope's more effusive female characters - Ugolina in The Three Clerks (1858). Having enthused on the flowers on display in Chiswick Gardens, she professes that "they convey to me the purest and most direct essence of that heavenly power of production which is the sweetest evidence which Jehovah gives us of his presence ... They are the bright stars of his handiwork ... and if our dim eyes could read them aright, they would whisper to us the secret of his love" (p. 302).

From this point of view, floral reading competence - that is, the ability to make sense of the meanings of flowers - ought in principle to be exoteric and ubiquitous, since plant meanings ought to be transparent to anyone with the necessary set of religious convictions. And, indeed, Victorian garden literature bristles with statements proclaiming the transparency and universality of floral codes. The following are typical: "Flowers speak a universal language, and they need no introduction beyond their loveliness";[10] "'the language of flowers' has no need to be taught in books; it is understood in all lands, by sage and savage, bound and free".[11]

What these statements deny or fail to acknowledge is the cultural determination of floral codes. If, as many Victorians believed, flowers have collective, pre-given significations by virtue of their divine ontogenesis, then these are always smothered by more local, historically-specific meanings. And certainly within the Victorian cultural context, flowers and groups of flowers acquired, to a greater or lesser extent, intersubjectively recognised significations as multifarious as the culture from which they emerged.

The most stable, fixed, and formalised of these codes was floriography, or the "language of flowers" proper, in which flowers were conceived as "emblems of thoughts and sentiments ... invested with a language of their own".[12] Middle-class Victorians took great delight in reviving the language of flowers, as the numerous flower books published in the period

testify. Each book has the same basic format: a list of plant names arranged alphabetically and, next to each plant name, the sentiments customarily assigned to it. The floral alphabet is often followed by a section on the poetry of flowers, and/or prefaced by an account of the rules of grammar governing the language of flowers. According to Robert Tyas, "The first rule in the language of flowers is, that a flower, presented in an upright position, expresses a thought; to express the opposite of that thought it suffices to let the flower hang down reversed".[13]

In spite of its extensive vocabulary and rather formidable syntax, there was every incentive for the educated Victorian to learn the language of flowers. Its users could exchange messages without the use of words, and without, moreover, the degree of explicit commitment involved in the making of verbal propositions. This must have been of particular advantage to those constrained by upbringing and bourgeois social conventions from disclosing their feelings more openly. (Eric Maple has noted that Victorian Valentine cards often carried a "secret" message in the form of a prominently depicted posy of flowers.[14]) Furthermore, the language of flowers was respectable, and conferred status and respectability upon those conversant with it. In the words of Jean Marsh, "an interest in flower language lent an air of modest feminine erudition to the lady gardener, at the same time allowing her to mingle dreams of romance with more prosaic gardening concerns".[15] A competence in floriography was considered a prestigious social accomplishment which accentuated the femininity of the woman and revealed the virtue in the man. If <u>he</u> is blind to beautiful landscapes, suggested Praed's "A Letter of Advice" in 1828,

> If he knows not the language of flowers,
> My own Araminta, say 'No!'[16]

The enormous popularity of the language of flowers derived largely from two apparently quite different tendencies. One was the impulse to escape, and in this respect floriography was a cultivated parlour game

which afforded a diversion from the ugliness of urban life and the tedium of humdrum social routines. Its links were with the widespread use of flowers for decoration, ornamentation, and consolation., by means of which the countryside was imported indoors, and with the many of hundreds of sentimental flower poems scattered throughout the popular magazines of the period. In spirit it was playful rather than serious. Its heirs were the book illustrations of Kate Greenaway in the 1870s and 1880s - which Ruskin praised for restoring the elements of fantasy and beauty fast disappearing from industrial England - and of Walter Crane in the 1880s and 1890s, in which plant names are interpreted freely and imaginatively.

The other tendency was emblematic and typological.' As an expression of the desire to discover the deeper meanings of plants, the enthusiasm for the language of flowers was itself an expression of the impulse to revive a symbolic world picture. The impetus came from various quarters. Religious writers encouraged the emblematic interpretation of nature for the lessons it imparted to mankind. The Flower Sermons preached by the Rev. W.M. Whittemore and others - to which all the worshippers carried flowers - appear to have been simplified versions of the Tractarian theory of "vertical correspondences". As Ian Fletcher reminds us, this was the theory that "Any object in nature must have a concealed affinity with every other object in nature, lateral correspondence, because all objects form part of the vertical correspondence between nature and God".[17] It was modified by Keble (in The Christian Year, 1827) from the world-model of living emblems promulgated in seventeenth-century devotional writings - themselves an inspiratory source of flower symbols.

Ruskin and some of the Pre-Raphaelites also embarked on the search for the deeper and symbolic meanings of flowers. That they found them is suggested by the typological interpretations that Holman Hunt and others produced for pictures, and by numerous statements and descriptions of Ruskin's, ranging from the emphatically unambiguous "The grass and

flowers are types" in Modern Painters IV to the more extended explorations in Proserpina (1875-86). Ruskin's starting point was close observation and a precise recording of natural details. In this sense, his method, like that of Hunt and Millais, and so often of Tennyson and George Eliot, was "scientific". Gisela Hönnighausen takes this as evidence of a reconciliation of the "new scientific interests of the nineteenth century and the outmoded concept of types".[18] But Ruskin's frame of reference was quite different from and irreconcilably opposed to that of the empirical scientist. His perception was always informed by a moral and imaginative vision and, as Dinah Birch has rightly stressed, his "scientific method inclines to devotion rather than analysis".[19] His contempt for the "vile industries and vicious curiosities of modern science",[20] his refusal to countenance investigations into the reproductive functions of plants, his distrust of and infrequent references to contemporary botanical "authorities", and his antipathy to the Darwinian idea that nature was in a state of constant flux, all point to his fundamental opposition to the mechanistic science of his day.

Virtually every Victorian who sought an emblematic interpretation of flowers believed in the abiding and immutable truths expressed by the natural forms, and struggled to tease out the moral significance of every detail of a plant's form. They differed principally in terms of their willingness and ability to discover meanings outside a strictly biblical framework. Ruskin's vision, particularly in Proserpina, was shaped by art and mythology as well as by the Bible, and the typologies of artists were generally more inventive and subjective than those of religious writers. Mrs. Loudon's 1848 account of Christ's Passion as displayed by the Blue Passion Flower (Passiflora Caerulea) is a good example of an emblematic reading within a conventional scriptural framework:

> The leaf they expound to be the spear which pierced
> His side; the twined threads of red and white which
> form the crown of the flower were supposed the symbol

> of the lashes of the whip tinged with blood; the fire encircling stamens the crown of thorns; the pistils the column to which our Lord was bound; the three divisions of the stigma the three nails used in the crucifixion.[21]

The Victorians's enthusiasm for the language of flowers is evident in contemporary literature. Poems were dedicated to it, including Thomas Hood's The Language of Flowers[22] and Leigh Hunt's Love-Letters Made of Flowers.[23] (According to Claire Powell, it was Hunt who "established the Victorian convention that is was chiefly of love that flowers spoke".[24]) It is explicitly mentioned in a number of literary texts[25] and, more importantly, it illuminates many others. William R. Campbell,[26] Romona Merchant,[27] and others, have argued that it contributes to the seemingly cryptogramatic design of Browning's Pippa Passes. Gisela Hönnighausen has shown that floral alphabets provide the key to many of Christina Rossetti's poems.[28] Tennyson's floral oppositions, and his use of the flower symbolism of classical mythology have for long been recognised as more than merely decorative in function. In addition, there are countless moments in Victorian fiction where characters give and receive a gift of flowers - selected, perhaps, for their symbolic values. One of M.E. Braddon's heroine's receives a gift of blue violets - flowers customarily associated with faithfulness. The donor calls it a "hero's emblem".[29] In Gaskell's Ruth, Mr. Bellingham presents the young Ruth Hilton with a "snowy white" camellia, ostensibly in gratitude for her "dexterous" work on Miss Duncombe's dress (p. 17). Since the white camellia is a symbol of perfected loveliness, Bellingham's choice of flower is, at the very least, felicitous. Such was the popularity of the language of flowers, that Victorian writers could work on the supposition that their cultivated readers had some acquaintance with it. Lacking this competence, most modern readers are likely to assume that the choice of plant names in Victorian poems and novels is either random or merely subjective.

In many respects, the language of flowers proper was quite different

from the multiplicity of other Victorian floral codes. For one thing, its vocabulary and rules of use were written down, which made it comparatively formalised, and meant that it had to be learned by rather formal means. For another, it was not firmly anchored in contemporary horticultural practices and did not emerge from the signifying operations performed upon it. This ought theoretically to have rendered it incompatible with floral codes of much greater historical specificity, and dependent upon what phenomelogists would probably call "commonsense" knowledge. In practice, many Victorians were able to entertain at one time and with no apparent discomfort the notion that in one sense the significations of plants were fixed and achronic, and in another sense, culturally contingent. This curious case of double-think betrays conflicting desires: on the one hand, an enormous reluctance on the part of many Victorians to let go of the consoling belief that nature is the source of abidding truths; on the other, a desire to make the evidence to the contrary still more compelling by releasing the semiotic potential of plants that the language of flowers served to hold in check. Unfettered by the closed system constraints of the floral alphabets, plant names could be used to signify (inter alia) moral values, social status, and social group identities - no small gain for those in the business of mapping out the cultural terrain. "Those" includes Victorian imaginative writers, who were instrumental in the mediation, construction, and negotiation of floral codes.

Various sets of factors played a part in determining the conventional, widely agreed-upon meanings which plants come to acquire for the Victorians. One of the principal determinants was "age" - which turned largely upon the distinction between "old favourites" and newly imported exotics, hybridised plants and other prised cultivars. The latter were usually expensive and often showy; not unsurprisingly they functioned indexically as signs of social status and material wealth. Some Victorian novelists exploited these significations. Exotics of Babylonian splendour make manifest the almost fabulous affluence of some of Disraeli's fictional

aristocrats. As we have seen, Charlotte Yonge's Heartsease includes a description of an upper-class display garden brimful of exotics and costly American plants.

Some plants were only ephemerally wealth-expressive. Consider the fate of the tulip. At the height of the English tulip mania (between about 1830 and 1850), affluent fanciers paid anything up to £150 for a single rare bulb.[30] As the less common varieties of tulips became cheaper, and so more widely available, their significations became commensurately more negotiable. By the end of the century they had all but ceased to function as social signs indexical of wealth, and garden writers were free to debate their more "personal" qualities. Alfred Austin discerned in them displeasing associations of "eighteenth-century correctness",[31] while "Elizabeth", the author of Elizabeth and her German Garden (1898), considered them "the embodiment of alert cheerfulness and tidy grace" (p. 71)

Other plants were similarly democratised. In 1853, an anonymous garden writer declared that he was "pleasantly surprised to see in the gardens of the poor ... plants which a very few years ago we could only have expected to find in gardens of some pretensions". He mentions in particular "showy dahlias" and "hardier varieties of the fuchsia".[32] This trickling-down process attenuated rather than nullified the indexical significations of exotics and "quality" plants; most remained real or vestigial signs of material wealth.

By contrast, their connotative values had to be fought for. This struggle for the mastery of plant meanings was not a cultural expression of the class struggle so much as a tussle between those who occupied different ideological positions within the dominant value-system. For the commercial middle-classes, exuberant exotics were indubitable symbols of triumph and progress - their own and their country's. Giant plants brought back from distant lands were the palpable signs of entrepreneurial efficiency. That they could be made to flourish in artificial environments,

themselves created by British engineers, showed that nature itself could be controlled.

In marvelling at exotics, the industrial middle-classes and progressive upper-classes were marvelling at themselves and their own achievements. How else can we explain the extraordinary public interest generated by Paxton's successful cultivation of the remarkable South American water-lily, Victoria Regia or, more accurately perhaps, by the attention it received from the middle class press?[33] Its prodigious size and vigorous growth seemed perfectly to symbolise the confidence, energy and expansionist ambitions of the classes who lionised Paxton in the years immediately preceding the Great Exhibition.

That imported exotics acquired their positive connotative values largely from and by their association with the rising middle-classes helps to explain why they were less favourably encoded by those whose conservative sympathies made them critical of parvenu capitalists and their flamboyant status symbols. The identification of exotics and showy bedders with brazen social upstarts is implicit in comments denouncing new plants for their lack of pedigree and breeding. Bedding plants, said Henry Arthur Bright, have "no associations as regards the past. No poet ever sang their beauty, and no legend tells the origin of their birth".[34] Another writer lamented that "some prime old favourites ... have lost their place in the parterre to make room for the upstart parvenus of vaunting propagators".[35]

In the novels of Anthony Trollope, exotics are semiotically akin to foreigners and imperfect gentlemen of dubious or unknown origins. With Tory grandiloquence and the backing of an ancient lineage, the young Frank Gresham in Framley Parsonage asserts that he would "sooner have one full-grown oak standing in its pride alone ... than all the exotics in the world" (p. 79). Old oaks, like true gentlemen, cannot be whistled up by wealth alone. Nor can they be brought into conservatories on "great

barrows" - as are the exotics at Gatherum Castle at the behest of Lady Glencora in Trollope's The Prime Minister (1876). To her husband, the Duke of Omnium, they had about them a repulsive look of "raw newness" (I, 211).

Trollope's reluctance to assign positive values to exotics was by no means peculiar. The majority of Victorian imaginative writers displayed an enthusiasm for old-fashioned flowers that they rarely exhibited for newer and "improved" plant materials. What they sensed, though rarely made explicit, was that the apparent usurpation of old-favourites by fashionable annuals and imported newcomers provided a paradigmatic case of the displacement of the old cultural system by the new. As it was generally perceived, the old cultural system had as its core the organic rural community, of which the cottage garden provided an imaginatively compelling synechdoche. As synechdoches of the cottage garden, old-fashioned plants were powerful reminders of a world that was quickly passing - if it hadn't already passed.

To some extent, then, hollyhocks, sunflowers, larkspurs, pinks, pansies, lupins, gillyflowers, and the other plants generally considered old-fashioned were positively accented for the values their names were thought to symbolise. But their peculiar qualities also played some part in the way they were encoded. According to their champions, the old favourites appealed to all the relevant senses. They usually combined handsome colour with sweetness of scent, and they also had "interesting" forms. In addition, their beauty was not of the transitory kind. Hence, for the majority of novelists and poets, and for garden lovers who did not despise them for their intractability and/or their "vulgar" associations - they were often referred to as "poor men's flowers" - old-fashioned plants resonated with the positive connotations of plenitude, variety, individuality, and the kind of stability equivalent to homeliness.

By contrast, bedding plants such as verbenas, scarlet geraniums and calceolarias had only bright colour, ornamentation, and obedience to

recommend them. For the advocates of the old-favourites, and of the omnium-gatherum garden styles with which they were associated, bedders spoke of homogeneity, ephemerality, and the absense of "personality". These negative connotations were accentuated by (con)textual factors. As the name implies, bedders were normally planted in massed arrangements for maximum visual impact. For Forbes Watson and the later Victorians who shared his views, this inevitably involved the "subjection of the imaginative, or higher, to the sensuous, or lower, element of flower beauty".[36] Since they were not individuated and had little staying power, bedding-plants could not be regarded as "old friends on whose coming we can rely, and who, returning with the recurring season, bring back with them, pleasant memories of past years".[37] As Mrs. Oliphant suggests in one of her fictional garden descriptions in Miss Marjoribanks, they were merely "tenants-at-will", whereas the old perennials always looked thoroughly "at home" (p. 188). And being at home, probably in long established herbaceous borders, "friendly perennials", as E.M. Braddon pointed out in A Lost Eden (1904) "ask so little of the gardener" (p. 74). Bedding annuals always asked so much.

Plants consensually defined as "old" and "traditional" acquired felicitous significations for other reasons. Imaginative writers and those with little taste for "modern" gardens, considered exotics and bedders to be more artificial than the plants they threatened to displace. Though very few Victorians argued that a garden should pretend to be an unworked patch of raw nature, many believed that mid-century horticultural practices abused the principle of necessary artifice. As a term of derogation, "artificial" was applied both to the physical disposition of plants and to their mode of cultivation. The detractors of carpet-bedding condemned what they saw as the over-regulation and "unnatural" patterning of plant materials. Robinson dubbed it "barren geometry"; one of his allies called it "horticultural tailordom".[38] Shirley Hibberd, who perceived in the glaring colours and mechanical designs of bedding displays (some took the

shape of wheels and the like) a visual echo if not a symbolic inflection of the industrial practices by which they were supported, likened them to "manufactories" and to "the blazing fire at the mouth of a coal-pit".[39] He might almost have been thinking of the garish townscape of Dickens's Coketown in Hard Times, and of Gradgrind's own unnatural flower-garden where mathematical regularity rules the "lawns and garden and an infant avenue" (p. 10).

"Artificial" was applied also to plants "forced" by hot-house cultivation, and by the "improving" practices of florists and scientifically-minded horticulturalists.

Though pampered exotics figure prominently in conservatory scenes in Victorian fiction - where they add considerably to the atmosphere of fairy-tale other-worldliness - the strain of the hot-house imagery in Victorian literature is decidedly unflattering. Grown by force, exotics signify the false. In George Gissing's novels, hot-house plants invariably suggest some form of artificiality or false display. Paula Tyrell in Thyrza "looked the most exquisite of conservatory flowers". By way of clarification, the narrator tells us that she was "entirely ... a child of luxury and frivolous concern. Exquisite as an artistic product of Society, she affected the imagination not so much by her personal charm as through the perfume of luxury which breathed about her" (p. 133). In Demos (1886), Adela Waltham's "strange new emotion, the beginning of a self-conscious zeal" for Richard Mutimer's socialist ideas, is "an enthusiasm forced into being like a hothouse flower" (p. 187), and so destined to early atrophy. And in A Life's Morning, we find the following lines in the passage treating of Emily Hood's devotions at the grave of her parents: "Close at hand was a grave on which friends placed hot-house flowers, sheltering them beneath glass. Emily had no desire to express her mourning in that way; the flower of her love was planted where it would not die" (p. 265). Swinburne uses forcing-house imagery in an essay in which he praises two

of D.G. Rossetti's lyrics, Troy Town and Eden Bower. "There is", he writes, "a strength and breadth of style about these poems also which ennobles their sweetness and brightness, giving them a perfume that savours of no hotbed, but of hill flowers that face the sea and sunrise; a colour that grows in no greenhouse, but such as comes with morning upon the mountains".[40] The point of the comparison, to oppose and privilege the genuine article to the product of pampered artifice, appears also in Charlotte Brönte's The Professor (1857) when William Crimsworth declares to Hunsden that the sweetness of Frances "my little wild strawberry ... made me careless of your hot-house grapes" (p. 313).

If only obliquely, the pejoratative significations of hot-house flowers imply a negative view of forcing-house cultivation, which are not hard to square with Ruskin's more explicit protestations against the deleterious practice of pampering to improve. In Modern Painters III (1856) he wrote:

> The exalted or seemingly improved condition, whether of plant or animal, induced by human interference, is not the true and artistical idea of it. It has been well shown by Dr. Herbert that many plants are found alone on a certain soil or subsoil in a wild state, not because such soil is favourable to them, but because they alone are capable of existing on it, and because all dangerous rivals are by its inhospitality removed. Now if we withdraw the plant from the position, which it hardly endures, and supply it with earth, and maintain about it the temperature, that it delights in; withdrawing from it, at the same time, all rivals, which, in such conditions, nature should have thrust upon it, we shall indeed obtain a magnificently developed example of the plant, colossal in size and splendid in organization; but we shall utterly lose in it that moral ideal which is dependent on its right fulfilment of its appointed functions.[41]

Ruskin detested hot-houses (he once described the Crystal Palace as a "cucumber frame"[42]) and vilified "the vile and gluttinous modern habit of forcing".[43] But he also believed that plants could be unnaturally overdeveloped even under seemingly more natural conditions. In one of his earliest published articles he wrote:

> A flower-garden is an ugly thing, even when best managed: it is an assembly of unfortunate beings,

> pampered and bloated above their natural size, starved and heated into diseased growth; corrupted by evil communication into speckled and inharmonious colours ...[44]

William Morris also had a good deal to say about the "over-artificiality" of florists's flowers, and he was especially dismissive of plants "which are curiosities only, which Nature meant to be grotesque, not beautiful, and which are generally the growth of hot countries, where things grow over quick and rank".[45] He argued that they should be confined - or consigned - to botanical gardens. Morris was vituperative on the subject of carpet-bedding (he called it "an aberration of the human mind"[46]) and, as Paul Meire rightly says, "was appalled by everything he called 'horticulture' between inverted commas, either Romantic or baroque, shrubberies and rockeries".[47]

For both Ruskin and Morris, the mindless pursuit of floricultural novelties was of more than local significance. Both writers construed it as an index of cultural degeneration under the conditions of industrial capitalism. In the second volume of Modern Painters (1846) Ruskin remarked that "we see every day the power of general taste destroyed ... by the vain straining of curiosity for new forms such as nature never intended" as in "the delight of horticulturalists in the spoiling of plants".[48] Morris regarded the commercial florist's "way of dealing with flowers" as an apt illustration of that change without thought of beauty, change for the sake of change, which has played such a great part in the degradation of art in all times".[49]

Like Jefferies, who opened Amaryllis at the Fair with a lament for the old roses, which for him had quite different significations from modern varieties, Morris illustrated his case against the florists by charting the declining fortunes of the rose. In so doing, he joined the chorus of a small band of contemporary rosarians who, as Jack Harness points out, "protested against the wholesale neglect of the old roses",

while the Victorian "world in general ... looked upon the roses of former days as experiments discarded in the search for progress".[50]

Does Harness's assertion hold true of other "old plants"? Did the Victorian "world in general" privilege the significations of newer and "improved" plant species? The answers we get to these questions depend partly upon the texts we consult. There are at least two good reasons for drawing heavily upon the "evidence" of literary texts. First, the majority of (at least) mid-Victorian novelists inhabited substantially the same cultural community as their readers; hence, fiction offers access to the dominant floral codes of the age, though it also challenges some of them. Second, the evidence of imaginative literature provides a valuable corrective to the vulgar version of Victorian garden history - promulgated initially by opponents of the bedding system - according to which bedders monopolised Victorian flower gardens until finally eschewed rather late in the century in favour of (i) more "natural" uses of plant materials, and (ii) modestly formal gardens constructed with old-fashioned models in mind.

Some old-favourites may have been marginalised by bedders and exotics in the middle decades of the century. But their prominence in imaginative literature quite clearly indicates that the positive significations of old-fashioned plants were maintained and even enhanced. Even at the height of their popularity, bedders failed to attract the wealth of felicitous associations evoked by such plant names as sunflower and hollyhock. The Floral World of March 1862 illuminatingly revealed that "Annuals are grown everywhere, and almost everywhere condemned. They are variously pronounced 'trashy', 'flimsy', 'unsatisfactory', and 'not worthy of a place in my garden'. But the condemnation is never pronounced till some time in July, when most of the popular kinds of hardy annuals go out of bloom".[51] This ambivalence is registered in virtually every issue of The Floral World in the 1860s. Readers were apprised of the latest developments in bedding

plant cultivation; at the same time, they were urged not to be carried away by them.

That Shirley Hibberd (editor of The Floral World) should have blown hot and cold is significant and not altogether surprising. He knew that many of his readers enjoyed a great splash of colourful bedders, and that they relished also their connotations of progress, fashion-consciousness, and middle-class respectability. And at least one part of him was committed to floricultural innovations - hence, for example, his enthusiasm at the introduction of "strikingly coloured foliage" bedders.[52] Hibberd also sensed that for a growing number of contemporaries, bedding displays spoke too loudly of mid-century complacency, vulgarity, and mis-directed energy.

In the last thirty years of the century, Hibberd's circumspect admonitions escalated to the unrestrained denunciations of William Robinson and a host of less famous garden writers who fulminated hyperbolically and sometimes histrionically against what they perceived as the "tyranny" of the bedding system. The war against the bedders was accompanied by an upsurge of interest in, and respect for, old-fashioned "cottage" plants, and more natural and less sophisticated uses of plant materials. The impetus came, as I have already noted, from various pressure groups: from gardeners associated with the so-called "Queen Anne" movement of architecture and design; from the advocates of the "wild" garden; from the followers of the Arts and Crafts movement; from the painters, photographers, and "Old England" worshippers who went in search of cottage scenes and other representative bits of the rural past; from culture critics, like Ruskin and Morris; and from poetic and fictional models of old-fashioned gardens, including Corisande's garden in Disraeli's Lothair, which acquired an almost mythological status in the 1870s and 1880s.

The renewed reverence for old-fashioned flowers can be explained in two ways. The more obvious explanation is that many later Victorians, particularly among the upper middle-classes, attempted to distance themselves from the ugliness of the present - epitomised by the meretricious

glare of bedding-displays - by resurrecting the beautifully simple symbols of the pre-industrial past. The less obvious and more radical explanation is that the canonisation of "cottage" garden plants was motivated by the perceived need to shore up, revitalise and purify the imaginatively bankrupt floral culture of the Philistine bourgeoisie.[53] The "thinking" ran like this: though economically hegemonic, the middle-classes were culturally impoverished - as their monomania for the imaginatively sterile and crassly ostentatious bedding system clearly showed. Their cultural refurbishment could come about only through the assimilation and appropriation of vital elements from the apparently untainted and flourishing floral cultures of the "junior" or tradition-bearing classes: from the old-fashioned gardens of genuine rural labourers and farmers, from the gardens of more genteel cottagers and, where they survived in pockets, from the Corisande-type gardens of the gentry and the aristocracy.

Although this Arnoldian project was never explicitly formulated, the sheer volume of anti-bedding literature of a scourging and reformatory kind is itself enough to suggest that the inadequacies of the bedding system were conceived in cultural as well as in horticultural terms. As its shrewder critics hinted, the quick turnover of huge quantities of plant materials, produced under what amounted to factory conditions, too clearly betrayed the material preoccupations of its principal subscribers. One anonymous writer candidly confessed that "Few gardeners cultivate the plants they like" because "they are obliged to conform to horticulture de convenance, as their customers are compelled to make marriages de convenance".[54] Commercial imperatives, he suggested, were responsible for the production of "bedding-out stuff by the train-load and the milliard". In an article extolling the virtues of old-fashioned gardening, Margaret A. Paul declared that "the brilliant piece of mosaic work called a flower-garden ... is as much an appendage of state as powdered footmen or stables filled with sleek and pampered horses".[55]

That most of the critics of bedding out advocated more "natural" uses of plant materials and cottage garden models, suggests that their ultimate objective was the cultural refinement of the privileged classes. For one of the great merits of the old-fashioned cottage garden was that it appeared to speak more of natural wealth than of material wealth. Similarly, in the so-called "wild garden", and in the modestly formal old-fashioned garden, the connection between these two forms of wealth was suggested rather than trumpeted.

At the level of signification, the struggle to confer status upon more "natural" uses of plant materials took the form of giving fresh accents to old labels. In mid-century, "trim" was frequently applied as a term of commendation to bedding arrangements and to other highly regulated uses of flowers. In The Wild Garden, Robinson gave "trim" a pejorative twist; many other garden writers followed suit, though some re-directed it to formal gardens with clipped yews and tidy walks.

While "trim" became a more dubious term of praise, "wild" and "weeds" were positively reappraised. Having averred that "hap-hazard" flower-beds are "more picturesque" than regular and uniform ones, a contributor to The Cornhill wrote:

> I am not sure that if I were allowed to have my own way, I should not rather encourage a style of natural wildness. Often the fairest and sweetest things come up by chance. I have, indeed, a sort of partiality for what the gardener calls "weeds". It is not easy, indeed, to determine the exact point at which the domain of "weeds" ends and that of "flowers" commences. My gardener not only calls, but treats as weeds what I regard as very beautiful flowers.[56]

"Weeds" and (comparatively) wild gardens had plenty of champions in the latter decades of the century. George Meredith appears to have been one. His novels suggest that he had very little affection for the more conventional and respectable garden flowers. His predilections were for wild flowers and "weeds". His sympathetically presented characters identify imaginatively with such plants. Mrs. Fleming violates conventions of

context by bringing poppies into her garden; to her neighbours this love of "weeds" is a sure sign of moral perversity. Clara Middleton in The Egoist (1879) values more highly the bouquet of wild flowers presented to her by the young Crossjay than the "oppressive load" of Sir Willoughby's formal flower garden. The titular heroine of Diana of the Crossways (1885) tells Mr. Dacier that she is

> "reluctant to take the life of flowers for a whim. Wild flowers, I mean. I am not sentimental about garden flowers: they are cultivated for decoration, grown for clipping".
> "I suppose they don't carry the same signification", said Dacier ...
> "They carry no feeling", said she. (p. 153)

The speaker in the long poem Love in the Valley (1883) expresses an almost identical sentiment:

> Prim little scholars are the flowers of her garden,
> Trained to stand in rows, and asking if they please.
> I might love them but for loving more the wild ones.[57]

And in a poem entitled The Wild Rose, Meredith leaves little doubt that he prefers the "superbly shy" wild rose to the roses of the garden - "Her queenly sisters enthroned by art".[58]

At the level of signification, the struggle to canonise modest and traditional "cottage" flowers involved the simplification and demystification of plant names. One of the chief reasons Ruskin produced Proserpina was to reform the nomenclature of plants, or, what he called "the vulgar and ugly mysteries of the so-called science of botany".[59] Robinson and his followers argued that English plant names were more democratic and infinitely less pretentious than Latin ones.[60] Some garden writers were evidently alarmed at the thought that the names ofmany of the old favourites were unfamiliar to the bedding generation. In 1873, an anonymous garden enthusiast wrote:

> Fifty years ago the pleasaunce of a small country house was never without colour and sweet scents from January to December. To the children of the present day such a poem as Mrs. Sigourney's "Flora's Party" is simply unintelligible. She only makes mention of one annual,

> and does not even include Geraniums in her invitation. It would not be easy to form a personal attachment to an annual.[61]

This last remark recalls Miss Mitford's contention that "One is never thoroughly sociable with flowers till they are naturalised as it were, christened, provided with decent, homely, well-wearing English names". She claimed to be distressed by the "heathenish appellations" of the "true connoiseur".[62]

The belief that esoteric nomenclature had the effect of alienating the gardener from what ought to have been the objects of his affection, appears to have weighed heavily upon later champions of old-fashioned flowers. They may also have sensed that the special languages spawned by various categories of middle-class flower cultivators were deleterious to their interests of achieving cultural hegemony in the horticultural sphere. Since arcane codes were generally inaccessible to all but a socially and educationally advantaged minority, they were socially divisive, and militated against the formation of a truly common flower culture spearheaded by a truly responsible and sympathetic middle-class.

Whether or not the campaigners for a democratic nomenclature were ideologically motivated, they certainly recognised that there was a linguistic rift between the esoteric and "unpronounceable" names of "gardeners's" plants, and the exoteric and familiar names of the "poor man's" or amateur's plants. Narrowcast plant codes may have developed as an inevitable concomitant of a predominantly scientific interest in plants; they may have been generated as a means of regulating "access" to the social classes they came to identify. They undoubtedly had the effect of excluding the educationally disadvantaged.[63] This was evident, for example, at the height of the fern craze in the mid 1850s. The significations of ferns themselves were multifarious, ambivalent, and context-dependent, connoting everything from rococo elegance to romantic melancholy, salubrity and natural freshness to moral fervour and kill-joy sobriety. (Mr. Slope's

"strongest worldly passion was for ferns".[64]) But the taxonomic codes of the pteridomaniacs were univocally cabalistic. The young heroine of Heartsease is made acutely conscious of her ignorance and humble origins when she is proferred a "beautifully illustrated magazine of horticulture - whilst the other [upper-class] ladies talked about the fernery, in scientific terms, that sounded like an unknown tongue" (p. 32). In Glaucus (1855), Charles Kingsley wrote:

> Your daughters, perhaps, have been seized with the prevailing "Pteriodomania", and are collecting and buying ferns, with Ward's cases wherein to keep them ... and are wrangling over unpronounceable names of species (which seem to be different in each new fern-book they buy), till the Pteriodomania seems to be somewhat of a bore. (p. 4)

The mid-century fern specialists were but one of a host of Victorian sub-collectivities differentiated partly in terms of their floral allegiances. Various sub-cultural groups and movements appropriated particular flowers as badges of identity. The Pre-Raphaelites and Aesthetes were identified by their reverence for sunflowers and lilies (and the tall madonna lily in particular); Girouard suggests that they may have been chosen to symbolise physical love and spiritual love respectively.[65] Other plants played a significant part in signifying differences between socio-spatial groups. In the later decades of the century, the rhododendron and other foreign shrubs were much in evidence in suburban villa gardens; for Richard Jefferies and others they were emblematic of sudden riches.[66] Other shrubs and trees served to symbolise status gradations within suburbia. In London suburbs, as Gissing well knew, plane trees and horse chestnuts were among the indexical and symbolic signifiers of the really well-to-do; limes, laburnums and acacias signified suburban residents of middle-incomes; the absence of trees denoted wage-earners.[67]

Finally, mention must be made of the ideologically motivated functions of floral codes and discourses within the Victorian cultural context. This is a big and important subject; here, some remarks of a general

nature will have to suffice.

Contrary to popular belief, flower power was not an invention of the Hippy youth cult movement of the 1960s. Many Victorians were convinced that flowers had the power to influence almost every area of human life, and many sought to extend this influence. What these mainly educated, middle-class writers emphasised was the "innocence" of flowers and so of the activities connected with them. But some of the uses to which they wanted flowers to be put, and the more covert functions of Victorian floral ideology, were anything but politically innocent. Though the advocates of flower power sought to purify and humanise the values of the dominant classes, they rarely sought to challenge them. Quite the reverse. Consider, for example, the ultimate target audience that countless garden writers had in mind when they spoke of the value of fostering an interest in flower cultivation. An anonymous contributor to The Gardener's Chronicle of 1861 left no doubts: "It is certainly most desirable to cultivate a taste for flowers among the working classes".[68] He didn't supply his reasons, though he almost certainly assumed that flower cultivation would keep working people from the brutalising influence of the ale-house and/or divert their minds and energies from politically "dangerous" activities. In an article entitled "The Influence of Flowers", an anonymous contributor to The Saturday Magazine declared that the principal advantage "derived from a fondness for this pursuit" (flower growing) is that "it attaches men to their homes; and on this account every encouragement should be given to increase a taste for gardening, in general, in country towns and villages".[69] He argued also that flower cultivation "promotes civilization, and softens the manners and tempers of men".[70] Whatever the conscious intentions of this writer, his (or her) article reads suspiciously like a contribution towards the maintenance of the status quo by means of the production of consent for middle-class values. This deliberate or unwitting propaganda is still more apparent in texts

directed specifically at working-class city dwellers. As Robert Harling has noted, "Touching anecdotes of the love of the lower orders for their flower-boxes were recorded in the introduction to manuals for city gardeners". He cites a certain Mrs. Catherine Buckton, a "typical Victorian horticulturalist" who "spent considerable time in inculcating this love of flowers into the youth of Leeds. She delivered innumerable lectures and produced a handbook on the subject".[71] One of the many stories she recorded concerned a young working-class boy who struggled to rear a plant, but which died despite all his care. He was not despondent "Because, you see mother, our neighbours have bought plants since they have seen mine". Harling comments, rather generously perhaps, that "Mrs. Buckton was probably unaware that such tales were of the greatest possible aid to the industrialists in the great unspoken crusade to make millions of slum dwellers contented with their lowly lot in life".[72]

Less specific, probably less conscious, but far more pervasive in their effects, were the ideologically inflected modes of flower-oriented discourse specifically concerned with women. Through texts proclaiming their fondness for, association with, and equivalence to, flowers, the decorative and domestic functions of women were persistently naturalised. Victorian garden literature bristles with linguistic sexism and sexist distinctions. The following comments from Henry Burgess's The Amateur Gardener's year-book (1854) are fairly representative:

> The retiring habits of ladies make them turn to flowers with an almost instinctive love, and dispose them to fill up their spare moments in tending and training these ornaments of their homes.[73]

Though men may appreciate flowers, he says, "female taste is more pure". The "gentleman amateur is more attracted to novelty ... but the lady will find pleasure in attending to old favourites". He adds: "the gentler sex is more easily pleased, and less easily discouraged by the results of garden operations".[74]

Books specifically directed at women gardeners, and articles dealing

exclusively with women and flowers, were by no means uncommon. William Robinson himself produced a piece entitled "Ladies' Flowers" which opened with the following remark: "Ladies' Flowers! The name sounds odd. Surely all flowers have hitherto been beloved of ladies".[75]

In Victorian imaginative literature, women are frequently presented in the company of flowers in such a way as to heighten their femininity, and in terms suggesting a metaphoric exchange value between human and vegetable forms. Like the plants they lovingly tend, "ladies" are "naturally" delicate, ornamental, wholesome, pure, and submissive, performing for their husbands and lovers the same debrutalising and refining services which flowers perform for people in general. Explicit comparisons between women and flowers are not uncommon. Rachel Anderson cites Rhoda Broughton's "shamelessly sentimental" use of the metaphor of the rose to describe the heroine of Red as a Rose is She (1870). Having described a pot "brimming over" with freshly plucked roses, the narrator says:

> But the freshest, the sweetest, the largest of the roses is not in the beanpot with the others; it is on a chair by itself; there are no dew-tears on its cheek, it has no prickles and its name is Esther.[76]

In Charles Reade's It is Never Too Late to Mend (1856) the narrator sketches one of the "little garden scenes" enacted by George Fielding and his sweetheart, Susan Merton, before George is compelled to seek his fortune in Australia. Susan presents the poor farmer with a marigold, which she despises for its gaudiness, and subsequently a "lovely clove-pink" which she has carefully nurtured. Though he admits to being "not so deep in flowers" as Susan, George professes a preference for the pink. He moralises as follows:

> I see flowers that are pretty, but have no smell, and I see women that have good looks, but no great wisdom or goodness when you come nearer to them. Now the marigold is like those lasses, but the pink is good as well as pretty, so then it will stand for you, when we are apart ... (p. 67)

Gender construction, sexual politics and flower imagery are more than

usually interlinked in a major mid-century poem that specifically addresses the "woman question": Tennyson's The Princess. In the story of the poem's inner frame, the metaphor of woman as flower is advanced as an enlightened alternative to the reactionary metaphor of woman as "game", and a moderate alternative to the extreme feminist position. Though the shrieking sisters of the poem (Lilia in the Prologue , Ida in the tale) are given ample opportunity to present their case for separatist development and the abolition of marriage as an institution, they are up against the gender definitions imposed upon them by the dominant (male) discourse of the poem that codifies dichotomous female types in floral terms. These prove more difficult to resist than the blatantly sexist image of woman as game.

This is evident even in the Prologue. Lilia, the spirited modern girl, speaks about women's rights and wrongs, and fulminates against men and the "conventions" that "beat" women "down". She can deal with because she recognises the overtly patronising gestures of her father, Sir Walter, as she demonstrates when she "shook aside/The hand that played the patron with her curls" (Poems, p. 747). But she has also to struggle against the voice of the male narrator that gives her access and defines her as "A rosebud set with little wilful thorns" and as a "little hearth-flower" (p. 748). Even the connotations of her name run counter to her ideal self-concept.

The female characters of the story she inspires are similarly fixed into subject positions by the floral metaphors of a man-made code. Having internalised that code, or lacking a language uncontaminated by its sexual ideology, even the feminists of the story unwittingly reproduce it. Lady Psyche (admittedly the most "feminine" of Ida's satellites) calls her baby girl, Aglaia, "my flower" and "my little blossom" (p. 803). When Ida addresses her a "Pretty bud!/Lilly of the vale" (p. 823) she unconsciously echoes the Prince's description of her as "The lily-shining child" (p. 793). Lady Blanche's daughter, Melissa, combines the innocent passivity of one

female type with the beauty and potential passion of the other: hence she is at one time both "lilylike", "rosy blonde" and "clad like an April daffodily" (p. 768). The male narrator describes the students who packed the long hall of the Women's College as "beauties" who "glittered like a bed of flowers" (p. 771).

Ida herself is assailed with floral metaphors from her male admirers. Cyril informs her that the Prince worships her as his "one rose in all the world" (p. 760) - though she has decked a white robe to signal her repudiation of the sexual stereotype implied by the image of the red rose. Her brother, the semi-articulate Arac, labels her "the flower of womankind" (p. 809). Donald S. Hair says of this image that it "sums up ... the pattern of growth and development which produce this flower, this essence toward which change has been directing its energies".[77] Yet Ida herself explicitly rejects the model of unbroken, fixed and predetermined development implied by the flower image. At the height of her feminist convictions, she insists upon a necessary rupture between childhood and womanhood. Gerard Joseph, whose reading runs smoothly with the grain of the poem's preferred meaning, says that Ida's desire "to lose the child, assume the woman" is "immature".[78] From a feminist position, however, Ida's ambition is born of a perception to which she is later blinded by her capitulation to the role of wife, mother and moral guide: the perception that the bud-into-flower image of gradual and continous growth serves to make unthinkable the idea of radical, self-determining change.[79]

In a great many Victorian imaginative texts, the sustained identification of women with flowers is a principal means by which female characters are constructed and defined. A particularly good example is Browning's presentation of the Duchess in Colombe's Birthday (1853). As Park Honan has pointed out, Colombe is associated with flowers almost from her first appearance, and the flower imagery gathers increasingly intense and complex meanings as the play unfolds.[80]

The deployment of flower imagery in Victorian imaginative literature has also to be understood as a technique either for complying with or for circumventing the taboo on the overt acknowledgement of female sexuality. The sexual ideology of the Victorian middle classes demanded sexual restraint, especially in imaginative literature produced for family consumption. One novelist who was highly conscious of, and probably constrained by, "respectable" notions of the permissible was George Meredith. As a consequence, Meredith drew heavily upon flower symbols and other natural images to allude tactfully to the physical desires of women and to sexual relations generally. Consider, for instance, the much-discussed scene in The Egoist in which Clara Middleton peers down at Vernon Whitford stretched out under the double-blossom cherry tree.

> ... still with a bent head, she turned her face to where the load of virginal blossom ... showered and drooped and clustered as thick as to claim colour ... From deep to deeper heavens of white, her eyes perched and soared. Wonder lived in her. Happiness in the beauty of the tree pressed to supplant it, and was more mortal and narrower. Reflection came, contracting her vision and weighing her to earth. Her reflection was: "He must be good who loves to lie and sleep beneath the branches of this tree". She would rather have clung to her first impression; wonder so divine, so unbounded ... but the thought of it was no recovery of it; she might as well have striven to be a child. (I, 135)

Clara's moment of irrepressible sexual awakening is clinched when Vernon peers up and they are fleetingly locked in a sexual embrace naturalised, as it were, by the "dazzling blossom" that "circled" Clara's head (I, 136). Meredith hints more strongly at the physical nature of women than most of his contemporaries. Imaginative writers in general either denied the existence of female sexuality or sanitised it by displacement into symbolic representations. The point can be illustrated with reference to the symbol of the rose.

Though the rose has multiple significations, three are outstanding: beauty, transience and sexual passion. In most of the enormous number of Victorian poems in which the rose is symbolic of glorious but transitory female beauty, sexual connotations are conspicuously suppressed. A thoroughly typical example is The Gardener's Daughter by W.C. Bennett, which appeared with no fewer than four other "Rose" poems in the same volume of The Quiver (12, 1877). As in so many similar verses, the starting point of Bennett's poem is the identity-conflating homophonic coupling "rose"/"Rose". Here are the first two stanzas:

> Rose among roses sweet,
> Flower fresh and fair
> As any bloom you meet
> Clasped in June air;
> Fitly your beauty's flush
> To many summer shows
> Blush fair to fairest blush,
> Rose sweet to rose.
>
> Ah, as with soft gloved hand
> You pluck each flower,
> Think how old Time's quick sand
> Flows, hour on hour;
> Roses bloom, roses pass,
> Pity 'tis true!
> So, through time's wasteful glass
> Speed your hours too.[81]

For the few writers prepared to confront the sexuality of women, the rose afforded a fairly blatant but permissible symbol of the explicitly unspeakable. The floral opposition or pairing of white lily (for purity) and red rose (for passion) is recurrent in the poetry of Tennyson. It occurs in The Princess, is prominent in Maud (1855), and figures at its most emblematically patterned in a momentous scene in the idyll of Balin and Balan (1872-73), involving a chance encounter between Lancelot and Guinevere in an enclosed Camelot garden. The garden has a "walk of roses" "crost" by a "walk of lilies" (Poems, p. 1583). As J.B. Steane says, "Lancelot implicitly asserts his will to chastity"[82] by taking the walk of lilies, and by disclosing his vision of a "maiden Saint" who stood "with lily in hand". By contrast, Guinevere chooses the "range of roses",

and declares her preference for the "garden rose/Deep-hued and many-folded" (p. 1583). As a contemporary reviewer was quick to point out, the rose "is a fitting emblem of the voluptuous, passionate Queen."[83]

Hardy was less reticent even than Tennyson when it came to releasing the sexual connotations of the rose. As Rosalind Miles points out, "Hardy's deeply senuous response to his female characters shows ... in his fondness for bathing his admired women in shades of red and pink".[84] "Tess, as she epitomises the peak of Hardy's flower comparison device, is also the quintessence of Hardyesque rosy glow".[85] Early in Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1891) she appears as "a rosy warming apparition" with "roses in her breast; roses in her hat; roses and strawberries in her basket to the brim" (p. 67). More than once we are told of her "flower-like" mouth and her "deep red lips".

As for liking flowers, there is scarcely a romantic heroine who does not express in word or deed or both a passionate fondness for flowers. Indeed, flowers are one of the very few things for which the conventional heroine of mid-century fiction is expected to feel passion, as opposed to mere affection. This is not to say that less conventional heroines are immune to the passion. Kate Chester, described by R.C. Terry as "the first in a line of [Rhoda Broughton's] self-willed heroines whose passionate nature gets them into trouble"[86] is, we are told in Not Wisely, but Too Well (1884), a "ripe" woman with none of "the emaciated prettiness of young ladies" (p. 107). Yet she also confesses to her lover, Dale Stamer, that " flowers are one of the very few weak points in my character " (p. 107). Even feminists, like Rhoda Nunn in Gissing's The Odd Women, are pervious to the charms of flowers. Of her Chelsea apartment we are told that "the numerous bunches of cut flowers, which agreeably scented the air, seemed to prove the student a woman" (p. 30).

In some way or other, the flower-loving heroine is usually rewarded for her floral devotions. It may heighten her feminine attractions in

the eyes of a suitor: this is the effect that Henrietta Temple's love of plants has upon Ferdinand Armine.[87] It may bring her compliments of a more direct kind - as Disraeli's Sybil discovers when she is visited by a group of noble women who congratulate her upon her floral pursuits.[88] It may even bring her tangible material benefits. Miss Pawker, one of the young women in M.E. Braddon's Just as I am (1880), is employed as a lady's companion largely on the strength of her professed fondness for flowers .[89] That women especially are susceptible to the influence of flowers is the supposition upon which the belles lettristic "hero" of The Aspern Papers devises his strategy for beguiling the Misses Bordereau into permitting him access to the "sacred relics" of his literary idol. With fin de siecle exuberance he declares:

> "I cling to the fond fancy that by flowers I should make my way - I should succeed by nosegays. I would batter the old woman with lilies - I would bombard the citadel with roses. Their door would have to yield to the pressure when a mound of fragrance should be heaped upon it". (p. 153)

His possibly disingenuous confession to Miss Tina - "It's absurd, if you like, for a man, but I can't live without flowers" (p. 138) - makes explicit an assumption almost ubiquitous in Victorian literature: that it is women, not men, who have a natural and priviledged affinity with flowers.

The point is reinforced in a myriad of ways. Authorial comments draw attention to it, as when Hardy in Far From the Madding Crowd (1874) has this to say regarding Bathsheba's attempts to repair the damage done to Fanny's grave by the water-spouting gurgoyle: "Bathsheba collected the flowers, and began planting them with that sympathetic manipulation of roots and leaves which is so conspicuous in a woman's gardening, and which flowers seem to understand and thrive upon (p. 346). And then there is the satisfaction that heroines derive from tending their plants - or simply from knowing what they are called. The speaker in Browning's The Flower's Name (1844) recalls the occasion when the "she" of the poem "Stooped over" a flower and, "with pride to make no slip" gave him "It s soft meandering

Spanish name".[90]

But these examples seem small fry when compared to those fictional heroines whose minds have been thoroughly colonised by flower and garden consciousness. One such heroine is the titular protagonist of a generically indescribable piece by Thomas Hood entitled Mrs. Gardiner (1843).[91] Though nominally a story (its subtitle is "A Horticultural Romance") Mrs. Gardiner is a comic, seam-prominent, digressionary sketch of an apparently eccentric suburban housewife who breathes, thinks and speaks in floricultural terms. Hood introduces her to his "Gentle Readers" as "a woman after your own hearts - for she is a Gardiner by name and a Gardiner by nature".[92] Her peculiarity is that she

> speaks the true "Language of Flowers", not using their buds and blossoms as symbols of her own passions and sentiments, according to the Greek fashion, but lending words to the wants and affections of her plants. Thus, when she says that she is "dreadful dry, and longs for a good soaking", it refers not to a defect of moisture in her own clay, but to the parched condition of the soil in her parterres: or if she wishes for a regular smoking, it is not from any unfeminine partiality to tobacco, but on behalf of her blighted geraniums.... In a similar style she delivered herself as to certain other subjects of the rivalry that is universal amongst the suburban votaries of Flora: converting common blowing and growing substantives into horticultural verbs, as thus:
>
> "Miss Sharp crocussed before me, - but I snow-dropped sooner than any one in the Row".
>
> But this identification of herself with the objects of her love was not confined to her plants. It extended to every thing that was connected with her hobby - her garden implements, her garden-rails, and her garden-wall.[93]

Preposterous and idiosyncratic as she may seem to be, Mrs. Gardiner is in fact neither an oddity nor a "phantom". Anticipating cries of incredulity from his readers, Hood insists that she is "real" and "substantial" - that she may be seen "any day ... employed in her horticultural and floricultural pursuits".[94] In other words, Hood asks his readers to believe that Mrs. Gardiner is an exaggerated portrait of an early Victorian type: a suburban housewife of "limited ways and means"[95] for whom gardening is not just an all-absorbing occupation but the only reality

her language mediates or constructs. This permeation of the individual (female) consciousness is, or so Hood implies, a logical development or concomitant of the process by which horticultural interests have diffused the social hierarchy. It is notable, however, that while Mrs. Gardiner opens with an extensive catalogue of garden-lovers of both sexes, it is a comic but nonetheless representative woman who exemplifies the most complete internalisation of the gardening experience.

Between Mrs. Gardiner and The Portrait of a Lady there are 38 years and at least as many technical and theoretical dissimilarities. Even so, James's Isabel Archer does have one thing in common with Mrs. Gardiner: the tendency to experience the world and the self in garden terms. True, she is not besotted with the actual practice of horticulture, and her public speech is not habitually spiced with horticultural locutions. But as many critics have observed, James not only manoeuvres his heroine into garden settings, but also attempts to render the diastolic-systolic rhythms of her consciousness by means of spatial metaphors in general and by the symbol of the garden in particular.[96] Moreover, the imagery by which the contractions and dilations of Isabel's mental life are mapped is justified by Isabel's psychological disposition.

> Her nature had, in her conceit, a certain garden-like quality, a suggestion of perfume and murmuring boughs, of shady bowers and lengthening vistas, which made her feel that introspection was, after all, an exercise in the open air, and that a visit to the recesses of one's spirit was harmless when one returned from it with a lapful of roses. (pp. 53-4)

Horticultural metaphors also provide a currency for Isabel's narrated monologue, as here where she is meditating upon her husband:

> Her mind was to be his - attached to his own like a small garden-plot to a deer-park. He would rake the soil gently and water the flowers; he would weed the beds and gather an occasional nose-gay. It would be a pretty piece of property for a proprietor already far-reaching. (p. 432)

Isabel Archer is not Everywoman, and it would be crass to contend that her presentation is a simple instance of the ideological practice by which a

culture-specific image of woman is naturalised by equation with flowers and gardens. Though James appears to have had greater sympathy with traditional than with feminist conceptions of women, and though, as Patricia Stubbs asserts, he "is interested in the way his women think and feel, not in the fundamental injustice of their situation",[97] the horticultural imagery by which he characterises the experience of his heroine is motivated by aesthetic and psychological considerations rather than by "political" ones. Still, the fact remains that Isabel Archer is a female character and, as far as I know, no nineteenth century novelists writing in English persistently gardenised to any degree the consciousness of any of their major male characters. I take this to be a fact of some significance.

I remarked earlier that some Victorian commentators tended to disesteem a purely scientific interest in flowers. In practice, however, only women were actively discouraged or prevented from the serious study of what was tellingly tagged by some "promiscuous biology". As Fraser Harrison notes, "A girl was expected to love flowers and animals, but to know nothing of biology, particularly of its darker side".[98] The principal reasons for this are stated with alarming candour by a minor character in Charles Reade's A Woman-Hater (1874) - perhaps the only Victorian novel purposively to expose the iniquity of the situation. When an articulate and intelligent young woman, Miss Garrett, has the gall to apply to a university to study medicine, a high-ranking male official pontificates as follows: "Woman's sphere is the hearth and the home: to impair her delicacy is to take the bloom from the peach: she could not qualify for medicine without mastering anatomy and surgery, branches that must unsex her" (p. 150).

When Miss Garrett is finally admitted, she is not allowed to study botany with the male students. Her fellow student, the feminist Miss Gale, is struck by the absurdity as well as by the injustice of the

situation:

> we might have gathered blackberries with them in umbrageous woods, from morn to dewy night, and not a professor shocked in the whole Faculty; but we must not sit down with them to an intellectual dinner of herbs, and listen, in their company, to the pedantic terms and childish classifications of botany, in which kindred properties are ignored. Only a male student must be told publicly that a foxglove is Digitalis purpurea in the improved nomenclature of science ... (p. 155)

Not that Miss Gale has any respect for male-constructed botanical classifications: she dubs them "puerile and fanciful". It is simply that she is convinced that "the sexes will never lose either morals or delicacy through courses of botany endured together" (p. 156).

A Woman-Hater is exceptional in its interrogation of the institutional practices by which women are debarred access to scientific floral discourses. Victorian fiction in general subserves by acquiescence the myth that rationalises these practices: that is, the myth that opposes male "reason" to female "intuition" (or feeling),[99] by the logic of which women are deemed constitutionally unfitted for intellectual enquiry, and in need of protection from the harsh truths which science uncovers. By the same (il)logic, they are deemed to be blessed by nature with an instinctive love of and affinity with flowers.

Very occasionally, the dichotomy of female intuition and male intellect is foregrounded in its totality - as it is in the very title of Wilkie Collins's Heart and Science (1883). Collins's novel is virtually a counterblast to A Woman-Hater. As Robert Ashley observes, its "overall protest is against the exaltation of the head at the expense of the heart".[100] The protest is concretised in part through the characterisation of the novel's Jezebel, the Gradgrindian Mrs. Gallilee. Collins asks his readers to believe that Mrs. Gallilee has been made hard and callous by her monomania for science. One proof of this is her view of flowers. She calls them "superfluities", cares nothing for their beauty or for their powers to refresh and delight, hires a "florist's man" to arrange her house-plants,

but lights up at the thought of dissecting them. Since she is also money-minded, she appreciates their status-symbolic uses, and on one occasion spends lavishly on a "profusion of splendid flowers" (p. 143) to impress her wealthier sister. The implied unnaturalness of her "protoplastic point of view" (p. 106) is heightened by contrast with the floral interests of the gentle lawyer, Mr. Mool, who combines an enthusiasm for botany with a genuine love of flowers, and who regards dissection as "murderous mutilation" (p. 172).

Nowhere in Heart and Science is any clear indication given of the processes by which Mrs. Gallilee has acquired what the novel encodes as a perverse interest in plants. This hiatus is of more than local significance, for the sexual ideology inflected in flower imagery generally entails the suppression of those parallels between women and flowers which bear directly upon the conditions under which both are "grown". The unsaid of much flower imagery is that women of the dominant social classes resemble flowers most exactly in the way they are brought up. Like conservatory exotics, they are reared for brief but glorious, husband-attracting show in stultifying and debilitating environments. This is precisely the image used by John Stuart Mill in The Subjection of Women (1869), where he argues, in effect, that women are made into, not born, flowers. If upper-class women are frail, nervous and emotionally fraught, then it is only because "a hot-house and stove cultivation has always been carried on of some of the capabilities of their nature, for the benefit and pleasure of their masters".[101]

One of the few Victorian heroines permitted not only to recognise the subjection of women but also to articulate it in the imagery by which that subjection is typically mystified and sweetened, is George Eliot's Gwendolen Harleth in Daniel Deronda. Before she is married, Gwendolen is asked by Grandcourt whether she intends always to live at Offendene.

Gwendolen replies as follows:

> I don't know. We women can't go in search of adventure... We must stay where we grow, or where the gardeners like to transplant us. We are brought up like the flowers, to look as pretty as we can, and be dull without complaining. This is my notion about the plants: they are often bored, and that is the reason why some have got poisonous. (p. 98)

On the face of it, Gwendolen appears to harbour no illusions about her own fate. Since she is a woman, she must also be a plant: static, dependant, pretty and uncomplaining. But it is clear from her thinking at this stage in her career that she expects to avoid the fate of upper-class women in general. Her self-comparisons with plainer plants (her younger sisters), the reactions of others to her, and her showy, forcing-house school education have imbued her with a "sense that so exceptional a person as herself could hardly remain in ordinary circumstances or in a social position less than advantageous". She also feels "ready to manage her own destiny" (p.27).

It seems probable that under the pressures of the situation, Gwendolen gives utterance to what she has been programmed to accept, if not to think in the terms she does. Ironically, her scenario has greater personal application than she realises. Equipped chiefly with charm and the ability to captivate, she does indeed become, in the apt words of Hazel Mews, "a beautiful but harmful plant, misusing its powers of attraction".[102]

One of the effects that Gwendolen's speech makes possible is that of renewing the reader's attentiveness to the flower imagery used elsewhere in Daniel Deronda. For example, with reference to the Archery Meeting at Brackenshaw Park, the narrator poses the following rhetorical question: "What could make a better background for the flower-groups of ladies, moving and bowing and turning their necks as it would become the leisurely lilies to do if they took to locomotion?" (p. 72). Read from the horizon of Gwendolen's speech, this flower image invites a less automatised response and a less innocent construction than it is likely otherwise to receive.

Nonetheless, the defamiliarising force of the speech should not be overestimated. Although Gwendolen foregrounds the idea that women in her position have their destinies determined for them, there is no suggestion here that she thinks of this as anything other than natural and inevitable. The most that can be said of its estranging effects is that it draws attention to the potentially deleterious consequences of treating women as flowers. From a critical perspective, this is at least a step in the right direction, particularly since the mass of flower imagery in Victorian literature tends to beautify the plant-like destinies of women. Even a novelist as sympathetic to women as Hardy uses flower comparisons to suggest that women can expect what Rosalind Miles calls "a short life, but a gallant show".[103]

Gwendolen's speech bears interesting comparison with the following passage from Ouida's Moths (1880):

> When gardeners plant and graft, they know very well what will be the issue of their work; they do not expect the rose from a bulb or garlic, or look for the fragrant olive from a slip of briar; but the culturers of human nature are less wise, and they sow poison, yet rave in reproaches when it breeds and brings forth its like. "The rosebud garden of girls" is a favourite theme for poets, and the maiden, in her likeness to a half-opened blossom, is as near purity and sweetness as a human creature can be, yet what does the world do with its opening buds? - it thrusts them in the forcing house amidst the ordure, and then if they perish prematurely, never blames itself. The streets absorb the girls of the poor; society absorbs the daughters of the rich; and not seldom one form of prostitution, like the other, keeps its captives "bound in the dungeon of their own corruption". (p. 117)

Like Gwendolen, Ouida's narrator interrogates floral discourse and the social practices with which they are associated. In the novel as a whole she is, as Patricia Stubbs points out, overtly critical of "the marriage-market, the education and wasted lives of upper-class girls [and] the legal position of the unhappily married woman".[104] She draws a daring parallel between the commodity values of upper class and working class

girls, and shows none of Ruskin's inclination in "Of Queens' Gardens" (1865) to cloak prostitution in the sentimentality of flower language.[105] At the same time, she appears to accept without question the indentification of women with plants, and all that this implies about their moral beauty and social ductility.

Who benefits when women are raised to be as delicate and submissive as flowers? One novelist to have addressed himself to this question was Thackeray. The conclusions reached in his fiction are complex and ambivalent, but in The Newcombes at least, no one seems to gain in the long run. Lady Clara suffers an unhappy marriage after she is "sold" by her parents and "bought" with "a fine country-house with delightful gardens, and conservatories" (p. 582). And when, to the misery of everyone, Rosa Newcombe dies at the age of twenty six, the narrator comments: "So this poor little flower had bloomed for its little day, and pined, and withered, and perished" (p. 838). The tone seems fatalistic, but Thackeray's target, as the context makes clear, is the parent who exploits the flower-like meekness of a daughter for which he is in any case primarily responsible.

In Pendennis (1850) Thackeray applies the flower image to marriage itself:

> Damon has taxes, sermon, parade, tailors' bills, parliamentary duties, and the deuce knows what to think of; Delia has to think about Damon - Damon is the oak (or the post), and stands up, and Delia is the ivy or the honeysuckle whose arms twine about him. Is it not so, Delia? Is it not in your nature to creep about his feet and kiss them, to twine around his trunk and hang there; Damon's duty to stand like a British man with his hands in his breeches pocket, while the pretty fond parasite clings round him? (pp. 628-9)

Variants of the horticultural image of marriage, most inviting women to identify with the role of dependent and decorative wife, would not have been unfamiliar to Thackeray's contemporary readers. Doubtless, some would have found nothing either exceptional or exceptionable about his rhetorical enquiry. But "pretty fond parasite" seems to imply a male perspective, and hints at the ambivalence, the mixture of kudos and

resentment, which many middle-class husbands felt about supporting economically unproductive wives. At the very least, the passage from Pendennis permits the construction that status-conscious husbands are the victims as well as the victors of their own sexual politics.

Occasionally, then, Victorian imaginative writers show some awareness of, and even glance critically at, the darker implications and effects of women-flower equivalences. Much more frequently, however, they propagate these equivalences and the sexual ideology to which they are tied. Their contributions to one of the dominant sexual myths of the age can have been nothing short of massive.

7

Gardens, Landscapes, and Nature

The significance of the garden in Victorian literature has in part to be understood in terms of its relations of equivalence. Since it is generally cognate with the domestic world - the sphere of paramount interest in nineteenth-century fiction as a whole - "garden" discursively associates with words like "house", "home", "leisure" and "marriage". But its significance is explicable also and perhaps primarily in terms of its relations of opposition. Of relevance here is the structuralist postulation that meaning inheres - if it inheres at all - not in signs but in the differential relations between them. "Garden" signifies by virtue of its positions with networks of differentiated "landscape" signifiers.

I say positions rather than position because "garden" shuttles between the signifiers to which it is paradigmatically related, its meanings and connotations varying according to the ways in which it is used within different discourses. Thus in some texts it is contiguous with "nature" almost to the point of convergence; in others, it hurtles semantically from it to nestle among words denoting the world of social construction.

How can we account for these shifting relations? As a starting point we might take Robert L. Patten's observation that "Nineteenth-century authors define the ontology of Nature variously".[1] "Nature" meant different things to different writers; so, it seems reasonable to suppose, did "garden". This is part of the explanation, but only part, for if it is true to say that the Victorians as a whole had no consensual concept of nature, it is true also to say that they called upon the word "nature" to perform a variety of signifying functions. In other words, "nature" in Victorian literature is a multi-accentual and multi-discursive term, and given the complex cultural conditions of the period, this is precisely what we should expect.

The expansion of urban and industrial landscapes, and the pressures

and perplexities of city life, ensured the persistence of "nature" as a romantic honorific for the countryside and landscape scenery ascribed with the efficacious powers of refreshment, revitalisation and visual delight. In this sense, "nature" is closely related to the cult of ruralism, and to what Walter E. Houghton describes as "nostalgia for a lost world of peace and companionship, of healthy bodies and quiet minds".[2]

But "nature" was bound also to be more negatively accented by writers who found it impossible to worship nature with the enthusiasm of the Romantic poets. Matthew Arnold is a case in point. Arnold valued "gentle" landscapes, and saw in gardens, glades and dells a partial and temporary solution to certain human problems. For example, the speaker of Lines Written in Kensington Gardens finds in his "long open glade" a peaceful retreat from the social furor of the engirdling city. What he does not find, and what Arnold can never quite achieve, is what Fraser Neiman aptly calls an "enhanced sense of participation in the life of nature".[3] Of Arnold's "references to nature in the abstract", Joseph Warren Beach glosses: "Sometimes they are conventional and admiring; more often perhaps they are critical and disparaging. And throughout they are lacking in the warmth and richness that marked the romantic treatment of nature".[4] From a human standpoint, Arnold's relative certainties are generally depressing: nature's steadfastness, the theme, for instance, of The Youth of Nature and The Youth of Man,[5] reminds us only of our otherness from it; the instinctual harmony with nature possible in the joy and innocence of childhood, gives way in adulthood to estrangement, and lingers merely as a remote Wordsworthian memory of, as William A. Madden has it, "a sense of wholeness irrecoverably lost rather than preserved and transmuted in the exalted philosophic mood of Wordsworth's mature Philosopher".[6]

Two things in particular made nature worship a difficult matter for many Victorian writers. First, a lack of faith in the divinity or immanent powers of nature, coupled with a conviction of the separateness of

of man (the perceiving subject) and nature (the observed object). They did not see nature as the source of transcendant truths or, if they did, they could not normally apprehend them by an exercise of the imagination. Second, the disabling influence of Victorian science. Darwin and the earlier evolutionists seemed to suggest that nature was "red" rather than "green", competitive and antagonistic rather than co-operative and charitable. They also drew attention to the mutability and the invisible processes of nature, and not (as had the Romantics) to its grand, static and apparently timeless visible structures. Both suppositions - that nature was probably amoral, and that nature was a material world in flux - encouraged what might be called the botanical hand-book view of nature as "just a collection of discrete things, all jumbled up together, with no pattern and no hierarchy".[7]

On one hand, then, "nature" serves as a warmly accented synonym for the beneficent countryside. Generally speaking, the garden in Victorian literature is identified with the more positive qualities ascribed to the countryside, and frequently functions as a synechdoche of, or surrogate for, nature in its pastoral and generous modes. Its antitheses are the city - the negation or subjugation of nature - and the wilderness - nature in its sublime, threatening and least co-operative modes.

On the other hand, "nature" is more negatively accented when it implies a philosophic or scientific frame of reference. (There are exceptions to this generalisation, most notably in the writings of Meredith and Swinburne.) As a rule, the garden is remote from "nature" in its abstract and cheerless senses. Indeed, it seems likely that the garden appealed to Victorian writers partly because it suggested a means of evading, suspending or positively re-defining the discomforting intimations of nature conceived as purely materialistic or "red in tooth and claw". Certainly, in the majority of garden descriptions, the appetitive aspects of nature are absent, firmly under human control, or, as in some of Browning's poems and a great many cottage garden descriptions, heartening

manifestations of the earth's irrepressible exuberance and spontaneity. Moreover, gardens legitimised the botanical hand-book view of nature, and offered comfort to those who, like Arnold and Tennyson, were stuck with it. It may have been disquieting to think of nature in general as a collection of disparate things with no esemplastic force to interanimate them. But gardens could properly be regarded as special cases, since they are assemblages of plants and trees, and since their designs are imposed rather than naturally occurring. Their features can be itemised in the manner of a botanical catalogue or on the basis of organising principles that do not entail a sense of nature as "more deeply interfused". To take just one example: in Browning's The Flower's Name, the account of the garden is organised in terms of the speaker's imaginative reconstruction of the movements of a woman through it. If there is any interanimating force at work, it is the spirit not of nature but of the woman whose "dear mark" the speaker strains to make out on each of the flowers she touched.[8]

Like many other Victorian garden poems and fictional garden descriptions, The Flower's Name is not "about" nature, but about (in part) natural things in a domestic or humanised landscape. Moreover, these natural things acquire their significance not from their ontological connections with nature conceived as a material system or spiritual force, but from their associations with people, places, and experiences. This orientation betrays a set of post-Romantic convictions regarding nature and human relations with it. If nature as a whole is inscrutable and probably indifferent to human needs and interests, at least the natural objects of gardens can be known and made meaningful by their peculiar associations for particular individuals. If nature cannot be relied upon to offer spiritual sustenance and moral enlightenment, gardens at least can be friends and partners. If the analysis of nature is corrosive, direct engagement with flowers and the like delights, refreshes and cultivates the heart. (Charles Kingsley's advice was to "Feed on Nature[but] do not try to under-

stand it".[9])

These convictions surface almost everywhere in Victorian literature. They are implicit, for example, in the countless farewell-to-garden passages in fiction, each of which discloses a character's emotional investment in a garden long considered a personal friend. They come closer to the surface in the "garden" books of Alfred Austin and "Elizabeth" (E.M. Russell), in which nature, now thoroughly personified, is simply and comfortably construed as a superior kind of gardener - or "senior partner" as Austin has it. A good many fictional characters are restored to physical or spiritual health, not through their contemplation of nature in the abstract, but through their exposure to gardens and the knowable natural things they contain.

The distinction I am pressing here, between a theorised concept of nature and the concretisation of nature in complaisant particulars, informs and helps to account for the dozens of garden-as-refuge poems produced in the Victorian period. Consider two superficially similar examples: Arnold's Lines Written in Kensington Gardens, and the much anthologised A Garden Song by Austin Dobson.

The opening stanza of Arnold's poem places the speaker within a framed and finite garden landscape:

> In this lone, open glade I lie,
> Screened by deep boughs on either hand;
> And at its end, to stay the eye,
> Those black-crowned, red-boled pine-trees stand.
> (Poems, p. 269)

In the immediately succeeding stanzas, the speaker supplies an inventory of the sights and sounds which animate the scene: bird-songs, sheep-cries, "blowing daisies", "fragrant grass", a stray child or two. Because of its "endless, active life", its "peace for ever new", its clearness and freshness, the glade compares favourably with the "mountain sod", a vignette of which is the subject of stanza five. Although the speaker is an observer of rather than a participant in the life of the glade - as Alan Roper

points out, his "harmony with nature" is "modest, mundane, unmystical, unquestioning"[10] - his sympathies are with it, and its peacefulness soothes him. He is as close to knowing the things of the garden as he can get. That he nonetheless experiences a sense of alienation, a lack, is a measure of his perceived separateness from the spirit of nature - the "calm soul of all things" to which he prays in the concluding lines.

A Garden Song might crudely be described as a simplified version of Lines. What in particular makes it more simplified - and thus more typical of the garden-as-refuge poems strewn in the pages of popular Victorian magazines - is the simple opposition of peaceful garden and noisy world; "nature", the complicating third term, is conspicuous by its absence. This may seem an odd statement to make about a poem packed with the names of natural things; but consider the first stanza:

> Here, in this sequestered close,
> Bloom the hyacinth and rose;
> Here beside the modest stock
> Flaunts the flaring hollyhock;
> Here, without a pang, one sees
> Ranks, conditions, and degrees.[11]

The "sequestered" close shuts out disturbing intimations of nature - its anarchy, its amorality, its troubling mysteries - as effectively as it shuts out the distant "Sounds of toil and turmoil". The flowers of the garden, nameable and so knowable, are agreeably humanised with the epithets of an implied social code. And with equal anthropocentric assurance, the garden "text" is presented as an innocuous mirror image of the hierarchical social structure it seems at the same time almost to naturalise.[12]

The speaker's certitude - the tone of which persists throughout the poem - issues from his sense of inhabiting a known and graspable world of natural things that behave predictably and in accordance with human interests. "Here", the confident indicative, abounds: the fruits "Here will ripen and grow big;/Here is store and overplus"; "Here be shadows large and long;/Here be spaces meet for song". Even the seasons are contained and personified (they "run their race") within the walls of the enclosed

garden. And although, like Arnold's Lines, the poem ends with an invocation, it is not to the mysterious "soul of all things", but to the resident genius loci, the congenial "garden-god".[13]

So far, I have attempted to determine the significance of the garden in Victorian literature by examining its complex relations with "nature". I now wish to focus more specifically upon the garden as a landscape, since its significations have also to be understood in terms of its position within a topographical system based upon qualitative landscape distinctions.

In his essay on Ruskin and the Victorian novelists, George Levine points out that in contrast to the Romantics's predilection for heights - "the terrifying reaches of Shelley's Mont Blanc, or even of Wordsworth's Snowden" - "Victorian fiction typically lives at low altitudes". He elaborates as follows: "The literature of manners, of social order and social accommodation - the Victorian novel - found its metaphors not in wild and extreme Nature but by the glowing hearth and in the cultivated fields".[14] And"the great mythic seat of innocence is not the craggy mountain but the garden".[15] In other words, Victorian novelists "tended to place happiness in bounded human landscapes".[16] In her recent study of the language of landscape in Victorian poetry, Pauline Fletcher makes a similar division of poetic landscapes, distinguishing between "antisocial" landscapes of isolation and retreat - "the great primeval wildernesses of mountain, sea, and forest" - and "social landscapes"[17] - gardens and other landscapes expressive of commonality and social values. Though Fletcher acknowledges that "the garden is the most complex and ambiguous of all landscapes",[18] and that some gardens "are created specifically for the antisocial purposes",[19] she avers that "to a certain extent it might be said that the Victorians retreated from the mountains into the [?] garden".[20]

For Levine and Fletcher, then, gardens are prominent in Victorian

literature chiefly because they displaced nature in its wilder forms as the principal sources of poetic inspiration, and because gardens were semiotically more appropriate to the functions that literary landscapes were required to serve. There is some truth in this view; at least it is true that most Victorian writers modified, lost confidence in, or actively repudiated the attitudes towards natural scenery that they inherited. There were a number of reasons for this.

First, there was a general decline in what might be termed the touristic perspective. More accurately, there was a reluctance on the part of some socially conscious Victorians to endorse the notion of a "pure" aesthetics of landscape, a notion that could be maintained, they believed, only by those for whom the spectator was absolved of social responsibilities and moral obligations. For Ruskin, George Eliot and others, the habit of seeing nature as merely something "out there" was the penchant of the aristocratic sightseer or writer whose determination to wrest aesthetic pleasure from a Sublime or Picturesque landscape implied indifference to the misery of its human inhabitants or, at the very least, a wilful disengagement from the world of human affairs.

Certain kinds of gardens could also be viewed touristically; but since they bore the imprint of human construction and occupation, it was considerably more difficult for the spectator to confine his attention to mere scenery. It was this inevitable presence of what the eighteenth-century advocates of the Picturesque would have regarded as "noise" in the landscape, rather than a sudden cessation of interest in raw nature or of the gratifications to be derived from viewing it, that induced Victorian novelists and poets in general to switch their picture-making operations from mountains to gardens. For gardens and garden-flecked landscapes afforded them the opportunity of indulging touristic proclivities with relative impunity from the charge of heartless detachment, irrespective of their sensitivity to the moral and social dimensions of

landscapes.

The retention but topographical redirection of the touristic perspective is evident in the opening chapter of some of George Eliot's novels, Felix Holt and The Mill on the Floss in particular, but still more obtrusive in a number of less famous novels. Consider, for example, A Year at Hartlebury, a piece of political fiction, published in 1834 and written, as we now know, by Benjamin Disraeli in collaboration with his sister, Sarah.[21] It opens with an invitation from the narrators in their role of tourist-guides:

> Gentle reader, wander with us awhile, along the banks of this tranquil river, as it winds its course through this verdant valley, and we will show you a fair scene. (p. 1)

The location is a rural lowland, and "fair" prepares the reader for a prospect altogether remote from the wild and rugged. It begins with the conventional imperative:

> Behold a rural green, encircled by cottages and embosomed in wood-crowned hills. Each humble dwelling stands in the midst of a garden rich in vegetable store, and gay with the many-coloured tulip, the garden crocus, and its slanting thatch is covered with the fragrant honeysuckle ... The green gradually ascends the side of the narrow valley, and, on the right on a sloping lawn, gay with laburnums, lilacs, and syringa, stands a low irregularly built house with gable ends and tall chimneys. It is the Parsonage; its porch is covered with ivy, and its large projecting windows are clustered with brilliant scarlet flowers of the Pyrus japonica. On the lawns, and separated from the garden only by a light iron fence, stands a very small church mantled with ivy. It is sheltered from the North by a rich dark plantation of firs and yews, while around are scattered humble but neat graves of the peaceful villagers. A road winds round the upland green to the wide gates of the mansion-house, an ancient Elizabethan Hall. (p. 1)

This is picturesque scenery with a small "p", the kind that came to appeal to country-starved Victorians, glad enough to suffer vicarious sightseeing, but not with an aristocratic connoiseur as guide.

Of the succeeding seven chapters of A Year at Hartlebury, no less than four begin with similar, if more localised, scenic descriptions in which gardens are the dominant landscape features. Only one chapter

(chapter 8) introduces the reader to "picturesque beauties" that are even remotely reminiscent of eighteenth-century touristic descriptions:

> Amid the wildest scenery of Bohun Park, you suddenly come to a small rustic gate. Pass through it a few yards, and a magical scene is before you. The ground seems to have opened at your feet; you look over the heads of the tallest trees upon a green and bowery glen, nearly surrounded by precipitous banks covered with towering trees growing one above the other. At the furthest point these banks gradually slope down, and form a natural opening. (p. 27)

But even the wild and romantic scenery of Bohun Castle has its social uses: it provides the scene for a picnic party from Hartlebury.

The Disraelis doubtless considered it an advantage to live a stone's throw away from enchanting castle scenery, though the Hartlebury locals were not the only people to avail themselves of the beauties of Bohun Park. We are told that it "was a regular show place", and that "Few travellers came within twenty miles of it that were not induced to stay on their way". And not because it was a picturesque ruin: "the splendid pile bore no marks of devastation - scarcely of neglect" (p. 28). Bohun has sufficient scenic interest and, though welcoming, is sufficiently uncluttered with sightseers to offer the genuine seeker after landscape experience an adequate substitute for the pleasure of gazing upon rugged natural scenery.

This suggests a further reason for the decline of interest in mountain scenery: for the majority of Victorians and for many fictional characters as well, such landscapes were either too inaccessible or by no means inaccessible enough. Those who retained the inclination to wander lonely as clouds in (say) the Lake District or the Alps, were frequently frustrated by the number of other "clouds" who were there for other purposes. As Pauline Fletcher notes, "The poet or painter could no longer enjoy the mountain in solitude, but must share them with boisterous groups of tourists and mountaineers".[22] The trend towards thronging the mountains for non-aesthetic purposes intensified in the course of the century, so much

so that by the 1890s some of the best-selling romantic novelists, including Mrs. Hoare, were setting their stories in snowy, peaked Tyrolean landscapes.[23] Ironically, then, private gardens and even public ones afforded greater opportunities for solitary experiences than the more popular "wildernesses" - which helps explain the prominence of the garden-as-a-retreat motif in Victorian literature.

Even so, the option of eschewing wild landscapes was the prerogative of a privileged minority. Mountains were too remote from the places in which the majority lived and worked to meet their needs for recreation and scenery. Whatever their preferences, they had to be content with tamer surrogates - public parks, the countryside and, usually for the better off, private gardens. Victorian fiction abounds in accounts of occasional trips to what Leo Marx has termed the "middle landscape"[24] (i.e. the countryside between the polarities of city and wilderness). In the words of Jean-Paul Hulin, Victorian literature "swarms with characters obeying a powerful centrifugal impulse urging them away from the city"[25] and, it ought to be added, an equally powerful centripetal impulse compelling them to remain in or return to their gardens. Elizabeth Gaskell was aware of the strength of both impulses. A substantial portion of her first published story, Libbie Marsh's Three Eras (1847) is devoted to Libbie's Whitsun outing to Dunham Park with the crippled Franky and his mother, Margaret Hall. Dunham Park had for years been "the favourite resort of the Manchester work people ... Its scenery presents such a complete contrast to the whirl and turmoil of Manchester: so thoroughly woodland, with its ancestral trees (here and there lightning blanched); its 'verduous walls'; its grassy walks leading far away into some glade".[26] Mary Barton (1848) opens with a similar episode: an account of the Bartons's holiday excursion to Green Heys fields. Had the events of the novel been set a few years later (in, say, the late 1840s) the outing might well have been to the newly constructed Peel Park, one of the "people's parks" and,

according to Geraldine Jewsbury, "no make believes, since they use them and enjoy them".[27]

An account of a similar excursion is given by Charlotte M. Yonge in The Pillars of the House. The trippers here are the dependants of a poor city curate who leave the "smoky" town of Bexley, and head for the nearest green space: the park of an untenanted country mansion. Miss Yonge was thinking of the picknickers in Tennyson's Audley Court who hold their singing contest "on a slope of orchard" on the garden estate of an abandoned country house. Perhaps she also had in mind the outer frame of The Princess, the setting of which is the "broad lawns" of the socially-conscious Sir Walter Vivian who, on this occasion at least, has made his park accessible "to the people", i.e. the members of the local Mechanics' Institute.

In Gaskell's North and South, the strength of the centripetal impulse is exemplified by Margaret Hale's attachment to the garden of Helstone vicarage, the pull of which impels her to revisit it long after her move to Milton Northern (and only shortly before the death of Mr. Bell).

Some critics have made much of Dickens's complicity in or unwitting perpetuation of "middle landscape" myths: the myth of the countryside as an Edenic world of pastoral innocence; the myth of the regenerative country-or semi-rural-garden. But gardens and fields are important places in Dickens's novels in the first place because they are the only functionally appropriate environments accessible to characters most in need of refuge and escape. Amy in Little Dorrit is an example. With her father in the Marshalsea, Amy Dorrit's only chance of a change of scenery comes every other Sunday with her trip to "some meadows and green lanes" where she "picked grass and flowers to bring home" (p. 70). Wemmick's return each evening to his suburban garden at Walworth may enable him adequately to shake off the Little Britain cobwebs; but in any case, the garden and miniature castle are the only recuperative spaces available to him. As

Dickens appreciated, the suburban garden was enormously important to the "regular City man", not because it was the only landscape supremely well fitted to gratify his recreational requirements, but because the commuter's circadian rhythms, together with the frictional effects of distance, conspired to narrow down the range of functional alternatives. In "London Recreations" in Sketches by Boz, he wrote:

> If the regular City man, who leaves Lloyd's at five o'clock, and drives home to Hackney, Clapham, Stamford Hill, or elsewhere, can be said to have any daily recreation beyond his dinner, it is his garden. He never does anything to it with his own hands; but he takes great pride in it notwithstanding; and if you are desirous of paying your addresses to the youngest daughter, be sure to be in raptures with every flower and shrub it contains. If your poverty of expression compel you to make any distinction between the two, we would certainly recommend your bestowing more admiration on his garden than his wine. He always takes a walk round it, before he starts for town in the morning, and is particularly anxious that the fish-pond should be kept specially neat. If you call on him on Sunday in summer-time, about an hour before dinner, you will find him sitting in an arm-chair, on the lawn behind the house, with a straw hat on, reading a Sunday paper. (pp. 92-3)

This is not to say that the City gentleman regarded his precious garden as no more than a convenient substitute for the "real" thing - for nature in the wild. He may well have concurred with the sentiment expressed by one of Wilkie Collins's characters, Benjamin Rondel in The Fallen Leaves (1879), that there is no need to venture outside London to experience the beauties of nature since they are all there in Finsbury Square "carefully ordered and arranged" (p. 2).

This is claiming a great deal for the reorientation of nature to man-made circumstances, more, perhaps, than most Victorians would have been willing to grant. But they would have accepted the implication: that nature "ordered and arranged" - "dressed" as garden writers were wont to put it - is not only more acceptable than, but also preferable to, nature in its naked state. Susan A. Hallgarth has made the point that "for the Victorians, nature generally functions as an anomalous symbol having the irreconcilable features of beauty and cruelty", and that it was "viewed

for the most part as an indifferent rather than a beneficent force".[28] For many Victorians, however, the wildscape was neither beautiful nor merely indifferent to human interests; rather, it was unequivocably ugly and brutal.

Scientific discoveries may have strengthened this view, but its pervasiveness had more to do with the (Christian) belief that the wilderness was "uncivilised" rather than ontologically autonomous. Nature might be brutal - but not irremediably so; civilised people could make parts of it green and benign and a testimony to the goodness of God. R.A. Forsyth has argued that "because of the expanding material wealth that resulted from the ingenious harnessing of natural forces" in the Victorian period, "the idea of Optimism in a divinely-controlled, rational universe tended to be replaced by that of PROGRESS in an industrialised environment".[29] But for many Victorians, God and man were not at strife, since progress in the form of environmental domination could be construed as the perpetration of God's will to civilise (i.e. Christianise) apparently Godless landscapes and people. To the evangelically inclined, the association of the wilderness with the heathenish was confirmed by the reports of missionaries and explorers who attested to their encounters with "brutal" people living in "brutal" surroundings. Lord Kaimes touched upon this association in an article in The Saturday Magazine:

> Rough uncultivated ground, dismal to the eye, inspires peevishness and discontent: may not this be one cause of the harsh manners of savages?
>
> A field richly ornamented, containing beautiful objects of various lands, displays in full lustre the goodness of the Deity, and the ample provision he has made for our happiness.... Other fine arts may be perverted to excite irregular, and even vicious, emotions; but gardening, which inspires the purest and most refined pleasures, cannot fail to promote every good affection.[30]

Kaimes's views were iterated by innumerable other Victorian writers equally keen on transforming wildscapes into gardens, and no less convinced of the refining and debrutalising effects of gardening. They would have found plenty of support for their views in contemporary imaginative

literature. The transformation of a wild country into a civilised garden is the cultural project rehearsed in Tennyson's Idylls of the King. As Jerome Buckley notes, Arthur himself is presented as "the bringer of civilisation to a barbarous people".[31] Like a head gardener newly appointed to a huge unkempt estate, his first mammoth task is to carve edenic clearings in a wasteland ruled by heathens and wild beasts. His gardenising mission does not end there, for having successfully created a garden, he has then to extirpate the weeds of evil and chaos from the very realm he has civilised. In an important speech to Geraint, he illustrates the insidiousness of habit and custom in specifically horticultural terms:

> The world will not believe a man repents:
> And this wise world of ours is mainly right.
> Full seldom doth a man repent, or use
> Both grace and will to pick the vicious quitch
> Of blood and custom wholly out of him,
> And make all clean, and plant himself afresh.
> Edyrn has done it, weeding all his heart
> As I will weed this land before I go. (Poems, p. 1574)

When Arthur embarks on a weed-plucking expedition, the narrator reinforces the metaphorical equivalence of horticulture and the progress and purification of civilisation:

> and as now
> Men weed the white horse on the Berkshire hills
> To keep him bright and clean as heretofore,
> He rooted out the slothful officer
> Or guilty, which for bribe had winked at wrong,
> And in their chairs set up a stronger race
> With hearts and hands, and sent a thousand men
> To till the wastes, and moving everywhere
> Cleared the dark places and let in the law,
> And broke the bandit holds and cleansed the land.
> (Poems, p. 1575)

Here, as elsewhere in the Idylls, "green" language serves the seemingly paradoxical function of naturalising the cultural control of nature. As James R. Kincaid says, "Arthur's insistence upon a perfect nature is indistinguishable from the imposition of unnatural (i.e. cultural) constraints to curb the ferocity of natural impulses".[32] Nonetheless,

it is Arthur's view of "uncooked" nature as "the hostile environment against which man must defend his spiritual identity"[33] that the discourse of the poems consistently privileges. Those who are sympathetic to Arthur's gardenising mission are attributed with positive "horticultural" qualities. Thus Gareth first travels to Camelot dressed like one of the "tillers of the soil"; Lynette dubs him "the flower of kitchendom". Those who wilfully oppose and subvert the cultural experiment have nature - but not the narrator - on their side. Vivien, who may be taken to represent the "threatening natural world",[34] is a wanton, writhing serpent: "wily", "lissome", and "snake"-like; Modred is a "Green-suited" creepy-crawly. When he scales the wall of Guinevere's garden "To spy some secret scandal if he might", he is caught in the act by Lancelot,

> and as the gardener's hand
> Plucks from the colewort a green caterpillar,
> So from the hall wall and the flowering grove
> Of grasses Lancelot plucked him by the heel,
> And cast him as a worm upon the way. (Poems, p. 1726)

The point to stress here is that Arthur's gardenising crusade is motivated by and predicated upon broadly the same notion of progress and the same anti-primitivistic assumptions upon which Victorian garden theorists constructed their non-mimetic garden designs. The thinking behind this model, neatly summarised by S. Baring Gould, is consentient with the thinking behind Arthur's cultural experiment:

> Why should we imitate wild nature? The garden is a product of civilisation. Why any more make of our gardens imitation of wild nature, than paint our children with woad, and make them run about naked in an effort to imitate nature unadorned? The very charm of a garden is that it is taken out of savagery, trimmed, clothed and disciplined.[35]

The association of wildscapes with brutality, and gardens with civility and refinement is suggested in other ways in Victorian literature. For example, gardening is closely associated with other "cultivating" activities - notably with reading. In the novels of Wilkie Collins and

others, the morphological contiguity of libraries and gardens or garden rooms hints at their functional equivalence. The Quarterly Review of 1884 specified gardening and reading as the principal "amusements" of country life.[36] Fictional correlatives conflate the two activities in pictures of privileged country-house dwellers reading and reclining in immaculately tended gardens - recurrent models of gracious living. Furthermore, fictional scholars often double up as knowledgeable gardens: Eugene Aram, Glastonbury (in Henrietta Temple), Father Coleman (in Lothair). The belles lettristic "hero" of The Aspern Papers confesses a "horticultural passion" (p. 153); Charlotte Bronte's M. Emanuel "had a taste for gardening" (p. 398); and to judge from his books, Alfred Austin did nothing but read, write and garden and converse on all three. The catalogue of cultivated cultivators is prodigious.

Still more compelling demonstrations of the humanising and refining influence of gardening and provided by working- or lower middle-class fictional gardeners whose lives are ruthlessly segmented into work and non-work. Wemmick's gardening activities are in part an expression of the finer feelings and creative impulses he is compelled to contain in Little Britain. Wilkie Collins's Sergeant Cuff is a similar case; if anything, he is more strikingly bifurcated even than Wemmick. As the "illustrious thief-taker" he is taciturn, impassive and impenetrable, behaviours which, like Wemmick's "post-office" mouth, are functional adaptions to a working environment in which spontaneous displays of sentiment are all but proscribed. But in the presence of his precious roses, Cuff confesses his capacity for "fondness", and babbles with the contentment of a child at play. When questioned about his "odd taste", he explains:

> If you will look about you (which most people won't do) ... You will see that the nature of a man's taste is, most time, as opposite as possible to the nature of a man's business. Show me any two things more opposite one from the other than a rose and a thief, and

> I'll correct my taste accordingly - if it isn't too late at my time of life. (p. 89)

Richard Jefferies's farmer Iden in Amaryllis at the Fair is an equally dichotomous figure. Forced to seek a meagre living from a meagre soil, he can see in nature only a harsh antagonist. His view is the view expressed by Jefferies with telegraphic certitude: "Nature never plants - nature is no gardener - no design, no proportion in the fields" (p. 317). Iden's work inevitably makes him hard, insensitive and coarsely materialistic. When his daughter gambols over to him, breathless with excitement at having discovered the first daffodil of spring, he can manage only a gruff and bruising rebuke: "Flowers bean't no use on; such trumpery as that; what do 'ee want a messing about arter thaay?" (p. 203). This is his initial response. When he looks at the flower with the eye of the gardener, he no longer regards it as an otoise inedible luxury. There is even a remarkable alteration of "his pronunciation from that of the country folk and labourers amongst whom he dwelt to the correct accent of education" (p. 204). Gardening releases in him all those felicitous feelings that potato planting compels him to suppress. As his grossness dissolves, so also do the tensions that lacerate his interpersonal relationships, and there is "billing and cooing and fraternising, and sunshine in the garden over the hedge of lavendar" (p. 240).

In general, mid-century fiction avoids extremes - both geographical and (with the exception of sensation fiction) experiential. Implicit in this orientation towards "familiar" social worlds is the assumption that "ordinary" human experience, like realist fiction itself, is imperilled beyond the boundaries of the known and knowable humanised landscape. As a consequence, the brutalising wildscape/civilising garden antithesis tends to be blunted or merely implied. The obvious exception is Wuthering Heights, in which an isolated, provincial house of fortress-

like stolidity, exposed to the tumult of the elements and surrounded by an unreclaimed wildscape of moors and marsh, stands in physical and symbolic opposition to a conventional country mansion, distanced and cushioned by parklands and gardens from nature in the raw; and in which the characters at home in the encincturing landscapes of these houses share their distinctive characteristics.

This may be a schematic simplification, though no number of complexifying qualifications can spirit away the reader's sense of a fundamental topographical dichotomy of exposed wildscape and enclosed park. I shall have more to say about Wuthering Heights later on. At the moment, I wish only to draw attention to a salient fact about its critical reception; when the novel first appeared, it was, first and foremost, grist to the mill of those who subscribed to the most vulgar version of environmental determinism. The reviewer for the Athenaeum wrote: "The brutal master of the lonely house on 'Wuthering Heights' ... has doubtless had his prototype in those uncongenial and remote districts where human beings, like the trees, grow gnarled and dwarfed and distorted by the inclement climate".[37] Other early critics were equally attentive to the brutalising effects of the moors, but also curiously inattentive to the environmental influence of the more humanised landscapes in the novel. For example, the reviewer for the Britannia lamented that "There are no green spots in it on which the mind can linger with satisfaction".[38] Since there most certainly are such spots in Wuthering Heights, the blindness of the early critics to them suggests that they were intent upon venting their antipathy towards unreclaimed nature, and what they supposed to be the deleterious effects of wildscapes upon those who exposed themselves to them.

Had old Mr. Earnshaw been a moral reformer, he would probably have set Heathcliff to work in the garden of the Heights in a bid to nuture his latent finer qualities. He would certainly have deemed it folly to

loose him upon a landscape so harsh that it could serve only to exacerbate his "native" savagery. Though jealous of his garden, Joseph might have sanctioned the project, for the calvinistically and evangelically inclined were apt to favour gardening among the young as a means of inculcating the virtues of self-discipline, submission to authority, and individual responsibility. Charlotte Brontë was aware of this - as she shows in Jane Eyre. Behind the prospect - excluding walls of the garden of Lowood School were "scores of little beds; these beds were assigned as gardens for the pupils to cultivate, and each bed had an owner" (p.80). The regimentation of these flower beds suggests that they are there to regulate the behaviour of the pupils, not to awaken in them an interest in nature. For Brocklehurst, the manager and treasurer of Lowood School, nature is a thoroughly negative model. As he declares, the girls are there to be drilled into "Grace", "not to conform to nature" (p. 96).

Brocklehurst is pharisaical, but many earnest, middle class Victorians shared his conviction that "uncooked" nature cannot improve morals and manners since it is itself rude and in need of correction. They would often use words like "training" and "cultivation" in ways which conflated their literal (i.e. horticultural) and figurative senses. One of Mrs. Henry Wood's characters, Lady Augusta in The Channings (1862), dilates homiletically upon the value of cultivation.

> God's laws everywhere proclaim it ... Look at the trees of our fields, the flowers of our parterres, the vegetables of our gardens - what are they, unless they are pruned, dug about, cared for? It is by cultivation alone that they can be brought to perfection. (p. 443)

Mrs. Gatty's Parables from Nature is very largely a diatribe against the anarchy of nature untrained. One of the parables, entitled "Training and restraining", tells the story of a Wind - here the personification of "wicked" wild nature - that gleefully seeks to arouse the frustrations and dissatisfaction of the flowers in "a pretty villa garden" by

drawing attention to the restraints imposed upon them by the gardener. With the assistance of the anarchic Wind, the flowers rebel against submission, with the result that they perish or grow wild. The daughter of the gardener draws a moral lesson from the sight of the fallen rebels. Addressing her mother, she says:

> I quite understand what you have so often said about the necessity of training, and restraint, and culture, for us as well as for flowers, in a fallen world. The wind has torn away these poor things from their fastenings, and they are growing wild whichever way they please. I know I should once have argued, that if it were their natural mode of growing it must therefore be the best. But I cannot say so, now that I see the result. They are doing whatever they like, unrestrained; and the end is, that my beautiful GARDEN is turned into a WILDERNESS.[39]

Small trace here of that "Rousseauistic faith in the goodness of human nature and the spontaneous flowering of the moral sentiments, so long as they are uncorrupted by the 'evil' influence of civilisation and unrestrained by authoritarian discipline".[40] According to Walter Houghton, whose words these are, the Victorians inherited the "cult of noble emotions" from the Romantics. But the majority of conventionally-minded Victorians were more likely to work on the supposition that savages are ignoble precisely because they have missed out on the benefits of corrected or civilised nature. To be civilised, savages, reprobates and children require gardens rather than mountains.

This view was given official endorsement in the Report of the Parliamentary Committee on the Labouring Poor of 1843, which pointed out that "Many striking instances have been stated ... where the possession of an allotment has been the means of reclaiming the criminal, reforming the dissolute, and of changing their whole moral character and conduct".[41] Charles Reade may have known of this report, and of the practice, long-established in the more enlightened reformatory institutions, of giving criminals and idlers gardens to tend. At any rate, he was of the opinion that gardening was the activity most likely to preserve the humanity

of those unfortunate inmates of Victorian gaols. In It is Never Too Late to Mend (1856) he describes the effects of an all too brief spell of gardening upon a prisoner (Robinson) whose other assignments are meaningless and cruel. The garden itself "was inclosed within walls of great height, and to us would have seemed a cheerless place for horticulture, but to Robinson it appeared the garden of Eden ... Robinson drove the spade into the soil with all the energy of one of God's creatures escaping from system back to nature" (p. 107).

Like Reade, Dickens regarded gardening as a potentially redemptive and revivifying activity, and advanced it from philanthropic rather than from puritanical motives. In the American Notes (1842) he relates the story of a prisoner in a Pennsylvanian penitentiary whose debilitation earned him the right to work in the prison garden. Like Robinson, he "went about the new occupation with great cheerfulness" (p. 111). Then one day the garden gate opened magically before him and he returned to the outside world. Perhaps Dickens took this for an apologue, for by the mid-1840s gardening as a means of rehabilitation and egress was looming large in his plans for an Asylum for Fallen Women. In a letter to Angela Burdett Coutts - the philanthropist who inaugurated and funded the project - he wrote: "The cultivation of little gardens, if they be no bigger than graves, is a great resource and a great reward. It has always been found to be productive of good effects wherever it has been tried".[42] Dickens hoped that each woman would be offered a garden of her own.

A number of Dickens's fictional characters are restored and comforted by gardening, or simply by the prospect of it. Old Mr. Wickfield in David Copperfield, a broken lawyer but a "reclaimed" man, travels almost daily to occupy himself in his garden "a couple of miles of so out of town" (p. 841). John Chivery's sustaining idea of "pastoral domestic happiness" is a scrap of the Marshalsea, transformed by "a

trellis-work of scarlet beans and a canary or so" into "a very Arbour" (p. 205). However, and this is a very significant point, none of Dickens's characters finds the quality of his or her life improved by direct contact with the wildest natural scenery and, indeed, Dickens consistently negates the belief that happiness is to be found among the solitudes of mountains and other barren landscapes.

In common with many of his contemporaries, Dickens could respond in a positive way to rugged scenery, but only as a touristic spectator, and never with that Wordsworthian sense of communion with the natural world. The travel books (but not, significantly, the novels) are thick with "picturesque" perceptions, and include some generally unremarkable descriptions of beautiful scenery, and even a few which exalt the awesome serenity and power of the natural world. For example, Niagra Falls is described as a "tremendous spectacle", an "Image of Beauty" with "nothing of gloom or terror about it".[43] The nearest novelistic equivalent is probably Esther Summerson's account in chapter 18 of Bleak House of a storm in the park of Chesney Wold. Here, as Samuel M. Sipe suggests, "the power of nature is associated with the Christian myth of creation".[44] Nonetheless, Dickens was basically a fair-weather sightseer who liked his landscapes to assume a friendly countenance. He was appalled by the "unutterable solemnity and dreariness"[45] of Vesuvius at sunset, though he had enjoyed the "same" scene under the sunny skies of daytime. He was delighted by the "elegance and neatness" of the villa gardens of Cincinnati, but dispirited by the desolation of the Mississippi floodplain, and oppressed by the "barren monotony"[46] of the prairies. As F.S. Schwarzbach comments: "When Dickens travelled west to the frontier and was confronted by the raw, untamed power of nature, he was quite simply terrified".[47] When he came to give the experience fictional expression in Martin Chuzzlewit (1844) he stressed the almost antediluvian character of the American wilderness. Of the ironically named

settlement of "Eden" - almost certainly inspired by Dickens's sight of Cairo, Illinois, in 1842 - he wrote: "The waters of the Deluge might have left it but a week" (p. 377).

Dickens had come to accept that there was no such thing as an intrinsically virtuous natural environment and, hence, no possibility of a return to primal innocence. The Kent marshes where Pip spent his childhood are a far cry from the American wasteland, but they too are bleak and oppressive. Dickens presents them as no more or less virtuous and virtue-inducing than London, though even the marshes can give pleasure to the romantic adolescent and the traveller returning home.

Not so the wildest natural landscapes; these Dickens puts to consistently negative uses. As George Levine points out, Dickens uses "Nature at its wildest (as, for instance, in the death of Steerforth) to act out passions not legitimate within society",[48] and almost always made mountains the sites of extreme and dangerous action. Levine cites as an example No Thoroughfare (1867), the late story Dickens wrote with Wilkie Collins:[49] "The villian, Obeneizer, spent his childhood in the mountain gloom; and in the Simplom pass he reveals his villiany to the hero and almost succeeds in killing him".[50] Moreover, Dickens's characters almost never find mountains exhilarating or elevating. It is significant that the only character in Little Dorrit with a taste for the picturesque is the evil Blandois. He declares: "I love and study the picturesque in all its varieties" (p. 344).

The Dorrits themselves find their Alpine tour anything but productive of picturesque experiences. Their ascent to the Great St. Bernard leaves them panting after shelter from the "searching cold". Above the lower slopes of the Swiss Alps, all is "barrenness and desolation" (p.412). The soil, like the wine, is "hard" and "stony". Only in the lower, "softer regions" is nature hospitable and refreshing. Amy discovers that the mountains are less real than "the old Marshalsea room"; they

are "visions" which "might melt at any moment" (p. 441). Monroe Engels's remark on Dickens's novels as a whole - "Misery is the palpable reality and magnificence is unreal"[51] - is particularly apposite here. As for William Dorrit, the Alps do not offer him "a new kind of transcendance; rather they are a bad dream, an unreality that makes a worse prison than the one before". As Levine goes on to say, "The Alps don't cure [his] disease; they make it worse".[52]

When David Copperfield journeys to Switzerland it is to recover his health and spirits. But the Alpine peaks can do nothing positive for him; like the Dorrits, he is unable to shed the burden of the recent past. "If those awful solitudes had spoken to my heart", he says, "I did not know it. I had found sublimity and wonder in the dread heights and precipices, in the roaring torrents, and the wastes of ice and snow; but as yet, they had taught me nothing else" (p. 814).

David's restoration is contigent upon his descent to the lowlands. When he comes down to the "clustered village in the valley" he finds not only Agnes's heartening letters but also the "softening influence" of peaceful landscapes, and the "human interest" from which he "had lately shrunk" (p. 815).

In Dickens's novels, then, the distinction between hard and soft landscapes is very marked. Soft landscapes occur more frequently and are presented more positively. This is largely a matter of their functional suitability. Few of Dickens's characters turn to landscapes for thrills or transcendance and, because of their states of mind, rarely find it when they do. On the other hand, many of his characters have needs which soft landscapes - gardens and bits of benign countryside - are peculiarly fitted to supply: refreshment, restoration, tranquility and protection. Hence, many of his domestic havens, like the Asylum for prostitutes, have a rural or semi-rural setting: the Maylies's cottage at Chertsey, for instance, or the Meagles's cottage at Twickenham - though the latter is

a more ambivalent case. This does not mean that Dickens described the countryside in consistently idyllic terms (as Louis Cazamian has asserted[53]). His rural "Edens" are havens not heavens. The Maylies's cottage garden offers Oliver what he needs: security and a certain degree of freedom. But it is not the perfect antithesis of the subterranean city world from which he has been rescued. As J. Hillis Miller percipiently observes, the "rose and honeysuckle which cling to the cottage walls, and the ivy which creeps round the trunks of the trees" are "images of enclosure rather than of complete openness".[54]

Though Dickens never lost faith in the restorative powers of pleasant pastoral pockets, he came to realise the insufficiency, even the partial impotency, of rural "Edens", and except in the early novels, incorporates his most resilient and efficacious garden spaces within rather than outside the urban community.

In making these modifications to the Wordsworthian view of nature and its place in the lives of ordinary poeple, Dickens was responding to a set of social conditions quite different from those which had obtained in the early years of the century. As James F. Marlow explains, Wordsworth "was able to remove himself from that 'monstrous anthill on the plain', London. Dickens knew that his own role, his world, his relation to his readers had unalterably changed: the 'common haunts of the green earth' could not really be expected to fasten on the hearts of a public of novel-readers".[55] Conscious of his close relationship with the middle-class readers, appreciative of their expectations from literature and life, and aware that they did not commune with nature in the manner of a Wordsworth or a Keats, Dickens offered his readers vicarious access to surrogates of Eden consonant with the interests and aspirations of his characters and readers alike. This is a major reason that "edenic" landscapes in the novels of Dickens and his

contemporaries more often take the form of gardens than of mountains.

I have tried to show that the identity of the garden in Victorian literature is established largely in terms of its differential relations to "wild" landscapes. I have argued that the garden is closely identified both with "soft" nature and with culture - that it frequently functions as a stand-in for the gentle, English countryside, but that is also granted the refining and de-brutalising powers of "civilising" agencies.

Though reasonably valid at a global level, this scenario is vitiated by an over simplified account of wild nature and its significance in Victorian literature. What needs to be stressed is that "wild" as an epithet for landscape and scenery has widely varying applications and connotations. Some of these <u>are</u> pejorative, particularly when the landscapes signified are vast, unhumanised and perceived as threatening. It is these negative uses of "wild" - <u>wild</u> as in <u>wilderness</u>, for example - that make it possible for Curtis Dahl to identify Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, Arnold, and Thomson as the precursors of the twentieth century "wasteland poets", and to discuss the ways in and reasons for which they "used wasteland imagery with great effectiveness to express their melancholy moods".[56] But "wild" is also used in ways which imply a positive evaluation, and in contexts which connect it with, rather than oppose it to, the garden.

There are two main explanations for these varying uses of "wild". The more obvious one is that the adjective is assigned to a diversity of topographical and botanical forms. The more important one is that many Victorians responded to wild nature with understandable ambivalence. They saw that it could be threatening and, therefore, something to overcome or avoid. But they also realised that wild nature itself was threatened with attrition or emasculation by the increasing human powers

of environmental control. From the latter perspective, the wildscape was seen as something to cherish and protect against the encroachments of city and cultivated landscapes alike. Many writers sensed that the garden had a part to play here. Though incapable of serving as a proper surrogate for wild nature, the garden could at least accommodate, within an unmistakably humanised framework, vestigial elements of nature's wilder forms and processes.

Phineas Fletcher, the narrator of Mrs. Craik's mid-century novel, John Halifax, Gentleman (1857), declares that his ideal garden is one that is "half trim, half wild". He has in mind the"dear old-fashioned garden" of "fruits, flowers, and vegetables living in comfortable equality and fraternity, none being too choice to be harmed by their neighbours, none esteemed too mean to be restricted in their natural profusion" (p. 175). Fletcher's notion of wildness may be cosy and limited - "half trim" operates as a kind of qualifier - but at least it overrides his partiality for order and constraint. He concludes his detailed description of an instance of the kind of "half wild" garden he loves by affirming its superiority to "the finest modern pleasure-ground" (p. 175).

Fletcher's preferences are far from idiosyncratic. Many fictional characters are made to sing the praises of carelessly ordered, overbrimming cottage gardens - to gardens that appear to approximate to the pleasantly chaotic profusion of nature in the wild. That this is the kind of garden "one rarely sees now-a-days" suggests also that the half wild garden is associated with the past, and usually with a sentimentalised and romanticised view of the past. The myth of pre-industrialised world where man and nature had lived in near-perfect harmony is basic to another popular version of the half trim, half wild garden. It takes the form of an "Old World" garden in which the process of humanisation has long since taken place, and where nature has been able gradually to reassert itself. Victorian magazines contain numerous poems about once

trim gardens made wild and picturesque by neglect. Here, for example, is the opening stanza of The Deserted Garden by Julia Goddard:

> Beyond the woods, yet half by woods inclosed
> A tangled wilderness of fair growth lay;
> A spot where dreaming poets might have dosed
> Into the dawning of a fairy day;
> For in its desolation wild reposed
> Something that pointed to a past more gay,
> Since here and there one found the lingering trace
> Of caresome hands in the neglected place.[57]

In one sense, the wildness of the garden speaks sadly of what has long since passed away. In another, it ratifies, and makes it possible for the speaker vicariously to experience, the spirit of the past, to "weave a tale of mystery to the last;/And in the old deserted garden bowers/ Find fairer blossoms than 'mongst tended flowers'".[58]

Of course, The Deserted Garden and the many mawkish poems like it are predicated upon a view of nature as romantic and picturesque rather than as Darwinian and appetitive. Doubtless they were produced by and for those middle-class Victorians with a propensity to use nature as an anodyne. Even so, the narcotising nostalgia of such poems seems to betray anxieties about the over-"civilising" of nature in the name of Progress, and is expressive of the desire to find reassuring evidence of nature's irrepressibility and mystery. (It is worth noting that Goddard's poem appears on the same page of Chambers's Journal as an article on the improvident destruction of "indigenous forests".)

The half trim, half wild garden, then, takes two basic forms: trimness and wildness occurring together, and trimness turning into wildness. In Victorian literature, both forms hint at "solutions" to the paradox they imply: that gardens are opposed to wild nature, but in a period of unprecedented urbanisation and environmental domination must also help to keep it alive. Even many of the most highly manicured gardens in Victorian fiction contain token "wildernesses". Their shrubberies, for example, tend to be thicker than those in most actual

Victorian gardens, and more closely packed than garden theorists generally advised. This can be explained partly in terms of plot requirements, since shrubberies (in fiction) are places of concealment and secret meetings. But it may also suggest the desire to smuggle into gardens acceptable echoes of the wildness they otherwise exclude.

Without at least a nod in the direction of the wildscape, the garden stands in peril of losing those very qualities which connect it with the natural world and distinguish it from the merely social. Most English authors were to some degree cognisant of this; so, too, was the American, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and so consciously so that his views, though contributions to the American debate on nature, are worth at least a mention.

Hawthorne accepted that the garden was essentially a human construction. But he was also inclined to the view that human designers should leave nature "to her own ways and methods" by bestowing only enough care "to prevent wildness from growing into deformity".[59] Hence, most of the gardens in Hawthorne's writings are "nooks and crannies where Nature, like a stray partridge, hides her head among the long established haunts of men".[60]

Hawthorne's ideas about man, nature, and the garden have recently been discussed by Egard A. Dryden. His percipient analysis is worth quoting at some length:

> If man and nature happily coexist in Hawthorne's gardens, they do so not because they share traits which bring them close to and cause them to resemble one another; rather the relationship is the result of man's discovery that nature loses its value if it is totally humanised. Gardens are the result of a happy balance between identity and difference: "An orchard has a relation to mankind, and readily connects itself with matters of the heart. The trees possess a domestic character; they have lost the wild nature of their forest-kindred, and have grown humanised by receiving the care of man, as well as by contributing to his want". The orchard and man are related not because the same pattern lies hidden beneath the surface of each, pulling them magnetically to one another. On the contrary, the relationship is grounded on man's

> initial recognition of a basic difference between the two and his subsequent attempt to minimise the difference by partially humanising the natural.[61]

Whether or not Dryden's remarks have a universal applicability is a matter for argument. What is certain is that they are pertinent to the gardens of English nineteenth century fiction, many of which are endowed with sufficient vestiges of natural landscapes to retain a semblance of wildness. Many, but not all, since some so closely resemble the comercially productive cultivated landscape as to be scarcely distinguishable from it. This is true of the garden landscapes in Gaskell's Wives and Daughters. As Coral Lansbury rightly points out, "Far from being a romantic breezy novel of the countryside, Wives and Daughters never looks at scenery without seeing economic value. Nature does not provide a sense of release but entails responsibilities and financial rewards".[62] The garden estate of Cumnor Towers "is a landscape that is planted with money and flourishes accordingly".[63] Lawns, flower-beds and hot-houses place an almost illimitable physical and psychic distance between the observer in the grounds (Molly in chapter 2) and the "dark gloom of the forest-trees beyond" (p. 45). The park of the Hamleys is still more economic, being devoted to "meadow-grass, ripening for hay" (p. 94).

Gardens like these are the confederates of commercial civilisation rather than bulwarks against its expansion. Yi-Fu Tuan has such landscapes in mind when he remarks that although "the countryside is widely accepted as the antithesis of the city irrespective of the actual living conditions of these two environments ... from another perspective it is clear that raw nature or wilderness, and not the countryside, stands at the opposite pole to the totally man-made city".[64] Tuan also indicates that in the nineteenth century, cultivated landscapes as well as cities could be "perceived as enemies of pristine nature"[65] since both were

expanding at the expense of the wilderness. Writers who lived in or regularly ventured into the countryside could not but be aware of this. Matthew Arnold's walks in the Oxfordshire countryside certainly made Arnold aware that one effect of agrarian capitalism was the literal marginalisation of wild nature - as the following stanza from Thyrsis clearly shows:

> I knew the slopes; who knows them if not I?
> But many a dingle on the loved hill-side,
> With thorns once studded, old, white-blossomed trees
> Where thick the cowslips grew, and far descried
> High towered the spikes of purple orchises,
> Hath since our day put by
> The coronals of that forgotten time;
> Down each green bank hath gone the ploughboy's team,
> And only in the hidden brookside gleam
> Primroses, orphans of the flowery prime. (Poems, p. 544)

The survival of wild nature was threatened also by the exportation of "city" values into the countryside via, at the most visible level, the appropriation and construction of garden estates by nouveaux riches industrialists. Far from assisting the survival of the wildscape, these egregious products of urban culture collaborated in its very demise. No Victorian understood this better than Hardy and, with the possible exception of Lakelands in Meredith's One of Our Conquerors (1891) there is no better example of the "imported", anti-wild garden than that of The Slopes in Tess of the d'Urbervilles (1891). Hardy desribes the Slopes as "a country-house built for enjoyment pure and simple, with not an acre of troublesome land attached to it beyond what was required for residential purposes, and for a little fancy farm kept in hand by the owner, and tended by a bailiff" (p. 60). Like Victor Radnor's Lakelands, the newly erected "seat" of the d'Urbervilles is a red brick blot on the green landscape from which it rises "like a geranium bloom" (p. 61). With its extensive lawn, its ornamental tent, its gravel sweep, glasshouses, and fashionable evergreens, the garden of the Slopes betrays its provenance in and complicity with the worlds of city and commerce.

Lest we should miss the point, Hardy tells us: "Everything looked like money - like the last coin issued from the Mint" (p. 61). The unnaturalness of the Slopes is emphasised by its contrast to the adjacent Chase, "a truly venerable tract of forest, one of the few remaining woodlands in England of undoubted primeval date" (p. 61).

The Slopes, then, is a kind of urbs rure; instead of accommodating the wildscape it suppresses and assaults it. Moreover, its garden, though "bright, thriving, and well-kept" (p. 61) is imaginatively uncompelling. It lacks those qualities of scenery - openness, vitality, irregularity, even a degree of harshness - that most appealed to Victorian authors who really knew the landscapes which inspired them, and who viewed them unsentimentally as only insiders can. The Brontës are obvious examples. The thoroughly trim garden left Charlotte cold - as she clearly indicates in a letter to G.H. Lewes. She tells Lewes that she finds in Pride and Prejudice "a carefully-tended, highly cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers; but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy, no open country, no fresh air, no blue hill, no bonny beck". She confesses that she "should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen, in their elegant but confined houses".[66]

Not unsurprisingly, most of the positively presented gardens in Charlotte Brontë's novels possess elements of wildness, and are encinctured by "unspoilt" natural scenery. The house in which William Crimsworth of The Professor finally settles is in "a sequestered and rather hilly region whose verdure the smoke of mills had not yet sullied". At the bottom of its "sloping garden there is a wicket, which opens upon a lane as green as the lawn, very long, shady, and little frequented" (p. 352). The garden is, in fact, quite literally made out of the stuff of the surrounding wildscape, for it is "chiefly laid out in lawn, formed of the sod of the hills, with herbage short and soft as moss, full of its own peculiar flowers" (p. 351). The "picturesque" garden

of Shirley's Fieldhead in Shirley (1849) is contiguous with the wild scenery at the narrow end of the Hollow where there is a "wooded ravine" and, running through it, a mill-stream "struggling with many stones, chafing against rugged banks, fretting with gnarled tree-roots, foaming, gurgling, battling as it went" (p. 300). Even Mr. Rochester's estate of Thornfield in Jane Eyre has affinities with the wildscape. In its ground is "an array of mighty old thorn trees, strong, knotty, and broad as oaks" (p. 131) which gives the place its name and redeems it from smoothness. In addition, the tree-filled garden near the house slides consonantly into the "lonely fields" from which it is separated only by a sunken fence.

Anne Brontë's landscape predilections are similar to Charlotte's and, like hers, shaped by personal experience of untamed Yorkshire scenery. In her very Wordsworthian poem Memory, the speaker calls to mind the flowers of her infancy. All of them are the flowers of "Green fields and waving woods".[67] As she walks in miserable solitude about the countryside of Horton Lodge (where she is governess) Agnes Grey in the work of the same name also longs "intensely" not for garden flowers, but "for some familiar flower that might recall the woody dales or green hill-sides of home" (p. 103).

Perhaps Anne Brontë's most explicit rejection of the trim in favour of the wild garden comes in the poem Home. The speaker stands in the grounds of a "mansion high". Its garden is

> fair and wide,
> With groves of evergreen,
> Long winding walks, and borders trim,
> And velvet lawns between;

But this neatly cultivated garden can do nothing to alleviate her home-sickness, and so she prays to be restored to

> that little spot,
> With gray walls compassed round,
> Where knotted grass neglected lies,
> And weeds usurp the ground.[68]

For the Brontë's, the half wild garden is one that is congruent with the surrounding countryside - countryside that is wild but not bleak or inhospitable. For a later, post-Darwinian generation of writers, the half wild garden is distinguished not only by its scenery, by what Charlotte Brontë would have called its "physiognomy", but also by its ecology, in particular, by the ceaseless, irrepressible activity of its animal and vegetable life. Two of the principal representatives of this generation are Meredith and Hardy. There are significant differences between them, but what they share is an intense, physical reciprocity with wilder English landscapes, assimilation of the Darwinian theory of evolution, and the struggle-for-existence view of nature that this theory entails.

If Meredith has a message to impart it is that the spiritual well-being of humanity is contingent upon its communion with the Earth. It is from the Earth that man has derived the gamut of his faculties and desires: his craving for sense life, his rationality ("man's germinant fruit"[69]) his capacity for selfless action and moral conscience. Only by recognising his kinship with the natural world can man as a species evolve by means of social progress.

There is nothing either gloomy or coldly scientific about the evolutionary naturalism that Meredith espouses. As one anonymous reviewer remarked, "if Mr. Meredith sings Evolution, he sings it in a lyrical rapture, and with a thrill of personal ecstasy".[70] Or as Norman Kelvin succinctly puts it, nature for Meredith is "an active and benevolent principle that reveals to man his kinship with the rest of creation and that teaches him to order his private, public and political life".[71] But there is a proviso: nature teaches only those who are prepared to "read" its signs; Meredith sensed that many of his contemporaries were not. His own mature nature poetry (i.e. that published after c. 1880) offers a reading of Earth from the perspective of a kind of sanguine

Darwinian semiotician. His fiction offers (to speak reductively) misreadings of nature, and a checklist of the reasons for them: egoism, sentimentality, suppression of the sense life, conventional, exploitative and expansionist forms of social organisation.

Meredith appears to regard the garden as one of those places in which human beings display the extent (if any) of their receptivity to, and fellowship with, the natural world. In truth, he only occasionally enthuses about gardens of any description; he much prefers the open countryside. In his own lifetime he was famed, not for his love of gardens, but for his thirty five mile hikes across the hills of Surrey and Hampshire from which, according to Jan Marsh, "aspiring writers took the idea that fresh air and natural scenery were the necessary compléments to the creative process".[72] Meredith was of the opinion that the signs of wild nature are richer than those of the garden. In Love in the Valley, the speaker responds only tepidly to "prim" garden flowers and their comparatively narrow pedagogy. "I might love them", he says, "but for loving more the wild ones" because the wild ones "tell me more".[73]

Nonetheless, a garden teeming with living things that had invited themselves in but which had not been made unwelcome was for Meredith a healthy sign of human communion with nature. He desribes such a garden in Change and Recurrence.

> I stood at the gate of the cot
> Where my darling, with side-glance demure,
> Would spy, on her trim garden-plot,
> The busy wild things chase and lure.
> For these with their ways were her feast;
> They had surety no enemy lurked.
> Their deftest of tricks to their least,
> She gathered in watch as she worked.
>
> When berries were red on her ash,
> The blackbird would rifle them rough,
> Till the ground underneath looked a gash,
> And her rogue grew the round of a chough.
> The squirrel cocked ear o'er his hoop,
> Up the spruce, quick as eye, trailing brush.
> She knew any tit of the troop
> All as well as the snail-tapping thrush.

I gazed: 'twas the scene of the frame,
With the face, the dear life for me, fled.
No window a lute to my name,
No watcher there plying the thread.
But the blackbird hung packing at will;
The squirrel from cone hopped to cone;
The thrush had a snail in his bill,
And tap-tapped the shell hard on stone.[74]

Here, without a trace of revulsion or perturbation, is Meredith's version of the Darwinian world in homely miniature. Only a poet who, in the words of Tess Cosslett, had "wholeheartedly absorbed and accepted the Victorian scientific world view"[75] could have written about the rapacity of nature within the context of an affective revisitation poem. The garden isn't pretty, but then, as Ebbatson remarks, "Only the sentimentalist, that typical Meredithian butt, would require of Nature the smooth charm of human society".[76]

Gardens which possess the "smooth charm of human society" come in for some rough treatment in Meredith's fiction. More than simply dull to the nature-worshipper, they are signs of the hubristic folly man exhibits when he tries to "raise a spiritual system in antagonism to Nature".[77] Throughout The Egoist, but particularly in the portrait of Sir Willoughby Patterne, nature and human ego polarise. In seeking the "Arcadian by the aesthetic route" (I, 12), Sir Willoughby abjures the natural. His estate, a "flat land" held in by "hedges and palings", is the topographical correlative of his "art of life" (I, 146), a philosophy he can exemplify only by ruthlessly enclosing the lives of those he gathers about him. Like its owner, Patterne estate is impeccably groomed and superficially charming. But Clara Middleton (here the author's mouth piece) finds its prettiness "overwhelming". She confesses to Laetitia Dale on their walk across the park: "It is very pretty; but to live with, I think I prefer ugliness. I can imagine learning to love ugliness. However young you are, you cannot be deceived by it ... I would rather have fields, commons" (I, 183).

Even Sir Willoughby cannot entirely dispose of ugliness or, what

amounts to the same thing, unruly fecundity. Nature kicks back when "civilisation" flexes its muscles or, as Meredith expressed it, "Nature abhors precociousness, and has the habit of punishing it".[78] Sir Willoughby's curse is the dryadical Crossjay, the unextirpatable weed in whom nature is "very strong". When it is time for his lessons, he has to be "plucked out of the earth, rank of the soil, like a root (I, 34). The mountain is another symbol of wild, free nature that will not be denied. Clara and Vernon Whitford, the alpinist, at first discuss the Alps, and finally escape to them. With them lies "Hope for the future, potential fertility and growth in the world".[79]

In contrast to Sir Willoughby, Victor Radnor, the successful businessman hero of <u>One of Our Conquerors</u>, pursues the realisation of an Idea that does not exclude nature but, as Mohammad Shaheen rightly points out, "represents a means of achieving the ideal of reconciling society to nature"[80] - though it is forever slipping from Victor's conscious grasp. Society refuses to sanction Victor's unorthodox relationship with Nataly (his mistress); he realises that society is not "in the dance with nature" (p. 435). But Victor's Lakelands venture - his scheme for scoring a victory over society and of securing a respectable future for his illegitimate daughter, Nesta - betrays the extent of his entanglement with society. Lakelands is a grandiose, hurriedly-constructed country estate, "a stately pleasure dome indeed" with, as Bernard A. Richards aptly puts it, "The botanical and human flowers protected and nurtured under the glass of the conservatory".[81] Even Nataly's dream place - a "real nest" in the country where she can "strike roots" (p. 48) - would have been closer to an honest communion with nature than the gardens of Lakelands, tricked out as they are with every fashionable feature that money can provide (see p. 81-4).

Had Meredith pronounced more explicitly upon the nature of the relationship of garden and wildscape, he would doubtless have repudiated

the notion of a simple dualism. He would have argued that the appetitive aspect of nature, the scourge of the totter-kneed sentimentalist, is as necessary a counter-force to atrophy in the garden as it is in natural landscapes and in man himself. As in fact he does say in The Woods of Westermain, "blood" must join "brain and spirit" "for true felicity".[82] In garden terms, the animal vitality immanent in plants and the like must be present, read for its lessons, and yet directed and governed by human rationality (or "brain"). Gardens should express the "joy of living ... in perfect accordance with Nature, in collectedness, in simplicity, in sanity".[83] These are the words of one of Meredith's reviewers, but it is inconceivable that a poet whose mature poetic project was the positive redefinition of the "red in tooth and claw" view of nature would not have endorsed them.

A great deal has been written about Hardy's presentation of nature and the countryside, but very little specifically about the gardens in his novels and poems. The obvious reason for this is that his woods, heaths, and hills have a physical vastness and/or an imaginative intensity that dwarfs and eclipses the (generally) modest gardens with which they are dotted. But there is a further and, to my mind, more interesting reason: the typical Hardian garden doesn't seem to plead for special attention because it is essentially a micro-version of the landscape in which it is situated. Its flora may be different, but it is subject to the same natural processes and inhabited by the same kinds of creatures. Only by dint of human effort, is the garden prevented from reverting to the wilderness from which it was wrested and to which it inclines. Even then, if it is a living garden, it must partake of the active life of nature.

For Hardy, the garden, just as much as the wood or the heath, is a site of struggle - objectively, between nature and man, subjectively, between competing views of nature: the beneficent, Romantic view, and

the Darwinian view of struggle intensified by random choice. These struggles, evinced at a macro-level in Hardy's treatment of dominant landscapes, are distilled in miniature in garden descriptions. Consider the modulation (from "beautiful" to "writhing") in Hardy's account of Henchard's garden:

> They locked up the office, and the young man [Farfrae] followed his companion through the private little door which, admitting directly to Henchard's garden, permitted a passage from the utilitarian to the beautiful at one step. The garden was silent, dewy, and full of perfume. It extended a long way back from the house, first as lawns and flower-beds, then as fruit gardens, where the long-tied espaliers, as old as the old house itself, had grown so stout, and cramped, and gnarled that they had pulled their stakes out of the ground and stood distorted and writhing in vegetable agony, like leafy Laocoöns. (pp. 102-3)

When Hardy wishes to suggest gentle domesticity and what Andrew Enstice calls nature's "simple proximity to village life",[84] he tilts towards the beneficent view of nature. But even here, itinerant or indigenous insects serve as the guarantors of wild nature's animating presence. Thus, Miller Loveday's grassed-over paths "harboured slugs";[85] "plodding bees" and "gadding butterflies" are among the "animate things that moved amid "the gardens of Welland;[86] and in Under the Greenwood Tree, the happy equipoise of country folk and nature is reflected in the micro-life of the cottage gardens:

> It was a morning of the later summer-time; a morning of lingering dews, when the grass is never dry in the shade. Fuchsias and dahlias were laded till eleven o'clock with small drops and dashes of water, changing the colour of their sparkle at every movement of the air; and elsewhere hanging on twigs like small silver fruit. The threads of garden spiders appeared thick and polished. In the dry and sunny places, dozens of long-legged crane-flies whizzed off the grass at every stage the passer took. (p. 171)

More often in Hardy's garden scenes, the Darwinian perspective is dominant. When Mrs. Smith in A Pair of Blue Eyes (1873) inveighs against the "horrid Jacob's ladders" in her cottage garden, it is to the intractable, scarcely containable fecundity of nature she draws

attention:

> Instead of praising 'em, I am mad wi' 'em for being so ready to grow where they are not wanted. They are very well in their way, but I do not care for things that neglect won't kill. Do what I will, dig, drag, scrap, pull, I get too many of 'em. I chop the roots: up they'll come treble strong. Throw 'em over hedge; there they'll grow, staring me in the face like a hungry dog driven away, and creep back again in a week or two the same as before. (pp. 258-9)

Other scenes exemplify Margaret Drabble's observation that Hardy "seems at times to have had an almost perverse delight in destroying the convention of a happy, pretty, gentle rural world, where the only vile thing is man".[87] The park of Lady Constantine's Great House in Two on a Tower (1882) is smothered by nature at its nastiest:

> A fog defaced all the trees of the park that morning; the white atmosphere adhered to the ground like a fungoid growth from it, and made the turfed undulations look slimy and raw. (p. 55)

Even the sunny suburban garden can expect to fall victim to the predations of nature and time. This is the theme of Hardy's poem During Wind and Rain. In each of the four stanzas, the etching of a convivial and vigorous scene of the past is abruptly terminated by the speaker's wailing refrain upon the effects of change and decay. Here are the middle two stanzas:

> They clear the creeping moss -
> Elders and juniors - aye,
> Making the pathways neat
> And the garden gay;
> And they build a shady seat ...
> Ah, no; the years, the years;
> See, the white storm-birds wing across!
>
> They are blithely breakfasting all -
> Men and maidens - yea,
> Under the summer tree,
> With a glimpse of the bay,
> While pet fowl come to the knee....
> Ah, no; the years O!
> And the rotten rose is ript from the wall.[88]

The best known and by far the most discussed of Hardy's gardens - the neglected garden at Talbothay's through which Tess in Tess of the d'Urbervilles is drawn by the entrancing strains of Angel's harp - is

also the one most closely to approximate to Darwin's "tangled bank". Of the relevant paragraphs, the following has received the most critical attention:

> The outskirts of the garden in which Tess found herself had been left uncultivated for some years, and was now damp and rank with juicy grass which sent up mists of pollen at a touch; and with tall blooming weeds emitting offensive smells - weeds whose red and yellow and purple hues formed a polychrome as dazzling as that of cultivated flowers. She went stealthily as a cat through this profusion of growth, gathering cuckoo-spittle on her skirts, cracking snails that were underfoot, staining her hands with thistle-milk and slug-slime, and rubbing off upon her naked arms sticky blights which, though snow-white on the apple-tree trunks, made madder stains on her skin; thus she drew quite near to Clare, still unobserved of him. (p. 154)

Reactions to this passage vary widely. Some, perhaps the majority, of commentators feel that the overriding impression is one of unqualified nastiness. J.R. Osgerby's response is typical. All the living things of the garden, she says, are "whitish, cold and drearily insubstantial, yet thoroughly unpleasant in their mere existence".[89] Other critics respond more ambivalently and positively. Bruce Johnson senses "some general vague corruption" in the symbolism of the decaying garden, but realises also that it is the "sticky objectionableness of Nature" that make "Our senses come alive".[90] Similarly, David Lodge contends - rightly, I believe - that "the conventional response (of revulsion) invited by concepts like 'rank', 'offensive smells', 'spittle', 'snails', 'slug-slime', 'blights', 'stains', etc., is insistently checked by an alternative note which runs through the landscape, a note of celebration of the brimming fertility of the weeds and the keen sensations they afford".[91] He adds that the overgrown garden is an apt image of "unconstrained nature" "reminds us of the wild, exuberant, anarchic life that flourishes on the dark underside, as it were, of the cultivated fertility of the valley".[92]

In other words, a degree of disagreeableness is part and parcel of

nature's virility, or the price to be paid for permitting its expression. Better mildly unpleasant fecundity than the amicable impotence of a garden laundered of the wildness that anchors it in nature. Hardy might have said this, and does say something like it in The Return of the Native (1878). The farmers of Egdon, we are told, smile to see the landscape fashioned into "square fields" that "look like silver gridirons".

> But as for [Clym] Yeobright, when he looked from the heights on his way he could not help indulging in a barbarous satisfaction at observing that, in some of the attempts at reclamation from the waste, tillage, after holding on for a year or two, had receded again in despair, the ferns and furze-tufts stubbornly re-asserting themselves. (p. 205)

Hardy's visceral sympathies, I suspect, are with Clym rather than with the cultivators. And my suspicion is that many of Hardy's readers were heartened rather than reviled by his aggressively unromantic descriptions of potent gardens in much the same way that the speaker in Browning's Sibrandus Schafraburgensis is impishly delighted to observe "live creatures" "frisking and twisting and coupling"[93] upon the scholarly book he had deposited in the crevice of a garden tree. Unmoored from an ever-receding wildscape, they sought for reassuring signs of nature's resilience. Given the circumstances that led in the late nineteenth century to what Jan Marsh describes as "a sudden and sustained flowering of societies and committees for protecting and preserving pieces of old England from urban and industrial depredations",[94] a "realistic", even a Darwinian interpretation of the natural world was palatable and possibly more comforting than the gentle "word painting of Nature" turned out "not so much from Nature's seers as from her showmen".[95] By way of example, Havelock Ellis mentions [William?] Black - one of the writers compelled to exhibit a "continuous strain of admiration" for Nature, because he does not "live near [its] heart". But in reading Hardy, he says, "we are conscious of the voice of one who has worshipped at the temple's inner shrine".[96]

There is certainly little evidence to suggest that Hardy's early readers were perturbed by his unsentimental presentation of gardens and other landscapes. R.H. Hutton found the Hintock woods the "only really pleasant part"[97] of The Woodlanders, and yet, they "are not described as green, fresh and growing but as sinister, hostile and dark".[98] If the Victorians found Meredith's "manly" attitude towards nature "tough, vigorous, and enduring",[99] they could scarcely have found Hardy's less so.

I am not, of course, suggesting that Hardy set out to reassure his readers that nature is alive and well. Whatever needs they satisfied, his landscape descriptions were not intended as field dressings applied to the wounds inflicted upon the countryside by urban imperialists and other change-ringing intruders. Nor do I wish to imply that Hardy blurred the garden/non-garden distinction because he was really just another nature-worshipper at heart, but canny enough to veil it by a hard-hitting blend of Darwinian biology and Schopenhaurian pessimism. Hardian gardens - with some exceptions - interpenetrate with natural and wilder landscapes because they are not exempt from nature's laws. They flourish and decay, are nasty or pleasant, not because nature for Hardy is whimsical (benevolent on occasions, malaevolent on others) but because it is indifferent to man yet generally stubborn and strenuous.

Of necessity, my argument in this chapter has been complex. For this reason, a summary of the main points may not be out of place.

I have shown that the prominence of gardens in Victorian literature has much to do with the declining imaginative and inspirational potency of wilder, natural landscapes, and with the rejection or modification of the aesthetic interests responsible for their earlier exaltation. The Romantic enthusiasm for (untamed) nature attenuated. Veneration of sublime mountain scenery came to many to seem a misdirection: a recherché

cult tempting individuals to dissipate socially useful energies in the self-indulgent pursuit of aesthetic experience and solitary heroics - posturings incompatible with the social orientation of nineteenth century fiction. For other reasons, gardens came to be privileged as the antithesis of the wildscape: less brutal, less "heathenish", more "civilised" and "civilising", less likely to position the perceiver in the role of mere spectator, more obviously a surrogate for the absent or disappearing countryside, physically more accessible, socially more accommodating, psychically more congenial.

At the same time, gardens were called upon to resonate with the more positively evaluated qualities of wild nature - plenitude, vitality, and spotaneity - that the agrarianisation of the countryside and the spread of urban influences were threatening to eliminate. What many writers sensed was that the tame garden is also a lame garden; that is, an ineffectual counter-image to the city, and sometimes even complicitous with it. Stronger antidotes seemed necessary. Hence, the celebration of the half-wild garden, sometimes shown as romantically beneficent, sometimes as riotously, even unpleasantly, exuberant. Some writers, biographically rooted in wilder English landscapes, retained a passion for untamed natural scenery and the kinds of gardens most closely to resemble it. Some absorbed Darwinianism, and infused their gardens with the life force of virile nature. (Swinburne takes this to extremes: some of the gardens in his poems are actually emptied, decimated and reduced to death-like stasis by the grand, elemental forces of nature.[100]) A few, though firmly anti-romantic in their attitudes towards nature, and with no great love of the wilderness, favoured the retention of pockets of wildscape within garden landscapes. Morris is a case in point. His vision of post-revolutionary England is of a garden containing tracts of forest valued both for their beauty and utility. In fact, in News from Nowhere, Morris comes close to exposing the wild-

scape/garden distinction as a false dichotomy or, more precisely, as a bifurcation emphatic only in capitalist societies where gardens are mostly private property, and the countryside is apparently "open" and "free". In the variegated landscape of his socialist utopia, gardens blend harmoniously with fields and forests, villages and clean, green cities. England is filled with gardens; but England is itself a garden, since human beings are in control of nature and yet very much a part of it. The old distinctions are dead.

But they are not dead in the England in which Morris himself lived, which is why the gardens in Victorian imaginative literature seem often to suggest ideal middle landscapes between the extremes of wildscape and city, combining and reconciling the merits of each. The middle landscape ideal is central to, say, the physical and symbolic topography of Hard Times in which, as George Bornstein contends, Dickens "idealises neither the chaotic growth of a wholly natural forest nor the ordered mechanism of a wholly artificial city, but the ordered growth, the blend of pattern with spontaneity, exemplified by a cultivated field or garden".[101] It seems also to triumph at the end of Wuthering Heights when Hareton Earnshaw and Catherine Heathcliff make for themselves a garden which couples something of the vitality of the propinquitous moors with the gentle domesticity of the enclosed gardens of Thrushcross Grange. Keith Sagar appears to recognise this when he compares these second generation children to Shakespeare's late heroines who "commit themselves ... to a civilised living which neither capitulates to nature, nor cuts itself off from nature's sustaining sources of vitality".[102] And as I have pointed out in preceding chapters, versions of the "half trim, half wild" garden are among the more positively presented garden types in Victorian imaginative literature as a whole.

In conclusion, I return to the point I made at the start of this chapter: in Victorian literature there is no simple or consistent

pairing, oppositional or otherwise, between "garden" and "nature", or "landscape" terms to which it is paradigmatically related. What can be asserted with confidence is that "garden" shoulders many, sometimes contradictory, representational burdens, that some of them were previously shouldered by other "landscape" terms, and that through their presentation of gardens, Victorian writers articulate their doubts about, their hopes for, and their attitudes towards, landscape scenery and the natural world.

8

Gardens and Cities

In Victorian imaginative literature, garden/city relationships are complex, varied and variously defined. To identify the principal permutations (the most I can hope to do) is also to determine the "answers" offered by novelists and poets to questions addressed more directly by town planners, social reformers, and others concerned with the problems of an unprecedented rate of urban growth: Can humanised nature survive, with or without human assistance, in city environments? If so, can it help to make urban existence tolerable, even comfortable - and for whom? If not, what can or should be done about it? Four main permutations or models can be identified. The order in which I present them hints - but no more than that - at their historical ascendancy.

The first can be represented by the formulation "the city and the garden". In some respects this is a variant of the more familiar opposition of town and country. The syntax of both formulations - polarised nouns about an adversative "and" - mimes the position it articulates: that the (industrial) city is irreconciliably opposed to the topos from which it is environmentally, morally, and in every other way distinguished. And as I have shown already, in nineteenth century literature "country" and "garden" are frequently tied to the same pastoral myths, frequently connote similar positive qualities, and frequently gratify similar personal needs. But the terms are not entirely synonymous, and for writers who wished to insist upon a simple dichotomy between rural England and industrial England, "garden" is sometimes the preferred term. One reason for this is obvious: when used as a pastoral metaphor, "garden" inevitably defines the country as something to look upon and enjoy rather than as something from which to derive a living - in short, as landscape rather than as land. The effects of this are to make the country(side) seem ideal and idyllic, to direct attention to its

otherness from the city, and to mask its social and economic realities. Moreover, since "garden" has a literal as well as a figurative significance, to equate "country" with "garden" is also to equate the rural landscape with a particular kind of enclave within it and, because "country" also has a double sense, with England itself. To borrow a minor character from Tennyson's The Princess, it is what we might call the position - or ideological trick - of the "Tory member's elder son" (Poems, p. 843). From his vantage point on the "slope" of Vivian-place, he reads the surrounding landscape with a selective and conservative eye, fixing first upon a specific garden that for him is a synechdoche of the "whole" (of England) whose virtues he proceeds to extol.

The idea that "real" England was old, rural England, and that pre-industrial England was a garden, was at the heart of the anti-urban bias of much nineteenth-century literature, and fondly nourished in the writings of many visitors from abroad. In his recent study of Anglo-American travel literature, Christopher Mulvey affirms that

> The most recurrent image used to describe England in nineteenth-century American travel literature was that of the garden. The American was impressed by the sheer number and variety of the gardens that he found in England; he was even more impressed by the fact that the whole country was "groomed", "finished", "completed" to the point that it could be described as "the very garden of the world". There was, so far as he could see, no wilderness at all ... The domesticated, tamed quality of the landscape induced a sense of unreality. At the same time, it encouraged a selective vision that excluded anything that was ugly or disruptive: "I used to think the gardens never ended", Nadal wrote, "but lay side by side the island through, and that the sea washed them all round".[1]

British writers who shared the American tourist's predilections, even if they could not take comfort in his selective perceptions, tended to image the industrial city as a corrupted garden. George Bornstein finds patterns of miscultivated field and corrupted garden imagery in Dickens's presentation of Coketown,[2] a town of "savages" and unnatural red and

black. Wilkie Collins called London a "house-forest";[3] numerous other detractors of the metropolis called it a "wilderness".[4]

Some Victorian writers had another reason for privileging the city/garden antithesis: they found that the garden had perceptual advantages over the country as a counter-image to the oppressive industrial city. That is, they sensed that the garden afforded a more specific, more focused and potentially more realisable model of innocence and tranquility upon which the inner eye could fix its yearnings. The anti-urban sentiments of writers as different as Ruskin, Gissing, and M.E. Braddon can be traced in part to their recollections of childhood gardens - actual, vividly-remembered places.

The "nexus and enblem"[5] of Ruskin's early childhood was the garden of his parents's "rustic eminence" at Herne Hill. In chapter two of Praeterita (1885-89) he recalls precisely its dimensions, its contents, and his experiences within it. From these details, and not from hazy impressions of a generalised rural topography, he constructs his subtly qualified version of the myth of edenic childhood. Like Ruskin, M.E. Braddon spent her critical formative years in a rustic suburb of London: Camberwell of the 1850s. In the three novels in which she recalls it,[6] it takes the form of a sizeable, well-stocked garden, such as she had known, and "such as", she wrote in 1904, "no one could hope for nowadays within five miles of London".[7]

The case with Gissing is somewhat different. As a boy, his affection for the countryside about the industrial town of Wakefield was stronger than that for the utilitarian town garden rented by his parents. Even so, he knew, as he shows in his novels, that when city-dwellers dream of a rural retreat, their dream generally assumes a specific if hand-me-down form. Those of meagre means may set their sights no higher than a modest allotment garden, a place like that of the Cartwrights in A Life's Morning "laid out with an eye less to beauty than to

usefulness" (p. 107). The well-healed and socially ambitious hanker after the ancestral country retirement they have never known. In The Whirlpool (1897) Alma Frothingham's up-market ideal is

> one of those picturesque old places down in Surrey - quite in the country, yet within easy reach of town; a house with a real garden, and perhaps an orchard. (p. 368)

Gissing was capable of mocking such aspirations - and probably intends to here - but he knew all about them and the conditions which give rise to them.[8] Before him, Gaskell, Dickens, and a host of minor novelists had attested to their sustaining power. Fictional "evidence" supports rather than otherwise the contention of one mid-century reviewer that the longing to possess a garden is "the universal wish of the human heart", and especially intense in the garden-less city dweller, who

> dreams of ending his days in a cottage festooned with honeysuckle and sweet jasmine, and of growing the simple flowers which pleased his boyhood.[9]

In its most extreme and reductionist form, the city/garden antithesis is premissed on the belief that, at least for the mass of working people, the industrial city is a place of unmitigated misery, ugliness, and degradation, and a breeding ground of social and political unrest. In most early and some later Victorian versions of the formulation, the power and ideology of the "millocracy" (i.e. the industrial bourgeoisie) are held responsible for urban evils, though exacerbated rather than potentially corrigible by working class political activity. The only solution envisaged for society in general is a return to the "past" conceived in conservative, idealised, and sometimes glutinously sentimental terms as a world of pastoral peace and stable social formations. The only solution for the individual is to stay away from the manufacturing town or, if he is unlucky enough to be penned within it, withdrawal to the country.

Just how many novelists subscribed in full to this particular definition of the situation, it is difficult to tell - for reasons I shall

touch upon shortly. What is certain is that only a very few novelists felt sufficiently confident in the feasibility of flight from the city to advocate it in fictional contexts as the only satisfactory strategy for survival. Among those who incline in that direction are one or two of the novelists who first probe "the Condition of England" question in the late 1830s and 1840s.

One such writer is the Tory and ultra-Protestant evangelical Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna. Her Helen Fleetwood (1841) - the first English novel wholly concerned with the plight of industrial workers - documents the rapid destruction of a simple rural family consequent upon their migration to the manufacturing centre of Manchester. The novel is an unrelenting assault upon the social and political anarchy and the moral debilitation wreaked by industrialism. Notwithstanding two very salient facts, first, that Widow Green and her brood of granddaughters (including the adopted Helen Fleetwood) are dispossessed of their land in a country village, and second, that they are lured to Manchester by the fraudulent pamphlets glamourising city life put about by parish guardians intent on shirking their obligations to the poor, Mrs. Tonna's ideal model is an idealised notion of the country, She writes:

> There are districts in the land still retaining much of the primitive character of English rusticity - places where the blight has not come; where the demoralising swarm of railway excavators has never alighted, nor the firebrand of political rancour scattered its darkening smoke, nor the hell-born reptile of socialism trailed its venomous slime. (p. 238)

For the nation at large, the only solution she can imagine is "the re-establishment of the spirit of Christian brotherhood";[10] but elsewhere she suggests as a more practical palliative the inverse migration of industrial workers to rural allotment gardens. In The Perils of the Nation she argues that "the poor, helpless, day-labourer, just subsisting on seven shillings per week" would become "at once sober, frugal and most industrious" if given "half an acre of land, at a

moderate rent".[11] Interestingly enough, moderate Chartists also favoured allotment gardens for the independence they would give to individual workers.

Because it relates the social conditions of early-Victorian England to the state of national politics, the class struggle, and the history of Chartism, Disraeli's Sybil is an altogether more ambitious project than Helen Fleetwood. A selective reading of the novel might suggest that Disraeli was operating within the same conceptual framework - the simple opposition of industrial city and rural garden - as Mrs. Tonna. With bluebook accuracy infused with imaginative intensity, he exposes the working and living conditions of a multiplicity of labduring groups in the industrial centres of northern England: among them, the miners of a despoiled countryside, the factory operatives of Mowbray (which may be a fictional conflation of Skipton and Huddersfield), and the metal workers of Woodgate, "the ugliest spot in England ... where a tree could not be seen, a flower was unknown" (p. 164). Though there are local variations, the industrial poor are in general degraded by a miserable and unhealthy environment, brutalised by tyrannical manufacturers and (at Woodgate) by soi dissant proletarian "aristocrats", and easy prey to Chartist agitators and violent malcontents. Conditions in the capital are scarcely better. As Sybil discovers, London outside "the dainty quarters of the city" (p. 319) is a dingy labyrinthe crawling with criminals and ruffians.

As a contrast, Disraeli presents the stone cottage and teeming country garden of Sybil and Walter Gerard - a modern place but of medieval simplicity:

> Its materials were of a fawn-coloured stone, common in the Mowbray quarries. A scarlet creeper clustered round one side of its ample porch; its windows were large, mullioned, and neatly latticed; it stood in the midst of a garden of no mean dimensions, but every bed and nook of which teemed with cultivation; flowers and vegetables both abounded, while an orchard rich with the promise

> of many fruits - ripe pears and famous pippins of the north and plums of every shape and hue - screened the dwelling from that wind against which the woods that formed its background were no protection. (p. 165)

"Here", observes Carolyn P. Collette,

> Disraeli appears to anticipate Morris's stress on clear, functional lines and old English design as the hallmarks of beauty. What is more, here the garden of England both nourishes and protects the home, itself symbolising the peace and prosperity of England's ancient order.[12]

If it was Disraeli's intention to suggest as an alternative to industrialism the "thinking" peasants's revivification of the medieval ideals of beauty, simplicity, and human harmony with the natural world, then the Gerards's cottage garden, and the idyllic Vale of Mowe in which it is situated, is the form it takes. It is in this locality that the aristocratic hero of the novel, Charles Egremont, assumes the name of Mr. Franklin, rents a place with "a little garden", enjoys a "delicious" existence amid "clustering orchards and gardens of flowers and herbs" (p. 215) and delights in enlightening conversation with the Gerards and Stephen Morley. Later in the narrative, when Walter Gerard has become deeply involved with Chartist extremists, Sybil "sighed for the days of their cottage and garden" - "touching images of the past" (p. 305) that have their historical equivalents in Disraeli's nostalgic images of "Merry England".

To read Sybil solely with an eye to the contrasts I have indicated is obviously to under-read it, since there is much more to the novel than the opposition of ugly city and beautiful garden. But it may also be to misread it, for however compelling to Disraeli and his protagonists may be the mode of existence the cottage garden represents, it does not escape the complexities and ambiguities which riddle the novel as a whole.[13]

In the first place, the Gerards's cottage is in no sense a representative symbol of rural peace and beauty. Gerard himself is a factory worker, not a farm labourer; and far from idealising the country, Disraeli draws attention to the contrast between its beautiful image and

its miserable reality. The rural town of Marney has more slum dwellings, more disease, and more penurious inhabitants than any of the industrial towns in the novel. Its residents are displaced farm workers, expelled from their cottages by landowners intent on exempting themselves from "the maintenance of the population" (p. 70). The fortunate few who are still employed obtain but "scant remuneration" and are forced to endure a "weary journey" to "reach the scene of their labour" (p. 70). Not even the "social problem" novels of Charles Kingsley, Yeast (1848) and Alton Locke (1850), do more than Sybil to dispel the belief that industrial towns have a monopoly of hardship and misery.

In the second place, Disraeli's propaganda is not directed against towns and industrialism as such, but rather at the exploitation of factory workers by socially irresponsible capitalists, without whom Chartism would be otiose. In Coningsby he goes as far as to say that "A great city ... is the type of some great idea" (p. 185); and nowhere in Sybil does he suggest repatriating urban workers to country cottages and gardens like that of the Gerards. Unwittingly, perhaps, he betrays the fact that Sybil's garden - Sybil calls it her "cloister" - is the privileged shelter in which she is able to maintain the fiction that society is divided neatly between the oppressors and the oppressed. Only when she ventures beyond it does she realise that the working class are not homogeneous, that some factions of it are violent and rough, and that some aristocrats are good and well-intentioned. Her father and the scholarly Owenite Stephen Morley are never entirely contented with their cottage garden existence. For them it is associated with talk rather than with action. It is a curious irony that the Gerards's garden - presumably their symbol of home - is the work of Morley, whose socialist convictions centre upon his detestation of the "domestic principle". Home for him is a "barbarous idea" because "home is isolation" and "therefore anti-social". "What we want", he says, "is community". (p.237)

Community, of a different sort, is also what Disraeli and his hero desire: a community of interests between capital and labour, existing within a graded class structure, and organised by a revitalised aristocracy who accept the social obligations encumbent upon the privileged. And this is why the ideal in Sybil is not the Gerards's cottage and garden but the model factory and village of Mr. Trafford - one of the rare employers with "gentle blood", "old English feelings", and a genuine concern for the welfare of his employees. Trafford's concept of community embraces the concept of home, for

> He knew well that the domestic virtues are dependent on the existence of a home, and one of his first efforts had been to build a village where every family might be well lodged. (p. 224)[14]

His employees are "proud of their house and little garden, and of the horticultural society, where its produce permitted them to be annual competitors". Trafford's own house stood "In the midst of the village, surrounded by beautiful gardens, which gave an impetus to the horticulture of the community". (p. 224) The message is clear: if all employers were like Trafford, then no industrial worker would yearn for a cottage and a garden in the country.

It is worth just noting that the concluding pages of Charlotte Brontë's Shirley provide a decidedly more ambivalent perspective on the model village as a solution to the social and environmental problems of the industrial proletariat. Having weathered the storm of Ludditism, and softened through experience and the influence of Caroline Helstone, the once cold-hearted industrialist Robert Moore feels able to deal more benevolently with his employees. His intention, partly fulfilled forty years on from its conception in the years of the Napoleonic Wars, is to "root up the copse" at Fieldhead and fill the "barren Hollow with lines of cottages, and rows of cottage gardens" (p. 508). From a Disraelian perspective, this paternalistic project is progress indeed.

But Caroline's reaction is one of horror. "You will change our blue hill-country air into the Stilbro' smoke atmosphere" (p. 508), she complains. Her frame of reference is endorsed by the nostalgic image of the Yorkshire countryside before the Industrial Revolution with which the novel closes.

Mary Barton, the first of Elizabeth Gaskell's industrial novels, seems also to privilege the environment of the countryside over that of the industrial town. However, the contrast between them is never allowed to detract larger concerns, while the garden-as-escape motif is not so much discredited as uninterrogated and quite literally pushed to the side, for the novel is framed by images of pastoral idyll at its outer most fringes. It opens with a memorable description of "Green Heys Fields", the beautiful spot accessible to Manchester cotton operatives on holiday excursions. Here there is a farm house surrounded by a little garden

> crowded with a medley of old-fashioned herbs and flowers, planted long ago, when the garden was the only druggist's shop within reach, and allowed to grow in scrambling and wild luxuriance - roses, lavendar, sage, balm (for tea), rosemary, pinks and wallflowers, onions and jessamine, in most republican and indiscriminate order (p. 4).

The novel closes with an image of the rural Canadian home of Mary and Jem Wilson. The reader is invited to picture a cottage, surrounded by a homely garden, with orchards stretching beyond it.

Between these pastoral poles, attention is overwhelmingly fixed upon the industrial town of Manchester, and upon the lives and conditions of its working class inhabitants. The countryside, gardens, flowers - these things are scarcely whiffed. The narrator's assertion that "there are no flowers in Manchester" (p. 91) is given the lie only twice: first, by the "geraniums, unpruned and leafy" (p. 12) that sit on the window-sill of the Bartons's home, and symbolise their relative prosperity at the start of the story; second, by the flowers that decorate the "almost"

country house of the wealthy Carsons. Here they symbolise self-indulgent luxury. The mill-owner's daughter, "little Miss Extravagance", is willing to pay half a guinea for a single rose; for her "Life was not worth having without flowers" (p. 64). Significantly, her eulogy on flowers follows jarringly upon the description of the starving Davenports and their filthy, fever-ridden, subterranean hovel. Miss Carson's brother, Henry, wooes Mary with the roses he sends to brighten her dingy rooms.

For the unemployed "workers" of Manchester in the "Hungry Forties", flowers and gardens are simply irrelevant, not because their living conditions have made them gross and insensitive (quite the reverse), but because their "comforts" necessarily take the more practical forms of tea, bread, and Cumberland oatcake.

Since Gaskell accepts that the industrial city is here to stay, and that the sufferings of industrial workers will persist until or unless the social classes can be reconciled by the spirit of fraternal love - the solution to which the latter part of Mary Barton unconvincingly points - she resists the temptation to offer rural retreat as a generally available solution to the problems of the urban poor. That it may have been a temptation is suggested by her account of the genesis of Mary Barton. "Living in Manchester, but with a deep relish and fond admiration for the country", she writes, "my first thought was to find a frame-work for my story in some rural scene".[15] Though she chose instead to write "A Tale of Manchester Life", she could not completely exorcise her love (and seemingly romantic view) of the countryside. Traces of it are evident in her Methodistical model of fortitude, Alice Wilson, a first generation "townie" who refuses the appellation, and feeds upon her memories of a happy childhood in a Cumberland cottage.

What must be stressed, however, is that "Gaskell's faith in the

beauty of nature to restore people to their better selves and to reinstate a feeling of harmony, community, co-operation and wholeness",[16] leads her to suggest only two practical forms that "escape" realistically can take. The first is the occasional excursion into the countryside, represented by the trip to "Green Heys Fields", one or two other references to "operatives sallying forth for a breath of country air" (p. 253) and, more lyrically, by the account of the Whitsuntide outing in Libbie Marsh's Three Eras. Its function is Wordsworthian: the storing up of happy memories "to haunt in greenness and freshness many a loom and workshop and factory with images of peace and beauty" (p. 468). The second is the complete and irrevocable break, not only with the industrial town but also with the society and nation of which it is a part. With the final scene of Mary Barton specifically in mind, Raymond Williams comments: "We can see in the industrial novels of the mid-nineteenth century how the idea of emigration to the colonies was seized on as a solution to the poverty and overcrowding of the cities".[17] The more conventional "solution" - withdrawal from the city to a country cottage existence - is the one escapist strategy that Gaskell refuses to endorse.

One of the differences between Mary Barton and Gaskell's second and only other industrial novel, North and South, is the greater topographical variety of the latter. There are four locales in North and South, but the keenest juxtaposition is between the New Forest hamlet of Helstone and the industrial town of Milton Northern. "At first", as David Skilton observes, "a naive contrast seems set up between the paternalistic south, full of sunny charm and the traditional values of English culture, and the struggling, brutal north, an 'unhealthy, smoky, sunless place', whose ungenteel values are work and profit".[18] Gradually, however, the reader, together with the heroine, Margaret Hale, is compelled to participate in the interrogation of the schematic

opposition implicit in the novel's title. This involves the realisation that life in a small country house and garden is not, inspite of its obvious environmental attractions, a self-evidently preferable alternative to life in an expanding industrial city.

Helstone is defined and judged from a number of perspectives, only some of which make it seem idyllic. On Margaret's return to Helstone from London in chapter 2 the narrator describes both the general countryside about the vicarage, and the vicarage garden itself, in terms suggesting beauty and enchantment. Lennox, the up-and-coming London lawyer with conventional if slightly mocking attitudes towards the country, pictures Helstone as a pastoral fiction where roses bloom all year round and life is "exquisite" and "serene" (p. 60). He attempts to woe Margaret in the sunny garden, and enjoys with the Hales a feast of golden pears gathered and eaten in the garden. But within the vicarage things are less rosy. The interior is dingy and threadbare, Mr. Hale's contentment is clouded by his religious doubts, and Mrs. Hale complains that Helstone is "one of the most out-of-the-way places in England" (p. 50).

Margaret's experience of Helstone is more complex, and her attitudes towards it neither fixed nor entirely consistent. She derives intense pleasure from its scenery, is heart-broken when she has to leave the vicarage garden, and continues to think of it as home long after her move to Milton. She dilates enthusiastically on its beauty to the dying Bessy Higgins, and defends the pre-industrialised south in general as a place of "less suffering" than the industrial north.

Nonetheless, she comes increasingly to view it in a more critical light. On her final return visit to Helstone, she is disappointed to find the vicarage garden much changed, and disenchanted by other changes besides. This subjective disillusionment involves or leads to a more objective reappraisal of the relative merits of the north and south, so

that when the despairing Nicholas Higgins thinks of leaving Milton for the south, she dissuades him in the following terms:

> You would not bear the dullness of the life; you don't know what it is; it would eat you away like rust. Those that have lived there all their lives, are used to soaking in the stagnant waters. They labour on, from day to day, in the great solitude of steaming fields - never speaking or lifting up their poor, bent, downcast heads. The hard spadework robs their brain of life; the sameness of their toil deadens their imagination; they don't care to meet to talk over thoughts and speculations ... What would be peace to them, would be eternal fretting to you. (p. 382).

This speech suggests that Margaret has learned to differentiate between life in a country garden and life on a working farm. It shows also that she has distilled an important lesson from her experience of Milton: that in spite of its general ugliness, the suffering of many of its people, the open hostility between mill-owners and their employees, and the immorality of unbridled economic individualism, the industrial town has one supreme virtue: energy. It is this which renders stultification impossible, and, for Gaskell, holds out the hope of social progress in the form of class reconciliation.

In Gaskell's industrial novels, then, there is no symbolic scaffold erected upon the simplistic bifurcation of England into country and city, and nostalgia for the countryside and country gardens is always kept firmly in check. As Angus Easson says, "Gaskell does not want to go back in terms of mechanical progress, but to forge anew a human relationship"[19] and to "insist that we must deal with problems in hand, which are as real in one area as another".[20] Though it leads to the disruption of small rural communities and their attractive garden landscapes, the installation of the railway - the supreme symbol of industrial progress - is allowed to triumph even in Gaskell's "country" fiction: Cranford, Cousin Phillis, and Wives and Daughters.

By the mid-nineteenth century, few novelists of any note were prepared to suggest that the problems of the industrial and urban poor

could be remedied by the expedient of flight to a country garden or, less specifically, by a "return" to a pre-industrial past. How much significance can be attached to this fact is difficult to say, if only because a great many fiction writers still found it possible to evade the kinds of issues which Gaskell's industrial novels confront, and so possible to say nothing of consequence about the environmental needs and aspirations of the urban working classes.[21] What is certain is that writers who at least glanced at the situation generally subscribed to some weaker form of the city/garden formulation. That is, they captured without fulfilling, the yearnings of the urban poor, or entertained the idea of flight from the city as an unrealised and probably unrealisable possibility. Jean-Paul Hulin cites as an example of a "purely imaginary" flight from the city the sempstress in Thomas Hood's The Song of the Shirt (1844) who, while plying her needle in a miserable city attic, yearns "to breathe the breath/of the cowslip and the primrose sweet".[22] Hulin also quotes a poem by Eliza Cook called the City Artisan, the speaker of which is a city dweller for whom "A dog-rose hedge, a cottage door,/Still linger in my wearied brain".[23] The same theme recurs in innumerable lyrics by many other minor Victorian poets: The Children's Cry by Clement Scott,[24] for example, and A City Flower and The Simple Life by Austin Dobson.[25] And then there are other writers who, while accepting that people with gardens can live contentedly in towns, acknowledge the superiority of country gardens and rural existence. When in John Halifax, Gentleman John Halifax and his family remove from their urban house and garden in Norton Bury to their country home at Longfield, Phineas Fletcher comments: "For pretty as our domain had grown, it was still in the middle of a town, and the children, like all naturally-reared children, craved after the freedom of the country" (p. 184).

This brings me to a consideration of the second model of city-garden relations. I shall call it the "garden-in-the-city" model, though in its more ambitious forms it comes close to resembling the garden city ideal. In bias, the garden-in-the-city concept in Victorian literature tends to be as firmly anti-urban as the city/garden dichotomy, but differs from it in taking as its starting point the recognition that gardens can and indeed must improve the living conditions of urban dwellers: first, because the city cannot be made to disappear; and second, because permanent withdrawal from the city and its influence is an impracticable "solution" for all but a tiny and privileged minority.

It is in the novels of Dickens - regarded developmentally rather than collectively - that the paradigmatic shift from a garden versus the city model to a garden in the city one is most thoroughly worked out or through.

Though Dickens never quite shrugged off his pastoral frame of reference, only in the early works, the Pickwick Papers and Oliver Twist in particular, is flight from the city presented as a coping strategy likely to bring about human growth and regeneration. In The Old Curiosity Shop, flight is identified with death itself, but even in Oliver Twist there are hints that Dickens is nudging towards the perception that the influence of the city is pervasive and inescapable. It requires the intervention of middle class altruists with money to whisk Oliver from London to a garden retreat in the country; yet even in the "free world" of the Maylies's cottage Oliver is not entirely safe. As John Lucas argues, the episode in which Fagin and Monks appear to Oliver in a waking dream, can be taken "to imply that no matter how far you retreat from the rottenness you can never get right away from it". Lucas adds:

> It is an idea that Dickens plumbs in novel after novel and always with an increasingly subtlety and range of imaginative grasp, so that by the time he came to Little

> Dorrit the noble air of freedom is itself merely a dream and there can be no pastoral retreat which images freedom from the city's spreading corruption.[26]

In other words, Dickens moved ineluctably if reluctantly towards the perception that the modern city is not a self-contained place but a space virtually coextensive with social reality itself. Unable or unwilling to envisage a comprehensive reconstruction of urban society, socio-politically and/or environmentally, Dickens came to accept that individuals could experience regeneration only within the city. Robert L. Patten has made a similar point. After Nicholas Nickleby, he writes,

> Dickens's novels increasingly incorporate within an urban community the powers of renewal traditionally associated with the natural countryside. The result is the natural restoration of the physical or spiritually dead to life. The conversion of Scrooge supplies a paradigm, but this transformation recurs in countless ways in the lives of major and minor characters, and in the settings of all Dickens's subsequent works.[27]

This does not mean that Dickens came to purvey a romantic image of the city and of the place of humanised nature within it: quite the reverse. As one critic speculates, "a detailed study of Nature's victories and defeats in Dickens's city would very probably reveal a slow degradation or elimination of the rus in urbe, and the gradual emergence of a totally de-naturalised city".[28] Coketown is completely "unnatural"; the London of Great Expectations, Little Dorrit and Our Mutual Friend is polluted and prison-like and, as Little Dorrit sums it up, "large", "barren" and "wild" (p. 165). Nor does it mean that the gardens which survive this comprehensive urbanisation are necessarily untainted by it. Unless they represent intentional projects to combat the physical and psychical homogenisation of the urban environment, Dickens's city gardens partake of the general contamination. One thinks of the brickmakers's hovels in St. Albans in Bleak House with their "miserable little gardens before the doors growing nothing but stagnant pools" (p. 121), and in Little Dorrit the "square court-yard" before Mrs. Clenham's house "where a

shrub or two and a patch of grass were as rank (which is saying much) as the iron railings enclosing them were rusty" (p. 36), and the "little slip of a front garden" at Pancks's Pentonville lodging-house "where a few of the dustiest leaves hung their dismal heads and led a life of choking" (p. 284).

What it means to speak of Dickens's incorporation of pastoral powers of renewal within the city is that Dickens had sufficient faith in the inextinguishability of "natural" human values - the values mythically associated with an ideal rural world - as to make some of his most thoroughly urban characters the most conspicuous purveyors of them. Imagination, goodness and fellow-feeling enable them to act upon and accommodate themselves to "unnatural" city conditions or, as Samuel M. Sipe has it "to reinvest the alien man-made world with its original meaning as an intentional world".[29] There is a long line of such characters: among them, the Cheerybles, the Nibbles, the Traddles, the Toodles, the Bagnets, the Plornishes, and John Chivery. As in the case of the Plornishes, who create the illusion of a cottage garden in their urban home, or the crippled boy in Nicholas Nickleby (1839) who displays in his back-attic window a remarkable "double wall-flower" blooming in "a cracked jug, without a spout" (p. 514), their reinvestment of the alien city suggests an intuitive grasp of the Ruskinian principle that nature must be built into the architecture of the modern city in order to compensate for the loss of human fellowship with natural scenery. These kinds of green spots are not just minor modifications to the urban environment but also sites of human affection designed, as Sipe says, to "foster a more satisfying sense of community".[30]

The essence of the view to which Dickens came increasingly to gravitate is that the survival of nature in the city is inextricably linked to the survival of urban dwellers with "pastoral" values. Other

writers subscribed to a less contingent version of the garden-in-the-city model.

In its simplest and most negative form, this model emerges in fictional descriptions of city gardens which serve merely as buffer zones against the ugliness and clamour of the physical environment. A characteristic example occurs in Wilkie Collins's early novel Basil (1852). From a window at the rear of his father's dreary London residence, Basil peers upon

> a strip of garden - London garden - a close-shut dungeon for nature, where stunted trees and drooping flowers seemed visibly pining for the free air and sunlight of the country, in their sooty atmosphere, amid the prison of high brick walls. But the place gave room for the air to blow in it, and distanced the tumult of the busy streets. (pp. 41-42)

A similar yet slightly more equivocal example is Hardy's description of a gardened area of Bede's Inn in A Pair of Blue Eyes. It focuses upon a sycamore tree visible from the window of Henry Knight's apartment. In October, the narrator observes,

> We notice the thick coat of soot upon the branches, hanging underneath them in flakes, as in a chimney. The blackness of these boughs does not at present improve the tree - nearly forsaken by its leaves as it is - but in the spring their green fresh beauty is made doubly beautiful by the contrast. Within the railings is a flower-garden of respectable dahlias and chrysanthemums, where a man is sweeping the leaves from the grass. (pp. 141-2)

Since Hardy is willing to grant the flora a degree of positive value, Tess Cosslett's assertion that "Nature here is subdued, imprisoned and controlled by man"[31] seems unduly harsh.

Even so, the figure of the polluted tree is hardly a sanguine sign of nature's capacity to survive among the wholly man-made artifacts of the city. Fortunately for Victorian readers seeking more consoling affirmations of nature's resilience, many imaginative writers subsribed to a stronger version of the city garden model, produced very positive readings of the garden elements of urban "texts" and, in the words of

Jean-Paul Hulin,

> made it a habit, it appears, to emphasize, magnify and glamourize the natural or rustic features still perceptible in the urban enironment. The result is that the Victorian city, as described by many authors, resembles a vast conservation area, an assemblage of green spots and secluded nooks, complete with flowers, butterflies and bird-songs.[32]

"Green spots" take two main forms. First, there are the older, more "passive" and least purpose-built of the city's garden components. These include pastoral nooks and other vestigial elements of an essentially pre-industrial era, now largely forgotten and nestling inconspicuously within the labyrinthine structure of the expanding city. They furnish the subject matter of a welter of magazine articles which treat of the "myriad-sided picture of [London] life"[33] with nostalgic enchantment. As editor of Household Words, Dickens himself probably gave the go ahead for one such piece entitled "Left Behind". The author guides his readers to the sequestered gardens of the metropolis, such as those of the Temple and the Inns of Court, "quiet nest[s], more delightful for being in the heart of London's vitality" which "seems to have been preserved in these busy days as needful harbours against the roar and storm of the main streets".[34] These words echo Dickens's own description of the Temple in chapter 15 of Barnaby Rudge where the emphasis is upon the "dreamy dullness of its trees and gardens" and its "clerkly monkish atmosphere" in contrast to the "tumult of the Strand or Fleet Street" (p. 113).

Throughout his writing career, Dickens showed a fascination for the sequestered pockets of (his version of) the metropolis. In a strictly formal sense, some of them are thoroughly unpastoral. In fact, the term "secluded nooks" is used first in Pickwick Papers of the old London coaching inns like that of White Hart Inn "which have escaped the rage for public improvement and the encroachments of private speculation" (p. 126). Similarly in Nicholas Nickleby the city square in

which the Cheerybles's warehouse is located "has no grass but the weeds which sprang up round its base" (p. 468). The chief function of this "desirable nook in the heart of a busy town" is not to create an illusion of the countryside but to reduce the din of the city to a "distant hum" (p. 468). Nonetheless, Tim's City Square is more garden-like in atmosphere and more tranquil as a refuge than the city gardens to which it stands symbolically opposed: explicitly, to "the gravel walks and garden seats of the Squares of Russell and Euston" (p. 468); implicitly, perhaps, to the "melancholy little plot of ground" behind Ralph Nickleby's house in Golden Square. The latter contains only deformed living things: "a crippled tree", a "rheumatic sparrow", and "stunted everbrowns" (p. 8). Hulin is surely wrong to read these signs as "symbolic of Nature's struggle to survive against the greatest odds"[35] since Dickens is quite specific that "dark yards" of this ilk are "gardens" in name only: "it is not supposed that they were ever planted, but rather that they are pieces of unreclaimed land, with the withered vegetation of the original brick-field" (p. 8).

But some of Dickens's sequestered city gardens are suggestive of the countryside and a beckoning rural past. In A Tale of Two Cities (1859) Doctor Marette's retirement is a "very harbour from the raging streets" and evokes a time when the district around Soho was more "country" than "town" (p. 90). The following description from The Mystery of Edwin Drood (1870) is evidence that Dickens maintained an interest in, though not, perhaps, an imaginative commitment to, the rus in urbe motif to the very end of his novel-writing career:

> Behind the most ancient part of Holborn, London ... is a little nook composed of two irregular quadrangles, called Staple Inn. It was one of these nooks, the turning into which out of the clashing street, imparts to the relieved pedestrian the sensation of having put cotton in his ears, and velvet soles in his boots. It is one of these nooks where a few smoky sparrows twitter in smoky trees, as though they called to one

> another, "Let us play at country", and where a few feet of garden-mould and a few yards of gravel enable them to do that refreshing violence to their tiny understandings. (p. 112)

Most of Dickens's secluded pastoral pockets are the fortuitous accidents or urban history. They have survived because, secreted within the urban matrix, they have escaped the attention of planners and builders. But they are also the potential casualties of urban depredation. This vulnerability, which helps to account for their imaginative resonance, also limits the contribution they can make to the disurbanisation of the city environment. Since most anti-urban writers took the view that nature can survive in the city only if imported or assisted by people, the green spots they celebrate usually take more "active" (i.e. purposively constructed) forms, though some authors were eager to accredit nature with its own inherent powers of resilience. Consider Charles Reade's description of a fictional Victorian gaol in It is Never too Late to Mend:

> Two round towers flank the principal entrance. On one side of the right-hand tower is a small house constructed in the same [Gothic] style as the grand pile. The castle is massive and grand: this, its satellite, is massive and tiny, like the frog doing his little bit of bull.... There is only one dimple to all this gloomy grandeur: a rich little flower-garden, whose frame of emerald turf goes smiling up to the very ankle of the frowning fortress ... From this green spot a few flowers look up with bright and wandering wide-open eyes at the great bullying masonry over their heads; and to the spectator both these sparks of colour at the castle-foot are dazzling and charming; they are like rubies, sapphires, and pink topaz, in some uncouth, angular, ancient setting. (p. 97)

Clearly, this description is inspired by the hope or conviction that nature cannot be bullied into submission, or as Sheila M. Smith puts it: "Nature impudently refuses to be daunted by the walls designed to shut her out".[36]

The little flower garden at the base of the overshadowing prison is typical of the local, small-scale form of environmental manipulation described and celebrated in mid-Victorian literature of the city.

Another, more imaginative adjustment to the pressure for space is the roof-top garden. The best known fictional example, is probably the roof-top garden of Riah's house in Our Mutual Friend (1865). Dickens refuses to romanticise what is little more than "A few boxes of humble flowers and evergreens" amid an "encompassing wilderness of dowager old chimneys" (p. 266). But its "humble creeper", trained about "a blackened chimney stack", is a perfect if grotesque accommodation of nature to the city's artifacts. And it is here that the crippled Fanny Cleaver, now transformed into the strangely beautiful Jenny Wren, professes to find air and rest, and to experience by proxy the blessed release of peaceful death.

Dickens may have got his idea of a roof-top garden from William Bridges-Adam, a contributor to Once a Week, who proposed a scheme to "convert London into a garden"[37] by means of an intensive development of roof-gardens. A story more in keeping with the sanguine spirit of Bridges-Adam's plan was printed in All The Year Round in 1874. Its setting is Tony Spence's second-hand book shop in a backstreet of a town called Smokeford. Above the bookshop, we are told, "flowers flourished wonderfully between sloping roofs".[38]

The roof-garden was the most ingenious example of a range of garden developments that compensated for the shortage of ground space by taking advantage of the vertical dimension of urban buildings. From mid-century onwards, fictional accounts of "portable gardens" were "supplemented" by garden books and magazine articles advocating the process by which gloomy city streets can be beautified and ruralised by the addition of balcony-gardens, window-boxes, and Wardian cases displayed for public viewing. Here are the cheering words of one contributor to Chambers's Journal in the mid-1870s:

> No one who is observant of his surroundings in a walk through any great town or city in the United Kingdom can fail to recognise the great increase in the

> cultivation of flowers, and the adornments of the exterior of houses with devices and arrangements in which shrubs and plants of every description are prominent features. Those who can recall the condition of things twenty or thirty years ago, tell us of the dull, cheerless aspect of our streets, and the impossibility of seeing a growing leaf in our great cities, save in the conservatories of the wealthy, or the few trees that escaped the axe of the destroyer when some of the squares and streets were formed by builders.[39]

The assertion that mid-Victorian streets presented a "cheerless aspect" is not confirmed by many novels of the period. Victorian fiction also leaves little doubt that balcony gardens are a monopoly of the privileged rich. In The History of Pendennis (1850), Thackeray informs his readers that the Claverings's mansion in Grosvenor Square sported a

> balcony before the drawing-room [which] bloomed with a portable garden of the most beautiful plants, and with flowers, white and pink, and scarlet; the windows of the upper room ... and even a pretty little casement of the third storey ... were similarly adorned with floral ornaments. (p. 306)

Trollope more than once points out that the wealthy have the means to make city life a serviceable substitute for life in the country, either by using their money, as does Melmotte in The Way We Live Now (1874-5), to "turn a London street into a bower of roses" (p. 162), or by acquiring desirable residences adjacent to beautiful parks and open spaces, as does Madame Goesler in Phineas Finn (1869). Her Park Lane "cottage" has a particularly lovely view.

> It was May now ... and the park opposite was beautiful with green things, and the air was soft and balmy ... and the flowers in the balcony were full of perfume, and the charm of London - what London can be to the rich - was at its height. (p. 547)

Scores of now largely forgotten novels of upper class London life attest to the contribution that portable gardens can make to "the charm of London". A typical example is Disraeli's description in Henrietta Temple of Bellair House, situated in fashionable Mayfair.

> It was a long building, in the Italian style, situate in the midst of gardens, which, though not very

> extensive, were laid out with so much art and taste, that it was very difficult to believe that you were in a great city. (p. 313)

In G.J. Whyte Melville's Kate Coventry (1856), a novel of the metropolitan beau monde, London seems to begin and end at Belgravia. The heroine's "sweet little house", "a perfect jewel of its kind", has "such a lovely drawing-room, opening into a conservatory, with a fountain and gold fish, to say nothing of flowers ... There are always flowers in the balcony; and there's no great singularity about that" (p. 15). The great advantage of having a residence in Belgravia, says Kate, is that it "is most conveniently situated for a morning ride or walk in the Park", which is one of the "pleasantest things one does in London" (p. 6).

Kate Coventry's view is echoed throughout mid- and late-Victorian literature of the city. With few exceptions, imaginative authors joined social commentators and environmentalists in lauding the provision of public parks and open, gardened spaces close to the most densely built-up areas of the metropolis.[40]

Public parks are extolled for a variety of apparently contradictory virtues. Two images dominate, though they characteristically take some composite form. The first is that of an oasis of quietude and beauty within a noisy desert of brick and mortar. In the 1860s, Hippolyte Taine found Saint James's Park "a real piece of country"[41] and Regent's Park a "backwater" in which "the noise of traffic is no longer to be heard, London is forgotten, the place is solitude".[42] To the speaker in Arnold's Lines Written in Kensington Gardens, the "mountain sod" is "scarce fresher" than his "lone, open glade", and in G.J. Whyte Melville's Digby Grand (1853) the titular hero comes close to experiencing a similar illusion of remoteness from the grimy city.

> People may sneer at the cockney-beauties of Kensington Gardens, but for my part I love those trim alleys and long deep glades as well as anything I have met with further afield; and were it not that the stems of the fine old trees become so engrained and blackened with

> soot, you might fancy, in the heart of that sylvan scenery, that you were a hundred miles from London. (p. 124)

As well as being conducive to the production of pleasing pastoral fictions, the green space of the Gardens offers the solitary figure breathing and thinking space and the experiential equivalent of the hurricane's eye. The most revealing phrase in the above passage is "in the heart of that sylvan scenery". What it implies is that the solitude-affording trees compose a heart within a heart. Arnold's speaker also occupies, or perceives that he occupies, a bowery shelter in which he can experience "peace for ever new" and from which he can gaze upon the "endless, active life" upon the open expanse before him. One of Hardy's short stories, "A Son's Veto" (1891) in Life's Little Ironies (1894), opens with a scene in "one of the minor parks ... that are to be found in the suburbs of London" (p. 35). "There are", says Hardy, "worlds within worlds in the great city", and this garden is one such place, a place that "nobody outside the immediate district had ever heard of" (p. 35). Partly because the city has become vast and complex, the kind of comprehensive vision which enabled Wordsworth, from his vantage point on Westminster Bridge in 1802, to apprehend London as one "mighty heart",[43] is no longer possible. The lone observer now experiences the city as a nested hierarchy of zones or spaces, each one more private, more heart- or womb-like, than the one outside it.

More than just a soothing refuge, the innermost space of the public garden is an external correlative of inner space: a metaphor for the soul, the heart, or the centre of being. In his essay "The Interior Garden and John Stuart Mill", Andrew Griffin attempts to make manifest its latent meaning. Taking as his principal example the "embattled garden at the centre of Charlotte Brontë's Villette" (i.e. the garden behind the girls' school in the Rue Fossette), Griffin asks:

> What is it that such a garden contains, conserves, withholds from the hot grasp of the city? Not, certainly, merely a quantity of trees, flowers, and grass, but rather those feelings or potentialities for feeling that had long been linked with such objects or environments ...[44]

Griffin construes Lucy Snowe's sheltering garden and Arnold's glade in Kensington Gardens as symbols of the Victorian "internalisation of the Romantic process ... a deliberate turning-inward, and even a making-inward of what was external Nature".[45] For Griffin, the garden within the city is homologous to the phenomenological bifurcation of Arnold's speaker: "What the park or garden was to the Victorian city, the soul or vital self might be to the active self, to what is called 'life in the world'".[46]

As a symbol of experiential enclosure, the garden in the city may have a temporal as well as a spatial dimension. Digby Grand looks back to the "peaceful time" when he took "very pleasant walks" in Kensington Gardens "as a sort of smiling oasis in the waste of [his] reckless and tempestuos life" (p. 124). Alaric Tudor in Trollope's The Three Clerks also associates his walks through the parks of London with happier days.

> His office and house were so circumstanced that, though they were some two miles distant, he could walk from one to the other almost without taking his feet off the grass. This had been the cause of great enjoyment to him ... The time was gone when he could watch the gambols of children, smile at courtships of nursery-maids, watch the changes in the dark foliage of the trees, and bend from his direct path hither and thither to catch the effects of distant buildings, and make for his eyes half-rural landscapes in the middle of the metropolis. (pp. 437-38)

Here, the image of the park as a sweet breathing-space, offering pleasing echoes of the countryside is fused with the other image of the park as a community playground affording animated scenes and "endless, active life". Fiction writers who emphasise the latter image come close to the view of Tim Linkinwater in Nicholas Nickleby for whom the green spaces of the city have all the merits and none of the demerits of the country. In Lucretia (1847), Bulwer Lytton remarks that "the parks

and green Kensington Gardens ... seem rural and country like, but yet with more life than the country" (p. 75). Julian Gray in Wilkie Collins's The New Magdalen (1873) dilates enthusiastically upon his invigorating experience through Kensington Gardens.

> For some time past I have been living in a flat, ugly, barren agricultural district. You can't think how pleasant I found the picture presented by the Gardens, as a contrast. The ladies in their rich winter dresses, the smart nursery maids, the lovely children, the ever-moving crowd skating on the ice of the Round Pond, it was all so exhilirating after what I have been used to that I actually caught myself whistling as I walked through the brilliant scene. (p. 92)

Like a less riotous version of a crowd painting by Frith, this passage is a celebratory account of "picturesque tumult"[47] in a pastoralised urban setting. An early-Victorian reader would have found it strange, for in pre-mid-century fiction public gardens are usually presented as the exclusive social arenas of the fashionable rich. But it has much in common with other contemporary images of public gardens as egalitarian playgrounds, fantasy worlds, and social microcosms in which rich and poor sport in harmonious propinquity. Late in the century, Henry James described the public parks of the capital as "the drawing rooms and clubs of the poor",[48] as well as the resorts of the better off. In the context of a poem, Austin Dobson referred to one London garden as a "type of the world".[49] And, as Guy Williams reminds us, "Sir James Barrie, devoted garden-lover, chose [Kensington] Gardens as a principal playground of his most famous creation, Peter Pan".[50] During the present century, countless plays, musicals and films of the Mary Poppins ilk have persistently endorsed these images.

It does not seem hard to understand why public gardens came to be presented so positively and romantically in the second half of the nineteenth century. For many middle class observers of the time, the provision of open spaces for the masses afforded a tangible sign of social progress and a solution to some pressing city problems. Most obviously,

it alleviated the distress of urban overcrowding. "There are evidences", wrote one contributor to the Quiver, "that the days of old were not better than these. The good new times have given us parks. In the old days towns had few of these beautiful healthy open recreation grounds".[51] Some contemporary novelists gave textual space to fictional advocates of public parks. In William Black's The Strange Adventures of a Phaeton (1878) a young Prussian officer in England is indignant that the "various ... open spaces around London" are wasted "playgrounds" (p. 18) for the people. The government or the municipalities, he contends, should "buy up the land, and provide amusements, and draw the people in to open air" (p. 19).

The enthusiasm for public parks, reflected in the passages I have quoted from The Three Clerks and The New Magdalen, suggests that they were seen also as a partial "solution" to what some middle class Victorians considered a far more worrying problem than the lack of breathing space: the problem of too little physical and social contact between the social classes in great cities and, as a possible consequence of this, social disintegration and mob rule. The gardens of the Crystal Palace were repeatedly lauded for having facilitated social intercourse between the classes: "As a garden alone", wrote one contributor to All The Year Round, the Crystal Palace "serves to bring all classes of our pleasure-seekers together".[52] The functions that Blanchard Jerrold ascribed to the Derby - "it gives all London an airing" and "effects a beneficial comingling of classes"[53] - he ascribed also to London's public gardens. Having averred that even "the most obstinate and prejudiced traducer of London must admit that the Cockney is well provided with greenery",[54] he proclaimed that "in the St. James's Park, betimes in Spring and Summer, are to be found men, women and children of all degrees, bowered in abundant greenery".[55]

Peter Conrad astutely observes that Gustave Doré, in his

illustrations to Jerrold's text in London: A Pilgrimage (1872), "transfers the picturesque sketch from a rural to an urban setting, using a Claude glass, as it were, to make the ugliness of London charmingly characteristic and therefore picturesque".[56] Though Jerrold and Doré are "true to the choppy and sketchy rhythms of the city" says Conrad, they "more often wish to resolve the urban hurly-burly into something like the idyllic charm of the pastoral scene".[57]

Other late-Victorian writers tended to pastoralise the city,[58] and strained to see in its public parks and gardens the urban equivalents of the small country parish. What they appear to have sensed is that the public garden could effect, if only temporarily, a softening of antagonisms between the social classes - the principal virtue ascribed by detractors of cities to the small rural community. As one writer put it: "The kindly intercourse that is promoted between the various classes is the best of all possible emollients in every season of political unrest".[59] Perhaps they also took comfort from the perception that in the public garden the mob is generally scattered into couples and knots, deprived of any collective perception of its identity, and encouraged to dissipate its energies in "harmless" play.[60]

I know of no evidence to suggest that imaginative writers consciously championed public gardens from political motives. The fact remains, however, that they presented such places as happy pastoral worlds in which dispersed and socially heterogeneous crowds congealed into the kinds of pseudo-communities desired by those who wished to bring the social classes into proximity but without attenuating the structural divisions between them.

Amidst the general fervour for public gardens, the one conspicuously dissonant voice was that of George Gissing. In his Private Papers, Henry Ryecroft looks back from the comfort of his cottage near

Exeter to his years as a struggling city writer. He recalls: "For more than six years I trod the pavement, never once stepping upon mother earth - for the parks are but pavements disguised with a growth of grass" (p. 34). In contrast to, say, Alaric Tudor or Julian Gray, the lonely figures in Gissing's fiction who wander through the parks of London, find nothing to exhilirate or cheer them. Their walks, like those of Mr. Temperley in A Poor Gentleman, are desolate, and their encounters with fellow "brethren in seclusion"[61] are mute and furtive. Similarly, the public garden gatherings in Gissing's novels are not disposed into innocently playful groups and couples like figures in a pastoral landscape. Rather, they rollick in drunken and quarrelsome disorder - as in chapter 12 of The Nether World, where Gissing brilliantly describes the wedding excursion of Bob Hewett, his wife, and their nether world companions to the grounds of the Crystal Palace.

In his novels of the London poor, Gissing consistently refuses both to collude with the practice of pastoralising the urban environment, and to subscribe to the idea that gardens can improve the lot of working people. As Pierre Coustillas explains, "he was never tempted to see the city through the eyes of a Walt Whitman" for he "knew too well the depressing effects of poverty on the urban proletariat to gloss light-heartedly over the plagues of unemployment, deplorable housing, lack of hygiene and ignorance".[62]

As John Goode asserts with reference to the location to which we are introduced in the opening chapters of The Unclassed (1884), Gissing's principal de-pastoralising strategy is to focus upon "the ironic disjunction between the idyllic name and the dingy actuality"[63] of a place. The filthy, dilapidated block of tenements at Clerkenwell in The Nether World where Mrs. Candy lives bears the ironic name of Shooters Gardens. Of Paradise Street in Thyrza, the narrator has this

to say:

> The name is less descriptive than it might be. Poor dwellings, mean and cheerless, are interspersed with factories and one or two small shops, and a public house is prominent, and a railway arch breaks the perspective of the thoroughfare midway. The street at the time - in the year '80 - began by the side of a graveyard, no longer used, and associated in the minds of those who dwelt around it with numberless burials in a dire season of cholera. The space has since been converted into a flower-garden, open to the children of the neighbourhood, and in summer time the bright flower-beds enhance the ignoble baldness of the by-way. (p. 25)

In the same novel, Walnut Tree Walk is distinguished by its lack of walnut trees, whilst in The Town Traveller (1898) we are told that beneath the back window of Mr. Gammon's room at Mrs. Bubb's lodging house "lay parallel strips of ground, divided from each other by low walls. These were called the 'gardens' of the houses in Kennington Road, but no blade of grass ever showed upon the black, hard-trodden soil (p. 277).

Gissing's message is clear: since slum dwellers have no access to gardens proper, gardens can do nothing to alleviate the ugliness of their living conditions. Nor, as Gissing makes plain in "Transplanted" (1895),[64] one of the sketches gathered together in Human Odds and Ends, can working people expect to find their lives transformed for the better if by some stroke of fortune they are transported to a real country garden. In "Transplanted", a well-to-do "young matron" takes pity on a physically wretched luggage carrier known by the name of Long Bill, and transplants him from London to her beautiful country house, where she puts him to work in the kitchen-garden. Far from experiencing the regeneration of Oliver Twist under similar circumstances, Long Bill feels unutterably "hopeless" and "purposeless" (p. 247). He blames his benefactress for having uprooted him from his "natural" home, and takes revenge by running riot in the grape-house and rose-garden. His mischief is discovered, and he runs away, only to die of a severe haemorrhage by the roadside.

In the companion piece to "Transplanted", a sketch entitled "A Son of the Soil" (1895),[65] Gissing considers the consequences of transplantation in the opposite direction. Its subject, the farm-labourer, Jonas Clay, is as misleadingly named as Gissing's slum tenements. He derives no joy or dignity from his work in the fields, is ignorant of the names of plants, and feels "discordant with everything about him" (p. 297). When he becomes bewitched by a "blurred, gaslight vision of a remote world" (p. 297), he abandons the mother who depends upon him, and leaves for London, where he finds every opportunity to lead a dissolute life. But he has no regrets: "Nothing would have induced him to return to rural life; the smell of the pavement was very sweet in his nostrils, and he loathed the memory of the fields" (p. 301).

As these two pieces suggest, Gissing's sense of the urban/rural dichotomy was atypically complex. In contrast to Dickens, Gissing was not inhabited by the pastoral frame of reference, though his novels and letters indicate that he preferred the countryside to the town, and that he regarded the country garden as a prerequisite or, at least, a concomitant of "civilised" living; that is, a leisured environment in which the gamut of human faculties could be fulfilled. In the novels of the 1880s and early 1890s, the model of the urbane lifestyle is the spacious country house and garden: the Firs in A Life's Morning, Knightswell in Isabel Clarendon (1886) and the Warricombe's home in Born in Exile (1892). In his final years, Gissing tried out a simpler, "cottage" model in Our Friend the Charlatan (1901), The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft and Will Warburton, consonant, perhaps, with the back-to-the-land impulse in late-Victorian England.

However, Gissing did on occasions accede that comparatively well-off town dwellers could live in and among pleasant, country-like gardens. The educated and intellectual Thomas Meres lives with his

daughter in the Cheyne Walk area of Chelsea, a place very favourably described in the first volume of Isabel Clarendon.

> Literally the air is pleasant; the flowing breadth of stream and the green extent of the opposite Park, the spacious Embankment with its patches of tree-planted garden, make a perceptible freshness ... There is peace to be found here in the morning hours, with pleasant haunting thoughts of great names and days gone by (I, 121).

In The Whirlpool, Harvey Rolfe finds "tranquility as he knew not how to find elsewhere" in the house of his friend, the corn business proprietor, Basil Morton. Morton's house is situated in an elm-bordered road in Greystone. "It was in the town, yet nothing town-like. No sooty smother hung above the house-tops and smirched the garden leafage" (p. 332). Behind the house is a large, old-fashioned garden, in a "bowered corner" of which Harvey luxuriates in dreams of his childhood.

And then, of course, there are the suburbs. Gissing's contributions to the literature of suburbia are of singular importance, though best understood within the context of that literature.

Depending on one's viewpoint, the Victorian suburb represents either a third configuration of garden/city relationships, or a stage between the rus in urbe idea and the topographical model in which city-garden distinctions are collapsed or transformed virtually to the point of confusion. Some Victorians saw it as "neither one thing nor the other" [66] that is, as neither town nor country. Other commentators insist that it became an independent entity in its own right: "neither the town spread thin nor the country built close, but a quite different type of development with its own inimitable characteristics".[67]

What does not brook argument is the centrality of the garden: conceptually, as the topographical image in which the concept of the suburb is located in ideational space; physically, as an essential component of the individual suburban residence and of the ambience of the suburb in general; and ideologically, as the spatial expression or

synechdoche of a culture of seclusion and privatism centred on the nuclear family. In addition, the features of at least some suburban gardens are emblematic of the wealth and social status of their owners, though the ambivalent combination of display and concealment is one of the characteristic paradoxes of the suburban garden.

As imaginative writers recognised, it was the desire to possess a house with a garden in an area of peaceful seclusion and floral beauty that prompted many middle class Victorians to gravitate towards the suburbs. In Cecil; or the Adventures of a Coxcomb (1841) Catherine Gore announced that "Thriving merchants - popular actors - popular dentists - popular lawyers - popular all sorts of things, are sure to have their Tusculum, their rus in urbe, their Eden, their 'appiness 'ouse"(p. 129). Less popular "sorts" were similarly motivated. In the Grossmith brothers's masterpiece of late-Victorian social comedy, The Diary of a Nobody (1892), the tell-tale name of the Pooters's house in suburban Holloway is "The Laurels", and Mr. Pooter's diary entries frequently betray his gardening interests.

According to Walter L. Creese, it was in the suburban garden that the "owner might actually demonstrate his mastery over Nature, however miniscule, and relate directly to the soil and the environment as he could no longer to his fellow humans".[68] Whatever the validity of this final clause, it is significant that the first substantial Victorian book on the garden, The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion, was also the first of many to be directed, not at the owners of country estates, but at the swelling band of affluent suburban gardeners.

Though Victorian imaginative writers acknowledge the perceived attractiveness of the suburban garden, their images of it, and their responses to the suburb in general, are varied and complex. Three factors in particular help to account for this: the phase and character

of suburban developments to which they pay attention; their historical perspectives; and their topographical perspectives, that is, whether they view the suburbs from within the city or from a point outside them.

Since Victorian suburbs differed enormously in kind, to speak of the suburb is extremely misleading. In the early nineteenth century, as B.I. Coleman points out, "the norm was the detached 'villa' standing in its own (and often substantial) grounds, very much a country seat in miniature and shorn of its tenant farms".[69] It was this kind of exclusive development that Loudon had in mind when he declared his intention to prove "that a suburban residence, with a very small portion of the land attached, will contain all that is essential to happiness, in the garden, park, and demesne of the most extensive country residence".[70]

Novelists not unfavourably disposed to the affluent middle classes show some degree of sympathy for the substantial villa garden. Bulwer Lytton in Kenelm Chillingly presents a positive image of Mr. Braefield's suburban garden: "a broad gravel-drive, bordered with rare evergreens ... a handsome house with a portico in front, and a long conservatory at the garden side". It was, says the narrator, "one of those houses which belong to 'city gentlemen', and often contain more comfort and exhibit more luxury than many a stately manorial mansion" (p. 273).

A close cousin of the affluent city suburb is the dormitory settlement of the provincial town. M.E. Braddon writes favourably of such a place in Just As I Am. Avonmore is the residential settlement for the "great iron town" of Blackford. It is "an elegant modern settlement, where the wealthy Blackfordians retired from the smoke of foundries and the labour of money-making, to clean air and conifer-shaded gardens,

and the relaxation of money-spending" (p. 47). Elsewhere we are told that its "gentle slopes ... are dotted with white-walled villas, girdled with exquisitely kept gardens, rich in monkey-trees, deodoras, Wellingtonias, and all the aristocracy of foreign timber" (p. 167). The narrator evinces no discomfort in describing a place of such blatant exclusiveness, though she does point out that the "picturesque town" of Highclere - a neighbouring settlement where everything "belonged to the Middle Ages" - "ranked above" even "the wealth and fashion of elegant Avonmore" (p. 47).

Waves of suburban expansion from the 1840s to the 1890s and, in particular, the development of lower-middle class suburbs characterised by repetitive and standardised layout, almost inevitably led to more varied literary images of the suburban garden. In the novels of Dickens there are at least three images, suggesting different responses to the idea of the suburb as a solution to inner-city problems. The first is exemplified by the attractive image of Mr. Spenlow's garden in suburban Norwood in David Copperfield, written at a time when guide books were praising Norwood for its semi-rural charms.

> There was a lovely garden to Mr. Spenlow's house; and though it was not the best time of year for seeing a garden, it was so beautifully kept, that I was quite enchanted. There was a charming lawn, there were clusters of trees; and there were perspective walks that I could just distinguish in the dark, arched over with trellis-work, on which shrubs and flowers grew in the growing season. (p. 368)

David's enchantment with Mr. Spenlow's garden is heightened, no doubt, by his enchantment with Mr. Spenlow's daughter. Nonetheless, it would seem that at this point in his working career Dickens was willing to allow that an attractive suburban garden could provide a delightful retreat for a City gentleman.

A second, more idiosyacratic image is typified by Wemmick's "castle" cottage and garden at Walworth in Great Expectations. This

kind of suburban idyll, the locus of familial sentiments and emotional expressiveness, more clearly indicates Dickens's critical attitude towards the materialistic and de-personalising conditions of the city itself. However, since Walworth for Wemmick is a purely residential suburb and not, as are some of the suburbs in Gissing's later novels, generative and distributive centres, it serves only to enforce a split between work and home life. Wemmick's lack of personal integration suggests that Dickens offers the suburban idyll as no more than a partial and inadequate solution to the problems of urban existence. Dickens's third image of the suburb is that of the blighted garden or wasteland. It occurs most conspicuously in his last completed novel, Our Mutual Friend, in the form of "a tract of suburban Sahara" (p. 30) south of Holloway, and seems to be Dickens's response to the mass suburbanisation of the lower middle-classes underway in the 1860s. It is a negative image, but as B.I. Coleman observes, "it is suburbia unfinished that Dickens is portraying here" and that consequently his "conclusions are incomplete".[71]

The second variable that helps to account for the multifariousness of literary images of the suburban garden is temporal perspective. As a rule, writers who look back to suburbs of the past tend to present them more affectionately and positively than those who treat of contemporary developments. Dickens opens chapter 4 of Barnaby Rudge (1841) with a description of the "venerable suburb" of Clerkenwell in the mid-1770s. It brings to mind a nostalgic image of a green, pre-industrial London.

> There were gardens to many of the houses, and trees by the pavement side; with an air of freshness breathing up and down, which in these days would be sought in vain ... Nature was not so far removed or hard to get at, as in these days ... (p. 30)

In The Doctor's Wife (1864), The Story of Barbara (1880), and

A Lost Eden (1904), M.E. Braddon looks back with affection to the Camberwell she knew in the early 1850s. Suburban gardens suggestive of the countryside are prominent in all three novels, and are presented in such a way as to imply that they offer their owners a more than adequate compensation for their lack of material wealth. The Trevernock family in The Story of Barbara, though "absolutely poor", live in a "little semi-detached house" with "a dainty prettiness not always attainable by people of large means" (I, 3). They are "always trying to surprise each other with some improvement in house or garden", if "only a shilling rose-bush planted in the border, or a penny bunch of violets on the mantel-piece" (I, 4-5). Robert Lee Wolff notes that by 1880 new housing developments were beginning to change the character of Camberwell, but that "in the early fifties the land still has only agricultural value. Houses, villages, cottages, all stand in their own gardens with many trees. Camberwell is still rustic".[72] Wolff's remarks chime with those of guide-book authors of the 1880s who were still drawing attention to the early-Victorian qualities of Camberwell. One contemporary observer wrote:

> Camberwell is not "new"; it has a history ... Thirty or forty years ago Camberwell was the City tradesman's beau idéal of a suburban-retreat; and there are plenty of houses still standing which give one a good idea of his taste. A large garden with plenty of fruit-trees was indispensable".[73]

In The Doctor's Wife, Braddon doesn't romanticise mid-Victorian Camberwell. Though there are "pretty little villas and comfortable cottages nestling among trees (I, 3), there is also a "wild and sterile" canal and "straggling rows of cottages dwindling away into pigsties" (I, 4). Though it must have been beautiful once, the garden of the Sleafords is unkempt: "rare orchids" sprout "out of beds that were full of chickweed, and lilies-of-the-valley" flourish "among the groundsel in a shady corner under the water-butt ... The odour of distant pigsties"

mingles "faintly with the perfume of the roses" (I, 31-32). Though the farm-yard odours may detract from the beauty of the gardens, they also ratify its rurban character.

A Lost Eden, the novel in which Braddon's perspective on mid-century Camberwell is most temporally distanced, is also the novel in which she most insistently details the differences between what was and what is. The family the novel concerns, the Sandfords, have suffered a severe social decline, and yet their home of Chestnut Lodge is a detached house with a garden over two acreas in size "such ... as no one could hope for nowadays [i.e. 1904] within five miles of London (p. 74). Here is one of a number of rhapsodic descriptions of it:

> It was June ... and the two girls almost lived in their garden, and rejoiced in the glory of great rose-bushes which former tenants had planted when Chestnut Lodge was new. Roses and Mary lilies grew in abundance in that suburban garden in the days when there was an open country of fair meadow-land and flowery hedges between Camberwell and Dulwich. The Walworth Road, with its frequent omnibuses and cheap shops, was not much more than a mile distant; but here there was no sound of traffic nor canopy of smoke, and the sunlit air tasted as pure and sweet as in Devonshire. The girls loved their garden. (p. 59)

In contrast to writers who present nostalgic images of suburbs that no longer exist, those who view contemporary developments tend to withhold approval. Implicit in the following passage from Rhoda Broughton's Belinda (1883) is the conservative assumption that old and traditional topographies are superior to new and fashionable suburbs:

> It would be the opinion of outsiders, who have not visited Oxbridge ... that the inhabitants of that university town dwell in grey and ancient houses, time-coloured and with flavours of old learning still hanging about their massy roof-trees. In point of fact, their lives are passed for the most part in flippant spick and span villas and villakins, each with its half acre of tennis-ground and double-daisies, all so neat that scarcely anyone has had the time to die there, though numerous people have taken leave to be born there, and forming, in their ensemble, an ugly, irrelevant, healthy suburb, that would not disgrace a cotton city of today. (pp. 251-2)

In a letter he wrote in May 1873, Ruskin spoke of the "pestilence" that "has fallen on the suburbs of loathsome London", and left no doubt of his attitude towards standardisation of design: "Attached to every double block are exactly similar double parallelograms of garden, laid out in a new gravel and scanty turf, on the model of the pleasure grounds in the Crystal Palace, and enclosed by high, thin, and pale brick walls".[74] In the same letter, Ruskin recalled Herne Hill in the 1820s: "a quiet secluded district of field and wood", in which cottages have "their porches embroidered with honeysuckle, and their gardens with daisies" and in which a "gentleman's house, with its lawn, gardens, offices, and attached fields" indicated "a country life of long continuance and quiet respectability".[75]

Gissing's images of suburban London are invariably in the present tense and, if not always expressive of disdain, are characteristically intoned by a reporter who can find little to excite his interest or approval. However, Gissing's images resist easy generalisation, partly because they map the subtle geographical and social variations of the suburban terrain, partly because Gissing appreciated, as few other novelists of his time did, that for many of its inhabitants suburbia had become a whole world, not just a place in which to reside. For many of his men, it is the market from which they derive their money; for many of his women, it is the place in which their lives are spent (or wasted).

For Gissing himself, the suburban garden and the garden-like qualities of the suburban environment, are integral elements of a complex milieu. To respond to them in isolation is analytically hazardous; and yet, as Gissing recognised, the visual appearance of the affluent suburb was all important to those who inspired to inhabit it. It is to this quite literally superficial way of seeing and

responding that Gissing draws attention in the opening chapter of In the Year of Jubilee (1894).

> De Crespigny Park, a thoroughfare connecting Grove Lane, Camberwell, with Denmark Hill, presents a double row of similar dwellings; its clean breadth, with foliage of trees and shrubs in front gardens, makes it pleasant to the eye that finds pleasure in suburban London. In point of respectability, it has claims only to be appreciated by the ambitious middle-class of Camberwell.(p. 1)

Suburbs, like individuals, are known in the first place by their names and faces - by what the eye can register. "De Crespigny Park", the name, discloses the pretentions of its residents and the paradic character of a district that likes to think it's a country estate. Front gardens, the suburb's public faces, are principal sites of affect displays. But front gardens can conceal as well as disclose, and what they conceal in Gissing are precisely and paradoxically those marital and generational tensions which the suburban home is intended to exorcise. Back gardens, though in part expressive of the desire to preserve the family as an autotelic unit, may ironically image the confinement and enclosure of its individual members. Here is Gissing's description of the rear garden of the Lord family in In the Year of Jubilee:

> The garden was but a strip of ground, bounded by walls of four feet high; in the midst stood a laburnum, now heavy with golden bloom, and at the end grew a holly-bush, flanked with laurels; a border flower-bed displayed Stephen Lord's taste and industry. (p. 30)

It is significant that the garden displays the "taste and industry" of the father, for it is Stephen's patriarchal authority and indifference to "culture" which brings him into conflict with his children. Nancy, his daughter, is frustrated by his refusal to move to a grander house as well as by what she takes to be her pointless existence. She realises that her father can afford a garden emblematic of greater affluence than his laurels and laburnums suggest. It is a telltale

sign that Nancy and her weak-willed brother, Horace, use the garden not to be with their father but to escape him and to talk in private. On one occasion she "carelessly" assents to seat herself on a rustic bench in the shadow of the laburnum while Horace stands languidly before her with one of the branches in his hand. Since both are bound in by the walls of the garden and the confinement they symbolise, their pastoral attitudes are strikingly ironic.

Considered solely in environmental terms, Gissing's suburbs are presented a good deal more positively than are the working class districts of the city. For example, in Grove Lane where the Lords live,

> The houses vary considerably in size and aspect, also in date, - with the result of a certain picturesqueness, enhanced by the growth of fine trees on either side ... Architectural grace can nowhere be discovered, but the contract-builder of to-day has not been permitted to work his will; age and irregularity ... have a pleasanter effect than that of new streets built to one pattern by the mile. There are small cottages overgrown with creepers, relics of Camberwell's rusticity; rows of tall and of squat dwellings that lie behind grassy plots, railed from the road; [and] larger houses that stand in their own gardens hidden by walls. (p. 13)

By dint of its foliage and variety, this "bit of London which does not keep pace with the times" (p. 13) is not unattractive. Gissing describes more favourably still the contiguous but far more affluent district of Champion Hill which "enjoys aristocratic seclusion" and from which "is obtainable a glimpse of open fields" (p. 13). With its overhanging trees and spacious gardens "one might have imagined it a country road, so profound the stillness and so leafy the prospect" (p. 47). For Nancy Lord, Champion Hill serves much the same function as does the trip to the countryside for the poor urban artisan. She found it pleasant "to walk about the neglected but pleasant garden" of Mrs. Vawdrey, "quiet and secluded as if whole countries divided it from Camberwell" (p. 50).

The main point that needs to be made about topographical perspective is that the suburb is more likely to be presented approvingly if it is viewed from within the city than if it is viewed from a rural perspective. In a number of Wilkie Collins's novels, houses and gardens on the outskirts of London compare favourably with those nearer to its centre. The home of Amelius Goldenheart in The Fallen Leaves is situated in a by-road outside Regent's Park. This "perfect little retreat" is simple, pretty and "completely surrounded by its own tiny plot of garden-ground". Toff, Goldenheart's old French servant, calls it a "suburban Paradise" (p. 242). In the opening pages of The Woman in White (1860) Walter Hartwright is relieved to exchange the oppressive atmosphere and noise of "the great heart of the city" for "the cool night air in the suburbs" (p. 2) and his mother's Hampstead cottage. A different but no less favourably presented residence is Mablethorpe House, situated in suburban Kensington, and the principal setting in The New Magdalen. Its conservatory, which "varied and brightened the scene ... forming an entrance to the rooms, through a winter garden of rare plants and flowers" bespoke "the march of modern improvement" (p. 57).

By contrast, when Trollope glances at the suburb he does so from the implicit frame of reference of the country house. "It is", he declared in The Three Clerks, "very difficult nowadays to say where the suburbs of London come to an end, and where the country begins" (p. 22). That he does not approve of this blurring of the city/country distinction is evident when he goes on to describe Surbiton Cottage, home of the Woodwards, situated in one of those "few nooks within reach of London which have not been be-villaed and be-terraced out of all look of rural charm" (p. 22). Surbiton cottage is appraised warmly only because it is atypical. It is not a villa "but a small old-fashioned brick house abutting on to the road, but looking

from its windows on to a lawn and gardens, which stretched down to the river". Its grounds were not extensive", but it "was absolutely secluded from the road". Though it had "no pretension to the grandeur of a country-house, [it] was a desirable residence for a moderate family with a limited income" (p. 22).

Trollope's preference for the genuine country house over its imitative suburban versions can be glimpsed in The Belton Estate. As Clara Amedroz sits in the waiting-room of a railway station, the narrator guides us in the direction of her gaze:

> The advertisements on the wall are examined, the map of some new Eden is studied - some Eden on which an irregular pond and a church are surrounded by a multiplicity of regular villas and shrubs - till the student feels that no consideration of health or economy would induce him to live there. (p. 81)

Trollope would have endorsed the sentiment expressed by Mrs. C.S. Peel in her manual of middle class domesticity, The New Home (1898), "that the suburbs of any large town appear to me detestable". Such advantages as it could boast, she believed, were merely consolation prizes for "those people who yearn for the pleasures of the country and who find their diversions in golf, tennis, bicycling, boating, or gardening, and whom cruel fate prevents from living in the real country".[76]

I wish finally to consider the contributions of imaginative writers to the forth and most radical of city/garden models. Since it is constructed upon the desire to eliminate blatant topographical dichotomies, this model is almost impossible to label by juggling the familiar categories of "town", "country" and "garden". Its most famous formulation is Garden City, though Ebenezer Howard's coinage upholds even as it qualifies the primacy of the city as the physical and conceptual core of the scheme. Though William Morris would probably have thought the formulation inadequate, his News from Nowhere is often cited as an important influence upon and even (though

wrongly) as a blue-print for the Garden City project.[77] Because News is by far the most significant fictional exploration of the integrative topographical model I am seeking to identify, I shall make use of the expression at which Morris himself strongly hints: "the city in the garden". It retains the old nouns, but in Morris's utopian romance, the applications of both are transformed almost beyond recognition.

Whether they are expounded in fiction or books on town planning, schemes designed to effect a comprehensive transformation of the humanised landscape are almost inevitably visionary and forward-looking rather than nostalgic genuflections to the myth of a past Golden Age - a fact which helps to explain their virtual absence in Victorian realist fiction. In addition to emphasising the supreme importance of beautiful and healthy living conditions, they tend also to foreground the concept of community. In "socialist" versions, everyone lives in harmony in the same garden-like environment. In its most radical forms, the city in the garden model entails the rejection of the two "philosophies" implicit in the city/garden models I have examined already: the philosophy of gradualism, i.e. the idea that environmental change should be a gradual and (probably) piecemeal process rather than the result of cataclysmic political change; and the philosophy of accommodation, i.e. the principle that people improve their living conditions by ameliorating and adjusting to prevailing environmental conditions.

Few if any mid-Victorian writers were able or willing to advocate political revolution as a path to radical environmental change, though one or two foreshadow some aspects of Morris's utopian vision. In his lecture on "Great Cities and their influence for Good and Evil", delivered in Bristol in 1857, Charles Kingsley declared that he looked forward to a time when it would be possible to "build better things

than cities",[78] and when there would be "a complete interpenetration of city and country, a complete fusion of their different modes of life, and a combination of the advantages of both, such as no country in the world had ever seen".[79] Like Morris, Kingsley came to eschew the Romantic view of nature. The Great Exhibition taught him

> that man was now in a position to conquer and civilise Nature, to master his environment, and to lay the foundations of a new society, in which cities would no longer appear as diseased patches soiling the purity of the landscape, but as nuclei of organisations shining with the brightness of their regenerated state.[80]

But Kingsley was no revolutionary. He accepted that landed and commercial interests would retain their power to veto any programme comprehensively to re-model the urban landscape. He believed also that model cities could only be imposed by despotic rulers or authoritarian states; he was thankful that the "democratic" political institutions of Britain inhibited such shortcuts. Kingsley placed his faith in the evolution of capitalism to a stage when the social order would be more harmonious, and when enlightened industrialists would do for their employees what they had already done for themselves: import the city into the countryside so that "the city would become what it ought to be; the workshop, and not the dwelling-house, of a mighty and healthy people".[81]

One work of utopian fiction that at least nods in the direction of the city in the garden ideal is Bulwer Lytton's The Coming Race (1871). The hero, an American, discovers a subterranean race, the Vril-ya, who owe their utopian existence to a fluid called "vril", a force that has much in common with electricity. By means of this remarkable fluid, the Vril-ya have extinguished war, poverty and crime, and the state has dwindled to a benevolent patriarchy.

Their civilisation appears to be a working model of social

Darwinianism, for in their rational pursuit of knowledge and the ideal society, the Vril-ya have weeded out institutions that have proved unfit, i.e. likely to engender conflict and violent passions. They distrust the arts for precisely this reason. Their landscapes, then, are not an expression of beauty for beauty's sake, but rather a reflection of the rational principles which govern every area of their lives. The city about which the hero is conducted is "large in proportion to the territory round it" (p. 113), but still no bigger than a country estate. It would seem to approximate to the Garden City ideal, for "the largeness of space, in proportion to the rural territory, occupied by the city, was occasioned by the custom of surrounding each house with a separate garden" (p. 117). Moreover, many of the houses sport hanging gardens and their apartments are richly decorated with flowers.

Nonetheless, Bulwer Lytton appears not to have been able to conceive of a truly radically restructured landscape. The Vril-ya have no community gardens; all the gardens seem to be privately owned. In addition, town and country are not completely integrated, so the hero's guide finds it necessary to retire to his country estate whenever the opportunity arises.

In fairness to Bulwer Lytton, it ought to be said that The Coming Race is a vision of a society distinguished by its institutions and practices rather than by its environmental qualities - to which only limited attention is paid. To William Morris, on the other hand, the quality of the physical environment was all important, not only because of the value he gave to beauty in everyday life, but also because he could not imagine a radically restructured landscape except as the product or concomitant of a radically restructured society - a socialist utopia.

Long before he wrote News, Morris repeatedly made it clear that he associated abundant gardens with a better society. His lectures and letters of the 1870s and 1880s bristle with declarations of what ought to be, and expressions of hope for what might be.

> In great towns, gardens both private and public are positive necessities, if the citizens are to live reasonable and healthy lives in body and mind.[82]

> Every child should be able to play in a garden close to the place where his parents live.[83]

> ... suppose people lived in little communities among gardens and greenfields ... then I think that one might say that civilization had really begun.[84]

When Morris addressed himself to the subject of a utopian future, the burden of "garden" is significantly displaced from individual plots of land to the whole of the English landscape.

> I want the town to be impregnated with the country ... I want every homestead to be ... a lovely house surrounded by acres and acres of garden ... I want the town to be ... in short, a garden with beautiful houses in it.[85]

What Morris came to realise was that the garden, both as a concept and as a topography, had to expand so as to incorporate those features of the landscape to which it had previously been both physically and symbolically opposed. Only then would it be possible to transform "this grimy back-yard of a workshop into a garden"[86] and so avoid the apocalyptic change, prophesied by Ruskin in the conclusion to Sesame and Lilies, in which the garden of England had become a coal mine.

The "education" of Guest, the nineteenth century narrator of News from Nowhere who awakens one day to find himself in post-revolutionary London, in part involves having to re-learn the concept of garden. At its simplest, this entails a renewed attentiveness to the importance of gardens as beautifying elements of the humanised landscape. He finds gardens everywhere and in the most unexpected places. Trafalgar Square is now the site of an apricot orchard. There are

rose gardens where Endell Street once stood, gardens surround the mills dotted along the banks of the Thames, and from the end of Piccadilly to the British Museum "each house stood in a garden carefully cultivated, and running over with flowers".[87]

Guest's concept of garden is challenged more radically by the forms of some of the gardens he encounters in transformed London. Accustomed to thinking of gardens as units of private property and as symbols of social exclusiveness, he is confronted in Hammersmith with the sight of a row of houses with a "continuous garden in front of them"[88] (my italics). Guest doesn't make much of this manifestation of community values, but the attentive reader can scarcely be anything other than struck by Guest's defamiliarising adjective. As Bernard Sharratt remarks, it "indicates a very radical shift in property values".[89]

What Guest does at first find strange are the "larger" applications that "garden" has come to acquire in the socialist Utopia. Hammond, his guide, informs him that England "is now a garden, where nothing is wasted and nothing spoilt, with the necessary dwellings, sheds, and workshops scattered up and down the country, all trim and neat and pretty".[90] Guest seeks clarification:

> "One thing, it seems to me, does not go with your word of 'garden' for the country. You have spoken of wastes and forests, and I myself have seen the beginning of your Middlesex and Essex forest. Why do you keep such things in a garden? and isn't it very wasteful to do so?"
>
> "My friend", he said, "we like these pieces of wild nature, and can afford them, so we have them; let alone that as to the forests, we need a great deal of timber, and suppose that our sons and sons' sons will do the like. As to the land being a garden, I have heard that they used to have shrubberies and rockeries in gardens once; and though I might not like the artificial ones, I assure you that some of the natural rockeries of our garden are worth seeing.[91]

Morris's vision of England transformed into a garden where the constituent elements also partake of garden-like qualities has nothing in common with the "conservative" myth of the Garden of England. The latter is a product of selective perception, an illegitimate extrapolation from selected bits of the landscape to the country as a whole. But Morris's image is no idle boast, for the comprehensive reconstruction of the physical environment justifies the application of "garden" in its macro-topographical sense. Remnants of pre-revolutionary England - Kensington Gardens, for instance - have been culturally recontextualised so that they now have totally different meanings and functions. (Significantly, Hammond cannot understand why Kensington Gardens is so called.)

Since the members of the socialist utopia make no distinctions between work and leisure, or between utility and beauty, "garden" is no longer used exclusively to mark off those spaces reserved for refuge and recreation. "Garden" has been released to designate, and legitimately so, almost any feature of the humanised landscape expressive of the "generosity and abundance of life" that brings Guest "to a pitch that [he] had never yet reached".[92] Thus, "the fields were everywhere treated as a garden made for the pleasure as well as the livelihood of all ..."[93] This radically novel application of "garden" reflects at one and the same time a desire to live close to nature and to control and shape it to human requirements. Blue Calhoun has made a similar point. Morris's utopia, she says, "synthesizes the city and garden settings by retaining the order inherent in both but by enduing the city with the natural vitality of the garden".[94]

It is no coincidence that News from Nowhere is both the most challenging exposition of city/garden relationships in Victorian imaginative literature and one of the least representative works of

fiction produced in the nineteenth century. The originality of News lies partly in the "fact" that it invites the reader to rethink the nature of city/garden relationships within the context of a work that itself makes strange the literature in which those relationships are otherwise defined.[95]