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Dublin's Ordinary Gardens: An Investigation of Some of the Various Meanings and Values Attached to the Space of the Garden

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Introduction

My intention upon commencing this work was to discuss the various ideas of the garden and to explore how these ideas are enacted in actual gardens in Dublin today. In researching garden history, I found a wealth of rhetoric and symbolism, often seeming to be far removed from the everyday back yard.

The idea of the garden has attained a saturation of meaning, diverse and eclectic, within Western culture. It has been reflected in much of the available literature surrounding "the garden" that the space of the garden, which has been distinctly separated from other spaces such as "the home" or "the street", has been mobilised as a space around which many values confirming many ideals can be constructed. The garden can represent religious ideals, political and domestic power structures, or the domination or experience of nature.

I would like to begin by demonstrating the breadth of opinion already amassed on the subject. The introduction to a recent American anthology states:

> Gardens have special meaning. They are powerful settings for human life, transcending time, place, and culture. Gardens are mirrors of ourselves, reflections of sensual and personal experience. By making gardens, using or admiring them, and dreaming of them, we create our own idealized order of nature and culture. Gardens connect us to our collective and primeval pasts. Since the beginning of human time, we have expressed ourselves through the gardens we have made. They live on as records of our private beliefs and public values, good and bad. (Francis & Hester, Jr., 1990, p. 2)

In fact, the body of this thesis will show how gardens on the whole do not and cannot transcend time, place, and culture. Gardens are temporally determined, growing and dying and changing. Gardens are linked to material place, defined by climate and topography. The various meanings attributed to gardens are as dependent on culture as any other place or activity or symbol. And yet the garden as an idea carries widely variant imagery, which is often applied to many situations:

> The garden as place can be our global garden of the entire planet and its biosphere or the back yard variety of lawn and patio. (Francis & Hester Jr.,1990, p. 5)

John Dixon Hunt, the English garden historian, addresses "gardens as the art of milieu - how gardens, where humans exercise control over space and nature,

become the most eloquent expressions of complex cultural ideas." (Hunt, 1992, p.3) He also describes gardens as:

> sophisticated products of our relationship with the world beyond their walls ... culturally specific, determined by a whole congeries of ideas and events few of which are explicitly horticultural or architectural: they may be political, social, economic, religious. (Hunt, 1992, p. 9)

Garden writing is worth studying in itself, often loaded with metaphor, paradox, and assumption. To deconstruct the language used to describe gardens is not the purpose of this thesis, however. Nor does this thesis aim to focus on the rhetoric and symbolism of what an ideal garden should be and somehow universally means. Instead, the following chapters will look at how gardens are *actually* used, in a certain place, in a certain way, by certain people: namely, in Dublin in the 1990s by residents in the city and the suburbs.

According to this ambiguous statement by Mark Francis, an American landscape architect:

> gardens are personal places with special qualities and meanings. They also reflect the common values people attach to gardens in separate parts of the world, in distinct cultures with unique environmental values and surrounded by strikingly different natural landscapes. To fully understand the power of gardens, we cannot ignore the common, everyday variety that for millions of us still forms our most significant landscape. (Francis, 1990, p. 215)

Francis defines gardens as "personal places" and yet he also maintains that gardens across the world are representative of similar values that are held by people across the world. I do not intend to uncover a universal system of beliefs as represented in human environments, although I will include reference to some writers' attempts to do so. Instead, this thesis will try to remain time and space specific, inviting a questioning of the values and meaning attached to gardens in contemporary Dublin.

Gardens are often described as private places, conducive to personal expression. Why is it that in a place where personal creativity can be given space, homogenous and standard gardens predominate in this country and in others? I would like to look at gardens, not from the sole point of view of design (the *form* of a garden) but also from the point of view of *why* it takes a

particular form and not another, and what values inform the decision to make a garden one way and not another, or to value a garden at all. It will be examined whether the values that inform the creation of gardens in Dublin are similar to English and American values.

I have chosen to draw on American and European literary sources alongside those specific to Dublin for various reasons. Americans have very different conceptions of history and geography, culture and society from Europeans, as do other Europeans from Irish people. Yet it has been noted how closely Irish architects, urban planners, and gardeners have followed foreign example, albeit with a few decades time-lag.

In the past twenty years, a large amount of literature has been collected on the subject of space, landscape, and nature, discussions which have invited participation from architects, planners, landscape architects, sociologists, psychologists, geographers, anthropologists, artists, and historians. (Howard, 1991, p. 15) I will attempt throughout the length of this work to place some of their ideas into the context of changing Irish urban ideology.

An American landscape architect, Robert B. Riley puts forth an argument that questions rather than assumes how the meaning of any garden is constructed, and is in turn interpreted by others:

> Neither nature nor the garden carry any inherent meaning. Flowers are neither evil nor good for us per se. Meaning is culturally determined and culturally specific. In a culture as diverse and fragmented as ours, meaning is likely to be more specific to a subculture, life style, or individual. We need less rhetoric about the eternal meaning of garden and fewer manifestos about what gardens mean for us today. (Riley, 1990, p. 73)

In that vein, I would like to begin, to investigate various meanings of "the garden" as well as specific gardens in Dublin. Do people need gardens? How do people use gardens? Why is "our most significant landscape" so valued? Difficult to define and easy to generalise about, the garden is indeed a curious and mutable cultural object.

Chapter One

The Need for External Space

I have borrowed the heading of this chapter from the Irish Department of the Environment's Study on the Urban Renewal Schemes. (1996, p. 44) It is the validity of such an idea as it relates to gardens which will be brought into question in this chapter.

Arguments have been put forward that access to external space and access to nature are of necessity - for different reasons - to social and personal well-being. It can be said that gardens serve both these needs, combining both nature and privacy outdoors. Ideas that external space should be deemed important, or even given a distinction, have arisen since industrialisation and urbanisation have become features of human life, and these ideas, particularly of private external space, have become more complex.

It should be noted that many of the observations, literature and discussions surrounding modernity and modern-life (and hence post-modernity) have been focused on the major cities of the western world - Paris, New York, Los Angeles. Ireland, being a young state with a small population, can be said to have an emergent modern identity(though it should be taken into account that Dublin houses almost one third of the Republic of Ireland's population). To some extent, Irish people have experienced modernism vicariously - through television and film and books - and firsthand, although on a much reduced scale.

Yet it is worthwhile to apply established and contemporary ideas of the modern experience to a Dublin model. Dublin is a city currently benefiting from economic growth. It can be seen how certain groups, such as Temple Bar Properties, have learned from schemes and principles successfully applied in cities like Barcelona and Berlin, rather than repeating the mistakes of some conurbations.

Lewis Mumford, the urban historian and theorist, wrote of a "biological necessity for open spaces." (Mumford, 1969, p.14) He identified the uneven distribution of open space in cities, believing that the sprawl of the suburbs

needed to be halted while the congestion of inner-cities could be alleviated by the inclusion of more small parks:

> The problem of the archetypal suburb today is to trade some of its excessive biological space (gardens) for social space (meeting places): That of the congested city is just the opposite, it must introduce into its overbuilt quarters sunlight, fresh air, private gardens, public squares, and pedestrian malls. (Mumford, 1969, p. 20)

Mumford saw the hinterland of a city becoming more like a large "collective park", easily accessible by car and by public transport, concurring with Ebenezer Howard's model of the "garden city" in the early twentieth century. (Mumford, 1969, p. 18) The garden city would take the form of a limited area of space, housing a limited population, surrounded by a green-belt, and linked to the countryside and other garden cities. (Mumford, 1961 p. 586)

The countryside surrounding the town or city has been seen as a large scale pleasure-ground, ready for appropriation by a new commuter class since Victorian times, when railroads facilitated the growth of the suburbs. In the nineteenth century, hygiene and sanitation were widely perceived to be the benefits of green, open space. While Mumford might have attributed the expansion of suburbia, in part at least, to such a biological necessity for open spaces, Ann Bermingham sees the move to suburbia as an indication of middle-class aspirations and social status.

Bermingham, an English art historian, tracked the history of the English suburb and the subsequent fetishisation of rusticity. She found evidence to suggest that the suburbs attracted both agricultural and industrial workers:

> In its purest form the suburb was an abstraction of the rustic tradition, a utopian ideological construction that provided a refuge from the disappointing realities of both urban and rural life. (Bermingham, 1987, p. 168)

Mumford also identified a second specific need: a "psychological need for [the] sight and smell of grass, bushes, flowers, trees and open sky." (Mumford, 1969, p. 14)

Healing and soothing effects have been attributed to nature, leading to the commonly held notion of "rooting" oneself in nature. A garden may be the only direct contact a person living in a city has with nature. The garden has been described as an oasis of green in the concrete jungle of the city.

According to the introduction of The Meaning of Gardens, (1990):

> Gardening has important social and psychological benefits. It relaxes, teaches, and connects. The act of gardening provides relief from our often abstract and secondhand work. A small but growing body of empirical research substantiates these common-sense claims; gardening does reduce stress and contributes to wellness. (Francis & Hester, Jr., 1990, p. 6)

The American psychologist Rachel Kaplan views the activity of gardening as conducive to mental well-being and stability. Her papers include "Restorative Experience: The healing power of nearby nature", (1990), "The Green Experience", (1978), and "Some Psychological Benefits of Gardening", (1973). Such a link, though not incredible, is difficult to prove empirically. Gardening may be carried out in mental hospitals, and in prisons, as therapy. So, too, is the activity of art, but do people *need* art?

Both Jay Appleton (The Experience of Landscape, 1975) and Yi-Fu Tuan (Topophilia, 1974) have written about universal landscape preferences and an inherent human need for nature. The English geographer Appleton developed a "prospect-refuge" theory attempting to identify a universal model of landscape preferences, based on what he deemed as a person's nascent need to seek safe refuge and gain a prospect of one's surroundings. Over a decade later, perhaps in response to new theories of cultural studies, in The Symbolism of Habitat, (1990), he reasserted his position:

> the twin concepts of foraging ground and nesting place are intimately related in the process of reproduction, and their initial selection clearly demonstrates the existence of some kind of preference system which must be at least partially innate (Appleton, 1990, p. 7)

Appleton accepted that perceptions of the environment are culturally, socially, and personally influenced, yet maintained a modern Darwinian approach, claiming that these perceptions are based upon survival instincts. It is difficult

to reconcile this stance with contemporary gardens. A person's decision to grow a large screen of trees around his or her garden indicates a preference for privacy above the need for defence. Most gardens are highly stylised and limited in form and function, and of minor importance to a city-dweller's literal survival.

The English landscape historian Denis Cosgrove's criticism of ethology and environmental psychology seems more plausible, particularly with regard to specifically designed and used spaces like gardens. He argues that the human environment is:

> so transformed, overlain and mediated by social, cultural and economic as well as personal meanings historically, that to trace the bio-physiological bases of environmental ... response seems largely futile at best, and at worst, pandering to the most dangerously ideological interpretation of 'human nature'. (Cosgrove, 1986, p. 23)

It is obvious that people do not need gardens for survival, in the way that they need food. The way people use gardens can indicate how they are valued in a culture. Gardens are not fixed objects. They are places, spaces which people use specifically, controlling, building, and surveying the space of the garden. These spaces perform various functions and are used in different ways.

It is necessary at this point to draw a distinction between the way that front and back gardens are used. Christopher Grampp, an American landscape architect, devised a system for classifying ordinary residential gardens in California. (Grampp, 1990, p. 181) He identified the "living garden" as a private, domestic space, similar to the Irish back garden. The back garden is usually an enclosed space, acting like another room of the house, adapted to human leisure activities rather than horticultural pursuits.

The Irish front garden equates with what Grampp called the "well-tempered garden". The front garden is always on display, a public space unless the owner has deliberately chosen to plant tall trees or build a high wall. Quite often, for reasons of planning permission or time, when such a desire for privacy is not possible, the owner can make his or her house less conspicuous

by conforming to the norm of the street. Front gardens can simply be personal car parks, or they can be overtly decorated, highly maintained with statues and other objects and name plaques on the walls of the house. The facades of these houses with neat and formal front gardens are often customised in some way, with stone cladding or the addition of a bay window to make the house different externally from their neighbours'. Front gardens display the taste of the owner, that is, the aesthetic decisions, culturally and socially influenced, taken by the owner. A humorous response to this can be seen in figure 1.1.

Grampp also called another type of garden "the expressionist garden". The people who own these gardens are those who have a great deal of interest in the activity of gardening, the growing of particular plants and vegetables, and perhaps have a specialised interest in maintaining a wildlife habitat in their garden. Grampp failed to include the obvious category of might be called "the unwanted garden". These gardens are noticeable because of their neglect and their owners' obvious disinterest in them.

The first specific use of gardens that will be examined here is that of the garden as a leisure amenity, an area for relaxation, productivity, and play.

The back garden is often a child's first playground, safe from strangers and foreign objects, with a soft ground to tumble on, under the watch of his or her parents. The back garden can act as host to a whole range of eclectic activities, from barbecues to sunbathing, and can contain a range of items from coal-bins to washing-lines. Where else can a person feed the birds, house their pets, and store all kinds of junk?

And, of course, people actually *garden* in their gardens. Wild gardens, water gardens, edible gardens and so on are all catered for by a multitude of garden centres and tool-shops. Every book shop, library, and newsagent will carry books and magazines advising on the best time to sow lettuce and the right type of lawn-mower to buy.

Gardening as an activity is currently growing in popularity in Ireland. It would seem that garden centres are becoming garden supermarkets - see figure 1.2.

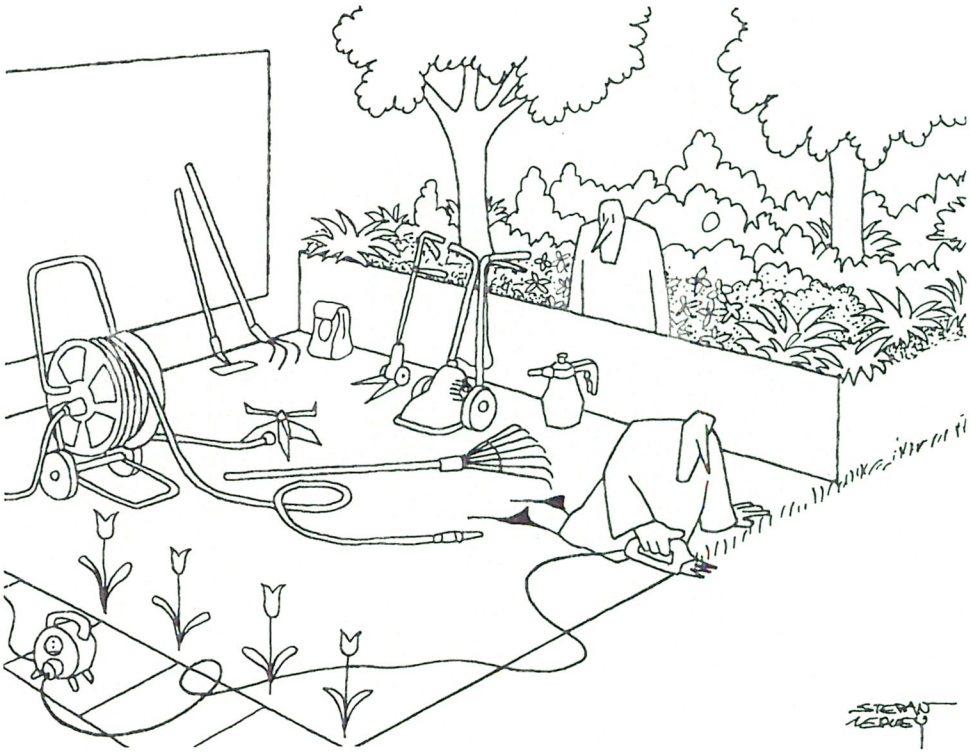

Fig. 1.1 Formalism versus informalism.
Stefan Verwey, cartoon, originally published in De Volkskrant (taken from Wrede & Adams, 1991, p. 30)

Fig. 1.2 A shopping trolley.
(author's photograph)

The Irish Garden is a new Irish magazine which began publication in 1991 and is now outselling all other garden magazines put together. (Fig. 1.3) The Irish public appears to be eager to support the horticultural industry of their country, perhaps in an attempt to establish an Irish gardening style.

The space of the garden, it has been shown, can serve to accommodate a wide spectrum of activities from socialising to relaxing, and gardens also afford another opportunity to shop - for tools, plants, ornaments, and ideas.

According to the English landscape theorist, R. A. Preece:

> Today especially, gardens are places where even ordinary people can do their own thing, places whose only function is to give delight and a sense of well-being. Gardens do not have to be designed in the aesthetic sense. The fresh food faddist who devotes his entire garden to growing vegetables is equally making a statement about the values of his ideal world, which perhaps he is unable to make at work. A study of gardens, then, tells us a great deal about ourselves. (Preece, 1991, p. 32)

Gardens are used and valued in many different ways all over the world, and in Ireland. By examining the multiplicity of gardens' roles in Dublin, attitudes towards nature and the countryside, and the relationship between urban and rural, and private and public life can be illustrated.

Traditionally, Ireland has not been seen as a nation of gardeners as has England for example. (Preston, Things, summer 1995, p. 87) It is only in recent decades that large numbers of Irish people have been financially able to sustain as "frivolous" an accessory as a garden. The ideas and values attached to "land" and "ownership" in Ireland are grounded in a history of colonisation .

It seems that long after the people who colonised Ireland have left, the plants which they introduced in their parks and gardens continue to colonise the countryside. An article titled "Natural and Naturalised" in The Irish Garden, noted how "the giant rhubarb looks splendid when it sits majestically beside a lake in the demesne of a stately Irish mansion." (The Irish Garden, January 1998, p. 18) However, the spread of this *Gunnera tinctoria* as as well as

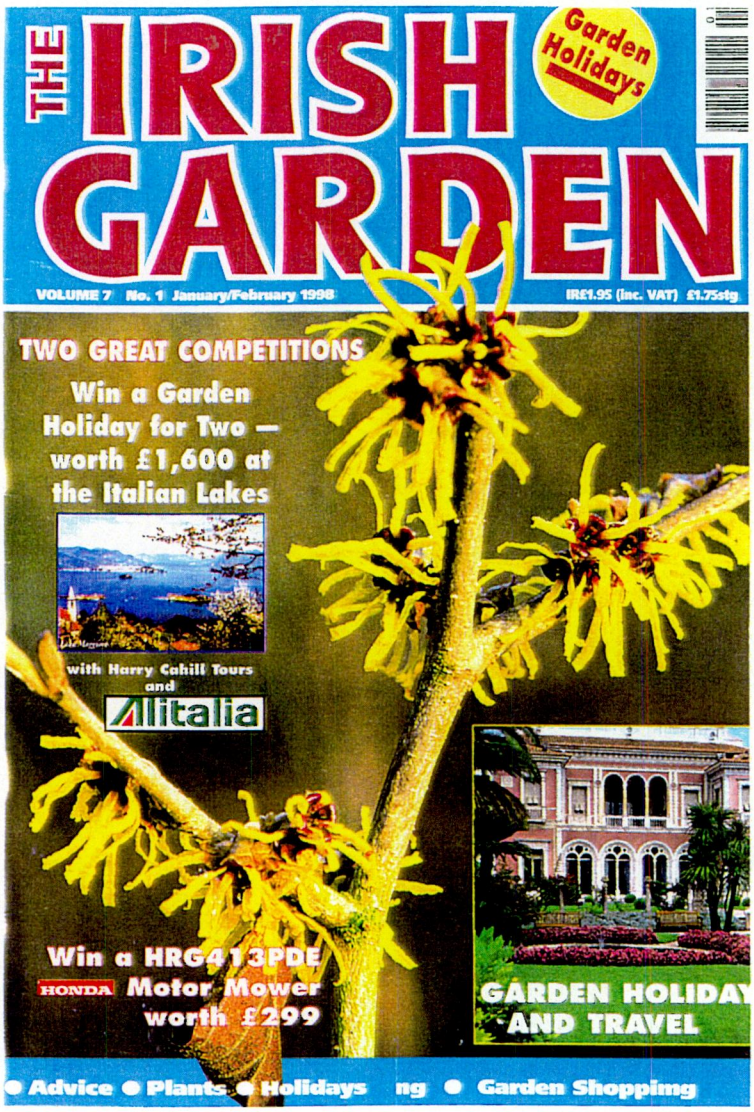

Fig. 1.3 An "all Irish" garden publication.
(The Irish Garden, Vol. 7, No. 1, January 1998)

rhododendrons in the west of Ireland is proving to be out of control and is threatening native Irish plant life. (Fig. 1.4)

Many of Ireland's historical gardens have only recently been rescued from terminal decline, perhaps because their negative associations with British rule in Ireland have become mitigated by an interest in Irish heritage. David Brett, the Irish cultural historian, calls this revisionist trend "a deproblematised story-telling". (Brett, 1996, p. 2) In 1994,when Michael D. Higgins, then minister for arts, culture, and the Gaeltacht, accepted Castletown House and gardens from the Irish Georgian Society, on behalf of the Irish people, he remarked that the state's acceptance of the historical property was "a mark of the confidence, sophistication, and cultural maturity" of the Irish people. (The Irish Independent, 22 January 1994)

Marianne Heron, the Irish garden writer, has noted that garden visiting, by foreign tourists and Irish people alike, has become "the growing edge of leisure" (Heron, 1996, p. 3). Now part of the Irish tourism industry, Irish historical gardens are celebrated as part of the country's heritage. Groups such as Gardens of Ireland, the Office of Public Works, the National Heritage Council, and the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme, all work to restore, conserve, and publicise such gardens.

Much of this publicity emphasises the history and age of the gardens as qualities that are inherently valuable. Richard Wood, chairman of Irish Heritage Properties, wrote that "Irish gardens ... have a noble history" (Irish Heritage Properties, 1993, introduction) Irish demesnes were certainly the property of the Anglo-Irish nobility, but whether their history, as emblems of occupation, could be considered noble is debatable. The tourism industry also markets the Irish countryside as natural and unspoilt, claiming that the historical gardens' "intimate blend of wild and cultivated plants, shrubs, and trees suit perfectly the mild and moist climate of this beautiful island." (Irish Heritage Properties, 1993, introduction)

Desmond Guinness, The Knight of Glin and president of the Irish Georgian Society, has argued that "Irish gardens and parks are in themselves works of art worthy of preservation." (Malins & The Knight of Glin, 1976, p. xvi) Many

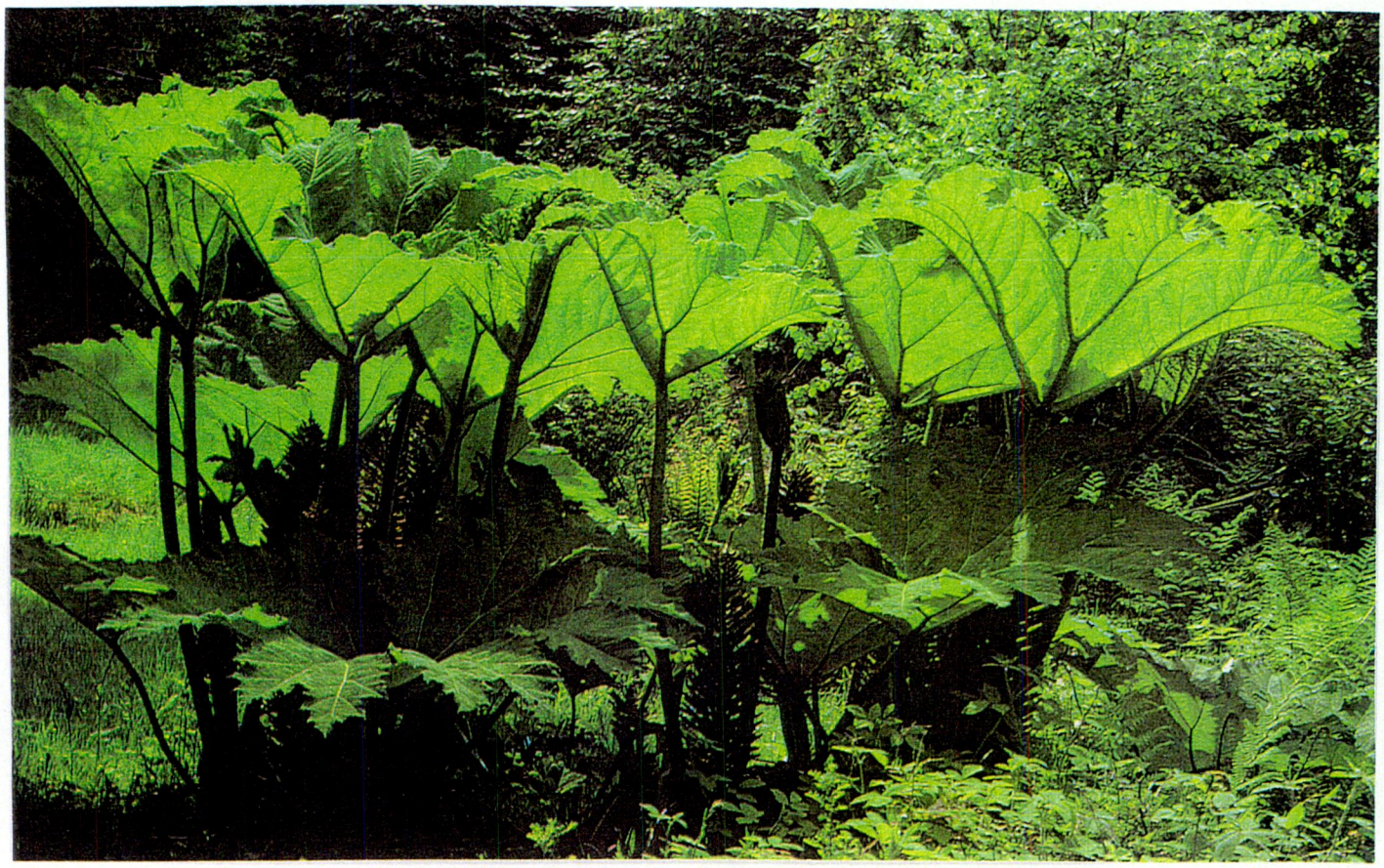

Fig. 1.4 *Gunnera tinctoria*; the rhubarb that is ravishing the Irish countryside. (taken from Brookes, 1991)

of these gardens were made at a time when gardening was considered to be one of the fine arts. Visiting these gardens and parks allows people to experience previous societies" ideas of art and nature.

In fact it is possible to define the activity of garden *visiting* as opposed to the activity of gardening. Of concern to this thesis are the motivations for owning and maintaining a garden today, which are vastly different to the values which prompted the creation of gardens by aristocratic families centuries ago. (See figure 1.5)

Frank McDonald, the environment correspondent for The Irish Times, criticised the manner in which the interior of Powerscourt house, Co. Wicklow, has been restored: "Far from being 'restored', Powerscourt has been virtually transformed into a shopping-mall" (McDonald, The Irish Times, 5 August 1997). The gardens remain among the most impressive formal gardens in Ireland, attracting hundreds of visitors each year. A view of these can be seen in figure 1.6. The interior of the house, after being destroyed by fire in 1974, has been redesigned to function as a retail and restaurant area until restoration work can be completed. It provides a clear example of how garden visiting is a passive entertainment, combining the spectacle and experience of the particular garden with the purchase of gifts and souvenirs.

Historical gardens may be seen as valuable to the general public because they represent the ideal garden in a society where people shop for the ideal home, but they are unlikely to have a demonstrable effect on a person's treatment of his or her suburban patch of lawn for obvious reasons, such as difference in scale and budget. Both types of space also carry different meanings and are not always immediately associated with one another.

While gardens can provide locations for a range of activities, they are also places for solitary meditation and reflection, where one can escape the hustling world of the street. It is interesting here to note the common treatment of gardens as a means of "escape", even though most traditional and contemporary Western gardens take the form of enclosed or limited areas of space. By retreating into the private and secure space of one's back garden for instance,

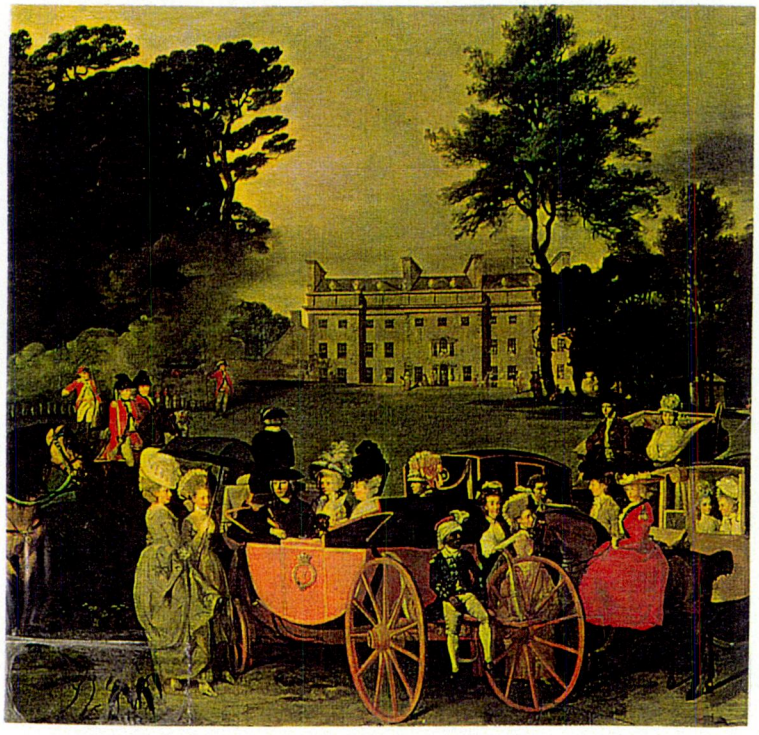

Fig. 1.5 "Lord Aldborough reviewing Volunteers", oil-painting by Francis Wheatley, c.1780 (taken from Malins & The Knight of Glin, 1976, cover)

Fig. 1.6 The stately Powerscourt gardens are an annual tourist attraction. (taken from Irish Heritage Properties, pamphlet, 1993)

one can escape the gaze of other people. A garden is perhaps the only place in a city where one can be certain to be alone while out in the air. The description which Appleton gives to the medieval garden can also be applied to a contemporary garden: "it may have been more sheltered than the world outside, but it was still open to the wind and the rain and its ceiling was the sky." (Appleton, 1993, p. 75)

Here, I will briefly expand upon Esther Da Costa Meyer's discussion of what she calls an urban pathology: agoraphobia. Da Costa Meyer, an American historian of art and architecture, describes how "the synchronicity of the appearance of agoraphobia with the rise of the metropolis also anchors it firmly within capitalism. The Industrial Revolution required, among other things, the sexual division of labour and the separation of dwelling from workplace." (Da Costa Meyer, 1996, p. 147). Agoraphobia literally means "fear of the marketplace": this definition would comply with the idea that this anxiety is linked to capitalism, and so places of consumption.

If, as she maintains, agoraphobia is the fear of open spaces and has been largely increasing in cities in recent years, then the undiminished popularity of gardens would seem to suggest that gardens fill a desire for a retreat from unlimited vistas and overwhelming open spaces. A garden can represent a safe, secluded space where proximity to large numbers of people is not necessary.

Da Costa Meyer continues:

> Fear of urban spaces came to be identified more correctly with situations located in the public realm: not only streets and squares, but more specifically, crowds, shopping, trains, bridges, tunnels, elevators, and so forth. (Da Costa Meyer, 1996, p. 141)

Here again it is clear that gardens provide a private external space within a private realm, and perhaps also act as a physical, mental, and visual buffer between indoors and outdoors.

Da Costa Meyer quotes Camillo Sitte, the nineteenth century Viennese architect and urban theorist, on the subject of agoraphobia:

> 'Numerous people are said to suffer from it, always experiencing certain anxiety or discomfort when they have to walk across a vast empty place.' According to Sitte, only small scale, enclosed squares took account of what he liked to call 'our natural craving for protection from the flank.' (Da Costa Meyer, 1996, p. 143)

And Da Costa Meyer later mentions "the emotional importance of walls", suggesting that people rely on the physical presence of a boundary or the delineation of space, in order to feel secure. (Da Costa Meyer, 1996, p. 145)

Jay Appleton has also contended that walls are of psychological and symbolic importance in relation to the sense of enclosure and security in the garden. He traces the walled garden from its beginnings in the medieval garden - shown in figure 1.7 - the *hortus conclusus*, walled to shelter plants and to shelter the owners of the garden from the general public. (Appleton, 1993, p. 75) The walled garden was also used to enclose the sanctuaries of monastic settlements. Gardens became the locus of love-making and intrigue, featuring mazes and trompe-loeils, included in the back-drops to sixteenth century plays (Hunt, 1992, p. 49)

The picturesque style followed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Landscape design as a profession was invented, with landscape gardeners designing large estates for aristocratic landowners, and the scope of that profession increased. The sweeping hills and mounds and strategically placed copses of "Capability" Brown's (1715-1783) designs enlarged the area of the garden to include the park, and the enclosing element of walls was replaced by that of trees and woodland. (Appleton, 1993, p. 75) A return to the smaller, bounded garden was reached by Victorian times.

By the nineteenth century, a new middle class had emerged in most European and American cities. The lives of this suburban population in England, according to Bermingham, became more regimented, with distinctions becoming more definite between work and home, private and public, and male and female roles within these realms: "With its detached and semidetached houses and private gardens, the suburb provided its inhabitants with tenuous and thus tightly maintained privacy." (Bermingham, 1987, pp. 167-168)

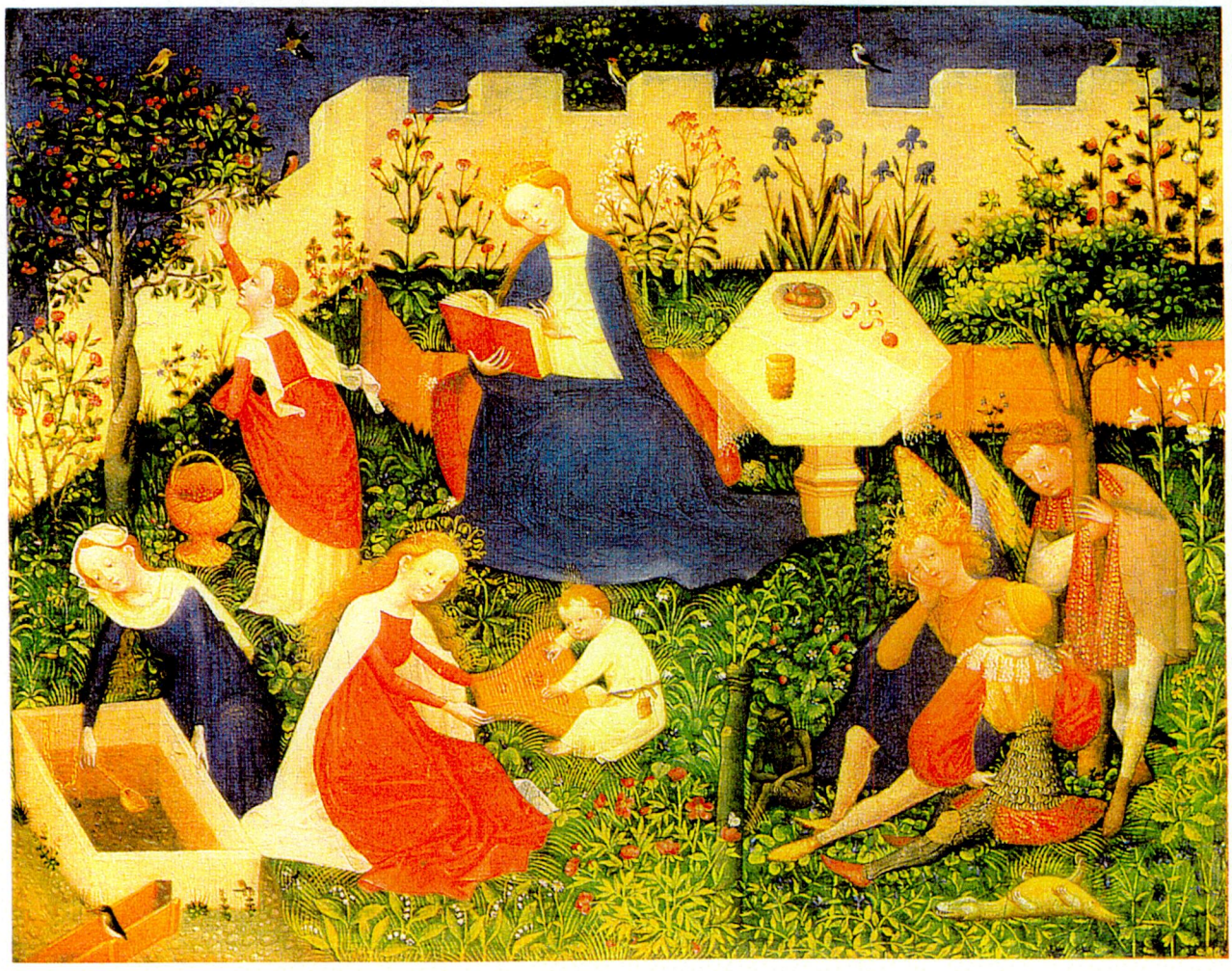

Fig. 1.7 Many activities were sheltered within the walls of the medieval garden. (Upper Rhine, c 1410-20, taken from Harvey, John. Medieval Gardens, London, Batsford Ltd, 1981, plate v)

Arboretum et Fruticetum Brittanicum, (1838) - matched the suburban ideal of arcadia with the practical and financial limitations of the middle classes. The cultivation of rare plants and trees in greenhouses and formal flower beds became popular in Victorian times, as did the amateur practices of botany and naturalism.

The Victorian, walled, cottage-garden (of which Gertrude Jeckyll, 1843-1932, was a widely published proponent) with lawn, floral abundance, and assorted garden furniture and sculpture, has remained the generic model for domestic gardens. (See figure 1.8) And this, despite the radical changes in architecture, design, use of space, and use of materials that have occurred in the last one hundred years. Perhaps this indicates the continuing ambivalence of the relationship between city and suburb. According to Bermingham, city planners in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries attempted to "suburbanise" urban areas with the inclusion of city squares and parks, believing in "the suburban promise of nature and civilisation in symbiotic harmony." (Bermingham, 1987, p. 172) The coupling of nature and culture is a common analogy for the garden. Perhaps an urban garden can represent an island of suburbia in the middle of a city.

Pierce Lewis, an American geographer, explains how he sees the boundary of the garden as being integral to the meaning of that garden, defining who owns, who can use, and who is responsible for the "look" of the garden:

> The private front yard ... commonly has unambiguous edges - sidewalks, curbs, hedges, or walls ... such walls serve a variety of useful purposes. They keep strangers away; they define the boundaries of ownership in an unambiguous way. But one of their main purposes ... is to establish the limits of aesthetic responsibility. (Lewis, 1993, p. 15)

It is here that one of the main roles of the garden today can be located; as a spatial and symbolic mediator between private and public domains. In his essay, "Landscape and Architecture" (1993), Appleton includes the idea that the facade of a building is the visual and symbolic interface between indoor and outdoor, private and public.

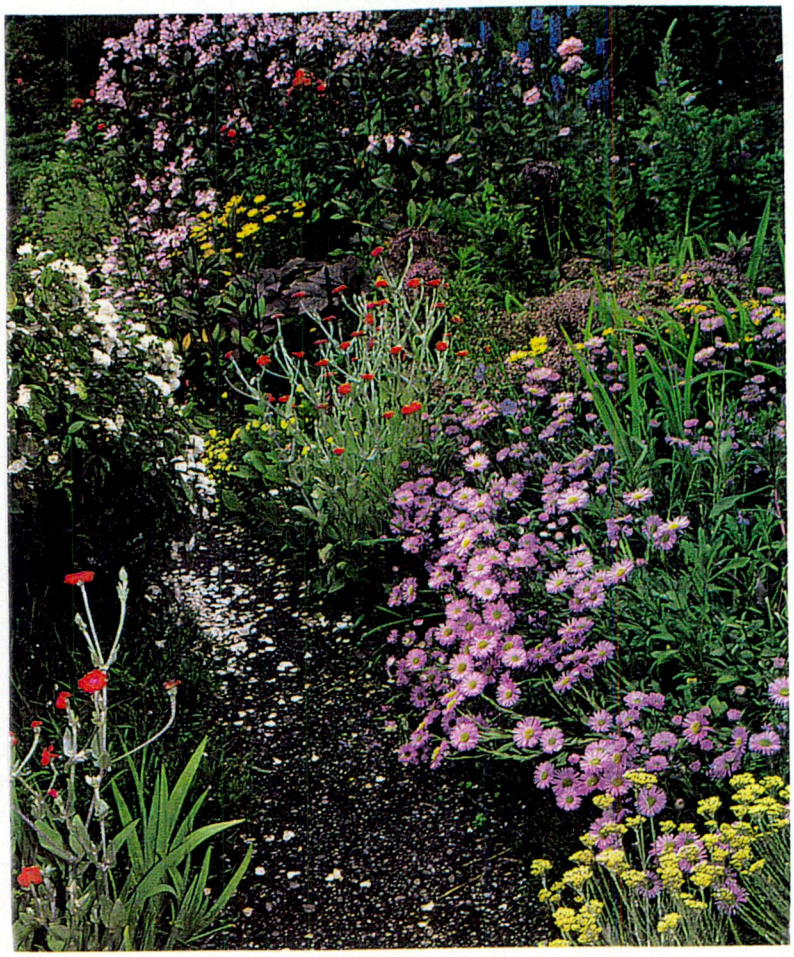

Fig. 1.8 The profusion of colour and growth typical of a wild flower, cottage-garden. (taken from Brookes, 1991)

Appleton takes the example of post-war, corporate buildings, presenting uniform and uninterrupted facades of glass, as representing impenetrability, reflecting the external and disguising their own presence, like the Dublin solicitor's building seen in figure 1.9. Also, he identifies the inclusion of overhangs, eaves, balconies. as well as emphasising doorways and points of entry, as inviting to the outsider. It is possible to add that people without gardens use hanging baskets and window boxes and creepers to represent gardens, to make the building blend with the landscape, or indeed, when the streetscape is devoid of greenery, to make the building stand out.

Additions such as arcades, verandahs, and exterior stairways break the absolute distinction between internal and external space, by casting shadows and extending into the space of the street. Appleton pays particular attention to gardens and conservatories, which he believes stretch the idea of "the interface in elevation" to include "its perception in plan". "In land-use terms the visual device for toning down the immediacy of the interface between indoors and outdoors is the garden." (Appleton, 1993, p. 75)

The comparison of the garden to a room demonstrates the interplay of indoor and outdoor space. By using similar descriptive terms, the garden remains connected in language to the house. For example, people plant flowers in flower "beds" to a certain colour scheme, use garden "furniture", and construct bird "tables".

To sum up, a garden is a limited and often enclosed area of space. This area of space has been endowed with all sorts of general qualities - naturalness, privacy, creativity - that perhaps enrich the image of the actual and ordinary garden. Nonetheless, gardens are considered by many people to be of importance, especially in an urban environment. (See figure 1.10) Values that are attached to gardens in Dublin will be examined in the following chapter.

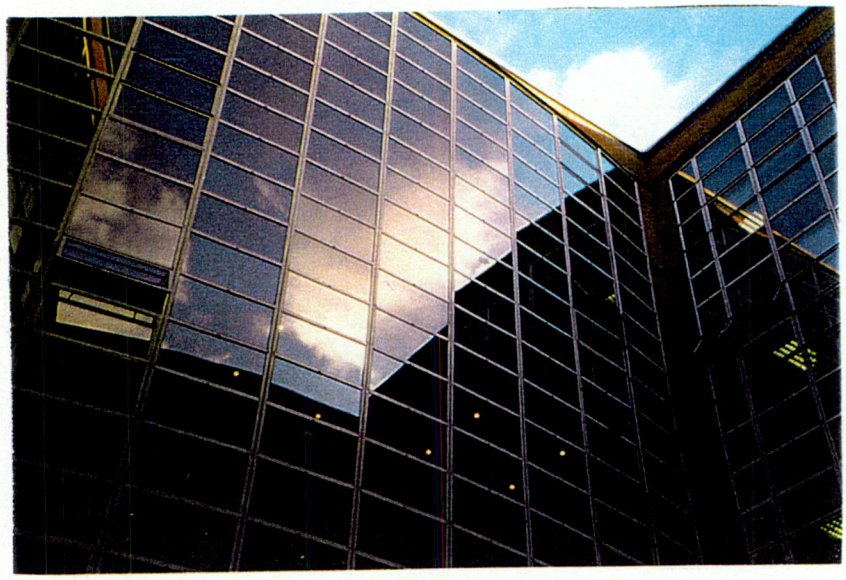

Fig. 1.9 The "walls of glass" reflect the exterior while concealing the interior. (author's photograph)

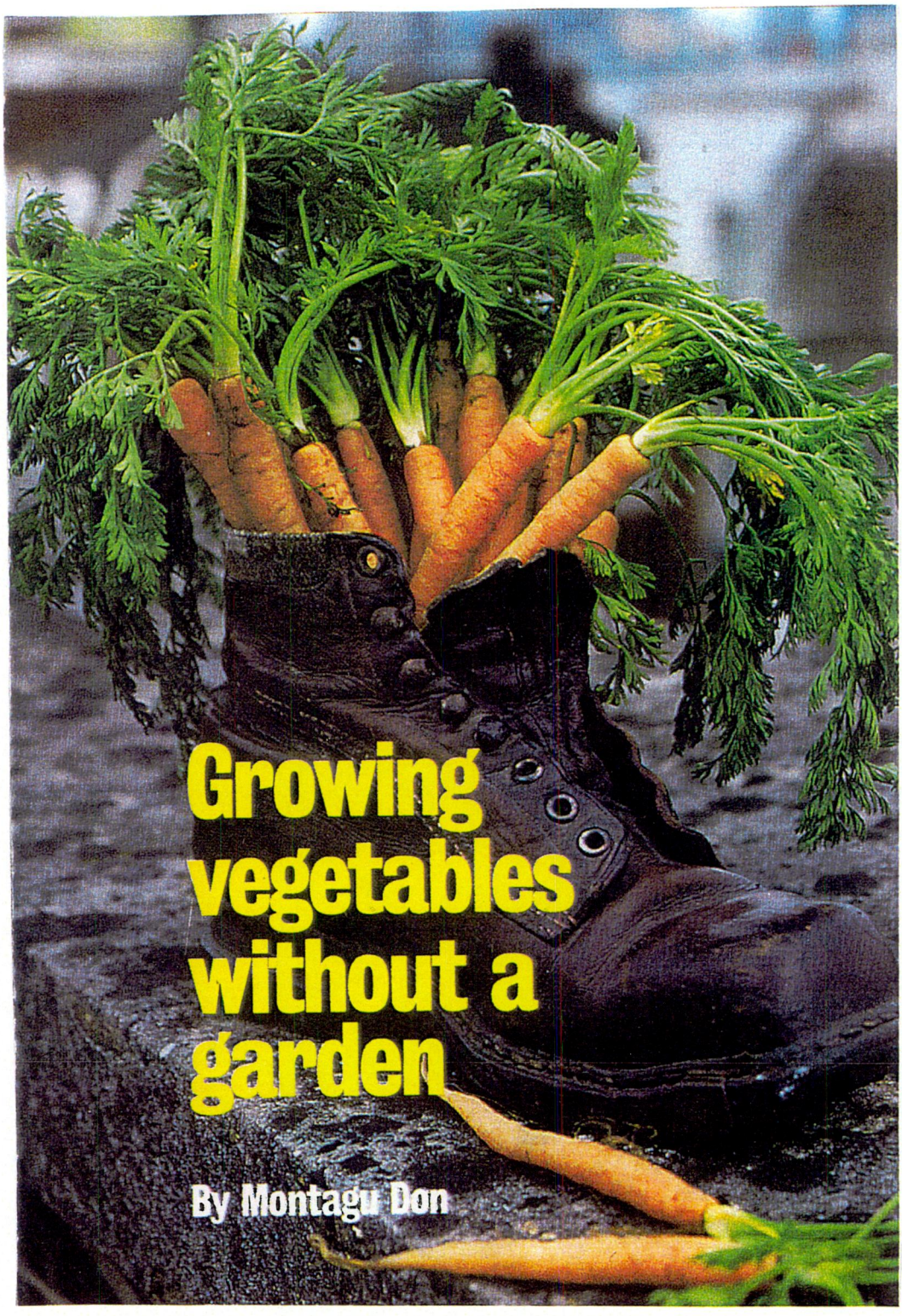

Fig. 1.10 The absence of a traditonal garden is not always a barrier to horticulture. (The Observer)

Chapter Two

"A Valuable bit of Land"

(Interview with Brian Dowling, 7 January 1998)

The aim of this chapter is to present and discuss the numerous values which are given to gardens owned and used in Dublin. Differing values can be placed upon a garden by different groups of people.

For instance, a residents' committee may value well-kept front gardens within a housing estate, because such a uniformity can project a particular image to visitors. A person living in an apartment complex may appreciate that their landscaped courtyard is maintained by contract gardeners, relieving them of the responsibility of care, but still providing a pleasant environment. (Figure 2.1 & 2.2)

In the previous chapter it was identified how ordinary people use gardens, and how sociologists, architects, planners, and designers examine the different uses of gardens. Karl Marx, the author of Das Kapital, distinguished between the use-value of an object (how it satisfies certain needs) and the exchange-value of an object (its price in the market-place). (Lechte, 1994, p. 233) Here, it will be examined how people value gardens.

With regard to the use-value of gardens, there are many activities and functions common to parks and gardens. The question should be asked why, given the availability of outdoor space in public parks, do people continue to value the smaller and often derisory space of their garden. It is my contention that a garden is considered an attractive alternative because of the privacy, the subjective indication of status, and the opportunities to dictate the form of the environment that are offered therein.

John Lechte, who has written on many aspects of modern thought, writes of French semiotician Jean Baudrillard's work:

> While there is a utilitarian aspect to many objects, what is essential to them is their ability to signify a status ... objects are not simply consumed in a consumer society; they are produced less to satisfy a need than to signify a status ... Hence, in a thorough-going consumer society, objects become signs, and the realm of necessity is left far behind - if it ever really existed. (Lechte, 1994, p. 234)

Baudrillard's point of view, which confers a status value on the garden, complements Marx's use-value. Baudrillard identified - further to Marx's

Fig. 2.1, & 2.2 The landscaped grounds of this apartment complex contrast with the residents' subdued efforts to have a personal garden on their balconies. (author's photograph)

system - a sign-value of objects. Taking the garden (as object), it is clear to see that "the realm of necessity" has been lost, and what is of interest is the way the garden displays values or status. From the point of view of its owner, a garden in Dublin is a valuable resource, indulging a need for private space (a claim that was investigated in the previous chapter), and enhancing the status of the owner.

From a more objective, pecuniary outlook, a garden in Dublin is also a valuable piece of land, and to own a garden in Dublin today is to own a desirable and increasingly rare commodity. As the city centre becomes more densely populated, and housing prices increase, there is less availability of private external space, and gardens continue to exist in abundance only in the suburbs.

As a commodity in demand, the exchange-value of gardens has hence risen. Figure 2.3 shows how estate agents market gardens with neutral terms such as "large", "spacious", "secluded", "extensive". The Irish Times printed an article in its property section advising readers "How gardens can make house prices grow". The article claimed that "the space outside your house can add from five to twenty per cent to its value." (Powers, The Irish Times, 3 April 1997) Jane Powers, journalist for The Irish Times, noted the recent increase in interest in gardens, as estate agents recommend that a tidy, "crisp and orderly" garden will create the right impression for a potential buyer. (Powers, The Irish Times, 3 April 1997)

This type of attitude may encourage uniformity in garden design. A buyer may be less likely to take on a garden with a strong personality, so it may be wiser to mow the lawn and kill the weeds. From the shared point of view of estate agents and buyers, a garden may have "potential", and the possibility of transforming the garden on view becomes a saleable feature. By transforming the state of a garden, a new owner can demonstrate a desire to make a statement about his or her tastes, as distinct from the previous owners'. Conversely, by accepting a garden's form, a new owner is conforming to the image which they perceive the garden portrays already. The current popularity of gardens may have more to do with owners' desires to be "garden-proud" as well as house-proud, than with personal expression. After all, although a back garden may be

64 DUFFERIN AVENUE,
SOUTH CIRCULAR ROAD, DUBLIN 8

Auction Friday 25th April at 3.30 p.m. **Executors Sale**

Red brick end of terrace period townhouse in need of modernisation with original features and excellently situated within minutes of town.

ACCOMM: 2 reception rooms, kitchen, 3 bedrooms, bathroom.

OUTSIDE: Railed garden to front and walled garden to side

SOLICITOR: Hayes McGrath, 91 Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2

VIEW: Saturdays 3-4.30 p.m. or by appointment

"BEAUMONT", 35 RICHMOND AVENUE,
MONKSTOWN, CO. DUBLIN

AUCTION THURSDAY 24TH APRIL AT 2.30 P.M.

A very attractive pre - war semi detached home set on superb gardens, surely award winning!

In neeed of some modernisation in this highly sought after location, adjacent all amenities.

ACCOMM: 3/4 bedrooms, bathroom, 2/3 reception rooms, kitchen downstairs wc&whb

SOLICITORS: Cullen Tyrrell & O'Beirne, Woodville, Herbert Road, Bray

VIEW: Saturdays 3-4.30 p.m. or by appointment

121 LEINSTER ROAD,
RATHMINES, DUBLIN 6

AUCTION WEDNESDAY 23RD APRIL AT 2.30 P.M.

EXECUTORS SALE **IN NEED OF REFURBISHMENT**

Put your own stamp on this wonderful double fronted single storey over garden level period home brimming with charm and character positioned on one of Dublin's finest roads. This property benefits from feature large sunny rear gardens, good sized front garden with off street parking.

ACCOMM: 7 principal rooms, bathrooom etc.

SOLICITORS: Shields LK & Partners, 39 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2

VIEW: Saturdays 3-4.30 p.m. or by appointment

9 TIVOLI TERRACE,
DUN LAOGHAIRE,CO. DUBLIN

AUCTION THURSDAY 24TH APRIL AT 3.30 P.M.

An outstanding double fronted two storey period home in the heart of Dun Laoghaire which has been sympathetically restored and upgraded by its present owners

ACCOMM: 3/4 reception rooms, 4/5 bedrooms, attic study area, kitchen. GFCH

OUTSIDE: Large 120 ft. rear garden with off street parking

SOLICITOR: PCL Halpenny & Sons, 96 Upper Georges Street, Dun Laoghaire

VIEW: Saturdays 3-4.30 p.m. or by appointment

Fig. 2.3 Dublin's estate agents sell the virtues of "large", "railed", and "walled" gardens. (taken from The Irish Times property secton, 5 February 1998)

on display partially or temporarily, a front garden is on display twenty-four hours a day.

Gardens are widely perceived as being private places. A back garden is considered more secluded, casual, and relaxed than a garden which is open to the street at the front of a house. Front gardens may offer less privacy, but they are still considered to be private areas, off-limits to passers-by and, also, gardens can be screened in a variety of ways allowing more, or less, privacy.

A strict social code will often dictate how people behave in public places as opposed to private places. Recently, on "The Gerry Ryan Show", a popular mid-morning radio talk-show on 2FM, RTE, a woman in Dublin called to express her distress at the amount of rubbish, from wheel-chairs to tins of beans, that was regularly being dumped into her secluded garden at the side of her house. Free from the sanction of the public gaze, some people were behaving as if her sheltered garden was their own private dump.

A person can keep animals in their garden because "in common law, property ownership means the exclusive private right to determine occupancy, use and form." (Vidler, 1993, p. 31) However, in certain circumstances, the public right can override the private right to determine such occupancy, use, and form, for instance, if the noise or smell of the animals kept is offensive to neighbours.

Kevin Gray, an English ecologist, outlines the concept of property:

> The beginning of truth in this area is the realization that 'property' is not itself the thing or resource that is 'owned'. 'Property' is instead the term used to describe a legally (because socially) endorsed concentration of power over things and resources. (Gray, 1995, p. 223)

Gray states that the amount of power one has over a resource is relative to the social right to also own property in that resource. He goes on to suggest the ambivalence of the concept of property. He argues, on the one hand, that no one person can completely own a piece of land - often because of easements, such as public rights of access to a footpath. On the other hand, if this idea of social rights is extended, each person has an amount of property in every

resource (fossil fuels, the atmosphere, rain forests). However, the ambivalence which Gray links to the concept of property is not generally applied to gardens.

It has been shown, in examples of how gardens are valued in the property market, that gardens are portrayed as exclusively private places, as private and as inviolable as a person's house. The area of a garden will generally be strictly demarcated, and responsibility for one or other sides of a dividing wall or overhanging trees is decided by law without any apparent ambivalence.

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), a German historian, philosopher, and critic, who wrote on aspects of modernity, considered that "ownership is the most intimate of relations one can have to an object, not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them." (Benjamin, in Illuminations, 1986, p. 67) This statement can be shown to be particularly useful for an understanding of the ownership of gardens. An inanimate object or an area of space cannot literally come alive, but it is by experiencing a space that it becomes "real" or known.

In an interview I conducted with the owner of an inner city garden in Dublin, some of the values placed on the garden were revealed.

Brian Dowling lives in south central Dublin in a working-class, market area, known as the Liberties since medieval times, as it lay outside the jurisdiction of Dublin Castle. His house is located off Meath Street on a corner at the junction of Gray Street and Reginald Street, and his garden lies to the side of the house. The garden consists of a red brick driveway (matching the house) where he parks his car, and a raised garden. (See figure 2.4)

The prominent features in this garden are a miniature pergola, about five feet high with trailing plants growing over it, and a white, two-tiered, mock-antique fountain. The pergola is flanked by a pair of painted concrete swans. There are more statues of swans in the garden, as well as planters in the form of urns and iron cauldrons, white pedestals, a small, bronze-effect statue of a boy in rustic costume, a bench, and a ceramic mask made by Mr. Dowling's son is mounted on a wall. (See figures 2.5, 2.6, & 2.7

Fig. 2.4 The Dowlings' House, a typical example of dwellings in the area. (photograph courtesy of Brian Dowling)

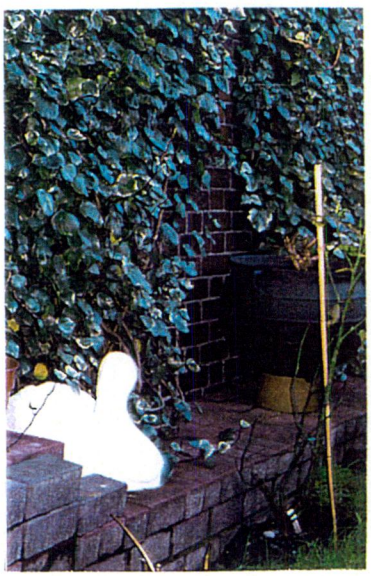

Fig. 2.5, 2.6, & 2.7 A selection of ornaments from Brian Dowling's garden. (author's photograph)

The garden is very neatly maintained and is clearly visible from both quiet streets, as can be seen in figure 2.8. It is remarkable for several reasons. The garden is also one of just four gardens on both streets, and, of these, is the most overtly public in display. Its varied collection of ornaments might seem out of context were it not complemented by a large piece of religious kitsch at the centre of the crossroads. (See figure 2. 9) In fact, it is unusual to see a garden of any type in the Liberties. Usually, back yards are small or built over, while houses open directly onto the streets without front gardens.

Mr. Dowling was happy to talk about his garden and was obviously used to an interest being taken in his garden. Particularly in the summer, people have often stopped to ask him about his garden, and he has entered his garden in a "Tidy Towns" competition.

His garden is used both as a front and back garden, combining decorative and practical qualities. The garden houses the Dowlings' car and is used for social occasions. The family have barbecues in the summer, and his daughter's twenty-first birthday party was attended by nearly one hundred people in the house and garden.

The garden is now quite formal in plan, although when they first bought the house, according to Mr. Dowling, the garden "was actually just like a building site" (Brian Dowling, interview, 7 January 1998). (This opinion possibly indicates his perception at the time that the garden had "potential".) Mr. Dowling cleared away the top-soil from the walls of the house to counter dampness, using the soil to create a raised garden beside a brick driveway. "Someone said to me if you put kerbs in it, it gives it size." (Brian Dowling, interview, 7 January 1998) The different levels effectively give the illusion of extra space while also separating the functional area from the decorative area. Figures 2.10, 2.11, & 2.12 show how the garden has changed.

Mr. Dowling maintained that he is the only one who works in the garden and that the garden is his main hobby, particularly in the summer, when he buys plants from a local street vendor on Thomas Street and also from large garden centres such as Johnstown Garden Centre on the outskirts of Dublin.

Fig. 2.8 Brian Dowling's garden - before a hedge was planted for privacy. (photograph courtesy of Brian Dowling)

Fig. 2.9 A religious grotto erected by local people of the Liberties. (photograph courtesy of Brian Dowling)

Fig. 2.10, 2.11, & 2.12 Work in progress in Brian Dowling's garden. (photographs courtesy of Brian Dowling)

However, he mentioned that he doesn't know much about horticulture, and it is the fountain, statues, and figurines that are given prominence in the garden. Mr. Dowling has collected them from various retailers and car-boot sales. Although there are a number of white swans in the collection, Mr. Dowling did not give any particular reason for their choice.

The functioning fountain is floodlit from below and the light is connected to an elaborate security system which triggers several lights when a beam is broken. Despite such security features, Mr. Dowling said that he doesn't have as many ornaments as he used to because they have been stolen over the years, some of them even dug up out of cement, by local young people, he surmised. This fact is not extraordinary, considering the lack of activities for children and adolescents in the area, and indicates the temerity of Mr. Dowling's decision to continue to display such "sitting ducks". (See figure 2.13)

Mr. Dowling enjoys the beauty and colour of the garden in the summer. Although he commented on the hedge he has planted for privacy, the garden is on display year round and privacy does not appear to be the most valued quality of the garden.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this garden's history is also the aspect which plainly demonstrates the amount of value attached to it. Mr. Dowling explained: "This garden did not belong to this house." (Brian Dowling, interview, 7 January 1998). It was originally a separate vegetable plot owned by his father-in-law, with whom he had to bargain to gain possession of the site. He succeeded in purchasing the site for eight thousand pounds, concerned that "someone would level it and park cars on it." (Brian Dowling, interview, 7 January 1998) He also realised that such a site would add to the value of his adjoined house, being one of so few gardens on the intersecting streets.

Mr. Dowling expressed a complex attachment to the garden: "My wife would like to build an extension, but I'd rather keep the garden." (Brian Dowling, 7 January 1998) In the sense that it is sometimes used as another room for domestic activity, the garden *is* an extension of the house, but it is also a space independent of the house, a space which appears to be entirely under Mr.

Fig. 2.13 Inside Brian Dowling's garden. (author's photograph)

Dowling's control. "It was going up for sale and I couldn't let it go to anyone else." (Brian Dowling, interview, 7 January 1998)

Mr. Dowling described how, at first, "this was just a piece of ground." (Brian Dowling, interview, January 1998) Now, the same piece of ground is thought of differently. The addition of the garden has enlarged the private space of the Dowlings' home. It has made their home distinct from that of their neighbours. With time and money spent, its meaning as well as its actual form has been transformed, and its value has increased. As Mr. Dowling said: "It's a valuable bit of land." (Brian Dowling, interview, 7 January 1998)

From the above interview, it is clear that the owner of the garden in question enjoys the sense of possession and control that he gains from his garden. R. A. Preece notes a current and increasing trend towards more formality in vernacular gardens in Britain, similar to Mr. Dowling's garden, with popular garden literature emphasising "strongly formal but not geometrical layouts." (Preece, 1991, p. 35) He questions why this might be.

Informalism in design may not be suited to small areas or gardens, appearing too cramped. Formal designs fit the equation of plenty of leisure time, labour-saving machinery, plus small gardens. An interview I conducted with the director of a large garden centre revealed that similar shifts in gardening are also occurring in Ireland.

Johnstown Garden Centre, situated on the main southbound road out of Dublin, was opened in 1974 and since then has grown to be a large and busy garden centre, employing fourteen full-time and six part-time staff. The director of the centre, Jim Clarke, estimated that half of the centre's customers are from Dublin and Dublin's southern suburbs.

Johnstown Garden Centre exists in competition with a number of large garden centres and suppliers in the area south of Dublin. The centre advertises locally, in The Golden Pages telephone directory and in The Irish Garden magazine. As it is Mr. Clarke's responsibility to decide upon which stock to carry, he remains abreast of trends on popular gardening by attending trade fairs in Ireland and abroad including the Co. Kildare Growers Show, the RDS spring and autumn

gardening trade fairs, Dublin, and the "Glee" trade fair, Birmingham, England. He has also attends the now annual international seminar "Constructive ideas for new century gardens", hosted in Dublin by the (Irish) Garden and Landscape Designers Association.

Mr. Clarke identified a recent swing to what he calls "impulse sales", meaning that more people are buying more flowering plants, looking for colour "today", and more evergreen shrubs for greenery all year round. (See figure 2.14 & 2.15) According to Mr. Clarke, customers are more interested in achieving an instant show of colour in their gardens, buying plants that they have seen in other gardens, rather then requesting rare or unusual plants as used to be the case. (Jim Clarke, interview, 6 February 1998) The traditional, wild-flower, cottage garden - made famous by William Robinson, author of The Wild Garden, (1870) - is apparently enjoying popularity again, reflected in sales of lavender, lupins, and hollyhocks.

Mr. Clarke attested, too, to the general interest in formal gardens, their plants and ornaments and layout. Among the centre's current best-sellers are box-hedging; clipped box and privet hedges, in shapes of cones, spheres, and spirals; and bay trees, displayed in figure 2.16 & 2.17. Many of these clipped shapes come from Italy and their relative expense does not seem to be a deterring factor. (The most expensive of these items in the centre at the time of my visit were life-size topiary stags, at a price of five hundred pounds each, seen in figure 2.18)

Mr. Clarke thought the conventional front lawn to be generally on the decline. Owning smaller gardens, the customers he encounters are finding a lawn to be more trouble than it is worth; an unsurprising trend, considering the expense of a lawn-mower, and the profuse growth of moss in the damp Irish climate. Instead, people wish to achieve an overall "look" in their gardens, whether the bountiful cosiness of a cottage garden or the sparse symmetry of a formal garden.

But whatever style suits the customer's taste, Jim Clarke confirms that there has been a dramatic upsurge of interest in gardening in Ireland in the last five years.

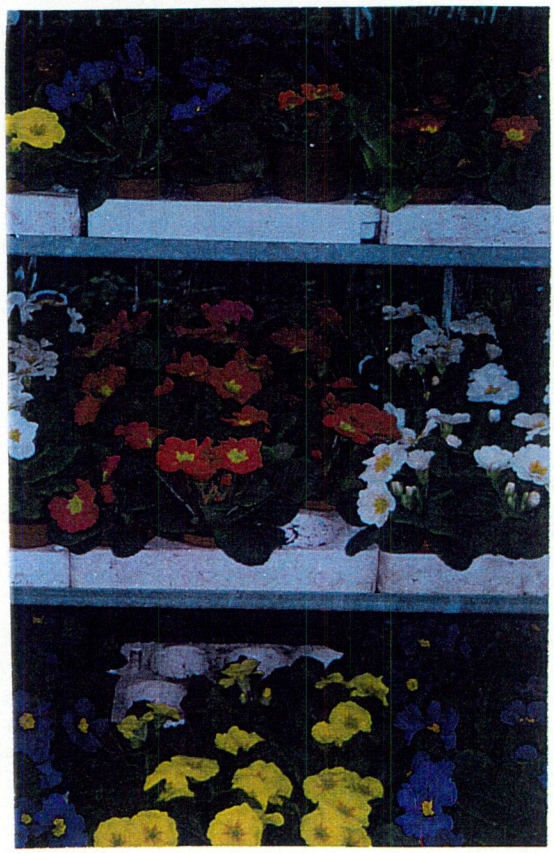

Fig. 2,14 & 2.15 "Ready-to-go" plants at Johnstown Garden Centre. (author's photographs)

Fig. 2.16 & 2.17 Formal, clipped shrubs are in demand at Johnstown Garden Centre. (author's photographs)

Fig. 2.18 Johnstown Garden Centre's most expensive piece of topiary. (author's photograph)

He attributes this to the promotion of gardens through Irish and British television and magazines, facilitated by greater levels of disposable income.

That Johnstown Garden Centre is an area for the disposal of such disposable income is recognisable by marketing techniques familiar in supermarket chains. Large banners welcome the shoppers, particularly on a Sunday, the centre's busiest day of the week. Trolleys await at the entrance, where outdoor plants are organised, labelled, and price-tagged in aisles. (See figure 2.19) An indoor shopping area holds seeds, bulbs, fertilisers, compost, planters, fountains, plastic rock-effect ponds, books, and tools, and staff in green jumpers operate at wide cash desks located at the exit. (Figure 2.20, 2.21, 2.22 & 2.23)

The new prominence of garden centres, their greater variety of stock, and the changing demands of their customers, in the various ways indicated by Jim Clarke, seem to indicate that gardening can be an important exercise in choice and taste. Lack of botanical expertise doesn't preclude the consumer from buying plants and ornaments.

Part of the trend in Dublin towards minimum-labour gardening shows evidence of a preference for short-term commitments to living space, while still seeking involvement with and control of that space. The combination of these elements is demonstrated by cultivators of bonsai, miniature Japanese trees. Bonsai trees require intensive care yet take up very little space and are conveniently portable. Jane Powers, who interviewed several cultivators of bonsai, concluded that as it can take years of attention and cultivation for bonsai to reach maturity, bonsai are "ideal for today's tiny patios and balconies". (Powers, The Irish Times, 29 November 1997) One of these balcony-gardens is visible in figure 2.24.

The arrangement of plants and objects in the garden can be an outlet for a person's creativity. The selective process that this involves can also be interpreted as an exercise in control over one's environment. Preece discussed the sense of well-being that can be experienced through the conscious arrangement of objects in space, and the viewing and contemplation of the result thereafter, completing the process of creative thought and action. As Preece outlined:

Fig. 2.19 Easily accessible aisles of plants.
(author's photograph)

Fig. 2.20 Colour and choice and convenience for the consumer.
(author's photographs)

Fig. 2.21, 2.22, & 2.23 Colour and choice and convenience for the consumer. (author's photographs)

Fig. 2.24 "Today's tiny balconies."
(author's photograph)

> A sense of well-being will then derive from the opportunity to exercise, albeit vicariously, these faculties, or at least from experiencing environments in which they are represented symbolically. (Preece, 1991, p. 17)

A sense of security can also be gained from the overt display of objects in a person's garden. According to Preece, such a display of possessions can signify a range of concerns from a fear of poverty and a fear of independent thought, to a refuge in conformity or a declaration of status.

Paul Shepard, an American garden architect, examines how people display objects which have not been bought, but collected: "The impulse to collect may be no less equivocal when the objects are rare and expensive than when they are selected from the tidal flotsam and jetsam." (Shepard, 1990, p. 148) His essay "Objets Trouves" engages with interesting ideas of bricolage, assemblage, and montage: the grouping and selecting of various found, miscellaneous, unrelated objects. For example, old mechanical parts, pieces of bog-oak, seashell mosaics, coloured glass bottles, for instance, are found in many Irish gardens.

Domestic design is often described as eclectic and idiosyncratic, ornamental sometimes to excess (ideas which have been expounded with relation to gender by Penny Sparke, the British design historian, in her book As Long as it's Pink, 1995). Important to domestic design are ideals of consumption and display. What is seen as individual and personal is often valued by amateur gardeners. Alternative to this point of view, modernism has always advocated functionalism and simplicity in design.

Martha Schwartz, the contemporary avant-garde American landscape architect, has addressed, both in her designs and her writing, the lack of application of modernist principles (including social equality, appropriate use of materials, and rational design) to the landscape:

> Architectural modernism has been remarkably disinterested in issues of collective space, for example, focusing instead on the space within buildings. Nor has it developed a formal attitude toward the built landscape ... Visible landscapes, those landscapes with obvious form, are perceived as competing with buildings and too active formally. To allow the building to 'read' more clearly, the content of the landscape must be drained. (Schwartz, 1993, p. 260-261)

Perhaps what Schwartz saw as modernism's neglect of the landscape, at a theoretical and professional level, explains why a modernist approach has not filtered down to influence the way people treat ordinary gardens. Schwartz went on to attest that:

> The lack of a modernist vision for our manufactured landscapes has had a devastating effect on our urban and suburban environments. Architecture's myopic and self-serving attitude toward the landscape, as the passive, untouched setting for heroic objects, has been disastrous visually and ecologically. (Schwartz, 1993, p. 261)

This statement, although not taking a directly feminist approach, does however correlate with the American landscape architect Robert B. Riley's ideas of sexuality and sexism in the garden and the language used to describe nature. In his essay "Flowers, Power, and Sex" (1990), he lists many incidents in history from the Old Testament to Freud where gardens, jungles, forests and other images from nature stand as metaphors for sexuality and sex, particularly the feminine. He notes how women have been compared to beautiful, fragile, and useless flowers, and how the garden, as an adjunct to the home, has been assigned as the woman's place. Although in some households, like Mr. Dowling's, the garden is considered to be under the man's control.

Whilst feminist issues or the sexual politics of landscape is largely outside the scope of this thesis, it is interesting to note Sparke's tone of disillusionment with modernism, similar to that of Schwartz, in As Long as it's Pink. This book discussed how during the past one hundred and fifty years, matters of "taste" have been associated with feminine qualities (passivity, consumption, domesticity) while "design" is associated with the masculine (active, productive, rational).

If the garden is taken to be a domestic and, therefore, female domain, then this designation may also explain why modernist design has not extended to include the space of ordinary houses and gardens, as modernism has often been seen as inimical to feminism. Diana Agrest, an American professor of architecture, states her opinion:

> The conception of the world as a machine in a fetishistic architecture that is the result of the application of principles of modernist urbanism allows the double domination (or negation) of nature and woman. (Agrest, 1996, p. 60)

Modernism in architecture has insistently foregrounded the functional in design. Functional areas such as footpaths, car parks, and air strips, are often accepted as being, by necessity of their functionalism, unattractive, or at least, uninteresting. This effect may have been produced precisely because of modernism's lack of interest in social spaces, beyond their function, and in personal preferences. John Dixon Hunt sees expansive areas such as motorways, train track margins, and golf-courses as the great gardens of tomorrow, upon which the landscape designers of today should be exercising and expanding the scope of their profession. By suggesting a new approach to the design of such areas, Hunt is essentially constructing potential, constructing value where it has not previously been evident.

It can be shown how Kevin Gray, a resident in McDonagh House, a block of flats built by Dublin Corporation on Whitefriar Street in the Liberties, has changed the type of value given to a piece of ground. In an interview I conducted with Mr. Gray, he related how the site next to the flats where he lives was designated by the corporation in 1990 to be cleared in order to (unnecessarily) widen the street next to it.

The four-storey building where Mr. Gray lives was built by Dublin Corporation in the 1960s, a time when the design of local authority housing in Dublin was influenced by British modernist examples. Apart from a small area of grass which runs around the front and side of the building, and some small and dark shared balconies, there was no consideration of outdoor space for the families that would be housed there. (Figure 2.25)

Mr. Gray made an application to the corporation to retain the site, to turn it into a recreation area for residents and local workers. The following year, the site had been transformed into a semi-public garden. In 1991 and 1992, the new garden won prizes in the corporation's and parish's annual "Facelift" awards for "flair and attention to detail" and "imagination and whole-hearted endeavour".

The garden has a concrete surface for ease of maintenance, several large planters (one in the form of a wishing-well), a large, raised, circular bed in the middle, and a fountain and goldfish pond at one end. (See figures 2.26, 2.27 & 2.28) There are also several benches and tables. According to Mr. Gray, the garden is used in the summer by children, elderly people, people from a nearby hospital, and lunching workers. Mr. Gray holds the keys to the area which is open all day in the summer, and carries out most of the gardening himself, receiving sponsorship from Woodchester Bank and a Kawasaki garage, both located nearby.

Mr. Gray spends a great deal of time maintaining the garden and planning new features for it. The garden contained a twenty foot tall christmas tree with lights during Christmas 1997, but he would not reveal the next "surprise". The imagination and initiative demonstrated by Mr. Gray, perhaps has averted to some degree Lewis Mumford's foreboding description of the future, where the word "park" would mean a "desert of asphalt, designed as a temporary storage space for motorcars; while "field" means another kind of artificial desert, a barren area planted in great concrete strips, vibrating with noise, dedicated to the arrival and departure of planes." (Mumford, 1969, pp. 15-16)

Instead, Mr. Gray has taken some control of his immediate environment, in order to effect change and determine the quality and image of his residence. In figure 2.29, Mr. Gray can be seen at work in the garden, which he called "an oasis of green in the city". (Mr. Gray, interview, 5 February 1998)

It would seem that Hunt would take interest in Mr. Gray's work:

> As far as modern private gardens are concerned, there seems little escape from the sterility of homogenized, packaged "good taste". It takes a bold spirit to strike out. The theorists of the 1930s and 1940s never dreamed either that public and private forms and imagery might be radically different from each other or that one feasible modernist strategy was to let every private person really do their own thing. (Hunt, 1992, p. 293)

Fig. 2.25 McDonagh house, viewed from the side. (author's photograph)

Fig. 2.26, A concrete, wishing-well planter. (author's photograph)

Fig. 2.27 A fountain and seating area; more blocks of flats like McDonagh House can be seen in the background. (author's photograph)

Fig. 2.28 An island in the centre of the garden is full of shrubs, flowers, and ornamental cabbages. (author's photograph)

Fig. 2.29 Kevin Gray in his garden; sponsors, Woodchester Bank, can be seen in the background. (author's photograph)

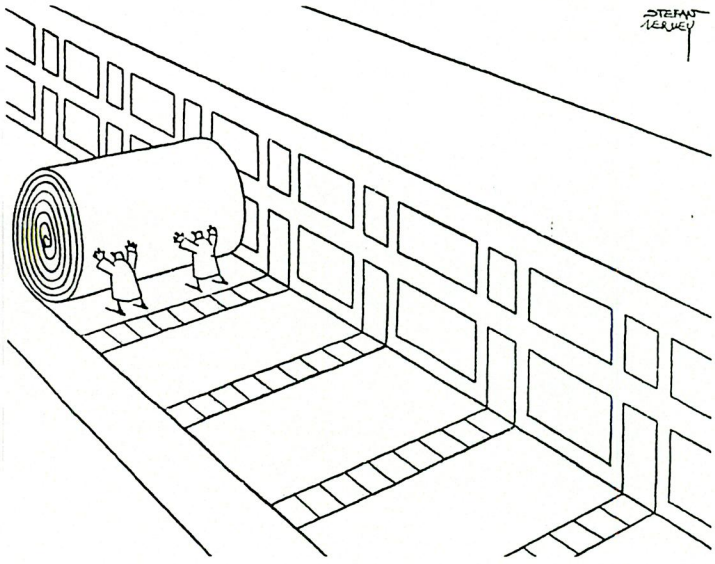

Fig. 2.30 The homogenous, standard lawn.
Stefan Verwey, cartoon, originally published in De Volkskrant (taken from Wrede & Adams, 1991, p. 29)

However, Marc Treib, the editor of the American anthology Modern Landscape Architecture: A critical review (1993), holds a less optimistic opinion as to the motives that sustain the cultivation of gardens:

> While I may be overly cynical, I feel that at the very bottom of the psychological urge to garden there also lies a sad and somewhat pathetic attempt to literally reroot oneself in a world of rapid change and rampant mobility. We grasp at what little power we have left. (Treib, 1990, p. 23)

Throughout this chapter, a wide variety of values given to gardens in Dublin have been demonstrated. Many of these values interlink and overlap. It has been shown how gardens have been commodified, and how an otherwise innocuous piece of ground is perceived and valued differently when it is considered to be privately owned or under a person's direct control.

Chapter Three

The Meanings of Dublin's Gardens in a Changing Urban Context

This chapter will examine the changing role and form of gardens in Dublin today. Ireland has rapidly changed, socially and economically, since the 1960s. The history of the relationship between rural and urban Ireland, and the place of gardens within Irish culture will be discussed.

Since Dublin's millenium year of 1988, followed by Dublin's participation as European City of Culture in 1991, the city has received new investment, interest, and renewal. The image of the city has changed as European models of integrated urban planning have been adopted. As new residential patterns begin to develop in Dublin, the purpose of this chapter is to look at the inclusion or exclusion of private external space and nature, perhaps leading to a new definition or a new meaning of the garden.

It is my intention at this point to demonstrate the development of an urban culture in Dublin, as the capital of a post-colonial country. This will be relevant to an understanding of how different meanings of "land", "nature", and the urban garden have been constructed.

Ireland has a long rural tradition. The image of an Irish rural ideal is one that has dominated readings of Irish history. Most Irish farmers were subsistence farmers and depended on the land, which was often rented from Anglo-Irish landlords until the land wars at the end of the nineteenth century. The space outside an Irish farmer's house was a resource of economic necessity, and therefore horticulture as a leisure activity was not generally practised.

Most of the historical demesnes, of which Malins urged protection, were owned by the Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy class who also lived in large and grand country houses. Known locally as "the Big House", surrounded by "pleasure grounds" and deer parks, the rural seat of the landlord was a focal building for an area. Dorothy A. Kennedy, Irish historian, in an article published by the Irish Georgian Society's bulletin, wrote that "the walls of the Big House demarcated the lines between the Ascendancy and the 'Irish'. It kept the factions in their separate worlds." (Kennedy, 1989, p. 7)

In England, during the first half of the twentieth century, the houses and gardens of the aristocracy, burdened with taxation, fell into ruin until public interest in their status as symbols of an English rural tradition ensured their preservation. In Ireland, according to Malins & Bowe, "absenteeism, troubles, civil war have ruined more houses and landscapes." (Malins & Bowe, 1980, p. 3) Many of the big houses were burned and sacked during the Irish War of Independence, and later in the 1920s. Kennedy recognised that W.B.Yeats (himself a member of the Protestant upper class) saw the big house as representative of order and culture. Yet in effect, these affluent houses and their lavish gardens were, to many, symbols of British rule and dominance in an impoverished Ireland.

In an essay about English suburban gardens between 1920 and 1940, Rebecca Preston, the design and social historian, identified a connection between gardens and national pride by "linking modern lifestyles with the past through the ancient English landscape, a mythical 'green and pleasant land' with values deeply rooted in the national soil." (Preston, 1995, p. 69)

By assessing the manner in which Irish gardens have tended to follow foreign trends, it may be concluded that Ireland does not have an indigenous gardening style. The history of Ireland includes many power struggles to retain and regain control of land. Aesthetic values which may have been attached to the landscape have been superseded by politicised representations of Irish history.

Gardens are used as a medium for the display of political loyalties in some parts of Ireland. In some unionist areas of the North of Ireland, kerbstones are painted red, white, and blue to represent the British flag. Flower beds are planted with red, white, and blue flowers, and two of the most popular plants to be found in such gardens are "London Pride" and the orange lily. Here the most benign of objects (flowers) are used to exhibit territoriality.

Forty years after the founding of the Irish Free State, Ireland underwent another social transformation: urbanisation. At this time, in the 1960s, Dublin expanded more quickly than any other capital city in western Europe, according to J. J. Lee, the Irish historian. (Lee, 1989, p.605) The following passage,

titled "Rural Dreams and Urban Awakenings", written by Anthony Cronin, the Irish poet and critic, sums up some of the shifts in residential settlement in Dublin, and also displays Cronin's belief in the ineptitude of Dublin's city planners:

> When the era of speculation came to Dublin in the 1960s the authorities presided in seeming helplessness over the destruction of much fine Georgian architecture and its replacement by fifth-rate office buildings. And though the inner-city slums were cleared eventually, the grey new working-class housing estates and the middle-class suburbs spread blindly westward or climbed into the foothills of the Dublin mountains as if searching for some lost rural arcadia which had been left behind. (Cronin, 1986, p. 16)

According to Cronin, towns are new to Ireland. (Cronin, 1986, p. 15) It is my conviction that it is the *idea* of urban Ireland which is relatively new to the general concept of "Irishness" and Irish identity. Declan Kiberd, Irish literary critic, also outlined the binary model, as apparent in Dublin society, of urban and rural traditions, describing the accepted idea of the 1960s that "rural Ireland was real Ireland." (Kiberd, 1996, p. 16)

Kiberd also contrasts the social inequities of Dublin, as made evident in the residential patterns of Dublin until recently:

> The city itself, with its rotting slums at the center and its salubrious suburbs housing a rural-educated elite, seemed literally to embody a periphery-dominated center. (Kiberd, 1996, P. 17)

Recently, it has been the aim of some organisations to promote urban regeneration in Dublin. One way to achieve a more cohesive urban infrastructure is to encourage residential and commercial diversity, using existing ammenities, infilling unused areas, and reducing urban sprawl. Tallaght, south of Dublin, is a case of virtually unchecked urban sprawl by Irish standards. (See figure 3. 1)

A recent study on Irish urban renewal schemes since 1985, commissioned by the Department of the Environment and carried out by KPMG management consultants, architects, and urban planners, addressed the issue of private external space. The study notes that many residential units in new apartment

Fig. 3.1 Urban sprawl in Tallaght with random green areas and no mixed-usage. (taken from McDonald, 1989, p78)

and townhouse developments are small and spatially repetitive, and that there has been little consideration for semi-public and private external space for residents' use. (Study on the Urban Renewal Schemes, 1996, p. iii) The provision of secure car-parking has often been given preference over recreation and play areas for either older, or younger, age groups.

Throughout the study, which relates general principles of urban regeneration to the Irish situation, it is noted how Irish residential units have often been constructed to be smaller than similar European developments. The minimum floor space of a one bedroom German apartment is 9 metres square, while the guidelines for residential development in designated areas in Ireland allow a minimum size of 6.5 metres square. There is also a lack of storage space, and little opportunity to adapt these standardised units.

The report suggests that perhaps the small amount of available space and natural light in some of these new units could be compensated for by the inclusion of extra external space in landing areas, porches, and courtyards. The study emphasises the principles of designing semi-public spaces and their importance in enhancing friendly neighbour-relations through common use of, and contact in, certain areas: "Semi-public spaces, characterised by porches, steps, terraces and residential courtyards, are the places where neighbours meet and children play". (Study on the Urban Renewal Schemes, 1996, p. 45) However, the study indicates that Irish residential schemes have often failed to create buildings that would facilitate both "a sense of ownership and community for the residents." (Study on the Urban Renewal Schemes, 1996, p. 37) And I would also suggest that these areas are also places where people can extend the space of their home, displaying their taste in decoration and ornamentation to their neighbours.

The study identifies the need for external space as part of an integrated approach to urban regeneration:

> City dwellers, generally living in higher densities than their suburban counterparts, are very dependent on the provision of three distinct types of external space - public, semi-public and private, each of which complement different aspects and needs of urban living. (Study on the Urban Renewal Schemes, 1996, p. 44)

The study finds that where such courtyards do exist, their use is frequently relegated to that of car storage areas (see figure 3.2 for an example):

> The residential courtyard has been reduced to an expanse of hard surface strewn with parked cars and the odd shrub, representing a poor environment visually when viewed from individual units. (Study on the Urban Renewal Schemes, 1996, p. 46)

Here, the visual experience of the garden, not just the spatial experience is touched upon. If one cannot own a garden, one may like to view a garden or park. The view from a house or apartment window can greatly increase the value of that property, as in the case of sea-views for instance. Indeed, in the eighteenth century, picturesque ("like a picture") landscapes were designed around particular vantage points, deliberately arranged to provoke a calculated response to specific buildings and compositions. (Smiles, 1994, p. 194)

When one does not own a garden, other elements of a building can be used to similar purpose, bridging inside and outside. The space on the inside of the window receives natural light and is the focal point of contact and separation between indoors and out. This space is often filled with plants to represent nature, or with a collection of objects, to display the taste of the resident.

With regard to the outside, window-boxes and hanging baskets - for those with little or no access to a garden - can represent nature and personalize the facade of a building.

> The design of balconies and roof gardens in many of these developments recognised *the need for the private space of the apartment or townhouse to extend outwards for the enjoyment of its user*. Some incorporated 'Parisian' window design, which can be fully opened to the floor, to open up a whole living space to air, light and views. However, a disappointing number of schemes incorporated balconies which were completely inaccessible due to window design. (Study on the Urban Renewal Schemes, 1996, p. 47, my italics)

The report recommends more than token, mock balconies or courtyards filled with cars. (See figures 3.3 & 3.4) It recommends "credible, usable private space" (Study on the Urban Renewal Schemes, 1996, p.47), space which

Fig. 3.2 The courtyard in this new residential sheme has been completely relegated to car parking. (taken from Study on the Urban Renewal Schemes, 1996, p. 46)

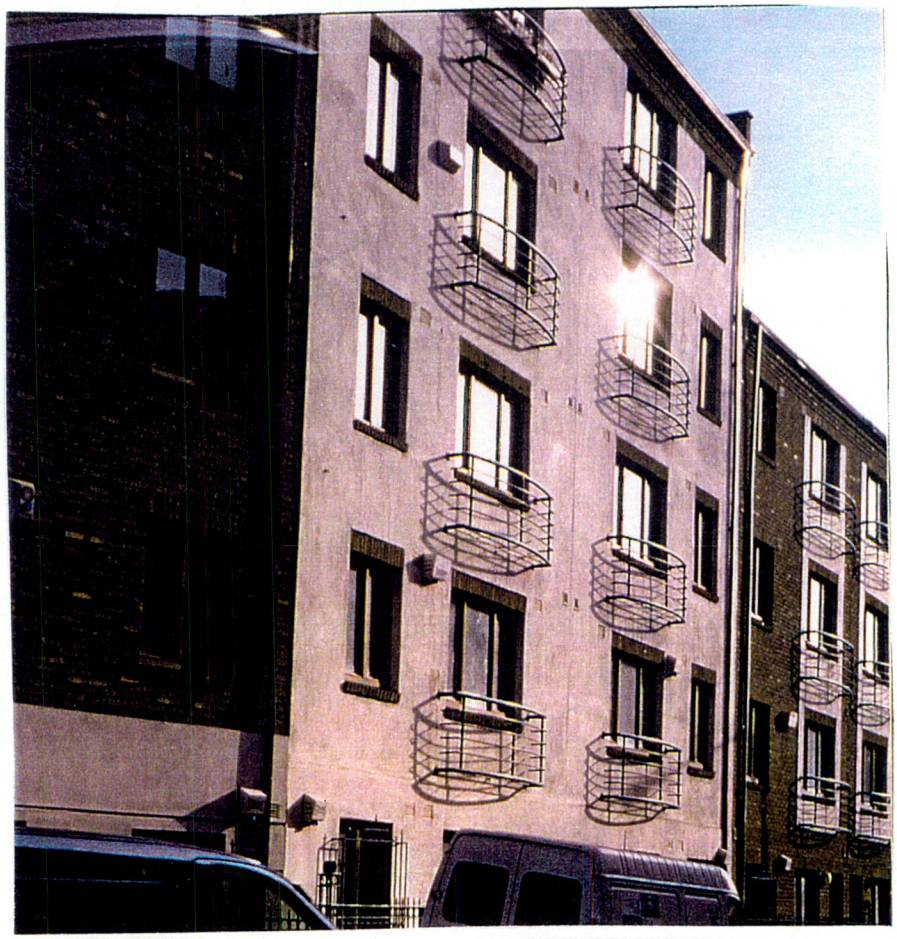

Fig. 3.3 Fake balconies; these balconies only serve to, visually, break the vertical plane of the building, and are of no benefit to the residents. (author's photograph)

people can actually use, adapt, and change to suit their practical needs and personal tastes.

The study identified the importance of a sense of place to a community. Integral to a sense of place, as the report outlines, is the maintenance of existing streetscape and urban typology. The success of urban renewal schemes in Temple Bar in Dublin is most evident. Temple Bar, lying on the south bank of the river Liffey, developed in the eighteenth century and was used by crafts people and traders until the 1950s when the area fell into decline. The last ten years has witnessed the reclamation of Temple Bar by artistic and cultural, as well as residential and commercial groups.

Temple Bar is now a thriving area of Dublin, full of colour and character. The small-scale buildings and winding, narrow, pedestrian streets invite exploration and are a good example of the kind of balance between open and enclosed spaces which Lewis Mumford and Camillo Sitte both advocated.

Temple Bar Properties Limited, a company set up to direct all types of development in Temple Bar, incorporates a Temple Bar Greening Department. Private roof gardens, terraces, balconies and hanging baskets are encouraged. A first Temple Bar garden festival, scheduled for the summer of 1998, is (at the time of writing) in preliminary preparation. Given the urban context in the city centre and the dense plan of Temple Bar, the greening programme is limited to creating "pocket parks" and green foliage, roof gardens and "sky furniture" to soften the skyline (See figures 3.5, 3.6 & 3.7) This "sky furniture" creates a visual reminder of the number of cranes that have swung over Temple Bar in the last decade, and some of examples can be seen in figures 3.8 & 3.9.

The designated areas are being renewed after decades of decay. (The population of Dublin's inner city had been steadily depleted up to just ten years ago.) Frank McDonald's book, Saving the City: How to halt the destruction of Dublin, (1989), shocked many people so that they became concerned about the "destruction of Dublin".

Fig. 3.5 A private roof garden,just visible from the street, in Temple Bar. (author's photograph)

Fig. 3.7 A potential roof garden? (author's photograph)

Fig. 3.6 Large, functonal, balconies in Temple Bar; plants (real and artificial) are used as decoration for the building. (author's photograph)

Fig. 3.8
& 3.9

"Sky furniture" in Temple Bar livens up the sky line.
(author's photographs)

In 1996, McDonald could happily report a sea-change in Dublin city-centre residential patterns:

> Nothing has so transformed the centre of Dublin as the huge influx of new residents ... the impact has been dramatic ... the estimated 15,000 new residents who have moved in contribute in no small way to Dublin's current 'buzz'. (McDonald, 1996)

The study on Irish urban renewal schemes also recognises the wider context. Dublin is acquiring a new urban class and culture. Perhaps the perceived lack of private external space in these developments has yet to have an impact on the lifestyles of their current occupiers.

> The culture of living in the city of living in the city requires more than simply the provision of physical accommodation. If cities are to compete with suburbia, they must offer a high quality of lifestyle opportunities in order to overcome prejudices about living in the city centre. ... Residential accommodation must also address the intangible qualities such as privacy and defensible space which are characterised by safe and pleasant semi-public squares and private external space. The challenge facing urban planners is to attract a mix of residents, and afford them an opportunity to stay. (Study on the Urban Renewal Schemes, 1996, p. 26)

Several newspaper articles in the early 1990s, attested to the unprecedented building boom in Dublin City, with heraldic and buoyant titles such as, "The Quays to the City", "Quays gain new landmark", and "Buyers snap up 400 apartments on Dublin's quays". These articles include brief mention of roof gardens and balconies as features of these new properties.

A development on Ellis Quay has a courtyard designed by Gerry Daly, garden designer, broadcaster, and editor of The Irish Garden, that was intended *not* to double as a carpark, instead providing "soothing greenery in a town context". (Clingan, The Irish Times,1994)

It would appear that recent Dublin Corporation co-op housing projects have taken a more inclusive approach to using external space, as recommended by the report discussed earlier. Frank McDonald commends a Dublin Corporation housing development opposite St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin 8. (Figures 3.10 & 3.11) He found that the new residents liked the fact that the majority of the apartments had their own front door to the street, and also an area of private

Fig. 3.10 Dublin Corporation's housing development, built in 1995, beside St. Patrick's cathedral; the building has a multitude of different stairways, porches, patios, and balconies. (author's photograph)

Fig. 3.11 Housing Development beside St. Patrick's cathedral; it is possible to discern that all of the residents displayed the same type of plant on their balconies. (author's photograph)

space which many people have personalised in some way. (See figures 3.12 & 3.13)

> The Corporation has a problem with shared access. Its tenants don't like it, the councillors don't like it and neither does the housing department. According to Mr. Gibbon [architect of the scheme], it leads to friction between neighbours - for example, over the maintenance of common areas. (McDonald, The Irish Times, 12 October 1995)

This dislike of shared access may be linked to negative associations with the, soon to be demolished, Ballymun tower-blocks of flats on Dublin's northside. These flats were completed in 1969 just as British housing authorities were admitting the problems inherent in the design of their high-rise developments. McDonald also sites "a folk-memory of the slums" in Dublin in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (McDonald, The Irish Times, 6 February 1998) By looking at the failure of Ballymun, which belatedly mirrored the mistakes of other countries, it can be seen how privacy and defensible space are important to a person's sense of well-being. Mumford warns; "let us not be deceived by the appearance of spatial openness that can be achieved by crowding many families into fifteen-storey apartment houses: abstract visual space is not the equivalent of functional open space." (Mumford, 1969, p. 20) And neither is functional open space the same as space that is perceived and understood subjectively. (Churchman & Ginsberg, 1984, p. 60)

Large, functional balconies have been included in a co-op housing scheme on Allingham Street, Dublin 8. Frank McDonald notes that "they have potted plants and spring flowers in elaborate urns, hanging baskets, garden chairs for sitting out in the sun" ... located on "extraordinarily generous balconies - far from the clip-on stuff favoured by the fag-end of the private sector. These compensate for having no front gardens." (McDonald, The Irish Times, 3 April 1997)

Gerry Cahill, architect of Allingham Street and other co-op schemes, outlines his aims:

> To make an edge to a street, with a front and a back, private and public areas, front doors opening onto the street to support it and, at the same time, to give people a sense that they belong to a

Fig. 3.12, 3.13, 3.14, & 3.15 The residents of the development beside St. Patrick's cathedral have personalised the area of private space ouside their homes. (author's photograph)

> community and they're in a world where their children can play safely. It's very basic, old-fashioned stuff. (McDonald, The Irish Times, 3 April 1997)

By looking at the recommendations that have been put forward, in previous chapters, for private external space, and actual gardens, it is clear to see how effectively gardens can be used to encourage a sense of security, a sense of pride, and a sense of place.

Finally, by looking at the example of Temple Bar Properties, it can be seen how a group of people have incorporated private and semi-private and public areas to create a new and different garden model for the city-centre.

Conclusion

The intention of this work has been to present a number of ways, new and old, to look at gardens in Dublin.

It has been shown how the theories of urbanism, sociology, psychology, geography, and landscape architecture have, in common, theories of space - the use of space, the commodification of space, and the interpretation of space. All of these categories have been applied, here, to the space of the garden.

At the beginning of this thesis, it was noted how the garden as a concept or construct has received a great deal of attention in various societies. Arguments have been deployed throughout the body of this thesis to justify the need for gardens, as pockets of private external space in an urban environment: "a pool of space removed from the flow of traffic ... an outdoor room, human in scale, enclosed, protected, and sheltered from the noise." (Seymour, Whitney North Jr., 1969, p.3)

Rather than taking a design-based approach, of concern here has been the social and personal reasons that define the form and function of gardens in Dublin today. It has been my intention to describe the exciting atmosphere of change in Dublin at present. With this change comes an opportunity to diversify and improve the cityscape of Dublin, by reassessing the real and mythical uses of the space that is available.

Some people would prefer to withdraw from the city, seeing their garden as "no longer a retreat from the 'awe-fulness' of nature; rather ... a retreat from the awfulness of the twentieth-century manifestations of Man himself" (Brookes, 1991, p. 24) Others might see their garden as a space within which they can address the twentieth century manifestations of man, to solidify their sense of belonging in an urban environment.

Yi-Fu Tuan defined a human love of place as "topophilia". The ties which a person can establish with a particular place can vary in strength, depending on familiarity and time, physical contact and association. Owning a garden can allow a person to exercise physical control over the content and form of that garden, thereby feeling part of the greater environment.

Paul Shepard, an American garden designer, interprets some ordinary gardens:

> we may laugh at the virgin in her bathtub grotto or the plastic duck behind a chain-link fence, but we should feel uneasy about that derision, for ... [such gardens] affirm that someone engages selectively with a real but inexplicable world rather than retreating into abstractions or rational plans." (Shepard, 1990, p.152)

Marshall Berman, the American author of All That is Solid Melts into Air, (1983), has famously described modernity as "a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal." (Berman, 1983, p. 15) Gardens can provide a means of dealing with the fragmented modernity which Berman describes. Gardening is a self-determined sensory act, allowing people to experience the "kinaesthetic pleasures of moving in and through a space", helping to define a sense of place in a society that is - through cars, televison, and computers - becoming increasingly aspatialised. (Ross, 1993, p. 159)

These are some of the many meanings of the garden. I would hope that I have shown the garden, like any other space, to be without any fixed meaning, yet with endless possibility.

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