

The Dream of 'la ville fleurie':
A Non-Linear History and Pragmatic Criticism of Public Gardens in Montreal

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis sets out to theorize the social and political agency of public gardens, and to find a means of comprehending their potential for facilitating creative as opposed to prescriptive cultural change, as well as their (perhaps more predominant) culturally conservative tendencies. I pursue this objective in large part through a more fulsome description of effects specific to gardens, attempting to develop a criticism capable of perceiving the function of different garden forms, and a more open-ended trajectory for their evolution.

The focus is on gardens in Montreal, as seen in part through the lens of the city's annual beautification campaigns (which ran more or less continuously between 1914 and 1989) and a variety of other horticulturally-oriented beautification initiatives undertaken by the municipal administration and in large part enabled by the staff and resources of the Montreal Botanical Garden. Culminating in the city's hosting of the Floraliés internationales in 1980, this history provides context for the evolution of a distinctly horticultural urbanism in Montreal—one which attributes to gardens an enhanced social significance and sees in them an avenue for (usually prescriptive) cultural change.

Against the background of this history, as well as in more active juxtaposition with it, I investigate the social and political functioning of two particular gardens in Montreal—one found at the site of the Botanical Garden and the other at the Jardins des Floralies in Parc Jean-Drapeau. By weaving together an experimental fieldwork, creative writing practice and archival research, I attempt to describe a much wider range of effects in and of gardens than is usual from either a social scientific or art historical point of view. Juxtaposing those descriptions in turn with analysis of a variety of (historically related) media forms, I produce a way of seeing gardens that registers a distinctive but underappreciated sociality (in other words, the basis for re-imagining their role in processes of social change).

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A PREFATORY NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Thought the official language is French, Montreal is very much a bilingual city. I have made certain choices with respect to style and terminology in this thesis that are intended to reflect, albeit to a modest degree, the mixed linguistic character of both the city and my research process. For example, though I provide translations to aid anglophone readers, I use French terms without signaling them typographically (i.e., through devices such as italic script). I hope that this approach will not be too disruptive to readers in either language. By way of orientation, I provide a few notes regarding the conventions I have adopted.

In general, when selecting terms of reference, I attempted to strike a balance between honouring the linguistic character of the materials I was using and the institutions to which they pertained, and acknowledging my appropriation of them for my own purposes. For example, I refer to the Montreal Botanical Garden rather than the *Jardin botanique de Montréal*. While most of its employees and volunteers are francophone, and the majority of its internal and historical documents are in French, the names of the different garden areas, and all of the interpretative materials, are available in both French and English. As an institution, the Garden seems determined to balance its Québécois heritage with a scientific and touristic cosmopolitanism. This made me feel free to choose the terms of my reference to it.¹ On the other hand, Montreal's municipal

¹ That said, I rarely use the full name, and more often use “the Botanical Garden,” or “the Garden”—relying on capitalization as a means of distinguishing it from other gardens, especially the smaller garden areas within its borders. In some discussions the ‘Montreal’ part is necessary to distinguish it from other botanical gardens. In those cases, I use MBG.

administration presents a more purely francophone identity to the public: the majority of the materials I consider with respect to the city have been in French, and so I use the French names of parks, city departments, and organizations.

I provide translations of quotations that appear in the main body of the text, but not of those in the footnotes (for reasons of economy). These translations have been inserted at the very beginning of the corresponding footnote or, in cases where a fragment is translated, in a separate note immediately following the fragment. In a glossary that appears at the end of the text, I provide translations of terms and phrases that I use repeatedly, including those pertaining to organizations and city departments, where there is an English equivalent. These terms and phrases are marked in the text upon first appearance, with * (but not thereafter). In case of place names, or of organizations for which there is no accepted English name, I do *not* provide a translation. For most of these, I attempt to provide some context—either in the text itself, or a note. I also do not provide translation of French terms already in common usage (in English).

INTRODUCTION: Hope and Politics in Public Gardens

I am writing this dissertation at a point in time when it seems there is both greater public awareness than ever of environmental issues, and an acceleration of environmental degradation. In surveys and opinion polls, people report that they are concerned, but they live as if they are not: driving cars, flying to faraway locations for work and vacation, buying and then discarding more and more things. To the extent that practices of consumption are the motor of environmental degradation, it seems that awareness and good intentions are not enough. We need other models of cultural change.

In the introduction to *The Three Ecologies*, Félix Guattari characterized ecological crisis in terms which were psychosocial as well as environmental: “[i]t is the relationship between subjectivity and its exteriority—be it social, animal or Cosmic—that is compromised...” Writing at the end of the twentieth century, he saw converging movements of demographic growth, “mass-media driven homogenization” and “techno-scientific” acceleration generating an environmental degradation that went hand-in-hand with a declining diversity in social and cultural forms. “Henceforth,” he proclaimed, “it is the *ways of living* on this planet that are in question...”¹ But by ‘ways of living’ he did not mean to refer to discourses of sustainability or to encourage the adoption of environmentally-friendly lifestyles. Rather, his claim was related to what he characterized as the “transversality” of major social and environmental problems, and the potential for change that resides in relational processes between a variety of entities and collectives—

¹ Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, 2nd English ed., ed. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton, (London, Continuum Press, 2008); emphasis added.

human and non-human. His hope was that a renewed heterogeneity of social and cultural forms would generate a way out of impending social and environmental impasses, and that a widespread nurturing of diverse processes of expression would give rise to new values, practices and relationships, rather than the consolidation of existing hierarchies and narrowing of existential possibilities he associated with post-industrial capitalism.

He advocated the development, “at every level, individual or collective, in everyday life as well as the reinvention of democracy” of an “ecological praxis” capable of facilitating and nurturing such processes. This thesis takes up a task I consider preparatory to Guattari’s larger, more all-encompassing program. That is, to take an existing cultural form and re-conceive our relation to it so that it becomes a site conducive to processes of change that are creative as opposed to prescriptive in nature. My disposition toward this task is pragmatic, in the philosophical sense: I pursue a generative understanding of the form through a more fulsome description of its effects and their implications. I will have been successful if this leads to a means of identifying the realm to which new practices and experiments may be most fruitfully addressed.

Characterizing the object of study: Why do gardens make us hopeful?

This thesis undertakes a study of ornamental gardens open to the public and located in the city. Even bracketing the prevalent but problematic association of gardens with environmental friendliness (which has been deployed as much in the service of ‘greenwashing’ as in substantive environmental initiatives), gardens have a special relevance to questions of environmentally-oriented cultural change. As John Dixon Hunt puts it, gardens and other designed landscapes constitute an “art of milieu,” where “milieu is not just objective, physical surroundings, but involves the inscription on that

site of how an individual or a society conceives of its environment.”² In other words, a garden constitutes an environment that is at the same time *about* environment. In fact, as I discuss below, it can also be seen as a form of media shaping how we perceive our surroundings—immediately, while we are there, in the garden, but also later, and potentially enduringly, when we are elsewhere. At the same time, gardens are (usually) composed of living beings, and foreground a more intensive experience of environmental qualities and circumstances.³ They are also constituted, through a variety of means, as *special* places—that is, as sites that call for modified behavior and promise an experience that is to some degree out of the ordinary, even when encountered in the course of everyday activities. Thus, whether or not a garden is considered a work of art, the experiences it affords have an aesthetic significance and may inspire a different mode of attention, whether focused inward (as in activities of reflection) or outward toward the living surroundings.

This ideal version of the garden’s potential—as a site that generates environmentally oriented aesthetic experiences—is perhaps best realized in what Lesley Johnstone calls the “contemporary” garden. In contrast to traditional gardens, which are more or less continuous with garden history, contemporary gardens demonstrate reflexivity with regard to that history and its constraints, exploring new meanings and practices for the garden.⁴ Taking on novel forms and being composed of a much greater

² John Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 8.

³ For example, the qualities of light, sound, smell and texture, and circumstances having to do with weather, the seasons and time of day.

⁴ Leslie Johnstone, "Recovering the garden," in *HYBRIDS: Reshaping the Contemporary Garden in Métis*, ed. Leslie Johnstone (Vancouver, blueimprint, 2007) 7-92.

variety of materials than normally found in gardens—often minimizing the use of flowers and sometimes even downplaying the role of plant life—these gardens operate in ways similar to contemporary installation art. They invite a much more interactive form of appreciation from visitors, sometimes explicitly encouraging a variety of exploratory and perceptually oriented activities, other times being more open-ended in their use and interpretation. As Johnstone points out, in reference to the annual garden festival at the Jardins des Métis, the “inherent approachability” of gardens in general enables contemporary gardens to engage a greater variety of visitors in a relatively challenging aesthetic experience, requiring them to undertake processes of reflection and observation in order to orient themselves in relation to what they are seeing and experiencing.⁵

Writing about the potential of such gardens to contribute to cultural change, Michel Conan suggests that this ultimately makes them “open to the production of new modes of engagement with the world.”⁶ While not all contemporary gardens address environmental questions as such, they may support the formation of new modes of sensibility and perception, which may in turn constitute the raw materials for processes of creative (as opposed to normative) cultural change. Thus, if advocates of parks and gardens have long spoken of the civic and psychosocial benefits of a ‘contact with nature,’ contemporary gardens may finally deliver—except that it is not so much nature itself they make available, as a chance to explore the implications of different relations between nature and culture.

⁵ Johnstone, "Recovering the garden," 9.

⁶ Michel Conan, "Introduction: In defiance of the institutional art world," in *Contemporary Garden Aesthetics, Creations and Interpretations*, ed. Michel Conan (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2007) 13.

It is important to note however, that the gardens Johnstone writes about appear for the most part, though not exclusively, in the context of garden festivals—that is, existing for short periods of time and visited exclusively by garden and design enthusiasts willing to pay an entry fee. The works Conan refers to are larger, more permanent, and found in a variety of settings, but many of them are located on private property and are not accessible to the general public. Outside a festival context then, accessible contemporary gardens are in fact somewhat rare.⁷ In contrast, as the members of PLANT, contributors to the 2000 International Garden Festival at the Jardins des Métis, put it,

If designed at all, gardens are often created by para-designers—contractors creating tract gardens (non-entities that function to create uniformity on the street) or playgrounds (areas of play space—grass with the ‘parsley’ of low-maintenance planting beds). Or at best they are mini Gardens of Eden created by garden ‘painters’ à la Gertrude Jekyll, rich in colour and variety but lacking any idea of form or cultural content.⁸

In other words, while gardens, or at least flower beds, can be found throughout most North American cities, they often function as mere ornament in public spaces intended for other purposes.

This state of affairs should give us pause, since gardens are so commonly celebrated as that which gives access to, or represents, nature in the city.⁹ Especially in the case of

⁷ Though it of course depends on where you are. In France for example, such gardens are often found in public parks or other similarly accessible contexts. In North America, they are more commonly found on private property, ornamenting the grounds of universities, institutes or large corporations. In Montreal, there are at least two public gardens that qualify, both of them ‘sculpture gardens’: one on the grounds of the Grand Bibliothèque, and the other adjacent to the Canadian Centre of Architecture.

⁸ PLANT, “Practising perception,” in *HYBRIDS: Reshaping the Contemporary Garden in Métis*, ed. Leslie Johnstone (Vancouver, blueimprint, 2007) 130.

⁹ In contexts where proponents need to gain support for a garden, such assertions are so commonplace as to be cliché, but they have also been a central component of the way the significance of gardens is understood by scholars. For example, as Bernard St-Denis puts it, “...the garden engages those who experience it as a *thematization* of nature, or, more accurately, of their relationship with nature.” Bernard St-Denis, “Just what is a garden?” *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 27, no. 1

gardens that have a mandate for public education and engagement, we should ask why, in an era of accelerating environmental degradation, are our gardens not more challenging, more activist, in their designs? Why do they remain constrained by the replication of older garden forms? Is the garden nothing more than an apology for the dominant consumption-driven culture of post-industrial society? Or maybe worse, are they the nostalgic last gasp of outdated environmental values? While I think that there is a convincing argument to be made for answering these last two questions in the affirmative, the answer may also be both more straightforward and more complicated than this.

I suspect that the design and deployment of public gardens tends to be conventional and complacent because they serve purposes for which a more open-ended or experimental approach would be counterproductive. As I explore below, while gardens have an inherent potential, via bodily engagement, for generating environmentally oriented aesthetic experiences, they are also for the same reason conducive to processes of cultural reproduction. In particular, they function as sites for generating consensus about those environmental values and aesthetic ideals which inform the content, appearance and organization of land in the city. It will be one of the central tasks of this project to identify both the effects through which gardens contribute to these ends of cultural production, and the means of their participation in more generative social and cultural processes. As a starting point, I present a brief discussion of some of the ways in which gardens have historically become implicated in hegemonic political projects.

(2007), 66. Or, as John Dixon Hunt asserts, "Different garden styles are all modes of presenting, or re-presenting nature." John Dixon Hunt, "Approaches (new and old) to garden history," in *Perspectives on Garden Histories*, ed. Michel Conan (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1999) 87.

The political uses of gardens

The political agency of gardens—whether serving change or the status quo—is not a topic often addressed with regard to present-day gardens.¹⁰ Historical research however, has helped to draw attention to it. Perhaps the most well-known of such analyses, identifies the use of gardens as a means of simultaneously displaying and aestheticizing wealth and power, as undertaken, for example, on behalf of monarchs (and, later, wealthy landowners), during the European Renaissance and beyond.¹¹ According to Mukerji, the gardens of King Louis XIV at Versailles in France, took this tradition to new heights, developing an overtly political significance: simultaneously demonstrating the King's absolute power and legitimizing the secular authority of the state.¹² In their extensive and intensive alteration of the landscape they served as "...laboratories for and demonstrations of French capacities to use the countryside as a political resource for power."¹³

Similarly in many ways, though on a vastly different scale, and relying in part on the (apparently) more beneficent authority of science, botanical gardens have often been

¹⁰ At least not political agency as such. Certainly garden criticism does at times identify social and cultural effects that can be considered political in nature, but they rarely contain theorization of this potential in general terms. The texts by Conan and Johnstone (discussed above) represent an exception to a certain degree, though they focus on effects impacting individual experience and social interaction.

¹¹ Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2000).

¹² Not only were the gardens spectacularly impressive in every way—from their extent and perspectival accomplishments, to the technical virtuosity of their engineering, the diversity and productivity of the plants cultivated there, and the opulent beauty of the works of art they contained—they also signified France's military might and cultural superiority in a variety of ways. Chandra Mukerji, *Territorial ambitions and the gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹³ Ibid, 2.

used by colonial governments to legitimize their control of foreign land, resources and people. As Drayton describes of gardens created in India during the nineteenth century,

They were theatres in which exotic nature was, literally, put in its place in a European system. This spectacle of inclusion of the strange within the familiar comforted the expatriates and impressed the locals. It was as irresistible an argument for the imperial prerogative of British civilization as that offered many afternoons in colonial cities, when policemen or soldiers unpacked their shiny instruments on the iron bandstand and unfurled, as they perspired, the swaggering rhythms of ‘Rule Britannia.’¹⁴

Gardens are conducive to such projects because, not only do they physically and permanently stake a claim on land (seeming to *belong* there), but, being composed of ‘real’ or ‘natural’ things, the signs they deploy can communicate without calling attention to themselves as such. This latter capacity has also made them useful to a variety of nationalist and culturally hegemonic projects, since the reproduction of a particular order of things and spaces in a garden helps to establish or reify the values of a given social order. As Conan notes, “Gardens are not inconsequential objects indulged by wealthy patrons that can be studied in and for themselves as a mere luxury item. On the contrary they turn out to be battlegrounds where elite factions confront one another in their attempts to establish a symbolic language conveying what they consider the most appropriate ideology to the lower and middle classes.”¹⁵

For example, particular styles of garden and types of plant—particularly those classified as ‘natural’ and ‘native’—have been used as a means of naturalizing national identities. In these cases, the garden, or plant, is made symbolic of certain ideas or movements. Such uses of gardens rely to a large extent on other media (e.g., as Conan

¹⁴ Drayton, *Nature's Government*, 183.

¹⁵ Michel Conan, "Introduction," in *Perspectives on Garden Histories*, ed. Michel Conan (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1999) 4.

warns, that of garden history), which promote a particular interpretation of gardens and create a durable association between form and meaning. Perhaps the most notorious example in this regard is the promotion of native plants and ‘natural’ landscape design by German landscape architects during the reign of National Socialism.¹⁶ Similar projects have also been associated with different versions of the landscape garden in England, which served to reify myths about the ‘natural’ superiority and rural origins of values deemed essentially and uniquely English.¹⁷

Not all political uses of gardens rely on symbolism however; some depend on the power of gardens to shape perception of the surroundings and land in general. For example, the English landscape garden has also been seen to naturalize and aestheticize a new division and use of land during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Britain. During this time, the enclosure of common lands formerly reserved for foraging and collective agricultural use made it possible for wealthy landowners to construct large landscape gardens. Through the use of military technology—in the form of an invisible ditch called a haha—these gardens were able to deny the act of enclosure that enabled them, while also screening out productive uses of the land that did not fit the picturesque ideal. In the process, they helped to establish a new aesthetic value of landscape that

¹⁶ Gert Groening and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, "Some notes on the mania for native plants in Germany," *Landscape Journal* 11, no. 1 (1992): 116-26. As the authors of this article suggest, contemporary programs that prioritize native over non-native plants, may also contribute to present-day projects of nationalism and imperialism.

¹⁷ For example, John Dixon Hunt describes how, in the eighteenth century, garden historian Horace Walpole managed to establish the English landscape garden as, simultaneously, the form most natural, most beautiful and most perfectly English. Hunt, "Approaches." Similarly, Ann Helmreich discusses the specific importance, in the late nineteenth century, of William Robinson's "wild garden," which was promoted as more truly representative of English values than formal garden styles. Anne Helmreich, "Re-presenting nature: Ideology, art, and science in William Robinson's 'wild garden'," in *Nature and Ideology: Natural Garden Design in the Twentieth Century* (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1997) 81-111.

denied its former productivity, as well as the inequality of arrangements required both for its construction and to maintain it as ‘natural’.¹⁸

At the same time, such gardens have also been seen to operate as mechanisms of social control. In Simon Pugh’s analysis of the garden at Rousham, the control of nature signifies other forms of control—over labour for example. As he puts it, “The control of nature in the garden has its counterpart in the control of human nature, freedom *from* as a prerequisite for freedom *to*.¹⁹ As a reminder of society’s distance from wilderness, or what Pugh calls “precultural bliss”, the garden became a means of soliciting assent to the new liberal-democratic order, which depended on an internalization of control. Referencing Freud, he writes, “[t]he intense yearning, the desire, that can be felt for ‘nature’ from the perspective of the cultural world is a desire which is partly sexual, substantially repressed, desire as fulfillment of signs which are bound to the earliest experiences of satisfaction.”²⁰ As such, the garden is the site where proprietorship takes on a double significance: the owner must possess both land and self-control in order to enjoy the pleasure specific to the garden.

It is important to note that, without the benefit of distance which historical analysis provides, such functions of gardens are not easily detected. While this may also be true of other cultural forms in their contemporary context, there is a certain obscurity to the way gardens operate which seems important to their effectiveness as sites of cultural

¹⁸ As Simon Pugh observes, ”...the coincidence of fenceless gardens and parks... and enclosure acts was no coincidence at all: the one aestheticised the other by evaluative techniques that disguised the operation of both.”Simon Pugh, *Garden-Nature-Language* (Manchester, UK, Manchester University Press, 1988) , 12.

¹⁹ Pugh, *Garden-Nature-Language*, 12-3.

²⁰ Ibid, 127.

reproduction. Their ability to fade into background while asserting themselves as natural (at least in the sense of seeming inevitable), obscures the specificity of the point of view they present. As Pugh puts it, “...although [the garden] shares its metaphoric role with art in general, the garden appears to be less about aesthetic semblance, more about the real world...”²¹ As a result, any attempt to address the political agency of gardens, whether in progressive or conservative terms, must develop a strategy for seeing them and their effects. I will have more to say about this below.

All this said, there is a hopefulness that remains attached to gardens. As Gilles Clément has put it, the garden is “the quintessential site of permanent change.”²² Simultaneously *made* and living, it is a product of creativity which also requires care. It seems that, despite its political entanglements it could be a means of deliberately yet gently pursuing cultural experiments with our relationship to the non-human world. From my perspective, there are at least two ways in which research (as opposed to design) can support the nurturing of this potential. One is through criticism that identifies and translates the specific insights and possibilities for change that are produced in the creation of contemporary gardens. This is in some ways the more straightforward route, since there exists a space for it to occupy within professional design discourse, even if the candidates for study are relatively few and far between.²³ The other approach is to ask whether the potential inherent in gardens more generally might, even in more traditional

²¹ Ibid, 13.

²² “...le jardin est le terrain privilégié des changements permanents.” Gilles Clément, *Le jardin en mouvement*, 5th ed. (Paris, Sens & Tonka, 2007).

²³ Though there are dangers associated with scholarship that aligns itself too closely with a particular discipline—for example, the tendency for criticism to close in on itself, and through embroilment with professional concerns, to lose sight of larger social and cultural questions.

gardens, or those lacking a coherent design process, be turned toward more deliberately progressive ends. Given that these are the gardens we find more often in public spaces, might there be something worth rescuing, supporting or enhancing—not despite, but precisely because of the context in which we find it? Their prevalence and their relatively unchallenging (if pleasant) effects, make an understanding of their implication in processes of cultural reproduction all the more relevant—though it also makes it more difficult. If such gardens seem to do less than those designed to push the boundaries of garden history, it is in part because the domain of their effectiveness overlaps considerably with that which is fuzzy and vague about them, or deliberately concealed. As I discuss below, an experimental approach to both the fieldwork and analysis is required to bring their effects to visibility.

(The lack of) a history of public gardens

This project focuses on urban ornamental gardens, which are a geographically and historically pervasive (though not universal), cultural form.²⁴ As such, most gardens are for most people immediately recognizable as such. At the same time, they are notoriously flexible in their form and composition, and are difficult to define or otherwise

²⁴ Although gardening is often treated as if it were a universally significant activity (e.g., part of ‘what it means to be human’), it is not found everywhere and at all times in human history. For example, historically there has not been much of an ornamental gardening culture in Africa. See Jack Goody, *The Culture of Flowers* (Cambridge, University of Cambridge Press, 1993), 11-17. I exclude food gardens from consideration in this study, not because they lack an aesthetic dimension, but because their history and their social and cultural function are for the most part different from ornamental gardens, particularly in a public context. That said, the history of community and allotment gardening in North America suggests that particular kinds of food garden represent fertile ground for exploring some of the interpersonal or processual aspects of the garden’s environmentally communicative potential. See for example, Laura Lawson, *City Bountiful: A Century of Community Gardening in America* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 2005).

circumscribe; whatever criteria you settle on, it is easy to come up with exceptions.²⁵

Entire books have been written on the topic, and indeed, much hangs on certain distinctions, since different definitions authorize different forms of expertise and, I would argue, different futures for the garden as a cultural form. For example, as demonstrated by treatment of the question of the garden's relationship to meaning—which is directly related to what kind of thing we take it to be—answering such questions in terms that are either overly restrictive or overly broad, can be damaging to the garden's potential to evolve as a cultural form.

As Marc Treib's recent collection, *Meaning in Landscape Architecture and Gardens* attests, the question of the garden's relation to meaning has in the last fifteen years, been the subject of ongoing debate among garden and landscape scholars.²⁶ This is at least in part because it is a question upon which the garden can be circumscribed for analysis: each author in Treib's collection makes a case (implicitly) for the kinds of effects that will be considered important, and the point of view most conducive to evaluating them. Perhaps what is most important in this regard, is the way that three of the four authors prioritize a particular understanding of design—one in which meaning is only *really* present to the extent that the designer intends it.²⁷ In this context, what gardens and other designed

²⁵ So much so that many authors begin their response to the question, ‘what is a garden?’ with a long list of different types. For example, see Hunt, *Greater Perfections*; and Johnstone, “Recovering the garden.”

²⁶ Marc Treib, ed., *Meaning in Landscape Architecture and Gardens* (London and New York, Routledge, 2011). See also, John Dixon Hunt, “Stourhead revisited and the pursuit of meaning in gardens,” *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 26, no. 4 (2006): 328-341.

²⁷ For example, while Treib allows for the accrual of meaning over time as a result of larger historical and cultural processes, this is not the same as meaning intended and encoded by the designer—which is seen as doomed to failure since its interpretation by visitors cannot be controlled over time. Thus, writes Treib, “Can a (landscape) designer help make a significant place? Yes. Can a (landscape) designer design significance into the place at the time of its realization? No, or let’s say, no longer in most places.”

landscapes are seen to do is constrained by a design practice that is itself circumscribed ahead of time. For example, both Treib and Jane Gillete assert that what gardens do that other cultural forms cannot, is produce pleasure (as if that were the same thing for everyone).²⁸ Even if the conditions for producing pleasure *were* universal, the limitation of the garden to this purpose would still constrain what it can do to a fairly narrow and politically modest range of effects. In fact, given what I have written above about the political agency of gardens historically speaking, an emphasis on the importance of pleasure (especially at the expense of meaning) is both naive and pessimistic with regard to broader cultural potential.

In contrast, Herrington presents a much more inclusive and fluid understanding of the ways in which gardens can be seen to create and communicate meaning, casting

(Treib does allow that in a sufficiently homogeneous society, a more straightforward communication of meaning may be possible). Marc Treib, "Must landscapes mean? Approaches to significance in recent landscape architecture," in *Meaning in Landscape Architecture and Gardens*, ed. Marc Treib (London and New York, Routledge, 2011) 82-125. Similarly, Olin judges landscapes designed for what he takes to be instrumental purposes (such as highway landscapes) to be incapable of conveying meaning—as if the elements of landscape, and the practices of landscape design and construction do not themselves come inscribed with a host of social and cultural meanings. Laurie Olin, "Form, meaning, and expression in landscape architecture," in *Meaning in Landscape Architecture and Gardens*, ed. Marc Treib (London and New York, Routledge, 2011) 22-71. For an analysis of the way in which highway landscapes present particular social relations and cultural values (pertaining in particular to landscape, and the relationship between society and non-human nature), see Alexander Wilson, *The Culture of Nature* (Toronto, Between the Lines Press, 1991).

²⁸ As justification for the universality of the garden's pleasure, they both assert that physiologically, we are all basically the same. As Treib puts it, "Differences in culture, in education, in life experience, in our experience of nature will all modify our perception of the work of landscape architecture. While this transaction between people and place is never completely symmetrical, we *can* circumscribe the range of possible reactions to a place. We cannot make that place mean, but we can hopefully instigate reactions to the place that will fall within the desired confines of happiness, gloom, joy, contemplation, or delight. This range of possible reactions, while tempered by cultural norms and personal experience, is still physiologically dependent on the human body." Treib, "Must landscapes mean?" Also see Jane Gillette, "Can gardens mean?" in *Meaning in Landscape Architecture and Gardens*, ed. Marc Treib (London and New York, Routledge, 2011) 134-65. To be clear, it is not that I don't think pleasure could be a productive starting point for garden criticism, it is that a) I don't think its physicality is enough to assure its universality; and b) I don't believe it should be the end point of criticism (as both Treib and Gillette imply).

visitors as active participants in the process.²⁹ Unfortunately however, I think that Herrington's definition of meaning (implied rather than stated) is overly broad: she sees the garden's 'meaning' in both explicit messages or themes encoded there by the designer, and in processes and circumstances that are conducive to meaning-making (i.e., on behalf of visitors). In this context, it is unclear how the garden's production and communication of meaning differs from other cultural forms. Further, while I agree with Herrington's inclusiveness in principle, I find an emphasis on meaning, broadly conceived, to be restrictive in itself because the interpretation of a wide variety of effects in terms of meaning, makes it more difficult to perceive other uses or impacts of those effects. For example, if the production of particular phenomenological qualities is viewed as contributing to the garden's meaning, it becomes more difficult to perceive how those qualities may also enable the garden to do things other than mean (such as facilitate particular cultural practices and social relations). In summary, debates about foundational questions such as that of meaning, require and produce definitions of 'the garden' (as, for example, a representational or non-representational form), which in turn constrains what we see it doing, and therefore, the degree to which its future capacities are already mapped out ahead of time.

For my purposes, it is important that the definition of gardens remains to a certain degree open. I agree with Craig Clunas that "[g]ardens do not innocently present themselves for examination."³⁰ Rather than a pre-existent and stable entity, 'garden' is a

²⁹ Susan Herrington, "Gardens can mean," in *Meaning in Landscape Architecture and Gardens*, ed. Marc Treib (London and New York, Routledge, 2011) 193.

³⁰ Craig Clunas, "Introduction," in *Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1996) 13.

category that is historically variable. Our ideas about what gardens are, constrain what we see of both their past, and their future. Thus, if we want to think more openly about their possibilities, we must allow for a certain vagueness in what we take as the starting point. As such, I consider gardens those cultivated spaces that are treated (verbally and practically) as gardens. That said, being specifically concerned with their role in the politics of changing (or protecting) ways of life in the city, I am interested in certain types of garden more than others.

As a starting point, I make a distinction between gardens and flower beds, as well as between gardens and other designed landscapes (such as parks, greenways, squares, etc.). I follow John Dixon Hunt's assertion that the founding characteristic of a garden, as reflected in its etymology, is its enclosure of a given space by means of a well-demarcated boundary—whether that takes the form of a fence, a hedge, a stone wall, or something more symbolic, such as a sharp edge cut into the soil between garden and lawn.³¹ As Hunt asserts, the boundary is important to the garden's creation of a space apart from the world. Not only does it provide a sense of seclusion or retreat, and facilitate activities proper to the garden (which over time and in different contexts have included everything from contemplation and reflection to socializing and sexual adventure), it is what enables the garden to be read as a reflection on or representation of a particular disposition toward the world—whether locally or generally conceived. While all urban spaces large and small can be seen as demarcated from one another, and perhaps even read in a similar way, it is the garden's enclosure which is important to my understanding of its

³¹ As Hunt reports, "...all European, Indo-European, and Slavic languages derive their words for gardens from roots that signify enclosure." Hunt, *Greater Perfections*, 19.

potential, and which distinguishes it from both flower beds and parks. Though the larger gardens I discuss are located in park-like settings, they are themselves relatively enclosed.³² The point at which I diverge from Hunt, is in his assertion that gardens are, by virtue of their enclosure, necessarily private.³³ While it is certainly true that gardens tend to be tied to notions of property ownership (even public gardens are often seen as ‘belonging to’ a particular public), cities have featured gardens and garden-like spaces open to the public throughout history.³⁴ That said, their documentation as such, is somewhat limited. I provide here only a brief sketch of the history of (public) garden design.

The first gardens with ornamental features were documented in Ancient Egypt (around 2000 to 1000 BCE).³⁵ Many of these were located on the estates of wealthy landowners, serving both instrumental and aesthetic purposes, but groves of trees and flower beds were also found ornamenting public spaces such as temples.³⁶ In classical

³² That said, I also attend to the role of other urban horticultural interventions, such as tree pit gardens and garden planters, which I take as secondary forms that reference the qualities and experiences associated with larger gardens and, ultimately, influence the ways in which gardens themselves are perceived and experienced.

³³ He writes, “...‘public garden’ always seems to me a contradiction in terms.” Hunt, *Greater Perfections*, 63. And yet, in 2002, a design symposium on public gardens in modern cities focused in particular on the *hortus conclusus*—the most private of garden forms—as a counterpoint to the existing predominance of open, relatively unprogrammed green spaces. Anne-Mie Devolder, ed., *The Public Garden: The Enclosure and Disclosure of the Public Garden* (Rotterdam, NAI Publishers, 2002).

³⁴ I focus here on those issuing from European and North American traditions, since these are most relevant to the gardens I write about.

³⁵ The first Chinese gardens also appeared during this time, though these resembled large parks more than what we now associate with classical Chinese gardens. This makes the Chinese the longest continuous tradition of garden design. Maggie Keswick, “China,” in *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*, ed. Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, Susan Jellicoe, Patrick Goode and Michael Lancaster (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1986) 111-16.

³⁶ Penelope Hobhouse, “The origins of gardening in the West,” in *Plants in Garden History* (London, Pavilion Books Ltd., 1992) 11-40; John Baines and Helen Whitehouse, “Egypt, Ancient,” in *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*, ed. Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, Susan Jellicoe, Patrick Goode and Michael Lancaster (Oxford

Greece, there is evidence of horticultural activities beginning in the fourth century BCE, and of trees ornamenting public spaces, but few gardens. The garden of Epicurus, which was bequeathed to the public upon his death in 271 BCE, is one famous exception.³⁷ In Persia, walled “paradise gardens” accompanied the birth of the Islamic religion (in the seventh century), and persisted for 1000 years. Always taking the same symmetrical, quadripartite form, they reproduced an image of paradise that was seen as a foretaste of the reward for the faithful. These gardens provided a space for contemplation as well as relaxation and retreat that was enjoyed by all members of society.³⁸ In Europe, the Romans were the first civilization to develop a true “art” of gardening (during the classical era), cultivating gardens in both town and country, in public as well as private spaces, and for religious as well as aesthetic purposes.³⁹ However, the fall of the Roman Empire was accompanied by the disappearance of these practices for the most part. Aside from the Islamic gardens created by the Moors in Spain (beginning in the eighth century), medieval gardens tended to be small, functional and simple in design (e.g., taking the form of kitchen, herb or knot gardens).⁴⁰ Many of these were located within convents or

and New York, Oxford University Press, 1986) 155-8.

³⁷ Baines and Whitehouse, "Egypt, Ancient."

³⁸ Jonas Lehrman, "Islam, Gardens of," in *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*, ed. Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, Susan Jellicoe, Patrick Goode and Michael Lancaster (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1986) 277-80.

³⁹ "The Roman art of gardens established over centuries an aesthetic in which natural objects (such as plants, water, perspectives) are used for the pleasure of the sense, and also for their religious, philosophical and literary meanings." Pierre Grimal, "Rome, Ancient," in *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*, ed. Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, Susan Jellicoe, Patrick Goode and Michael Lancaster (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1986) 478.

⁴⁰ This is not to say they weren't also appreciated for their aesthetic and/or religious significance, just that there was neither a tradition nor progress of garden design as such during this period. That said, part of the problem is apparently one of evidence: no documentation or remains of gardens exist for the period between 476 and 800 CE. John Harvey, "Medieval garden," in *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*, ed.

monasteries. Beginning in the eleventh century, gardens open to the public began to appear throughout Europe, though they consisted mainly of meadows for recreation and tree-lined walks.⁴¹

It wasn't until the Renaissance that garden design became a lasting and widely valued form of cultural expression in Europe, generating what is now often portrayed as a succession of three major design traditions attributable to, and reflective of the circumstances and culture of the countries in which they first arose.⁴² Although it is a gross simplification, this progression is often understood as a movement from formal to informal, or from a rigidly controlling to a naturalistic approach to cultivation. I treat it here in its simplified form, because it constitutes the framework according to which many gardens today define themselves. The first of these traditions appeared in Italy during the Renaissance, when gardens became a central component of villa culture, functioning as spaces of retreat from public life and of contemplation.⁴³ Downplaying the role of plants and especially flowers, these gardens were composed mainly of highly manicured, sometimes sculpted evergreens, and often contained elaborate mechanized water works (which also provided irrigation). Widely emulated throughout Europe during the

Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, Susan Jellicoe, Patrick Goode and Michael Lancaster (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1986) 362-7

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Interestingly, as Hunt notes, this nationalist narrative is to a large degree the product of British garden historians who portrayed the English landscape garden as the apogee of garden design. Prior to the 1700s, "European gardening did not see any one mode of laying out grounds as superior to any other." Hunt, "Approaches," 82.

⁴³ As Robert Pogue Harrison describes, they were in this sense decidedly apolitical, but not asocial. The fictional garden of Boccacio's *Decameron*, discussed at length by Harrison, epitomizes an apolitical but social use of gardens that foregrounds the arts of storytelling and conversation, which were essential components of moral and philosophical reflection during the Renaissance. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition* (Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

sixteenth century, this tradition is seen to have stagnated by the middle of the seventeenth century, when the more expansive French garden came to the forefront.⁴⁴

The main innovations that the French garden offered, were those of its scale and the visual effects which, Mukerji argues, made its survey both challenging and pleasurable.⁴⁵ It required both intensive maintenance and extensive engineering to produce its elaborate parterres,⁴⁶ straight lines, perspectival effects, and complex waterworks. It was, as such, a form particularly well suited to demonstrations of power and had its heyday during the reign of Louis XIV. Interestingly, the gardens at Versailles—which have since become emblematic of the period—were open to the public. As a demonstration of the extent and reach of the King's power, as well as the originality and coherence of French culture, it was important that the gardens be viewed by the French people as well as visitors from other countries. As Mukerji puts it, the gardens functioned "...as a kind of central square for all of France, and set out in public view the qualities that made France uniquely great."⁴⁷ They also often provided the setting for elaborately scripted festivities in which the nobility performed their subservience to the

⁴⁴ Though it is not considered nearly as influential, a tradition of baroque Italian garden design emerged during the seventeenth century, predominantly in Rome and the surrounding countryside. As Grimal notes of baroque art in general, it is "...primarily one of spectacle rather than contemplation; the eye predominates and is catered for by illusion and the cunning use of perspective..." Pierre Grimal, "Italy," in *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*, ed. Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, Susan Jellicoe, Patrick Goode and Michael Lancaster (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1986) 286.

⁴⁵ "Visual surprises met garden visitors as they strolled through Le Nôtre's parks because the subtle grading and complex plantings kept shifting visual relations among garden features and making design elements appear and reappear in a matter of a few paces. The topography of the garden could seem absolutely clear in one moment—and then the promenader would come upon a huge drop, where a canal cut across the landscape. The whole structure of the park would suddenly be revealed to be vastly different from the one the visitor presupposed." Mukerji, *Territorial ambitions and the gardens of Versailles*.

⁴⁶ A parterre is a low-lying garden bed usually composed of annual flowers, closely pruned shrubs, gravel and/or grass. In formal French gardens, the planting design was often quite intricate in detail.

⁴⁷ Mukerji, *Territorial ambitions and the gardens of Versailles*.

King, and for which members of the lower classes served as witness. Other gardens built on royal grounds during this era, were also opened to the public, for similar reasons: that is, as a means of demonstrating the wealth and magnanimity of their owners.⁴⁸ As Conan describes, these gardens, which were often less highly regulated than other public spaces, served as meeting places and sites of divergent but culturally important social practices.⁴⁹

A more naturalistic landscape garden—conceived in part as a response to the formality of the French garden—began to appear on the estates of wealthy British landowners in the early eighteenth century. Despite the preoccupations of its designers with an idealized or picturesque nature however, it was no less a product of engineering than the gardens it was seen to oppose—particularly in its early, transitional form, which retained certain classical elements. As Mosser and Teyssot put it, “[a]s a technical workshop, the landscape park provided an opportunity for military engineering, hydraulics, surveying and cartography, involving land reclamation and the construction of raised embankments and trenches, ditches and escarpments, canals and watercourses, pools and basins, polygons, rectangles and half moons.”⁵⁰ Later versions were somewhat more simplified, though they still required the installation of lakes and other ‘natural’ water features, along with buildings and structures that recreated allegorical scenes drawn from literature, theatre and mythology, and the sculpting of earth to recreate vistas found

⁴⁸ For example, two of the great Parisian public gardens, the Jardins des Tuileries and the Jardin du Luxembourg were opened to the public beginning in the seventeenth century.

⁴⁹ Michel Conan, "Fragments of a poetics of gardens," *Landscape Journal* 25, no. 1 (2006).

⁵⁰ Monique Mosser and Georges Teyssot, "Introduction: The architecture of the garden and architecture in the garden," in *The History of Garden Design*, ed. Monique Mosser and Georges Teyssot (London, Thames and Hudson, 1991) 14.

in landscape paintings.⁵¹ They were also no less concerned with extensity, and it was the haha, a military technology, that enabled the apparent (but illusory) opening up of the garden to the countryside that contained it. Far from being open to the public, these gardens owed their existence to the transformation of the land from a common to a private good (via the act of enclosure).

While the popularity of the landscape park fell out of fashion among British landowners in the nineteenth century, it provided a model for the urban public parks that began to appear in the middle of that century—first in Britain but soon after in other European nations and North America. Given the ideals invested in their creation, these parks can be seen as influential with regard to ideas about what public gardens can or should be. They were created thanks in large part to proponents of the public parks movement, who saw them as a means of mitigating deteriorating physical conditions and the associated health problems found in cities at the time. They were also seen as a way of diverting the lower classes from unhealthy activities likely to contribute to social disorder (such as drinking).⁵²

While they included a variety of recreational amenities, these parks were designed by landscape gardeners and architects and were intended to deliver their social and moral benefits in part via aesthetic means: that is, through an appreciation of natural beauty.

⁵¹ “At a time when nature was regarded as a complement to the life of the community, the role of the painter, the architect and the garden designer was to select those images which elicited the desired reaction from the spectator: the various features which comprised the different episodes in the garden—the pavilions, temples, lakes, trees, hills, etc.—were chosen and set out in such a way that made a perfectly composed picture in a frame. Nature was thus created anew and the story of the world rewritten.” Ibid.

⁵² Hazel Conway, *Public Parks* (Buckinghamshire, Shire Publications Ltd., 1996).

Situated within picturesque landscapes,⁵³ they also often incorporated extensive flowerbeds,⁵⁴ or gardenesque plantings of specimen trees and shrubs.⁵⁵ When Frederick Law Olmsted wrote about his visit to Birkenhead, the first park of this kind in England, he described a luxuriant “People’s Garden”:

...gardening had here reached a perfection that I had never before dreamed of...we passed by winding paths, over acres and acres, with a constant varying surface, where on all sides were growing every variety of shrubs and flowers, with more than natural grace, all set in borders of greenest, closest turf, and kept with most consummate neatness.⁵⁶

Although intended as democratic spaces where different classes could mix harmoniously (as Olmsted observed, approvingly, of Birkenhead), public parks were also informed by programs of social engineering. For example, proponents believed that the lower classes would benefit from contact with the upper classes, while the form of the park itself would also exert a civilizing influence: “having provided a well-equipped area of open green space available to all, it demanded that those who used it behaved in a

⁵³ That is, incorporating rolling terrain, curved rather than straight pathways and waterways, and planting arrangements self-consciously ‘natural’ in appearance.

⁵⁴ This was referred to at the time as “bedding out”, or “carpet bedding,” and was often used to create flowerbeds in a variety of decorative and often quite elaborate forms. As Cranz describes, North American proponents of the “pleasure ground” found carpet bedding distasteful, but it was immensely popular with the public. Galen Cranz, *The Politics of Public Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1982).

⁵⁵ A style of garden design developed and promoted by John Claudius Loudon during the nineteenth century as an alternative to picturesque landscapes (which were intended to appear uncultivated). It involved presenting trees and shrubs as individual specimens rather than in clumps so that their unique natural beauty could be more easily appreciated, while preserving the garden’s status as art rather than nature.

⁵⁶ Fredrick Law Olmsted, *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England* (New York, George P. Putnam, 1852).

disciplined fashion and conformed with certain standards..."⁵⁷ Similarly, as Conway points out,

The way in which the park and the plants were maintained so perfectly and neatly would, it was thought, influence park visitors to dress neatly and behave well. They also illustrated that virtuous effort, the labour of planting and maintaining the park, gave just rewards, which could be seen in the beauty of the results.⁵⁸

In North America, the motivations for and the aesthetic of public "pleasure grounds" was somewhat different than in England. As Cranz describes, proponents such as Olmsted, were more strongly anti-urban. They sought to create a space that came as close as possible (visually speaking), to a recreation of wilderness, and in so doing to provide a contrast with the space of the city that was psychologically restorative.⁵⁹ As such, American designers produced an interpretation of the English picturesque that was more rugged, and many of them (Olmsted included), eschewed the use of flower beds (as was popular in English parks), because they detracted from the effects of a more natural beauty, and because the public's fascination with them was seen as morally dangerous.⁶⁰

Such efforts to design parks that were at once functional and beautiful, resulted not only in urban landscapes that endure to this day (in both Europe and North America), but also, as Ponté argues, the transformation of specific functional concerns into a "distinct aesthetic movement"—that is, one based on the notion that 'natural beauty'

⁵⁷ Mosser and Teyssot, "Introduction," 18.

⁵⁸ Conway, *Public Parks*, 68.

⁵⁹ Cranz, *Politics of Public Park Design*.

⁶⁰ As Cranz writes, somewhat in contrast to the quote from Olmsted above, "Olmsted relaxed his standards only in the case of large naturalistic bands of one species of flower or decorative gardens confined to narrow bands and formal plots around buildings. Even such a policy of restraint however, proved to be dangerous, for once flowers of any kind were introduced discipline might slack, and this could open the way to Victorian excesses." Ibid, 41-2.

could have a ‘civilizing effect’ on urban residents (particularly the lower classes). Thus, for example, in the parks and parkways of Olmstead, “...domestic landscapes create an environment in which the tensions and contradictions of an industrial society are sublimated and transformed into an aesthetic ideal.”⁶¹ As Cranz notes however, the expense of maintaining parks that looked natural was often hard to justify to the public, and picturesque “pleasure grounds” began to be replaced by more highly structured parks and playgrounds in the early twentieth century. Thus, while park development increased dramatically in North American cities in the twentieth century, the focus was increasingly on recreational amenities and programming, leading to parks that had less and less in common with gardens.⁶²

Around the same time that picturesque landscape parks began to go out of fashion, large public gardens (often in the form of conservatories) began to appear, being seen as reflective of the “cultural maturity and economic prowess” of American cities, as well as ideals related to popular education.⁶³ Also around this time, smaller gardens and flowerbeds began to appear in a variety of public settings outside of parks, in the context of campaigns to beautify urban spaces and increase community pride. In Canada, during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, these gardens came to ornament church

⁶¹ Alessandra Ponté, "Public parks in Great Britain and the United States: From a 'spirit of the place' to a 'spirit of civilization,'" in *The History of Garden Design*, ed. Monique Mosser and Georges Teyssot (London, Thames and Hudson, 1991) 386.

⁶² Cranz, *Politics of Public Park Design*.

⁶³ Richard Lighty, "A history of the North American public garden," *Public Garden* 11, no. 1 (1996), 8.

grounds, hospitals, municipal buildings, schools and railway stations.⁶⁴ The first botanical gardens also began to appear in Canadian cities during this time.⁶⁵

Overall, the number of large North American public gardens (most commonly in the form of botanical gardens and arboreta), increased throughout the twentieth century, especially from the 1960s onwards, when the rate of increase was roughly doubled.⁶⁶ The second half of the twentieth century also saw the advent (across Europe and to a lesser extent in North America), of *floral parks*. These parks, which contain multiple smaller gardens, or floral displays, were generally created in the wake of large garden festivals (such as the *Floralies internationales*).⁶⁷

Since the 1970s, community or allotment gardens have also become increasingly common in North American cities, as have other community-initiated and maintained landscapes. Created in response to growing environmental awareness, decreased access to land and deteriorating conditions of life in the city, many early community gardens reclaimed abandoned and derelict land for the purposes of environmental amelioration

⁶⁴ Edwinna von Baeyer, *Rhetoric and Roses: A History of Canadian Gardening, 1900-1930* Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1984). Unlike the larger parks, these gardens tended to be relatively formal in style, featuring the colourful bedding plants that had been so popular in Britain during the Victorian era.

⁶⁵ The first, located on the grounds of the University of British Columbia, was created in 1916. The first municipally owned botanical gardens—the Montreal Botanical Garden and the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington—were created as ‘make work’ projects during the depression.

⁶⁶ As Lighty writes, “Whereas the number of public gardens increased at an average rate of one to two a year during the first 50 years of this century, this figure rose to between five and six new gardens each year over the next fifty years.” He counted a total of 346 public gardens as of 1996. Lighty, “North American public garden,” 9. As Lighty explains, these increases are explained in part by the trend among mid-century educational institutions to turn botanical collections and conservatories maintained for research purposes over to public display, as well as a dramatic increase in gardens on the grounds of museums and other public institutions such as hospitals, cemeteries, horticultural societies, institutes, conservation areas, and so on.

⁶⁷ Andrew Theokas, *Grounds for Review: The Garden Festival in Urban Planning and Design* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2004).

and community empowerment. As Lawson puts it, these gardens not only gave residents a chance to take action in response to concern over larger environmental problems, they “...added resiliency to deteriorated social and physical infrastructure through new social networks that worked toward physical and social reclamation.”⁶⁸ As environmental awareness and interest in gardening as a recreational pastime continued to grow during the late 1970s and early 1980s, cities and residents alike have turned their attention to repurposing urban infrastructure in order to enable cultivation: examples of these new garden forms include *greenways* (which turn streets into gardens), *ruelles vertes* (which turn alleyways into gardens), tree pit gardens (planted at the base of street trees) and boulevard and traffic roundabout gardens. These gardens today constitute key strategies of a ‘green’ or ‘sustainable’ urbanism, and represent for many urban residents, an opportunity to garden where arable land is increasingly scarce.

Thus, while their form as well as the circumstances of their use have varied a great deal over the years and across social and geographical contexts, publicly accessible gardens are a culturally important and enduring feature of life in the city. They may be even more vital to contemporary urban environments. As was proposed in a 2001 symposium in Rotterdam, where urban green spaces are seen to be both overly homogenized and underused, they represent a means of making such spaces “more distinctive, more expressive and more accessible.”⁶⁹ That said, as the Rotterdam symposium noted, funding for the creation of public gardens and provision of adequate

⁶⁸ Lawson, *City Bountiful*, 216.

⁶⁹ Entitled Breeze of AIR (Architecture International Rotterdam), the symposium gave rise to a collection of texts and works. Devolder, *The Public Garden*. Interestingly, the organizers decided to focus on the form of the *hortus conclusus* or the ‘enclosed garden’, as that which held the most potential for generating productive discussion about how best to enliven urban public spaces.

maintenance in the long term, remain significant challenges for those who would advocate for their proliferation.⁷⁰ There has also been very little scholarly attention, historical or otherwise, given to the ‘public garden’ as a coherent object of study. Certain types of public garden, such as botanical gardens and community gardens, have generated historical and/or ethnographic research, but for the most part, the designation ‘public’ is not especially relevant to the concerns of garden and landscape scholars. Garden criticism and historical research tends to be either site or form-specific, treating questions about use and access as secondary or contextual,⁷¹ while social scientific study is more usually focused on practices of gardening (which tend to be situated in residential or community gardens).⁷²

However, especially in the city, where access to open space and natural amenities is often quite limited, the designation of ‘public’ relates the garden to problems both broader in scope and more immediate in impact than conventional forms of criticism or history can, in themselves, address. A garden that is accessible to the public can be seen as having a significant (if sometimes vague or obscure) role in discussions about, or conflicts over, environmental values and landscape ideals, as well as the distribution and use of urban land more generally. At the same time, the specific manner in which gardens tend

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ The anthology *Contemporary Garden Aesthetics, Creations and Interpretations* is an exception to a certain degree, since the stated focus on experience implies that the way gardens are used and appreciated (as well as by who, under what circumstances) is important to their significance. However, as I discuss below, in practice, the consideration of user experiences is in many cases disappointingly cursory, and in others, undertheorized. Michel Conan, ed., *Contemporary Garden Aesthetics, Creations and Interpretations* (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2007).

⁷² I should note that, as has become clear to me over the course of this research, I am in fact quite interested in what is implied (or denied), in a given public garden, about professional and popular gardening practices. However, it is the garden itself, and its modes of communication and action that constitute the focus of my analysis.

to be embedded in a particular cultural and historical context (which I attempt to theorize below), is more clear in a public context, since their creation and continued existence tend to be the focus of negotiations between competing interests. But it is also public gardens, which are visited under circumstances both ordinary (in the sense of belonging to the everyday) and special (by virtue of their separation from the usual business of the city), that have the environmentally communicative potential that interests me. Thus, while acknowledging that the term ‘public’ is somewhat imprecise, I use it to indicate that I am interested in gardens which are, at least in theory, open to everyone, and are in practice visited under a variety of everyday circumstances, not just by tourists.⁷³

As it turns out, the garden sites I have chosen to focus on in my analysis all share an additional qualifier, that of ‘municipal’. This limitation was not one I chose ahead of time, though given my interest in the political agency of gardens, as well as the prevalence of municipally owned gardens (relative to other forms of public garden), it is hardly surprising that this focus took shape the way it did. In modern cities, municipal governments usually take primary responsibility for shaping and ornamenting public spaces. The gardens created and maintained in this context are politically active in more ways than one. Not only are their construction and maintenance often controversial (since they require so much in the way of spatial and financial resources), they are also often created in part to enhance a city’s image, or make it more attractive to tourists and business owners; they serve as signs of prosperity and cultural sophistication. In Montreal, gardens have had a special role in the city’s recent history—being seen as a means of

⁷³ Given the limited number of public gardens of adequate size to be found in Montreal, it was not possible to rule out gardens that require an entry fee (and which therefore limit their accessibility to those who can afford to pay).

cleaning it up, improving quality of life, and enhancing environmental sustainability. They were, as such, an important component of a distinctly *horticultural* urbanism which was influential from the 1960s to the mid 1980s, as city officials attempted to modernize the city's image and convince residents *not* to move to the suburbs.

The particular importance of gardens in this context can perhaps be in part explained by the significant role that the Montreal Botanical Garden had in those efforts, as well as in civic life more generally. One of the largest such gardens in the world, the Botanical Garden was founded in 1936, and owned in full by the city as of 1942. Over the years, but especially from 1962 to the late 1980s, the Garden was directly involved in the horticultural beautification of parks and other public spaces. Perhaps most significantly, its staff and its director at the time, Pierre Bourque, were largely responsible for the planning, construction and day to day maintenance of the *Floralies internationales* in 1980—a massive international horticultural exhibition which is frequently credited for galvanizing a widespread interest in gardening among Montrealers, and which also led to the creation of a large floral park on Île Notre-Dame. As the man behind this and many other memorable projects, and after having served as director of the Garden for fifteen years, Bourque eventually went on to become the city's mayor from 1994 to 2001—a testament in part to the importance of gardens in the civic life of the city.

Today, in addition to the Botanical Garden and the floral park (which contains many of the themed gardens originally created for the festival), the grounds of municipal buildings, major thoroughfares, tourist and shopping districts in Montreal are also quite generously ornamented with flowerbeds, large sidewalk planters and hanging baskets. Thus, in Montreal, gardens are important not only from a civic perspective, but also in an everyday sense, even if many residents do not have much space to create their own. In

this context, public gardens and other horticulturally beautified public spaces have contributed in important ways to efforts to define, renovate and homogenize the values and aesthetic ideals constituting a distinctively urban ‘way of life’ in the face of both development and suburbanization. Thus, just as there is a utopic optimism inscribed in aspects of Montreal’s horticultural history—a sense of what life in the city *could* be—there is also a distinctively normative undertone informing the gardens and garden-like forms encountered in public spaces. Much of the analysis I assemble below is concerned with identifying what and how gardens communicate about how we *should* live.

I characterize this research, which is organized around a recursive movement between phenomenological and archival materials, as a politically attuned garden criticism—one focused on function as well as form, and located in the realm of everyday as opposed to rarefied aesthetic experience. As I discuss below, this is a criticism that is pragmatic as opposed to evaluative in its aims. I am not concerned with an adjudication of forms so much as a process of perception: I want to become able to see more in public gardens (more of what they do, more of what they can do), and also to be able to say how exactly I have done it.

I turn now to a methodological discussion, locating the current work within the realm of garden criticism, even as I revise both its goals and methods.

Garden criticism

Lacking a single disciplinary home, gardens have been studied by scholars in numerous disciplines.⁷⁴ Outside of more general historical studies, research on gardens

⁷⁴ But most predominantly in the context of architectural history and theory, art history, literary

tends to focus exclusively on either function or form.⁷⁵ Research focused on the broader social or cultural function of gardens, is usually undertaken by social scientists and geographers. But for the most part, gardens are of interest to social scientists primarily as a site where the activity of gardening takes place.⁷⁶ Thus the vast majority of such research is focused on either community or residential gardens. The garden's specific form in such research is for the most part inconsequential.⁷⁷ Cultural geography and cultural studies are two disciplines where we might expect to see the form as well as function of gardens treated, but aside from research on landscape more broadly conceived (two examples of which are discussed below), research from these disciplines has also focused on the activity of gardening and leaves questions related to form mostly unanswered.⁷⁸

The majority of scholarship on gardens is produced within disciplines where the practice of criticism provides the methodological framework (e.g., architectural history and theory, art history and literary studies). The focus in these studies is on the meaning

studies and the classical humanities.

⁷⁵ Such studies—like those discussed above—are generally concerned with the elucidation of larger cultural themes, where a range of effects and circumstances are more normally brought to bear on study of a given garden.

⁷⁶ Though the total number of studies conducted to date by social scientists is small, gardening is implicated in a variety of social questions: for example, those having to do with individual and collective identity formation, social and economic differentiation, popular environmentalism, attitudes toward nature and so on. For a review, in the context of mapping a sociology of gardens, see Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, "Cultivating questions for a sociology of gardens," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 39, no. 5 (2010): 498-516.

⁷⁷ Thus Hondagneu-Sotelo's review, which includes a wide variety of potential and actual studies of gardens, nowhere makes reference to garden form. *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ For example, see Russell Hitchings, "Expertise and inability: Cultured materials and the reason for some retreating lawns in London," *Journal of Material Culture* 11, no. 3 (2006); Russell Hitchings and Verity Jones, "Living with Plants and the Exploration of Botanical Encounter within Human Geographic Research Practice," *Ethics, Place and Environment* 7, no. 1-2 (2004): 3-18; Christopher Tilley, "The sensory dimensions of gardening," *Senses and Society* 1, no. 3 (2006): 311-30.

and significance of garden form—whether in a particular garden, or across a series of related sites. This is not to say that other effects are not addressed, just that they are clearly of secondary importance in what is understood as an interpretative as opposed to empirical project. Among studies of garden form, it is possible to distinguish two ways of characterizing the materials of criticism (which are nonetheless often employed together in a single study): that is, in terms of meaning or aesthetic experience. While the divide between these two ways of understanding the aesthetic products of gardens seemed for a time to be quite decisive—as reflected by the series of articles treating the question of meaning, discussed above—they are more often employed together.⁷⁹ Since between the two of them they account for the majority of garden criticism however, it seems worth discussing the assumptions they make and the implications that follow. I do this by considering exemplary versions of each framework—one advanced across several texts by a prominent author in garden studies, the other presented as introduction to an anthology of critical texts concerned with garden experience.

John Dixon Hunt has put forward what I find to be the most coherent and well-theorized description of how gardens communicate meaning, and how that meaning is best uncovered by critics and historians.⁸⁰ In fact, he attempts to change the terms of the debate about meaning, arguing that “...there is a far more interesting question than ‘can gardens mean?’—which in fact should be construed more as a question of reception, how the construction of meanings is achieved by successive visitors, than whether designers

⁷⁹ The elasticity of the central concepts makes this easy to do. For example, not only must the interpretation of meaning take place within a larger experience of a given garden, so can meaning, once received, influence one’s experience of the garden.

⁸⁰ As opposed to the contributors to Treib’s collection, who either decline to define ‘meaning’, or give it an overly inclusive reach, Hunt theorizes a process of meaning-making specific to gardens.

implant meanings on their sites.”⁸¹ He sees the garden’s meaning as arising over time out of the interaction between the garden itself, and visitors’ (necessarily varied) practices of reception. Within this exchange, the garden’s contributions take specific forms, the nature and status of which Hunt theorizes in terms of a theory of representation specific to gardens, starting from the observation that the garden’s enclosure enables it to refer to the world outside its borders. That reference, more often than not, involves forms of representation: plants and other elements are cultivated and presented in forms that call attention to themselves, as presentations (i.e., as intentional). In this way, visitors are drawn to consider, for example, the ‘tree-ness’ of a particular tree, or the relation between shrubs and sky (as idealized instances of general forms).⁸²

Of course, some gardens also contain more explicitly symbolic features, and garden critics have frequently employed iconographic methods—drawing on classical and literary sources as well as works of visual art—to ground particular interpretations.⁸³ Indeed, this is the approach taken by the majority of critics writing about Stourhead (a famous English landscape garden built in the eighteenth century), and which is problematized by Hunt in an essay concerned specifically with “the pursuit of meaning in gardens.” In this essay, Hunt downplays the importance of symbolism and narrative, showing the various inconsistencies and contradictions which various interpretations of the site have introduced into our understanding of its significance. As he asserts, gardens do not function in either a linear or holistic fashion—they are not like books or

⁸¹ John Dixon Hunt, *The Afterlife of Gardens* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 96.

⁸² See Hunt, *Greater Perfections*; especially Chapter Four.

⁸³ A semiotic analysis of garden space is also conceivable, though I have yet to find an example.

paintings—and they change over time. They communicate more vaguely through “triggers” and “prompts” that produce associations (to forms, ideas or events elsewhere), and which may elicit a variety of responses and interpretations from visitors. As such, and given the difficulty in many cases of gaining access to the intentions of the garden designer, as well as the tendency of garden visitors to bring their own expectations and interests to the garden’s exploration, Hunt prioritizes a more fluid and multiplicitous understanding of the garden’s meaning. This does not make it impossible to produce a correct interpretation and/or evaluation of a given garden’s meaning, it just makes it a question of being more thorough: considering a range of historical materials in order to determine different responses to the site over time, together with the specific possibilities contained within the site itself.⁸⁴ Given the unique environmental qualities of gardens, the “experience of being there” should also guide the interpretative process.⁸⁵

In contrast to Hunt’s approach, what has recently become somewhat more common, especially in the context of studies of contemporary as opposed to traditional gardens, is for critics to focus on the specific qualities of aesthetic experience that a given garden is seen to produce. While for some authors (such as Treib and Gillette), the focus is on a relatively limited range of qualities (such as those producing an experience of pleasure), applications of the concept of experience are in general, much broader, and represent a different means of pursuing and organizing the presentation of garden

⁸⁴ For an extended treatment of the contribution of both visitor responses and phenomenological potential to an interpretation of a garden meaning, see Hunt, *The Afterlife of Gardens*.

⁸⁵ Hunt, "Stourhead revisited," 338. While Hunt acknowledges the importance of experience in interpreting a given garden, it is clear that he continues to prioritize meaning, since he suggests use of the term ‘experience’ be reserved for “encounters that seem low in ‘cognitive content’ but seem otherwise important.” Ibid.

criticism (perhaps most relevant to new gardens as opposed to the historical gardens consider by Hunt), rather than a vastly different understanding of the gardens. In a recent anthology of scholarship on contemporary gardens taking garden experience as its starting point, this was justified on the basis of the assertion that “[g]ardens are places we enjoy as part of our dwelling in the world.”⁸⁶ Though they are works of art, they belong to the realm of everyday life, and encounters with ‘nature’. In this context, references to processes of communication are often substituted for those of meaning. As Conan asserts of landscape architecture in general, “It does not produce messages, but communicative interaction.”⁸⁷ Accordingly, some of the authors (though certainly not the majority) give attention to the kind of interpersonal activities taking place within the gardens.⁸⁸ A focus on experience is also a way of emphasizing the role of visitors in the constitution of a given garden’s significance, since, unlike meaning, which often requires a specialized expertise to perceive and interpret it, experience is universally available as well as individually variable.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Conan, "Introduction," 4.

⁸⁷ Conan, "Introduction," 6. The vagueness/redundancy of the term ‘communicative interaction’ gives a good indication of the extent to which processes of communication are theorized in this context (i.e., not at all).

⁸⁸ For example, see Michel Conan, "The Garden of Seasons by Bernard Lassus: Coming to terms with fleeting encounters in a decentered world," in *Contemporary Garden Aesthetics, Creations and Interpretations* (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2007) 97-119; and Susan Herrington, "Where art is a garden-Benny Farm by Claude Cormier," in *Contemporary Garden Aesthetics, Creations and Interpretations* (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2007) 17-34.

⁸⁹ That said, in most cases contained within the anthology, while there is frequently discussion of the context in which a garden is located, and who visits or uses the garden, under what circumstances, there is often little more than a nod towards its reception by actual visitors. None of the studies include any direct documentation of visitor response. Where visitor experiences are discussed, it is usually in the form of a projection (what visitors ‘would see’), an acknowledgement that multiple interpretations of a given aspect of the garden are possible, or speculation about the influence of cultural context on garden experience, in the form, for example, of “collective memory” or “shared history”. Perhaps the worst example is provided by the editor of the volume, who states in his essay, “To understand how the project can be experienced one

The approach taken to garden criticism in this context is hybrid—drawing on historical and theoretical materials as well as numerous photographs to contextualize and strengthen a given interpretation—but in general, great weight is given to the intentions of the designer and interpretation of the materials associated with the design process (e.g., drawings, plans). This is in part because the design process, as opposed to a design *tradition*, is so much in the foreground of contemporary gardens; it also provides a vocabulary for describing the aesthetic specificity of the garden in general terms. In this context, meaning frequently finds its way into analysis through the back door, in the form of metaphors, allusions, themes, or frames of reference acknowledged by the designer.

Given that these two approaches to garden criticism overlap to such a significant degree, it is perhaps not surprising that they should share key assumptions and implications. Most fundamentally, the exclusive focus on form generates observations that are predominantly individualistic and also apolitical. Thus, for Hunt (and the other critics he discusses), understanding the meaning of Stourhead requires that the critic draw on the balance of historical and phenomenological knowledge that will enable a projection into the minds of a given time (i.e., particularly those of visitors). Though Hunt is aware of the larger cultural historical processes in which gardens like Stourhead were implicated,⁹⁰ they do not figure in this discussion, presumably because they are not seen

should adopt the point of view of its constituencies rather than the abstracting perspective of a critic visiting by special permission” and then goes on to project onto those constituencies very specific experiences as well as interpretations of particular features that are quite involved (while noting of course, that multiple interpretations are possible). Conan, “The Garden of Seasons,” 99.

⁹⁰ In particular, the interpretation of such landscape gardens as quintessentially English as well as aesthetically and morally superior to other design traditions—a project of garden historians writing during the era in which Stourhead was created and which Hunt discusses elsewhere. See Hunt, “Approaches.”

as influencing the garden's meaning.⁹¹ In contrast, as Conan reports, garden experiences are seen by the authors in the anthology to contribute to cultural change. However, his description of the nature of this change is both simplistic and vague, being based on the assumption that an aggregation of individual experiences will—through a “process of communicative action”—produce a “shared frame of interpretation” that is somehow productive of some kind of cultural change.⁹²

While an open-endedness with regard to results may be an important feature of the gardens he is discussing, Conan's vagueness also glosses over potentially important social and political dimensions of the participation of gardens in cultural change. For example, in his brief discussion of the contribution of gardens to cultural change, Conan repeatedly refers to “joint” or “shared” interpretations, but doesn't specify the processes or circumstances under which such negotiations might occur. This glosses over, not only the difficulty of drawing general conclusions about culture on the basis of observations about experience, but also the potential for gardens to become the focus of social and economic conflict, or worse, to conceal and subdue such conflict.⁹³ When he discusses the differences in access which different groups of users have to the site he discusses later in the volume, he finds no particular significance in the fact that people who live in a highrise adjacent to the park and gardens may only look into certain areas from above,

⁹¹ Which, I have to acknowledge, is fair enough. At least Hunt's use of the term ‘meaning’ is less elastic than others, and does not blend into a discussion about what is significant or otherwise important about it. However, such an approach is not suited to my more politically attuned project.

⁹² Conan, "Introduction," , 12-3.

⁹³ A framework for theorizing the relation between experience and culture is available to Conan, as John Dewey's *Art and Experience* was supposed to have provided a common philosophical thread to the texts he is introducing, but it is not very thoroughly explored in his text. See Herrington, "Where art is a garden."; for a sense of the utility of Dewey's framework in this regard.

whereas physical access is reserved for “casual encounters by high-ranking employees... and key figures of the Parisian social circle with which the corporation engages.”⁹⁴ Jacob’s discussion of a series of public parks in Rio makes similar, repeated reference to ‘shared’ interpretations, apparently supposing that the landscape will itself provide the means for resolving differences arising out of drastic economic disparity among users of the parks (acknowledged elsewhere in the essay).⁹⁵ In general, despite Conan’s assertions, and in the absence of serious theorizing, a focus on aesthetic experience does not provide a means of understanding the garden’s effects in more broadly social and political terms.⁹⁶ It remains for the most part a site for detached, individual enjoyment or, at best, as a meeting place for similar people to “share” experiences and interpretations.

All this said, it is perhaps not overly surprising that studies of gardens concerned with form as opposed to function, should fail to account for broader social and cultural effects, and therefore also fail to include any sense of the politics associated with a given garden or garden form. If there is a politics of form, it requires an attention to effects that extend beyond the individual, and a theorization of the relation between gardens and larger social and cultural processes. That said, given my interest in the garden’s capacity (however constrained) to generate experiences which are aesthetic in significance, I nonetheless locate my research within the realm of garden criticism. In contrast with

⁹⁴ Conan, "The Garden of Seasons," 102.

⁹⁵ As Jacobs writes, “Shared experiences give rise to shared interpretations and eventually to shared values that support new cultural attitudes and positions, to a new aesthetic rooted in the people and places of Rio, and to a new *brasiliade*.” Peter Jacobs, “Echoes of paradise: Fernando Chacel’s Gardens in the coastal plains of Jacarepaguà,” in *Contemporary Garden Aesthetics, Creations and Interpretations* Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2007) 121-40.

⁹⁶ Herrington’s use of Dewey—as a means of underlining some of the social and psychological benefits of garden experience—is an exception to this critique. Herrington, “Where art is a garden.”

existing approaches however, and in part because I aim to politicize its practice, this thesis is concerned with both form and function. In fact, as I discuss below, I am interested in the *function* of garden form. In other words, I am interested in the social and political implications of effects generated through the form and aesthetic qualities of public gardens—both at particular sites and more generally.

This requires a criticism that is attuned to the specificity of effects at a given location, *and* capable of analyzing the way those effects are influenced by, and participatory in, circumstances and processes beyond the garden's borders. As it turns out, an experimental approach is required to bring these effects to light: in their self-evidence, gardens are characterized by a unique social and political obscurity (discussed further below). Additionally, because I am interested in how ‘the garden’ might in the future become something different from what is already imagined for it, I require this criticism to be pragmatic. While a simplified understanding of pragmatism sees it as exclusively concerned with determining what concept or explanation is most useful to a given problem, it is—in the work of philosophers such as C. S. Peirce and John Dewey—more properly seen as concerned with what Dewey called “the unachieved future—with possibilities involving a transfiguration.”⁹⁷ I seek a means of identifying where in the

⁹⁷ The entire quote, which pertains in particular to a pragmatist conception of intelligence, is as follows: “If we are to have a philosophy which will intervene between attachment to rule of thumb muddling and devotion to a systematized subordination of intelligence to pre-existent ends, it can be found only in a philosophy which finds the ultimate measure of intelligence in consideration of a desirable future and in search for the means of bringing it progressively into existence. When professed idealism turns out to be a narrow pragmatism—narrow because taking for granted the finality of ends determined by historic conditions—the time has arrived for a pragmatism which shall be empirically idealistic, proclaiming the essential connexion of intelligence with the unachieved future—with possibilities involving a transfiguration.” John Dewey, “The need for a recovery of philosophy,” in *Creative Intelligence: Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude* (New York, Henry Holt and Co., 1917) 29. Noting a conflict here between Dewey’s progressivism—which had a well-defined idea of what the future would ideally look like—and Guattari’s insistence on a heterogeneity of values and outcomes as well as process, I characterize my pragmatism as “empirically interventionist”—that is, acknowledging that there are specific values that motivate it, but also

garden a difference can be made—which elements are most thoroughly implicated in processes of translation and mutation, and which susceptible to projects of reinterpretation and repurposing. Thus I refuse to set a definition ahead of time, and emphasize instead the constitutive nature of the garden's effects.⁹⁸

I turn now to the conceptual framework that informs this approach, followed by a brief discussion of the central research question and methodological overview.

Conceptual framework

The critique implicit in the approach I take to studying public gardens begins from the observation that the traditional aesthetic conception of gardens—as productive of meaning and/or experience—reflects a partial account of what they do, and a simplification of the significance of form. This conception has yielded perspectives on gardens that tend more often than not to be both individualistic and apolitical in their observations. Consequently, the interpretations they produce are socially and practically stagnant: they do little to improve our understanding of the broader social and historical relations in which gardens participate, and even less our ability to perceive gardens themselves as socially active. In contrast, I contend that gardens are inherently socially

wishing it to be as open-ended in outcome as possible.

⁹⁸ In 1878, under the heading of an essay entitled "How to make our ideas clear," Peirce set out the central tenet of the method later to be named pragmatism. He wrote, "Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object." Charles S. Peirce, "How to make our ideas clear," *Popular Science Monthly* 12, (1878): 286-302, <http://www.peirce.org/writings/p119.html>. (accessed April 27, 2013). This emphasis on the effects of an object, rather than first principles regarding the object itself, was a means not only of exposing conceptual inconsistencies and obfuscations, but also of reinterpreting philosophical questions in terms of process rather than phenomena. Philosophers such as William James and John Dewey also worked in this way, confronting the problem, articulated by Rajchman, of "...how to see and conceive new forces that exceed and problematize assumptions that normally function as 'transcendental'." John Rajchman, "A new pragmatism," *Anyhow* (1998), 213.

and politically involved. They are conducive to the purposes of a multitude of social and political projects, in service of which they are deployed as instruments or mechanisms that tend to conceal their status as such. At the same time, they are themselves productive of events and effects that contribute to processes other to those underlying the projects for which they are deployed.

In the context of these interests, I think gardens are most productively viewed as *media*. I mean this, as a start, in the most fundamental way: as that which mediates. Gardens mediate perception of one's surroundings (and to a certain extent, of the world in general). As Dianne Harris and D. Fairchild Ruggles describe, designed landscapes have always been used as a means of controlling vision, to the extent that it is spatially determined. Particularly in gardens, techniques such as “perspectival manipulation, optical illusion, panopticism, screening, selective presentation, framing, masking, re-presentation and positioning the viewer” have often been exploited in a very deliberate fashion, controlling not only the content and extent of vision, but also its significance, by enhancing the drama or controlling the sequence of different effects.⁹⁹ As Simon Pugh puts it, “[a] garden is a ‘machine to see with’.”¹⁰⁰

But it is more complicated than this, because gardens, and landscape more generally, also serve as media in the sense of facilitating social and cultural exchange. They enable processes of creation and expression, but as W.J.T. Mitchell argues, in a collection of essays concerned with landscape and power, they also carry with them

⁹⁹ Dianne Harris and D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Sites Unseen*, ed. Dianne Harris and D. Fairchild Ruggles, (Pittsburgh, PA, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007) , 22.

¹⁰⁰ Pugh, *Garden-Nature-Language*, 6.

specific social and cultural values and are a “marketable commodity.”¹⁰¹ Thus, as Barbara Bender demonstrates with regard to Stonehenge—a lucrative tourist attraction that has also been made to serve as sign of English heritage—what starts out as expressive is often eventually turned towards more hegemonic ends.¹⁰² This is in large part because, as a “fetishized commodity” landscape simultaneously signifies and conceals particular social relations.¹⁰³ In gardens—which can be seen as a specific kind of landscape—human intervention is signified as an improvement of nature, but erased as labour. This is in part what makes the garden-as-media so conducive to the social and political projects described above. Just as landscape writ large (as in, the English pastoral), is a tool of imperialism, so gardens may also serve to colonize not only land but also space and vision in the service of other, more localized projects.

As the other essays in Mitchell’s collection demonstrate, physical landscapes are perceived and acquire significance in part because of the way they are represented and deployed in other media (e.g., painting, photography, literature), as well as discourse more generally.¹⁰⁴ While this is most readily established through historical means, James and Nancy Duncan’s study of a wealthy rural community outside New York City

¹⁰¹ In contrast to the contention (common among art historians) that landscape is an invention of seventeenth century landscape painting and gardening, Mitchell argues that this capacity reflects a pre-historical capacity of the land. He writes, “...landscape is itself a physical and multisensory medium (earth, stone, vegetation, water, sky, sound and silence, light and darkness, etc.) in which cultural values and meanings are encoded, whether they are *put* there by the physical transformation of a place in landscape gardening or architecture, or *found* in a place formed, as we say ‘by nature’.” As such, it is a medium “in the fullest sense of the word.” W.J.T. Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” in *Landscape and Power*, 2nd ed., ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002), 14.

¹⁰² Barbara Bender, “Landscape and politics,” in *The Material Culture Reader*, ed. Victor Buchli (Oxford and New York, Berg, 2002) 135-40.

¹⁰³ According to Mitchell, “[a]s a fetishized commodity, landscape is what Marx calls a ‘social hieroglyph,’ an emblem of the social relations it conceals.” Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” 15.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

provides some precedent with regard to how such interactions might be theorized and investigated in present day circumstances. Demonstrating that landscape acts as a covert “mechanism of exclusion” wherever a particular aesthetic is expensive to produce or maintain, *and* characterized as natural, they characterize the landscapes of the community they study as “signifying systems” that do much more than signify:

As the visible surface of places, landscapes are ensembles of physical elements and economic infrastructure—hills, fields, streams, dirt roads, barns, mansions and cottages, railroads, offices, stores and villagescapes, as well as images, views, and individual and collective memories. They are media molded into grand compositions that are enacted within the framework of culturally and historically particular discourses.¹⁰⁵

In the community they study a variety of “loosely articulated cultural discourses” are both inscribed and naturalized in landscape, thereby turning it into a discursive resource useful in the formation of identities and the waging of battles over development, as well as anchoring a sense of place, and practices and values associated with a particular “way of life.”

Landscape in this context is quite different from a garden (even if we understand gardens as a landscape form); perhaps most importantly, it forms the backdrop and physical ground for a well-established community. The landscape described by the Duncans has been invested with an array of personal and collective meanings that is in most cases more specific and firmly entrenched than those I might read in Montreal’s public gardens. At the same time, the struggle within the community to maintain a particular landscape aesthetic is more overt, even if the nature and extent of its stakes are not. The gardens and other media I study participate in discursive projects which are less

¹⁰⁵James Duncan and Nancy Duncan, *Landscapes of Privilege: The Politics of Aesthetics in an American Suburb* (New York, Routledge, 2004), 37. bud

clearly or completely formed, aiming not at the preservation of an existing aesthetic, so much as the strengthening and revision of aesthetic norms in a heterogeneous and continually shifting urban context. Nonetheless, the Duncan's characterization of landscape as articulated with other things, such as memories, values and practical knowledge, through discourse, provides a departure for the development of methods appropriate to my study of gardens. As they demonstrate, broad, multifaceted discourses become localized in landscape through the intervention of other media forms—in the case they study, particularly through images and evocative phrases that circulate in advertising, real estate marketing, films, novels, and so on—at the same time that practical knowledge and cultural taste find a means of transmission through it.

I assume a similar relationship between gardens and other media, except that for me, there is no “grand composition” in view. This is partly because a garden is more tightly delimited than the object of the Duncan's study (and the territory of my investigations much less so), but also because I want to be able to say something about gardens in general, and so consider the discourses and projects that intersect there only to the extent that they illuminate the garden's functioning. In other words, while I presume the existence of a specific media ecology that encompasses the gardens I study, I am not interested in mapping it comprehensively, but focus instead on those relations and functions that make the garden's own effects and dependencies appear. As Marshall MacLuhan asserted, given that media always produces its effects in interaction with other media, consideration of the effects of one can help to illuminate those of another. He wrote, “...the parallel between two media holds us on the frontiers between forms that snap us out of the Narcissus-narcosis. The moment of the meeting of media is a moment of freedom and release from the ordinary trance and numbness imposed by them on our

senses.”¹⁰⁶ In other words, considering the functioning of gardens in relation to other media, may help to bring their effects more clearly to light. That said, to say that gardens are a form of media, still leaves open the question of how exactly they mediate, and what kinds of relation they engage in doing so.

As Alexander Wilson’s analysis of the North American landscape in relation to a cultural production of nature demonstrates, the mediation of perception through landscape tends to be consistent in various ways with discourses that rationalize and prioritize particular relations between nature and culture. His analysis of the Blue Ridge Parkway details how the use of curves, pull-outs and vegetative screens, the removal of farm buildings and decrepit homesteads and the replanting of native vegetation, served to produce an experience of the Appalachians which hid or smoothed over the economic realities and history of people who live there. In so doing, it produced an image and experience of ‘nature’ as both inherently scenic, and devoid of human intervention. According to Wilson, such experiences ultimately reify a discursive separation of nature and culture, which is in turn a means of rationalizing both the protection of a supposedly pristine nature in parks, and environmentally destructive practices everywhere else.¹⁰⁷ Is landscape thus simply a site for providing an experiential compliment to discourse—a means of convincing us of the reality of certain ideas? I don’t believe so, at least not in the sense of such effects being choreographed by some overseeing authority, but I do think we need to account for what seems a deliberate (because so effective) adjustment of landscape and discourse.

¹⁰⁶ Marshall MacLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1964), 63.

¹⁰⁷ Wilson, *The Culture of Nature*.

While one of the major theoretical tasks of this thesis is to flesh out the relations between perception and discourse in gardens (via particular media), I start from Pierre Bourdieu's observation that, generally speaking, thought and representation tend to be structured in ways similar to those of space and practice. As I discuss in Chapter Three, this is because, according to Bourdieu, not only do the same basic principles structure bodily knowledge and social space (via the mechanism of *habitus*), they also tend to underlie the organization of physical space, as well as processes of thought and meaning-making. These relations are analogous in form as opposed to mimetic, reflecting not a determinate application of rules across contexts, but a more flexible reproduction of structures, the 'logic' of which is often quite fuzzy. Thus the disposition of physical space (in the form of gardens, for example) tends to correspond—in ways that are often not immediately apparent—with structures of meaning that also make sense of social relations.

What Bourdieu did not consider, is whether differences in the functioning of specific media might influence the reproduction of underlying structures in unexpected ways. If the 'logic' of such structures is indeed fuzzy (and modestly flexible), the evolution of media forms and the invention of new ones may be seen as a productive avenue of social critique.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, in this context (and if it is not too cute), gardens can be considered a form of *social* media, in the sense that they mediate processes of change—particularly with regard to ways of living in the city—via the reproduction of social relations. Thus

¹⁰⁸ Of course, as I have found, this critique is hampered by the failure of structures of meaning to account for such change, since, by definition, it entails a disruption of those structural analogies which otherwise enable analysis. What is required, ultimately, is a means of identifying and perceiving, if not comprehensively analyzing such change, so that criticism can identify and comprehend the significance of discontinuity as well as continuity.

between the characterization of the garden as media, and the assumption of a structural analogy between gardens and social relations, my analysis of public gardens proceeds on the basis of a series of juxtapositions of specific gardens and other media, complementary in content.¹⁰⁹

Central research question and methodological overview

The central question I attempt to answer in relation to specific gardens is: how do gardens work, and what kinds of effects do they produce, to what ends? Although it is informed by an overarching methodological objective (developing a pragmatic garden criticism), and the refinement of a conceptual tool attuned to the demands of that criticism, my approach, and the results generated, have been predominantly descriptive in character. The fieldwork I undertook in order to begin to answer these questions, consisted of repeated visits to gardens and other horticulturally augmented sites around the city, where I pursued activities that, while developed in response to conventional activities of garden appreciation, were designed to take the visit beyond its normal experiential parameters. I also employed a variety of writing practices (some conventional, some creative) as a means of planning, documenting and extending this process of experimentation in various ways. I then selected a much smaller set of gardens and horticultural interventions to analyze in depth, taking what I had been able to discover of them through the fieldwork, and juxtaposing it with other media forms (discovered largely through archival research).

¹⁰⁹ That is, I am primarily interested in the way structurally analogous content becomes visible across its expression in different media (or conversely, how that content may change in its translation across forms and contexts). This is different, I think, than what MacLuhan intended, which was to reveal the different ways in which media itself functioned, irrespective of content.

Although the results are not in any sense conclusive—and given my interest in discovering an openness of gardens with respect to the future, I don't think they should be—they allow me to outline two different but complementary capacities of public gardens. These, I think, are relevant to the functioning of public gardens in general, but they come more or less to the forefront depending on 1) the garden's specific form; 2) its material circumstances with regard to the style and intensity of its care; and 3) the uses to which it has been put by its designers and/or administrators. The contribution of the first two factors can be established more or less through observation, but the last factor can only be established historically.¹¹⁰ That said, what I intend by 'established' perhaps deserves some qualification.

I provide historical context regarding the meanings and uses of the gardens I study, but I don't attempt to do so through the presentation of a complete or completely linear historical narrative. This is in part because I am suspicious of the prejudices a linear narrative introduces into historical thinking (e.g., prioritizing the values, point of view and circumstances of a relatively select group of actors). A history based on conventional categories of action, intention and effect (as a linear narrative tends to require), constrains our ability to imagine alternative (i.e., non-hegemonic) trajectories into the future. I therefore presume, without attempting to specify in detail (at least not up front), a certain degree of non-linear causality with regard to the relations and processes influencing changes (or the lack of change) in the form and function of public gardens. Consequently, I also consider a greater variety of actors, circumstances and processes to have historical

¹¹⁰ This is not to imply that the first two factors are not also historically specific, or that my historical research did not influence how I viewed the form and circumstances in which I found different gardens, but to identify the kinds of questions with which my historical research was more explicitly concerned.

significance than is usual in a historical research. In this, I take some cues from Stephen Muecke's 'experimental' approach: "...not excluding anything as a possible actor in a virtual situation, giving rise to an event..."¹¹¹

Although Muecke seeks a history that functions coherently as a "living system," my approach, while similarly inclusive of non-human actors and effects, does not aim to be comprehensive.¹¹² Thus while I also focus on relations between elements as opposed to the causation of events, my selection of elements for consideration has been perceptually and critically strategic, rather than being concerned with outlining a historical 'system'. Instead I attempt to provide a historical backdrop against which certain contemporary effects and functions may come more clearly into view. In particular, I have used historical materials that enable me to discover analogies between gardens and other media forms that would normally prove difficult to analyze as such (that is, without the objectivity that distance in time provides). These forms include, along with those more conventionally understood as media (such as garden guides): parades, exhibitions, beautification programs and imaginary gardens.

I provide a full description of the methods employed in during my fieldwork, including examples, in Appendix A. Before turning to discussion of the role of writing and my use of a particular literary device, I must acknowledge two further constraints entailed in my approach. First, committing to a perceptually strategic and non-linear garden history, has required that I leave for other scholars and commentators a more fulsome

¹¹¹ Stephen Muecke, "A touching and contagious captain cook: Thinking history through things," *Cultural Studies Review* 14, no. 1 (2008), 36.

¹¹² For him, historical research consists in "the observation of actual relations among objects, concepts, humans and other living things. This is a living and growing system where 'actual relations' refers to things that are articulated for all sorts of purposes that further the continuation of the system." Ibid, 35.

elaboration of certain events and circumstances, as well as the influence of figures otherwise considered important to a history of public gardens and civic horticulture in Montreal. Probably the most significant of these figures is that of Pierre Bourque. By many accounts (formal and informal), the success of the Floralies, the rejuvenation of the Botanical Garden in the 1970s and 80s, and the extent of horticultural interventions by the municipal administration at large during the same period, were to a large degree made possible by the administrative and political prowess of Bourque, as well as his ability to motivate and mobilize others. In fact, it is possible to read much of what was promised with respect to the Floralies and its associated beautification initiatives (discussed in Chapters Five and Six), in terms of his personal enthusiasm for the potential of horticulture to make life better.¹¹³ However, I do not give much attention to the power of his personality here, though I recognize that a different history, with different aims, might find good reason to foreground its influence.¹¹⁴

Finally, on a more analytic note, there is another factor (in addition to form, circumstance and use), influencing what capacities of the garden come to the forefront: the conceptual tools brought to bear in the analysis. As a gathering together of living entities, ‘the garden’ exists in a state of tension between the order imposed through design and the work of maintenance, and a relative disorder, via processes of growth and decay. This is I think, the defining condition of its phenomenology. Depending on which of these

¹¹³ After having spoken informally with a number of individuals who worked with him, and with Bourque himself, I can attest to the infectiousness of that enthusiasm, more than thirty years later.

¹¹⁴ For accounts of Bourque’s role in the Botanical Garden’s development after 1970, see André Bouchard, *Le Jardin botanique de Montréal: Esquisse d’une histoire* (Montreal, Éditions Fides, 1998); and for a treatment of his life’s accomplishments more broadly (including the hosting of the Floralies), see Anne Richer, *Pierre Bourque: Portrait de l’homme* (Montreal, Les éditions internationales de Alain Stanké, 1994).

tendencies is more in the forefront in a given garden, it seems to have a different relation to change.¹¹⁵ Although my choice of conceptual tools must be seen (in retrospect) as having been influenced by this aspect of the garden's functioning, I think my attempt—throughout both the fieldwork and the analysis—to think the two tendencies of the garden together, has enabled me to perceive and understand it in relational, as opposed to categorical terms. Thus the conceptual challenge that ultimately troubles a pragmatic criticism (and to which I return in the conclusion), is to think the garden in terms that are specific to it, and thereby, to find a means of capturing this tension in its characteristic forms.

I have found it necessary in the context of this challenge, to move continually between different points of view. In an attempt to be reflexive, as well as to make the most, analytically speaking, of this fluidity of perspective, I have decided to present the results in a form which dramatizes certain aspects of my process.

Introducing the gardener: Split personality garden criticism

When I began this research, I had a problem. Having worked for many years as a gardener, I had only one way of perceiving them: when I visited gardens, I would switch into a mode of perception that was primarily evaluative and nominative.¹¹⁶ I would walk through them, naming the plants to myself (perhaps learning the names of new ones),

¹¹⁵ In a more formal and intensively maintained garden, it is easier to see the garden's contribution to processes of reproduction, whereas in a less formal and/or neglected garden, it is easier to see its capacity for disrupting or distorting such processes.

¹¹⁶ For the most part my work consisted of garden maintenance—watering, weeding, pruning, transplanting, fertilizing, pest management, etc.—though in some jobs I was also responsible for plant selection, and a minimal amount of design. I had no formal training.

identifying weeds, and deciding which areas of the garden were ‘nicely done’ and which were neglected or overdone. As a result, I found them boring. I loved plants and I certainly recognized when a garden was beautiful, but I was incapable of enjoying that beauty as a garden visitor. This is in part where the inspiration for my approach to the fieldwork came from. The role of habit in structuring my perception of gardens could not have been more clear. If I wanted to see and experience more of gardens, I would have to find a way around the gardener in me. Or so I thought at first, and developed an approach to garden visits that attempted to circumvent my first, largely automatic response, and to perceive the garden in more expansive as well as more critical (as opposed to evaluative) ways. As I discuss in Appendix A, for the most part this involved giving myself a task for the garden visit—one which was absorbing enough so that I didn’t have to think about what I ‘should’ be doing or seeing, but not so much so that I couldn’t allow myself to be distracted or surprised by some aspect or another of the garden and my experience in it.¹¹⁷

Designed to address a specific handicap, this approach produced a greater diversity of perspectives on the gardens I visited than would have been available with more conventional tools, even to a researcher not so weighed down by practical knowledge. It also produced another problem however, for I found that being busy with other activities did not only enlarge my perspective, it divided it. On the one hand, I still had evaluative reactions to gardens that my more critical self deemed superficial. Even as I tried to bracket or minimize the importance of these reactions, they found their way into my

¹¹⁷ It also involved the cultivation of low expectations. I found that if I didn’t require something specific in either the nature or the ‘quality’ of my experience, then I would be more open to the production of insights and observations not anticipated ahead of time.

notes in the form of a voice that spoke in ways that often made me uncomfortable. To a certain extent, this was to be expected: as I discuss below, mine was a writing practice that overlapped experimental with cathartic effects. I wrote without a filter, come what may. As a result, I found myself recording, not only critically valuable observations of the gardens I visited, but also reactions that were intensely personal and sometimes petty. I was often dismayed by the strength of my opinions, and found them irrelevant or misguided, as well as infected with a good deal of nostalgia and sentimentality. Thus, not only had my attempt to circumvent my inner gardener failed to silence her, it seemed to have removed some of her inhibitions.

That said, I had to admit that a variety of experiences, and a diversity of perspectives on the gardens I visited, were in many ways precisely what I had been looking for. In fact, it began to seem as if the split in perspective—which became more pronounced as the research progressed—was in fact a major asset, since the difficulty to which it responded, was itself related to an important aspect of how gardens operate. That is, though for me it was manifest in the form of habits I could attribute to my personal background, it is not unusual for gardens to frustrate a more full or critical perception.

The garden's perceptual challenge and the limitations of visual expertise

As Craig Clunas points out, gardens are characterized by an apparent ‘givenness’ which obstructs a more critical understanding of them as objects which are discursively as well as materially made. Thus, for most people, a garden is easy to recognize but hard to see. While such ‘givenness’ inflects our perception of many common objects (particularly those which are part of our everyday environments), the difficulty in perceiving gardens is

especially profound. Beyond identifying plants or preferences, it is often difficult to say, for example, what makes this garden different from others, or to specify how is it composed. If it is a larger garden, you might find it quite pleasant to wander through, or to sit in it, reading, but what will you remember afterwards? What could you tell someone else about it? If words often fail in the face of gardens, it is not only because they generate impressions and experiences that are fleeting and ephemeral, as is often observed, and because they demand a specialized vocabulary, but also because the composition of their effects, and the techniques of their making are designed to conceal themselves. This is in part because, in general, they are intended either to serve as ornamentations of buildings and social spaces such as parks, or, in the case of larger or fully enclosed gardens, to be immersive in their effects. They are meant, in the first case, to be taken for granted, and in the second, to be experienced as separate from the ‘real world’—in both cases they are not usually subject to a more critical or deconstructive vision. As such, the difficulty of seeing gardens is an important aspect of how they operate.¹¹⁸ The task of a more critical scholarship of gardens is therefore, as Clunas puts it, to make “what we all know less familiar.”¹¹⁹

That said, an expert eye can see many things that the untrained eye cannot: landscape architects, garden historians and critics tend to bring a mixture of historical and practical knowledge to perception of a garden that helps them to see the garden in its relationship to a history of design traditions and garden styles on the one hand, as well as

¹¹⁸ As I have already suggested, and as I discuss below, this is true not only from a practical, but also a social and political standpoint.

¹¹⁹ Clunas, "Introduction," 14. Undertaking historical research, Clunas' own strategy was to use a discursive approach in his analysis of ancient Chinese texts and images of gardens.

the major moves it makes in response to that history, and the specific techniques it employs to do so on the other. In other words, they see what the designer was trying to do with a given garden, as well as how successful he or she was. This is in many ways a major advantage, giving architects, historians and critics both a focus for observation and a vocabulary for description. But it also has a cost, because in knowing what to look for, the garden expert avoids an experience of the opacity which is a crucial part of the way gardens work. As a result, there is a certain degree to which the perspective of a non-expert, or at least, a different kind of expert, can be productive of insights about the garden's broader social and cultural effects that are unavailable to historians, architects and critics.

What is wanted, I think, is a point of view on gardens that is sharpened by expertise and intention (i.e., is a looking for *something*), but is also to a certain degree stupid—humbling the eye and preventing it from knowing what it sees in every instance, working *with* the cultural blindness specific to gardens in order to produce the possibility of perceiving that blindness in action. What I discovered in the course of my fieldwork was that my experience as a working gardener gave me access to this point of view, though the expertise that informed it was not of the type normally considered useful to garden criticism. What the gardener-in-me knows about is plants—their names, their needs and their differences—and the work of gardening: its specific tasks, pleasures and difficulties. This knowledge enables perception of certain details that would go unnoticed for many (even landscape architects and critics, who are often not familiar with plants in such an intimate way) and a bodily engagement—also unavailable to those who have not invested the hours of labour required to develop garden-specific habits of movement and perception which, even when they are not actively engaged, contribute to a unique point

of view. At the same time, this expertise narrows perception, making other points of view, such as that of the designer, less accessible, and creating bias out of the preferences and evaluations which are part of a working gardener's habitus.¹²⁰

I have decided in my analysis to retain the input of my inner gardener, and also to performatively exaggerate the distance between her perspective and that of my more critical self. I have done this by writing both voices into the research process (which has been thoroughly informed by a variety of writing practices, discussed below), as well as the final document. In this context, the gardener-in-me (who I refer to simply as 'the gardener') is strategically stupid: she is capable of *misrecognizing* the garden—which is to say, following Bourdieu, that she is capable of seeing it as if it was *not* invested with social and political interests, as if it was only what it claimed to be.¹²¹ Such misrecognition, informed as they are by a heightened (if narrowed) perception, provide entries into an analysis of gardens that catches them in action, generating effects which exceed the significance allotted them by a more conventional approach to garden history and criticism.

Of course, it would be dishonest to pretend that the two perspectives have been kept fully separate. The gardener is not as naïve as my remarks so far suggest. Perhaps what most accurately characterizes the situation, is to imagine the two perspectives as

¹²⁰ The expression of preferences and the evaluation of plant choice, garden upkeep and so on, constitute to a large degree what gardeners talk about and what they trade in—both with their clients and among themselves. Having a good eye for detail and strong opinions are both marks of an experienced gardener.

¹²¹ In other words, to apply Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic capital' somewhat loosely, she recognizes the garden as a symbolic as opposed to social and economic achievement. Bourdieu defined symbolic capital as "...the form that one or another of [the species of capital] takes when it is grasped through categories of perception that recognize its specific logic or, if you prefer, misrecognize the arbitrariness of its possession and accumulation" Pierre Bourdieu and Loic J.D. Wacquant, *Invitation to a Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992), 119.

collaborators. The fieldwork and the writing that accompanied it can be attributed to the gardener. Given her former occupation, she was uniquely equipped to pursue an experimental fieldwork—not only was she comfortable exploring gardens from a variety of angles (often literally), but she was also attuned to perceive in them the traces of human intervention, as well as the processes and momentum of growth that such interventions engage. The critic on the other hand, (the ‘T’ who writes), takes responsibility for the historical research, and for producing the final analysis. But we have been in constant communication throughout, and the gardener continued to write and reflect on her experiences as the analysis required it. Her notes and writing exercises have thus provided materials for the analysis I (the critic) now undertake.

While there is an element of performance informing this arrangement, this was not, in the first place, explicitly intended. I thought that the gardener’s was a voice that I had to turn off or ignore. As the project progressed however, it came more and more to the forefront, with several variations. Sometimes she appeared in the form of parody; other times she spoke through resurrected former clients, or memories from other times and places. She haunted the research; she was an embarrassment to me. Embracing her input has however allowed me to position myself, somewhat less apologetically, from a distance, while still drawing upon her observations and experiences. She speaks about the gardens from within them, while I attend to the larger picture, the web of relations and significances which were often intuited but not clearly visible to her. Together, and because the analysis which follows preserves the two voices, we bring a fullness of perspective without pretending to have a view of the whole in every moment (as is often the case in more conventional forms of criticism). The form which the analysis takes reflects my movement between points of view: between up close and distanced, practical

and critical, intensely personal and social or cultural. I hope that it clarifies the contributions of different forms of knowledge.

The gardener's minority status

The gardener occupies a position with respect to the world of garden criticism that is distinctly marginal. She embodies a perspective on gardens that has for the most part been, not only disregarded, but disappeared. Questions related to the construction and maintenance of gardens are rarely considered in works of garden criticism; and if they do figure it is usually in a cursory fashion, providing context or narrative flavour as opposed to substantive insight into the garden's significance.¹²² While considerable attention is often given to aspects of the design process, the garden otherwise seems to have grown out of the landscape fully formed and self-sustaining. As such, within the realm of garden criticism, the gardener's knowledge pertains to precisely that which is considered inconsequential.¹²³ At the same time, without the more specialized training that others may claim (e.g., in the fields of architecture or design), and not having had the means to travel abroad and visit more than one or two "important" gardens (she has never even set foot in England!), she lacks access to other forms of authority.

At the same time, among other gardeners she is also to a certain degree marginalized by the fact that she doesn't have a garden of her own. Though some

¹²² Pugh's analysis of Rousham, which turns around a letter written by the head gardener, is an exception. Pugh, *Garden-Nature-Language*.

¹²³ An indication of the extent to which this is the case is provided in Hunt's dismissal of the head gardener's knowledge of the garden at Rousham as being less intimate than that of the owners—who did not even live at the estate (and in response to whose absence the gardener wrote, providing a description of the garden in order to entice them to return). See Hunt, *The Afterlife of Gardens*, 169-70.

gardeners may have respect for expertise gained occupationally as opposed to recreationally, for the gardener herself, it has been a tricky position to occupy, especially now that she is not actually doing the work that would keep her expertise live and fully credible. If you love plants, but have nowhere to grow them, you must find other ways of expressing that love—maintaining knowledge, furthering your interest, and so on. The gardener has over the years found a variety of ways to do this, but even so, she is sometimes haunted by dreams of gardens—those she would make, if not own.¹²⁴

Thus, disrespected in one realm, and impoverished in another, she wields her knowledge in a manner which is both intensely personal and political. For the gardener-without-a-garden, every garden is *about* gardening. They speak to her less of a history of design, and more of plants, their needs, and all that has been done, or not done, with them. They activate an expertise which has become to a large degree virtual—shaping her perception and her reactions, but otherwise useful only in an imaginative sense. Working from outside the social arrangements the garden normally circumscribes—that is, between property owners, who care about gardens, and labourers who care about the money they make there—she searches gardens for an opening, a space she may cultivate despite being without land or the resources of a conventional criticism. She asks, on the one hand, how to be a gardener without staking a claim; and on the other, how to be strategically as opposed to authoritatively critical. Hers is what might be called, following Deleuze and Guattari, a *minor* practice of garden criticism: in the course of remaking it

¹²⁴ Even in her dreams the gardener is a labourer, not an owner of gardens.

into a domain of activity and expertise that includes her, she gives voice to a community of garden-less gardeners and critics that does not yet exist.¹²⁵

Writing as research and conventions of garden criticism

It is often complained that words can never fully capture experience, and that language will always be inadequate to its task of representation. As Richardson puts it, the "...‘worded world’ never accurately, precisely, completely captures the studied world, yet we persist in trying."¹²⁶ For me, the point of employing a creative writing practice in the course of research is less to get closer to accurately representing experiences that are otherwise beyond words, and more to enable new experiences. Given the extent to which gardens structure perception, experiencing them in a more open-ended way requires that their (otherwise in many ways latent) potential be made perceptible. I see this as a project of co-creation, or extension, in which the garden produces the conditions for events which the gardener turns into experiences—first by being there, as witness and participant, then by ‘working them up’ in writing—and which are later ‘worked over’ by me, for the sake of analysis. This writing practice, combined with distance from the gardens in time and space, has taken me further and further away from a “normal”

¹²⁵ Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that in the case of minor literature, there is no author in the usual sense, only works of “collective enunciation”: “...and if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility...” Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

¹²⁶ Richardson is also concerned with ways in which the process of writing influences understanding. As she continues, “Writing as a method of inquiry honors and encourages that trying, recognizing it as embryonic to the full-fledged attention to the significance of language.” Laurel Richardson, “Writing: A method of inquiry,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed., ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. (Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage, 2005) 294.

experience of them. As such, and particularly in creative exercises undertaken by the gardener, gardens are made to do more than they normally do. As their effects are amplified and (mildly) distorted, and later, in their juxtaposition with other materials, what they do (and how they do it) becomes more apparent, and more open to reinterpretation. At the same time, and especially because it is polyvocal, such writing destabilizes the assumptions underlying a more conventional garden criticism—in particular, the idea that the critic occupies a single, all-encompassing point of view unclouded by emotion or personal preference.

In general, works of garden criticism tend to conceal the process of research and writing, and imply that the interpretation presented is correct, final and complete. This is accomplished not only by what is left out (e.g., any discussion of method), but also through authorial conventions. For example, the construction of assertions in general terms, without a subject, or using ‘we’ or ‘one’ instead of ‘I’, denies the singularity of perspective which necessarily underlies the work of interpretation.¹²⁷ While such strategies are the norm in most academic scholarship, they are problematic in the context of research that aims to be supportive of change.¹²⁸ That is, as long as knowledge of

¹²⁷ For example, even while Hunt asserts that the changing, non-linear character of gardens makes it impossible to produce an all-encompassing interpretation of them, and requires a balancing of phenomenological and historical knowledge, he *writes* as if a unified knowledge of the whole was possible, making no distinction between the two different forms. He critiques various interpretations of Stourhead on the basis of observations that issue from extensive familiarity with the site, but whose provenance is glossed over through the use of the generic ‘we’. For example, with regard to a particular interpretation of the garden’s grotto, he writes: “When Charlesworth takes us into the grotto, his analysis depends heavily upon our seeing the Sleeping Nymph first: he deals with it at once and then writes “the visitor proceeds to another part of the grotto to discover the river god”... But unfortunately his explanation of the actual event is faulty: we have, in fact, been confronted by the River God ever since we descended into the grotto, for he is placed at the far end of the grotto corridor; so we do not “proceed” from nymph to river god, since we see the god before the nymph.” Hunt, “Stourhead revisited,” 332.

¹²⁸ They are especially pervasive in the humanities, where the certainty and integrity of the ‘results’ must be asserted as opposed to demonstrated (e.g., through a discussion of methods and replicable results).

gardens is seen to reside exclusively with those claiming a specialized expertise (such as critics and landscape architects), then the fields of both criticism and design will remain constrained by the conventions according to which those experts have been trained to perceive gardens. While those conventions may in special circumstances be challenged (e.g., in the context of contemporary garden festivals), and perhaps as a result evolve over time, the garden will remain constrained to reflect existing knowledge and circumstances, rather than itself becoming a motor of change. If the use and broader influence of the garden is to change, then its study must admit a heterogeneity of input (in both form and content). In this context, my use of writing as a practice of research as well as representation, attempts to make both the process and provenance of my insights clear. I hope it will also, in turn, open some space within the field of garden criticism for differing perspectives.

My writing practice

From the start, it was my intention to use writing as a tool of both documentation and thought. In addition to capturing my experiences, and documenting the research process, I wanted it to be a means of furthering my perception and understanding of the gardens I visited. I started from the observation that crafting a thorough description of a given experience is often a means not only of remembering it, but also of raising details to awareness that had not been prominent at the time, or were pushed aside for one reason or another. In other words, writing was a way a means of seeing and experiencing more.¹²⁹ But I also suspected that the ‘more’ of writing could be turned to deliberately

¹²⁹ This is similar to what Richardson advocates with regard to the use of writing in research

experimental ends—that in reproducing an experience, I might produce something new. Not only new insights, or ideas for future exploration, but perhaps, a new capacity of the garden that was otherwise effectively inert or incompletely expressed. As such, my writing practice has much in common with what Anna Gibbs (under the umbrella of fictocriticism) calls a “haunted” writing. Iterative and multi-voiced, it is an attempt “...to move from citation, the kind of repetition you have when reference is deference to disciplinary authority, to recitation—the performance of repetition, a repetition of repetition in order not to reproduce identity, but to try instead to engender new differences.”¹³⁰

Of course, as I eventually realized, there was one voice in particular that was asserting itself through my writing practice, and I eventually decided that the performative aspect should shape the production and writing of the analysis as well as the fieldwork. The gardener went from being a creative and literary device to a condition of the specific insights I was able to generate. She was the motor of garden experiments that aimed, as much as anything else, to overcome her boredom. She is also a means of making room in the analysis for events and effects that might otherwise be disregarded as being ‘merely’ personal. Her inclusion is a way of asserting that this is often the register in which the garden operates, and that this makes it no less relevant to larger social and cultural concerns. She is the keeper of all that is reactive, emotional, fantastical, or

generally: “trying on different modes of writing is a practical and powerful way to expand one’s interpretative skills, raise one’s consciousness, and bring a fresh perspective to one’s research.” Richardson, “Writing: A method of inquiry,” 931.

¹³⁰ Anna Gibbs, “Fictocriticism, affect, mimesis: Engendering differences,” *Text* 9, no. 1 (2005), <http://www.textjournal.com.au/april05/gibbs.htm> (accessed July 5, 2012). As Gibbs and others assert, a use of writing-as-research necessarily interrogates the role of authorial conventions in scholarly writing. In this regard, I am mainly interested in destabilizing the figure of the critic, and portraying criticism as a process rather than a individualized capacity.

mundane with respect to the garden—everything that seems on first glance to be unimportant to a critical analysis. But she has in this way been the channel through which many surprises have arrived. Sometimes these have taken shape in the form of preoccupations—such as verbal tics or irritations that surfaced repeatedly in field notes and journal entries—other times as seemingly simplistic or peripheral questions. Perhaps most often however, it is in the form of memorable experiences, or persistent preferences. When the gardener liked a particular garden, and wanted to return to it over and over, when the language and tone of her descriptions was particularly vivid, or strongly coloured with emotion, I paid attention—in fact, that is how the gardens that feature in this analysis were chosen.

In addition to comprehensive journaling and note-taking (in which I tended to employ a stream-of-consciousness approach), my writing practice has consisted mainly in the production of one-off exercises tailored to the contours of the garden experience they were attempting to either work up (in the days following a garden visit) or work over (much later, in the course of analysis). These were usually only a page or two in length, and took a variety of forms: poems, fiction, collage, monologue, and so on.¹³¹ In each case, my intent was to capture the essence or character of the experience, in part to make it more memorable, but also as a means of furthering my understanding of what, exactly, had happened while I was in the garden. This was not as easy as it sounds. My impressions upon leaving a garden were often strong but quite vague, making me unsure of what role different elements (in myself or the garden) had played. Creative writing was

¹³¹ While I present excerpts from these exercises as a means of grounding my analysis of particular gardens, I also include a selection in their entirety, as examples, in Appendix B.

a means of making sense of the garden and its effects without feeling constrained by conventional authorial imperatives. For example, in the exercises, there was no attempt to explain what I had experienced; I focused instead on describing or otherwise evoking the essence (if not every last detail) of my experience as richly as possible.

The two main strategies I employed in the crafting of these exercises, were those of amplification and mimesis. In the first case, I would take a particular aspect of the visit—whatever remained most vividly in my mind—and attempt to reproduce it in concentrated or dramatic form—often using poetry or poetic narrative to do so. In the second, I used writing as a means of making someone other than my skeptical, goal-oriented and watch-checking self, speak about the gardens. I would write in other voices—that of the gardener of course, who had many moods, but also those of other gardeners (mostly women) I have known—and I would write about gardens as if they were other worlds, imagining the dramas that might unfold there, the disasters or miracles that often seemed about to happen. Sometimes the gardens (in writing) would act as a conduit for memory, or a setting for daydreams. In every case, my intent was to push the garden further, to make its effects more clear, and to make it differ—first on the page and later, I hoped, in my perception of gardens generally.

When it came time to produce the analysis (after the fieldwork was complete), the journals I had kept, notes taken while on-site, and the writing exercises, constituted the material I would draw upon, along with other, more properly historical documents. As such, the gardener appears periodically throughout the text, usually in the form of quotations from notes and exercises, but also, less often, in references to ‘conversations’ we have had, or general observations made. While acknowledging that, especially in the latter instances, the device runs the risk of going too far, I have made it a rule to attribute

to the gardener, only that knowledge which belongs to experience, rather than research. My ability to make this distinction, has been maintained through the continuation of a creative writing practice (as the gardener) throughout the analysis.¹³²

These exercises—sometimes entirely new, but also in the form of a reworking of earlier exercises—serve to continue the work of extension begun in the fieldwork. While those exercises had given experience a form that was memorable, detailed and sensible; those undertaken during the analysis take what happened and attempt to discern what matters—particularly in relation to the other gardens and garden-related media I study, as well as the critical concerns described above. This is a work of both discovery and construction: it involves the selection and strategic layering of observations, images and impressions; a working and reworking of description until it does something productive—something which both feels ‘true’ (of the garden and its effects) and produces an opening, or critical tension that in turn enables a progression of thought (and the text). Thus, in the analysis as in the fieldwork, writing has been a means of extending the garden’s effects—not just in the sense of recreating them outside its boundaries, but also of connecting them with other things, spaces, ideas and events, and making them perceptible in a new way. Which is in turn to say, available for future improvisations. In this context, writing is intended to push criticism toward a generative as opposed to evaluative fruition, making of it a form of ‘ecological praxis’ that prepares the way perceptually for a garden-specific heterogenesis of sensibility and action.

¹³² Thus, for example, as I was attempting to better articulate some aspect of a particular garden’s effects, I would often ‘ask’ the gardener about it, and see what she would write in response.

All that said, it is important to acknowledge that this way of working, combined with my current distance from the gardens, generates a certain amount of imprecision. The gardens and experiences I write about now, live in my memory in ways that are different than they would had I used writing in a more strictly documentary fashion, or continued visiting them throughout the analysis.¹³³ While this is, in part, the point of what I am trying to do, I don't want it to seem as if I am unconcerned with accuracy and authenticity, especially when it comes to my analysis of the gardens. This is in part why the gardener is so important: by giving her a distinct voice and set of tasks, I am able to be unrestrained in those tasks where the production of difference is the goal, and still adhere in the bigger picture to more conventional scholarly values. Thus, for example, both photographs and notes taken while in the gardens have helped to put creative descriptions of the gardens into context, recording physical details as well as my reflections on the influence that a variety of factors (personal and circumstantial) had on my perspective. At various points during the writing process, I have therefore been able to do a form of self-reflexive fact-checking. I also hope that by using two voices, I have been able to clearly mark in the text, the practical and experimental versus historical and analytical sources of different insights.

Chapter breakdown

This investigation of public gardens in Montreal unfolds in two parts, each centred around the intensive investigation of a particular public garden—one located in the Montreal Botanical Garden, the other in the Jardins des Floralies of Parc Jean-

¹³³ Though I did conduct a follow-up visit to the main sites of the analysis in 2011.

Drapeau. These two gardens were selected after the fieldwork—which involved repeated visits to different gardens within each of these larger gardens—was complete. They both provided the gardener with memorable and interesting experiences that seemed to speak particularly well to the questions I attempt to address here. As outlined above, my approach to the analysis of these gardens has been to undertake a juxtaposition of a variety of materials. I present the gardens and associated materials here in an order that reflects first, the chronology of the gardens' creation; and second, my strategy for bringing to light and making sense of effects and functions that are otherwise concealed, or somewhat vague in their operation. Because of the different quantity and character of materials between the gardens, and also in order to meet the specific difficulties that each poses to perception, the strategy taken is different in each case; the two analyses are therefore structured somewhat differently. In order to facilitate the reader's sense of orientation with respect to the materials and methods, I provide in Chapter Two and Chapter Five, visual schematics that map the contents of the two analyses and the relationship among different elements.

Part One begins with an introductory chapter that works primarily to lay historical groundwork, as well as to identify the central enigma at the heart of my interest in public gardens. In the archives of the City of Montreal, there is preserved, a collection of newspaper clippings covering the city's beautification campaigns, which were held on an annual basis, more or less continuously, between 1914 and 1989. Given the inherently civic character of these campaigns, as well as the prominent role which flowers and gardening came to have in them, I take these clippings as an opportunity to investigate the means of articulation between flowers, cleanliness and beauty over the years, as well as between gardens, civic ideals and specific aesthetic values. While I return to other

aspects of the campaigns in Chapter Two and Four, in Chapter One, I focus on those years during which gardening, particularly in the form of window box competitions, featured prominently (from the late 1930s to the 1960s), asking, with what kind of beauty were gardens equated, and how was it considered good? Answering these questions helps to both specify and problematize the social and cultural importance of gardens in Montreal during this time period. At the same time, in order to theorize the processes and products of such articulations, I explore the utility of Roland Barthes' analysis of signs in terms of underlying 'mythologies'. A 'myth of beautification' can be seen to underlie the eventual appropriation of those forms deployed by the campaigns. This way of reading gardens (and other horticultural interventions in the urban landscape) sits in the background of the rest of the thesis, as a capacity for signification seems to inform, if not fully capture, the garden's communicative potential.

I also introduce in this chapter the horticultural enigma which is the tree pit garden—a garden made, by citizen initiative, in the rectangular plot of soil found at the base of most street trees in Montreal. Though it is generally considered an act of beautification, it is frequently not very beautiful. It is also heterogeneous to the history of garden forms; appearing in the urban landscape as an unauthored horticultural innovation, it is un-designed, and essentially unclassifiable in relation to other garden types. As such, and also because it has recently been taken up as a formal component of beautification programs in certain boroughs of Montreal, the tree pit garden demanded my attention. I introduce and contextualize its conundrum here, but leave its significance to a large degree unresolved since later chapters will provide the tools for a more productive interpretation.

In Chapter Two, I introduce the Montreal Botanical Garden (MBG), which is the site of the first garden (of two) that I write about at length and which is an institution that has had a strong influence on both the quantity and quality of horticultural beautification in Montreal over the years, especially since the early 1960s. I also present a brief history of the botanical garden as a cultural form, with a special focus on its importance to colonial endeavours since the seventeenth century. I argue that while it is the alliance with science and education that sets botanical gardens apart from other forms, they have also proven themselves conducive to a variety of social, political and economic purposes. The MBG is undeniably a municipal rather than a nationalist (or imperialist) institution, but I take seriously the historical capacity of the form to legitimize or conceal political programs on the basis of an (apparently) beneficent scientific authority. In particular, I suggest and then attempt to demonstrate, that Teuscher's original design of the exhibition gardens incorporated a (modest) program of social engineering at the same time that it sought to educate the public about plants.

The Perennial Garden is one of the oldest gardens within the MBG's complex, and is often seen as emblematic of designer Henry Teuscher's vision. The remainder of the chapter completes what is intended as a preliminary analysis of the Perennial Garden, juxtaposing the description of its original form (as documented in archival materials), with newspaper coverage of the parades that were a central component of the beautification campaigns between 1946 and 1950. The identification of a structural analogy between the parades and the garden, enables both a demonstration of the MBG's contribution to beautification campaigns of the mid to late 1940s, and observations about the garden's implicit and explicit programs for socializing visitors with regard to the value of garden (and gardening) appreciation during the 1940s and 1950s. This perspective on the older

Perennial Garden sets up a contrast with the contemporary Perennial Garden that in turn anchors a more in-depth analysis in the following chapter.

Chapter Three begins with a description of the Perennial Garden in its contemporary form (from the perspective of the gardener), and the assertion that while it may originally have been addressed to a horticulturally inexperienced public, it is now addressed to home gardeners. This is followed by an account of a visit by the gardener which generated observations, impressions and memories that were both powerful and problematic: she characterized her experience as unexpectedly pleasurable, and her actions and reflections while there as both involuntary and improvisational. These effects of the garden, which seemed to operate at least in part on a bodily level, provide the impetus for an analysis of the garden's form in terms of a structural reading of its coding. I argue that the garden is coded for a particular reception, which ultimately disposes it to serve processes of cultural reproduction, particularly through a practical and perceptual training that not only ensures people know 'what to do' in a garden (i.e., most importantly, what to look at), but also, more generally, how they should relate plants. At the same time, I also consider the possibility that, somewhat paradoxically, the garden's coding also makes it available, under conducive circumstances (such as those of the gardener's visit), for a more playful interpretation. The conceptual framework that enables this analysis is based on an interpretation of Bourdieu's concept of habitus in terms of Barthes' conception of the text.

In putting these concepts to work, I attempt to juxtapose a reading of the garden's *practical code*, with an analysis of changes in the photographic content of guides to the Garden over the years. This serves to illuminate more fully, through analogy, the significance of the garden's coding, and to suggest some of its broader social and cultural

implications. Through an analysis of both image content and composition, I attempt to demonstrate a transition from a positioning of the Garden as an institution of social significance, to one of more strictly aesthetic value. Taking the guides as tools of both orientation and instruction (i.e., with respect to how the garden is best appreciated), I argue that this implies a related change in the activities and modes of perception the Garden facilitates and promotes as valuable. In particular, activities of a more detached and individualistic aesthetic appreciation, such as photography, entail an increasingly *acquisitive* relation to plants—one which is consistent with the constraints and imperatives that commercial horticulture imposes on the practices and possibility of gardening.

Returning to consideration of the concept of habitus and the seeming paradox of the gardener's simultaneously involuntary and improvisational response to the garden's code, I suggest that her improvisation proceeded not despite but through habitus and the capacity it entailed for mastering the garden's practical code, and explore what might be implied in a writing, as opposed to reading, of that code. I conclude with a final juxtaposition, this one based on an imagined alternative to the Perennial Garden—one in which the same structure with different contents facilitates a more experimental engagement, and thereby, the conditions for development of interpersonal skills and collective arrangements perhaps conducive to the invention of 'gardeners to come'. This helps to bring into sharper focus the (otherwise concealed) politics of the Perennial Garden, and its overarching capacity for structuring not only the activities of its appreciation by visitors, and the modes of perception applied to it, but also, indirectly, those social relations implied in the activity of gardening.

In Part Two, Chapters Four and Five treat materials which are almost exclusively historical, working to prepare the way for analysis of the second garden, presented in

Chapter Six. Chapter Four provides a bridge between the historical materials treated in Chapter One (which focuses mainly on material from the late 1930s through to the 1950s), and Chapter Five and Six, which focus on events of the late 1970s and early 1980s. It describes a shift in emphasis and organization of the beautification campaigns that began in the 1950s, and was accompanied by increased horticultural activities outside the campaigns that lasted into the 1960s. This was an era of intensified investments in park development, tree planting and a variety of horticultural augmentations sponsored by the city (such as hanging baskets and sidewalk containers). Between 1962 and 1964, after a former director of the Garden became head of the Service des parcs,* the Botanical Garden took over responsibility for the planting and care of all vegetation in public spaces. As such, Garden administrators oversaw a period of intensive “greening” as the city was given a makeover just in time for Expo 67. Two annual reports produced by the new “horticulture extérieure” division of the Botanical Garden, as well as reports from the Service des parcs, provide a window on these activities. In the context of its expanded responsibilities, newspaper coverage suggests that the Botanical Garden gained an increased visibility during this time in the eyes of Montreal residents, who, it was reported, came to value the Garden more and more as a municipal asset. At the same time, and more importantly for my interests, the administration also discovered a means of making its impact register more widely and positively in the daily lives of Montrealers. These activities set the stage for the concerted pursuit, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, of horticulturally-driven social and economic change.

In Chapter Five, I present an extended discussion of certain aspects of the Floraliées internationales, the exterior portion of which was held on Île Notre-Dame

during the summer of 1980. For the administration, the exhibition was part of a larger program of urban renewal that was strongly horticultural in its tactics. I treat different elements of this program in depth in Chapter Six, and in this chapter focus on understanding the significance of the environmental “message” that, according to organizers, the exhibition promoted. After briefly characterizing the social, economic and political circumstances contextualizing the hosting of the exhibition, I examine different aspects of its environmental message and pedagogy, arguing that the awareness-raising it undertook was largely inspirational as opposed to informative in nature. In this context, the presumption that horticulture was necessarily environmentally beneficial, begs a closer examination, which I undertake in part via a final look at the beautification campaigns. In the 1970s, the campaigns began to employ the vocabulary of environmentalism and make references to its discourse, though for the most part the underlying values and the activities promoted remained unchanged. I also consider, in a somewhat cursory and uneven fashion, given the relative paucity of research to date, the concurrent rise of interest in gardening and concern for the environment in Canada and Quebec. I conclude by revisiting the emotional character of newspaper coverage and promotions of the Floralies, suggesting that the spectacular renovation of Île Notre-Dame for the sake of celebrating the ‘natural beauty’ of horticulture, was a powerful means of convincing people that by beautifying their physical surroundings, they would transcend the social and environmental problems of life in the city.

In Chapter Six, I undertake an in-depth analysis of a garden located in the Jardins des Floralies, on the former exhibition site. My analysis turns in large part on a juxtaposition between the garden on the one hand, and the exhibition as well as two of the horticultural initiatives undertaken in conjunction with it on the other, which I

conceive as three elements in a coherent discursive complex (and which function in ways that are analogous as well as complementary to one another). Much like Chapter Three, this chapter begins by describing the site of the garden, and a visit to it by the gardener which generated an experience that was at once pleasurable and bewildering. The garden in question is located on the banks of the canal system which circumscribes the central sector of the floral park, and while it is not a garden in a formal sense, in the course of renovations undertaken in 1999, it was planted with a dense and diverse variety of perennials, flowering shrubs and trees, which have, in effect, made a garden of it. It is an especially beautiful section of the floral park, but it also serves as a demonstration site for the ecological management of waterways, being marked and introduced as such by interpretative panels at its entrance. That said, the banks of the canal are overgrown, and present the visitor with an unusual mixture of species in a setting that is both intimate and difficult to navigate. As the gardener's account emphasizes, it exhibits a disjunction between its communicated purpose, its aesthetic qualities and its phenomenology—one which I have taken to be characteristic of the floral park as a whole. The gardener was both intrigued and disturbed by it.

These observations are juxtaposed with extended discussion of two initiatives launched as part of a program of beautification activities undertaken by the city between 1978 and 1983, as well as with the exhibition (which was conceived as complementary to that program). I argue that between these three inter-connected horticultural media, the administration developed a new use of gardens, one that was explicitly communicative—which is to say, *programmatic*, or simultaneously promotional (of the administration's activities) and inspirational in character. I then attempt to demonstrate how the interaction of discourse and the visual and extra-visual effects of gardens, flower markets

and horticultural exhibition, worked in a coordinated fashion to make changes in the urban environment, and to assert their importance. I then attempt to relate this historically specific use of gardens, to the present-day functioning of the canal-garden, which serves—at least initially—to heighten the sense of disjunction between its intended use (educational and inspirational) and its phenomenology. There is an excess, I claim—something which escapes a programmatic use of gardens, and is perhaps even amplified by it.

In what remains of the chapter, I move back and forth between the canal-garden, the history of the floral park more generally, and the horticultural events and interventions of the 1980s, finding an increasing resonance between historical events and contemporary garden. I attempt to theorize the garden's excess by postulating that a programmatic use of gardens may make that which is *other* to the program appear all the more forcefully. Taking a cue from John Rajchman's architecturally-oriented reading of Deleuze and Foucault, I label this otherness 'diagrammatic' and attempt to show its operation in an unusual event that occurred at the Botanical Garden in 1981, as well as in the growing popularity at that time, of tree pit gardens. Finally, I return to the canal-garden and attempt to specify more precisely the context as well as the tenor and texture, if not the ultimate productivity, of its excess. In a general sense, it demonstrates the capacity of public gardens—perhaps, especially those which are less rigidly controlled—to propose and develop new relations within the garden (between plants and people, land, vegetation and space, as well as sound, texture and vision), and in so doing to trouble those relations which enable the making and visiting of the garden in the first place, and threaten them with dissolution.

In the conclusion, I discuss, briefly, the two overarching capacities of public gardens identified through this study, and attempt to fill out certain aspects of my claim (above) that gardens function as a form of media concerned with processes of change and the reproduction of social relations. I then turn to discussion of the conceptual challenge that up until this point has remained unaddressed: that is, the question of how to think ‘the garden’ in terms that are specific to it. Or, to put this another way, how exactly gardens can be said to engage those who make, visit and investigate them, and thereby, to mediate social relations in a broader sense. This amounts to the conversion of a methodological tool (the gardener), into a conceptual one. I conclude with some reflections on the role of the gardener, and of the gardens themselves in my research.

CHAPTER ONE: The Myth of Beautification and the Tree-Pit Garden

In a recent issue of *Quatre Temps*—the journal of Les amis du Jardin botanique—entitled “Verdir la ville: À vous de jouer!”¹ editor Stéphanie Lalut writes “Il est temps de prendre la santé de notre ville en main,” reassuring readers that, “Que vous ayez des idées de grandeur ou bien ‘zero budget’ tout est possible.”² Readers in Montreal likely found her message both familiar and inspiring, for it picks up on horticultural themes with a relatively long history, and a still resonant political significance. “Imaginez une seconde,” writes Lalut, “Montréal avec 20 000 nouveaux arbres, autant de cours arrière en fleurs, des centaines de ruelles vertes ou encore des avenues où poussent des milliers de plantes multicolores.”³ This vision of the city, as a 'ville verte et fleurie'* is one on which politicians have repeatedly insisted, despite sometimes strong evidence to the contrary, since at least 1940. We could even see it, if we were inclined to write a history of the city from the perspective of its 'big men', as a dream which, through the hard work of political and administrative visionaries, has become reality (or at least partially so). Despite a high density of buildings and paved surfaces, and a relatively low availability of green space (in comparison with other Canadian cities), Montreal boasts one of the world's largest

¹ “Greening the City: Your Move!”

² “It’s time to take the health of the city into our own hands... Whether you have big ideas or no budget at all, everything is possible.” Stéphanie Lalut, “La revue dont vous êtes le héros,” *Quatre Temps* 33, no. 2 (2009), 2. Les Amis du Jardin Botanique is “une société de loisir scientifique qui, depuis 1975, se voue à l’éducation populaire pour approfondir et diffuser des connaissances en botanique, en horticulture et en sciences naturelles et de l’environnement.” “Mission,” *Website of Les Amis du Jardin Botanique de Montréal*, <http://www.amisjardin.qc.ca/mission/mission.htm> (accessed May 12, 2011).

³ “Imagine for a second... 20,000 new trees in Montreal, as many backyard flower beds, hundreds of back alleys and avenues where thousands of multicoloured flowers grow.” Lalut, “vous êtes le héros,” 2.



Figure 1. Tree pit garden in the Mile Endneighbourhood of Montreal. Photograph by Erin Despard.

botanical gardens, supports a thriving park culture (especially in the summer months), and is home to an impressive variety of urban agricultural and community-oriented gardening initiatives.

Several of these are discussed in the special issue of *Quatre Temps*, including the planting of gardens in ‘tree pits’—those small squares of hard-packed soil that surround the city’s street trees. This is a practice that, while originating in the voluntary efforts of citizens, has more recently been, not only sanctioned, but actively facilitated by many

boroughs as part of ongoing beautification programs.⁴ Tree pit gardens are not a new idea, nor one exclusive to Montreal. Perhaps more importantly, the rhetoric of civic participation surrounding this kind of activity in general has, as I will describe shortly, a long history. To see the practice alive and well today is not surprising given that the popularity of various forms of urban gardening has increased in recent years, at the same time that access to space for such activities is increasingly limited.⁵ However, the proliferation of these gardens, and particularly their role in beautification programs, is of some interest to the gardener.

“If there is one urban horticultural phenomenon I don’t understand,” she writes, “it is the tree pit garden. They are so rarely beautiful in any significant sense or interesting. They contain the most common of annual bedding plants and are usually planted in a relatively thoughtless manner. There is not much you can do, after all, with what is often a square metre or less of space, and so little usable soil. What you often see, are a few marigolds and maybe a geranium or some cosmos, and then a whole bunch of weeds, and a small fence made out of plastic edgers or wooden stakes with wire or caution tape—which, being extraordinarily ugly, *must* have the sole purpose of ensuring that we recognize what it contains as a garden (often not otherwise apparent). This is *not* beautiful, however charmed you may be by someone’s effort to ‘make a difference’ and ‘green the city’. It is also not really an environmentally significant gesture. It seems to me it would be

⁴ I discuss these programs in more detail below. For now I should note that, since 2002, much of the city’s administration has been conducted at the level of its nineteen boroughs, (each of which has its own mayor and council), including everything pertaining to parks and gardens, cleanliness, and beautification.

⁵ Many Montreal residents have limited access to space for cultivating plants outdoors. The city’s community garden program, for which it has gained international recognition over the years, is therefore extremely popular and also badly oversubscribed. In some boroughs (e.g., the Plateau-Mont-Royal), waiting lists are two to three years long. This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that the city had to close eleven gardens in 2007 and 2008 due to contaminated soil.

just as useful, ecologically speaking (perhaps more so) if we were to simply allow these small plots of soil to be colonized by more opportunistic (and hardy) urban plant species.”

Of course there *are* exceptions, she admits, “and I *am* sympathetic to the desperation urban gardeners may experience, attempting to find a place to do *something*, *anything*, garden-related. I suppose too it could be a great educational opportunity for kids, or a way of getting to know your neighbours. But a *beautification* strategy? This I do not buy. Even those that are planted in a reasonably attractive manner contribute in a minimal way to the overall streetscape, by virtue of their size and the rather constrained growing conditions provided. If I was going to make a garden out of a tree pit, I wouldn’t even try for beauty.”

As such, and recognizing that the gardener has her own issues with ‘objective’ evaluations of beauty (as most gardeners do), I do think that the promotion of such a well-intentioned but relatively low quality horticultural intervention by an organization affiliated with the Botanical Garden deserves some consideration. As I discuss in Chapter Two, botanical gardens are generally seen first and foremost as scientific institutions. Thus, even where they have an educational and cultural mandate (as is the case at the Montreal Botanical Garden), they tend to measure their importance based on the size of their collections, as opposed to the number of people who visit every year.⁶ Large gardens such as Montreal’s, which is thematically organized according to horticultural as opposed to botanical criteria, also serve as arbiters of taste when it comes to trends in landscape

⁶ For example, in its most recent media package, the Montreal Botanical Garden is described as “one of the largest and most important botanical gardens in the world, given the size of its site (75 ha) and its plant collections. “A world of colours and fragrances,” (Montreal, Direction des Institutions Scientifiques, Ville de Montréal, 2003) <http://www2.ville.montreal.qc.ca/jardin/en/medias/medias.htm> (accessed, Jan. 30, 2013).

design, the development of new plant varieties, and so on. At the same time, such gardens have, historically, served a variety of imperialist and nationalist projects—perhaps more effectively and innocently (thanks to their association with scientific ideals) than other garden forms. All this taken into consideration, it should be surprising that the lowly and distinctly un-beautiful tree pit should be so wholeheartedly endorsed by an organization affiliated with the Botanical Garden. But, as I think the *Quatre Temps* article demonstrates, in Montreal at least, it's not.

Rather than being in the eye of the beholder, the beauty of gardens seems to be taken for granted. Or perhaps, as the enthusiasm for tree pit gardens suggests, it is the *fact* of gardening that we find universally beautiful. And by beautiful, maybe what we really mean is more complicated than that, such as, ‘environmentally beneficial’, or ‘humanizing’ or just generally *good*. In other words, it may be that beautification is not really about beauty at all, but about a consensus of values—the kinds of things and qualities we like to see in the city and with which we want to surround ourselves. While complicating the meaning of ‘beautiful’ goes some distance toward making sense of the tree pit garden, historical investigation can provide further context. How is it that, in the city at least, we have come to consider gardens—*all gardens*—necessarily good? And what, in Montreal, has the role of the Botanical Garden been in constituting a specific social and cultural significance, as well as a political effectiveness for gardens in general? In posing these questions, my intention is not to suggest that we are wrong to consider gardens good, but rather to recognize that their functioning depends on this goodness, and must be interrogated if it is to be made perceptible.

Similarly, though I view the Botanical Garden as a political entity, this is not to suggest that it can or should be finally evaluated on the basis of the specific political

projects that interest me here. As with any cultural institution, it has effects that are conservative, and those that can be seen to serve more progressive ends. It is not my intention to finally characterize the Garden one way or the other, but rather to interrogate those aspects of its form and history that (in my view) best illuminate the function of public gardens in general. Not only is the Montreal Botanical Garden a beautiful place and a considerable resource to the people and scientific community of Montreal, its role in the evolution of the urban landscape and municipal politics has been more significant than most such gardens, and as such, presents an opportunity to understand public gardens as politically active.

This chapter sets out to provide some general historical foundations for the more garden-specific investigations that make up the bulk of this thesis. I do this in large part through consideration of newspaper coverage of beautification campaigns in Montreal drawn from a collection of clippings preserved between 1914 and 1989.⁷ This provides a starting point for describing a constellation of discourses and practices that have implicated gardens in a variety of ways, associating them with, among other things, cleanliness, civic responsibility and specific aesthetic values. I focus here on the years between 1940 and 1965—the period during which the clippings are most numerous, and the campaigns seem to have held the greatest social significance—and on one particular element: that of the window box competitions.⁸ Since their introduction in 1940, they were a central feature of the campaigns and the major means through which gardening

⁷ This collection is found in the Archives of the City of Montreal, in dossier D1900.A-1, Reel 243, 1.1-4.50.

⁸ I consider another element of the campaigns—the parades which were prominent during the late 1940s and early 1950s—in Chapter Two, and treat the content of later campaigns (specifically those of the 1970s) in Chapter Four.

was promoted within them. They were also one of the ways the Botanical Garden became involved in the campaigns (i.e., supplying judges, hosting award ceremonies and later administering the contests).

In addition to providing important historical context, my consideration of the beautification campaigns also provides an opportunity to explore a preliminary function of gardens—that of signification. Conventional in style and small in size, window box gardens operate in a manner which depends on their immediate recognizability, as well as their legibility with respect to the care invested in them. As such, they are well suited to projects of signification, such as those undertaken via the beautification campaigns (which I characterize, via Barthes, in terms of a myth of beautification). That said, the tree pit garden, which, many years later nonetheless plays a similar role with respect to a modern myth of beautification (such as it may be), the tree pit suggests that there are limitations to thinking about gardens in this way, and that different garden forms may function differently. As such, it serves to open the analysis toward other means of theorizing, and to a historical trajectory that is not as straightforward as it might at first seem.

Although the Botanical Garden's role in the beautification campaigns themselves was relatively minor, it opened its doors to the public during the period in which gardening came to be seen as a central activity of beautification, and the story of its origins is intertwined with the emergence of a special civic significance of flowers. This story has been told and retold in many venues: Frère Marie-Victorin, a member of Les Frères des écoles chrétiennes⁹ and professor of botany at the Université de Montréal, had long dreamed of establishing a botanical garden in Montreal. But it wasn't until 1931 that

⁹ A religious order devoted especially to the education of impoverished youth.

his proposal finally won support and funding from the city.¹⁰ He believed that a garden would benefit Montreal's nascent scientific community, as well as provide a venue for popular education in botanical and natural science—a cause which had long been dear to his heart and which he believed important to the larger project of elevating the role of science in Quebec society.¹¹ However, while some of the buildings were constructed in 1932, the project stalled after Mayor Camilen Houde was defeated in municipal elections. It wasn't until his re-election in 1935 that Marie-Victorin was able to successfully make the case for re-investing in the project. Taking the launch of his landmark botanical text *Flore Laurentienne* as an opportunity to make a public appeal to the mayor, Marie-Victorin famously argued:

Bientôt on célébra le tricentenaire de Montréal. À la ville, à votre ville, il vous faudra faire un cadeau, un royal cadeau. Mais, Montréal c'est Ville-Marie. C'est une femme... Vous ne pouvez tout de même pas lui offrir un égout collecteur ou un poste de police... Alors, pardieu! Mettez des fleurs à son corsage! Jetez-lui dans les bras toutes les Roses, et tous les Lis des Champs!¹²

¹⁰ Though it is worth noting that the Montreal Horticultural Society briefly established a garden on Mount Royal in 1885, followed by another on the McGill campus, which lasted slightly longer (1889-1899). Jacques DesRochers, *Étude historique et analyse patrimoniale du Jardin botanique de Montréal*, vol. 1 (Montreal, Le Ministre de la Culture et des Communications, Direction Régionale de Montréal, 1995).

¹¹ "...un peuple sans élite scientifique – il faut sans doute dire la même chose de l'élite littéraire et artistique - est, dans le monde présent, condamné, quelles que soient les barrières qu'il élèvera autour de ses frontières." As quoted in, DesRochers, *Étude historique*, 4.

¹² "We will soon celebrate Montreal's tercentenary. To the city, to our city, you will have to make an offering, a royal gift. However, Montreal is Ville-Marie. She's a woman... you cannot offer her a sewer or a police station... By Jove! Put flowers on her corsage! Toss into her arms all the roses and all the lilies!" "De l'Institut Botanique et de la "Flore Laurentienne" au Jardin Botanique," *Le Devoir*, May 25, 1935. The story of the Garden's origins has been presented by representatives of the Garden in a variety of popular venues, including that of the garden itself, where didactic panels narrate its development over time, on the Garden's website, and in a history of the Garden. See "Historique du Jardin botanique," *Website of the Jardin Botanique de Montréal*, <http://espacepourlavie.ca/historique-du-jardin-botanique> (accessed Feb. 9, 2013); Bouchard, *Le Jardin botanique de Montréal*. A more scholarly treatment is found in DesRochers, *Étude historique*.

Perhaps it is not surprising that Marie-Victorin should have used such rhetoric to persuade the mayor (and the public) of the worth of his project. Certainly the floral imagery was appropriate to the topic. However, the metaphor of the city as a woman deserving of flowers, or made beautiful by floral adornment, is one which also appeared in the rhetoric of the city's annual beautification campaigns (or, campagnes d'embellissement*) during the same period. As I hope the discussion which follows will make clear, Marie-Victorin's use of it did more than create an evocative image, it also traded on an emerging association between flowers and civic improvement.¹³ As I discuss in Chapter Two, the design of the garden as well as its promotion, elaborated on an association between flowers, gardens and civic ideals that was one of the main accomplishments of the beautification campaigns during the same period.

Origins of the beautification campaigns

Public green space in Montreal has always been hard to come by. Up until the 1800s, the city's development was contained by walls, and its green spaces were largely the domain of religious institutions and wealthy citizens. While numerous public squares and three large parks (Mont-Royal, Île Ste-Hélène and Parc Lafontaine) were created during the nineteenth century, it wasn't until the turn of the twentieth that the bureaucratic structures for coordinating the maintenance of these parks and squares, as well as creating new ones, attained coherence. A Commission des parcs et traverses¹⁴ was

¹³ Of course, the significance of flowers—as both gifts and means of ornament—was much broader and more longstanding than this, but given the context of use, I think the civic significance is of particular importance here.

¹⁴ This translates roughly as “Commission of parks and pathways.”

formed in 1900, and a Surintendant des parcs appointed in 1910; between this time and the eventual establishment of the Service des parcs (in 1953), a concerted (though somewhat uneven) effort was made to develop a more or less comprehensive system of parks, squares and playgrounds around the city.¹⁵

The provision of open spaces, along with public baths, particularly around the turn of the century, must be understood in the context of concerns over public hygiene. Particularly in the poorer neighbourhoods, Montreal was overcrowded, and many of its citizens did not have access to proper bathing facilities.¹⁶ While the concern over hygiene would soon become background to a movement for improved access to recreational activities (themselves understood to contribute to public hygiene, more broadly understood), the ever-present threat of disease was an important factor early on in motivating the improvement of both public and private spaces within the city.¹⁷ Fire prevention was also a concern.

Also influential in the push for such improvements however, were the ideology and aesthetics of the City Beautiful Movement—a movement whose impacts were felt most strongly in the U.S. at the turn of the century. Arising in the context of the reform-minded thinking of the Progressive era—in which proponents sought to improve the

¹⁵ For discussion of the city's efforts during this period, see the account provided by Jean de Laplante, a former employee of the Service des parcs: Jean de Laplante, *Les parcs de Montréal: Des origines à nos jours* (Montreal, Éditions des Méridien, 1990). This highly detailed work does not include references. As such, I consider it an insider's history, particularly in its treatment of events and circumstances from the 1950s onwards, where it becomes increasingly focused on the interpersonal dynamics of the individuals involved. Also see Michèle Dagenais, *Faire et fuir la ville: Espaces de culture et de loisirs à Montréal et Toronto aux xixe et xx^e siècles* (Lévis, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2006).

¹⁶ The installment of sewers in many neighbourhoods was only completed in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and even in the early twentieth, a quarter of Montreal homes did not include toilets. de Laplante, *Les parcs de Montréal*.

¹⁷ For discussion of the role of reformist movements such as the “mouvement des terrains de jeu,” in pushing for such improvements, see de Laplante, *Les parcs de Montréal*.

moral and civic character of American citizens through science-based social planning—advocates of the City Beautiful Movement believed that improvements to the urban environment would result in higher levels of morality and civic participation, and greater harmony between classes.¹⁸ Unlike earlier supporters of the public parks movement (in the U.S. and the U.K. predominantly) for whom the city was a necessary evil, proponents of the City Beautiful viewed the city optimistically, as the site of society's greatest accomplishments. They believed that its associated social and hygienic problems could be ameliorated through the design of attractive, well-ordered public spaces, and beautification activities.¹⁹ Of course, particularly in the case of the latter, they sought not only concrete improvements, but also to inculcate social values and aesthetic norms in keeping with their own interests. As property owners, they had much to gain—in property value as well as increased business—from clean streets, fresh paint and well-tended gardens. Operating on the basis of similar assumptions and in pursuit of similar objectives, Montreal's City Improvement League was founded in 1909. It inaugurated the city's first clean-up campaign in 1914.²⁰

¹⁸ Advocates were generally, though not always, professionals or business owners from the middle and upper middle class. See William Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore and London, The John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 75-77.

¹⁹ In particular, they favoured neoclassical architecture, and a naturalistic landscape aesthetic. While much of the activity in the U.S. centred around planning and design of new public spaces, advocates also organized clean-up campaigns and initiatives to encourage businesses and citizens to beautify public spaces with trees, grass and gardens. Ibid, 86-95. According to Van Nus, Canadian proponents emphasized the importance of “coherence, visual variety and civic grandeur” in urban planning, but had limited success in mounting new projects or influencing the planning process, since the political climate in the early twentieth century was not favourable for large expenditures of public money on projects deemed inessential. Overcrowding and a lack of housing was a major problem in many cities, leading politicians and planners alike to focus on facilitating suburban development. Walter Van Nuys, "The fate of the City Beautiful movement," in *The Canadian City: Essays in Urban History*, ed. Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F.J. Artibise (Toronto, Macmillan of Canada Ltd., 1979).

²⁰ The League (also known as the Ligue du Progrès Civique) had for its “sole purpose the improvement of social conditions, the promotion of the general welfare, and the beautifying of a beautiful

There are two main overlapping questions I intend to address in consideration of this historically specific material. First, what was meant and entailed by ‘beautification’ in Montreal, and what was the definition of beauty thereby elaborated? Second, how did the process of elaboration work exactly—how did flowers and gardens become connected with specific ideals and values? In other words, what is the history of their civic significance? I approach this question from the perspective of the concept of articulation, assuming that connections between all types of cultural ‘things’—ideas, images, affects, objects, practices, people, organizations and so on—are not in any sense natural or stable but established and maintained through the ongoing efforts and activities of a variety of cultural actors and in a variety of contexts. These I refer to broadly as ‘articulatory practices’. The ones I consider here are largely discursive, though it is only fragmentary traces of that discourse which remains in media coverage of the campaigns. I also make some use of images, and attempt to identify aspects of the events and types of practice which the campaigns would have entailed in order to understand the diversity of ways in which flowers and gardens came to have a distinctly civic significance.

It is important to recognize that while what remains available for analysis is largely textual, the work of articulating ideas and ideals with particular landscape forms and practices, to the extent that it is effective and its results lasting, necessarily proceeds

city.” W.H. Atherton, “Aim of city improvement leagues,” *Bulletin of the League of American Municipalities* 11, no. 4 (1909): 123-4. Up until the 1960s, the League is frequently credited with involvement of some form or another in the campaigns, alongside other organizations such as the Ligue des propriétaires (an association business owners which still exists), the Chambre de commerce des jeunes (an association of young francophone businesspeople, now known as the Jeune Chambre de commerce de Montréal), and others. Members also worked with the Association des architects de la province de Québec (AAPQ) to promote the creation of more parks and green space in the city, and the cause of urban planning in general. Jeanne Wolfe and Peter Jacobs, “Urbanisme et embellissement urbain,” in *L’architecture d’Edward et William S. Maxwell*, ed. Robert Lemire (Montreal, Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1991).

via numerous modalities. Rhetoric alone is rarely enough to convince people to see the world around them in a particular way. At the same time, similar to the City Beautiful movement generally, these campaigns sought, not only to assign meaning to particular practices and landscape forms, but also to inculcate in city residents and organizations, the widespread *valuation* of those practices and forms, as well as specific civic ideals. The operation of signs produced and elaborated through discursive practices (i.e., particularly in media coverage and official proclamations), the events of the campaigns themselves, and the activities of those who participated in them, were always double: signifying not only specific ideals but also their valuation. As such, while I focus here on the specific rhetoric used to promote the campaigns, it was the unfolding of the campaigns themselves which made possible the durable articulation of civic ideals with practices of cleaning, repair and beautification—such that, the idea that cleaning and gardening make the city more beautiful, can now be largely taken for granted.²¹

Early beautification campaigns

According to Edwina von Baeyer, the years leading up to the first world war saw horticultural societies and ‘improvement’ associations across Canada planting trees and flowerbeds on the grounds of public buildings, hosting horticultural competitions, and organizing ‘cleanup weeks’ that focused on backyards, alleyways and ‘slum

²¹ Contemporary beautification programs therefore tend to be much more rhetorically straightforward. For example, in newspaper coverage of a 2009 contest in the borough of Rivière-des-Prairies-Pointe-aux-Trembles, the mayor is quoted simply as saying, “Si chacun participe à l’embellissement de sa propriété, c’est l’ensemble de la population de l’arrondissement qui bénéficiera d’un milieu de vie agréable.” Yvan Fortin, "Le Concours d'embellissement 2009 prend son envol," *L'informateur de Rivière-des-Prairies*, May 8, 2009, <http://www.linformateurrdp.com/Societe/Habitation/2009-05-08/article-759667/Le-Concours-d%26rsquo%3Bembellissement-2009-prend-son-envol/1> (accessed Feb. 9, 2013).

improvement'.²² Though Montreal's beautification campaigns would eventually take on all these activities, it was on the latter group that they first focused. The first week-long campaign with city-wide participation in Montreal was held in 1914.²³ Jointly organized by the Montreal Publicity Association and the City Improvement League, the campaign was targeted at removing trash and other debris that had accumulated in alleys, laneways and backyards over the winter.²⁴ While the control of disease and fire prevention were the objectives most strongly emphasized in newspaper coverage of the campaign, the participation of clergy members, who had been called upon to help publicize the campaign, gave the campaign strongly moral, even religious undertones, reminding citizens that "cleanliness is next to Godliness."²⁵

The first two campaigns (in 1914 and 1915) were later credited with reducing the number of child mortalities due to disease and the number of residential fires, as well as encouraging people to plant gardens.²⁶ Leading up to the 1916 campaign, it was reported that,

The yards and lanes were never as clean as during the summer of last year. Many people made little vegetable gardens in their back yards and thereby turned what used to be an empty can and weed infested place into a spot of cleanliness and

²² As von Baeyer notes, while WWI dampened enthusiasm for these activities, there was a resurgence of interest in the 1920s. von Baeyer, *Rhetoric and Roses*.

²³ Later sources disagree on the date of the first campaign, which lasted only one day—in 1909, 1911 or 1912. Several of the articles published between 1914 and 1936 recount this history. See dossier D1900.A-1, Reel 243, 1.1-1.31 (Montreal, City of Montreal Archives).

²⁴ I have not been able to find any information about the Montreal Publicity Association.

²⁵ "Clean-up week to start in earnest in city churches," *The Daily Mail*, May 16, 1914. Also see "La semaine de grand nettoyage commence des lundi prochain," *La Presse*, May 16, 1914; "Pastors support cleaning-up week," *The Gazette*, May 13, 1914.

²⁶ F.A. Covert, "'Clean-up week work' in Montreal," *Canadian Municipal Journal*, June, 1916.

production. In at least 90 per cent of the yards flowers were planted, with most of the front yards were [sic] made into lawns.”²⁷

In 1916, contests were organized for the first time, in the hopes not only of further increasing participation (especially among children), but also of encouraging people to extend their efforts throughout the year. Prizes were to be awarded for the most clean, well maintained and attractive yards.²⁸

The awarding of prizes was one campaign element which was to reappear in many of the years to come. Distinct from the window box and other horticultural competitions, these awards were given out for a variety of reasons over the years and usually without a systematically organized competition: for clean back yards, well-disposed garbage, making improvements to the grounds around a commercial building, making a contribution to the beautification of a public space, and so on.²⁹ A second recurring element was the structuring of the campaign into days—each devoted to different issues to which residents were encouraged to devote their attention. For example, in 1914 there was a fire prevention day, a front and back yard day, a sanitation day, a paint day and a children’s day.³⁰ Finally, programming directed at children and youth, who were judged to be a key audience for the messages of the campaign, also seems to have been a common feature almost all the way through the available newspaper coverage. As an article in 1946 put it, “...ces enfants sont les citoyens de

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ For example, an article in 1963 listed the winners of trophies and certificates in a variety of categories, including lawns, renovated façades, clean alleys and the proper disposal of trash (meriting the “poubelle dorée,” or golden trashcan). “Gagnants des concours de 1962,” *La Presse*, May 13, 1963.

³⁰ See “Clean-up week to start in earnest in city churches,” *The Daily Mail*, May 16, 1914.

demain. Il sauront peut-être mieux que leurs ainés, l'inestimable valeur d'une ville propre.”³¹ They were also at times considered a significant part of the problem, being a source of litter and vandalism.³² Special events or activities were often organized through the schools, and youth were sometimes themselves involved in the organization of the campaigns, as in the late forties and early fifties, when the Chambre de commerce des jeunes directed the campaign as a whole.³³

While the early campaigns focused for the most part on tasks of cleaning and repair, with only passing mention of planting flowers or vegetable gardens, there was, beginning in the 1930s,³⁴ an increasing emphasis on beautification (or embellissement) alongside cleaning.³⁵ As the sub-heading to one article put it, “Embellissement et assainissement vont de pair.”³⁶ The question of why exactly cleaning and beautification should have gone together, is in part answered by reflecting on the campaign’s origins in the work of an organization influenced by the City Beautiful Movement. For proponents of the City Beautiful, the goal was a city not only beautiful but also rationalized—that is,

³¹ “...these children are the citizens of tomorrow. They may know better than their elders, the true value of a clean city.” *Le Devoir*, May 6, 1946.

³² For example, see Raymond Guerin, “Un effort,” *La Presse*, June 3, 1963; “La semaine de l’embellissement,” *La Presse*, May 11, 1963.

³³ For examples of activities organized through the schools, see “Plans being made for clean-up week,” *The Gazette*, May 1, 1936; “À l’école Gillaume Couture: Les élèves promettent de respecter leur environnement,” *Hebdo Le Progrès*, June 2, 1982.

³⁴ There is a gap in the clippings preserved in the city archives between 1916 and 1928, though, given later references in newspaper coverage, it seems that the campaign was an annual event from 1914 onward.

³⁵ The English term ‘beautification’, is not much used in the newspaper coverage until the 1950s—references are rather to the “Clean-up campaign” or terms such as “Beauty week”. I use it however, since it is the translation of ‘embellissement’, which does appear almost throughout the history of the campaigns.

³⁶ “Beautification and sanitation go together.” “Les avantages et bienfaits de la propreté,” *Le Canada*, May 11, 1940.

functional, productive and socially harmonious.³⁷ Beautiful spaces were, necessarily, well-ordered. The accumulation of trash and debris was therefore antithetical to beautification, signifying disorder as well as a lack of care. Echoing this rationale, an article from 1930 connects both cleaning and beautification with social implications:

It is well to get rid of the rust and rags and the heterogeneous mass of odds and ends that are flung to the scrap pile, and a dab of clean paint upon a weathered fence, or a packet of seeds sprinkled in the ground to relieve the drabness of the immediate surroundings will do wonders by way of brightening things up. Nobody likes these slatternly patches which are grotesquely out of tune with every maxim of decency and decorous address. The effort to get rid of the slums, and everything pertaining to the slum habit, is a healthful sign of the modernist spirit, and a movement that can hardly be too strongly recommended.³⁸

The connection between cleanliness and beauty was however rarely explicitly formulated in itself, and tended to appear embedded in other assertions—pertaining, for example, to the promotion of tourism. As the above article put it, Montreal was already in many ways a beautiful city, and cleaning it up was a question of ensuring that this was highlighted for tourists:

The natural setting of Montreal is such as might render the city one of the most interesting and beautiful centres on earth. Its variety of trees, its thoroughfares, its spacious parks, its noble monuments, its churches, and garden plots—are all assets calculated to appeal to civic pride. Thousands of tourists come this way every summer. Their impression of the city, the judgment they form concerning it, depends very largely on upon the cleanliness of its appearance. This is one of the main factors of its attractiveness and good repute.”³⁹

³⁷ Wilson, *City Beautiful*, 78.

³⁸ "The clean-up campaign," *The Gazette*, no date. In another article which expresses a view of the city similarly in line with City Beautiful ideals, connecting cleanliness with beauty as well as other positive qualities, the mayor is said to have "called upon the citizenry as a whole to co-operate, to adhere to the all-important factors in the development of a large urban community: health, beautification, aestheticism and orderliness." Further, the Civic Improvement League is quoted as likening the city to a "monument of man's constructive genius," and advising that "this fine monument requires some cleaning up now and again." "Drive to clean-up city is launched," (missing publication), May 19, 1934.

³⁹ "The clean-up campaign," *The Gazette*, no date. In keeping with aesthetic ideals of the City Beautiful movement, aspects of Montreal's 'natural beauty'—particularly the mountain, the river and trees—were often noted in coverage of the clean-up campaigns. For example, as the president of the

Perhaps more important than such arguments however (which were rare), the connection between cleaning and beautification received considerable elaboration through the campaigns themselves—most directly via their structure, which was made up of events and activities concerned with both, and in the experiences of those who participated, presumably attributing to each a shared significance. While I will have more to say about the history of such significance—that is, *how* activities such as cleaning, painting and gardening became durably associated with civic ideals—I want first to sketch a preliminary outline of its content, as it appeared in the 1930s and early 1940s, when gardening began to have a more prominent role in the campaigns. In order to do this, I take up Roland Barthes' use of the term 'myth', positing a central 'myth of beautification' that encompassed and made use of a variety of signs (or significations, in Barthes' terminology). Defining myth as "depoliticized speech," he asserts that "even objects will become speech if they mean something."⁴⁰ His framework is particularly useful as a means of making sense of the relationship between a variety of cultural forms that signify in ways coherent with one another.⁴¹ In taking it up however, I do not mean to suggest that my analysis will capture such a myth in its totality, or that it would have been entirely unique to the campaigns, or that the organizers were in full control of its

Comité de nettoyage, peinture et plantation put it, "La ville de Montréal, avec son mont royal et son fleuve majestueux est sans doute l'une des plus belles villes et des plus pittoresques du continent. Nous avons grandement raison d'en être fiers. Il est de l'intérêt de chacun de nous de faire son possible pour la rendre plus élégante, plus attrayante et plus prospère." "Aux citoyens de Montréal," *La Presse*, May 1, 1937. See also, "La coopération de tous est nécessaire," *Le Canada*, May 11, 1940.

⁴⁰ Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," in *Mythologies* (New York, Hill and Wang, 1972) 111. Depoliticized speech is that which, having had its political intent evacuated, appears to communicate only fact.

⁴¹ The concept which is conveyed via the operation of a given myth can be signified through the deployment of numerous different forms. Barthes, "Myth Today," 120.

dissemination. The signs that were deployed and elaborated upon within the campaigns were not new. The use of flowers as forms of ornamentation is ancient, and the use of fences and gardens to delineate property and celebrate ownership also has a long history.⁴² These are forms that operate indexically, their meanings both widely understood and implicit.⁴³ But as Barthes asserts, a myth works by calling out existing knowledge, and is a question not so much of persuasion as of generating consensus. It is addressed to a specific audience, one familiar with the signs it deploys and the situation their presentation addresses. Thus, “the fundamental character of the mythical concept is to be *appropriated*.⁴⁴ The myth of beautification was not fabricated by the organizers of the beautification campaigns but the constellation of ideals and values that cohered in its central concept, were given life and relevance through the specific significations the campaigns reinterpreted and brought to the foreground—in particular, I argue, through the form of the window box garden.

I turn now to an elucidation of the civic ideals underlying the beautification campaigns up until the early 1940s, followed by discussion of the role of the window box contests from 1940 onwards.

⁴² The decorative, symbolic and ceremonial use of flowers predates the first gardens, which were documented in Egypt between 2000 and 1000 BCE. Hobhouse, "The origins of gardening."

⁴³ Thus, for example, we need not consciously recognize that a fence signifies a property boundary to know that we should remain on one side of it.

⁴⁴ Barthes, "Myth Today," 119; emphasis in original.

Beautification and the quality of urban citizens

The association of civic ideals with practices of cleaning and beautifying, hung on the idea that the beauty of the city was intimately connected with the ‘quality’ of its citizens. As an article in 1937 put it, “La beauté et l’attrait d’une ville ou d’une province dépendent des efforts d’un chacun, et la valeur des citoyens se reflète dans des demeures propres, bien peinturées, des pelouses entretenues et ornées des fleurs.”⁴⁵ Especially early on, cleanliness and beauty were inflected with moral and religious undertones, and seen to issue from within the individual. An article in 1914 reported that a local reverend had promoted the inaugural campaign in 1914 in the following manner:

...he urged on them the great beauty and brightness that would come to them if they had a clean-up in their own hearts and minds. The right place to commence a clean-up movement was within themselves. They should get themselves clean inside and out and then they might be in a position to get others to do the same thing.⁴⁶

In a similar vein, but elaborated in much greater detail, a “clean-up week pledge” was published in 1936, authored by the chairman of the City Improvement League’s “Citizenship Committee,” who claimed that the aims and objectives of the campaigns had become so well established they could be codified. The pledge contained four points, the first of which located its origins within the individual mind and body. It opened: “As cleanliness is next to godliness, and as social justice is the basis of democracy, so I hereby pledge myself to lead a hygienic life: keep both mind and body sweet and clean, and exert my best efforts to see that all my material and physical surroundings are also kept

⁴⁵ "But de la campagne de nettoyage, de plantation et d'embellissement," *La Presse*, May 1, 1937.

⁴⁶ “The beauty and the attraction of a city or province depends on the efforts of each, and the value of its citizens is reflected in houses that are well-kept, painted, and lawns that have been tended to and adorned with flowers.” "Pastors support cleaning-up week," *The Gazette*, May 13, 1914.

clean.”⁴⁷ Later, the moral and religious undertones fell away, but the underlying emphasis on the individual remained. Especially leading up to major civic events, participation in the campaigns was often presented as an opportunity to create a city that reflected well on its citizens. In this context, activities associated with urban improvement and renewal were always implicitly projects of self-improvement (whether that implicated individuals or groups).

Constellated around this notion (however vague) of the ‘quality’ citizen, were articulations with specific ideals. The pledge, quoted above, from 1936, provides a particularly explicit elaboration of some of the more important of these (at least for the period under consideration here). The second point pledged citizens to the protection of property, characterized as “the observance of the sacred trust of protecting my property and that of my fellow citizens, as well as the public property of my own city.”⁴⁸ Care for and respect of property seems to me perhaps the central ideal which campaign organizers sought to inculcate in city residents and business owners alike. Although it was not often put in such explicit terms, the campaigns themselves were for the most part focused on encouraging activities pertaining to the care of homes, yards, and commercial grounds and buildings. For the most part, ‘public’ in this context referred mainly to what was visible of private property from the street, though citizens were also encouraged to sweep the sidewalk in front of their house, and to keep tidy the areas of back alleys where trash was put out for collection.⁴⁹ As I will later discuss in connection with the window box

⁴⁷ “Plans being made for clean-up week,” *The Gazette*, May 1, 1936.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ This focus on private property and individual as opposed to collective effort is opposed to contemporary activities of beautification, which are often larger in scope and undertaken by community

contests, participation in beautification activities encouraged citizens to pay attention to and take pride in markers of ownership such as freshly painted fences, and well-tended lawns and gardens. Even if many residents did not own the properties they inhabited, the campaigns helped to make the social values associated with care of property universally relevant to urban residents.

While the third point is somewhat less relevant with regard to what was more commonly made explicit in media coverage of the campaigns—pledging citizens to actively participate in the local economy⁵⁰—the connection of cleaning and beautification with enhanced prosperity was definitely consistent with the incentives for participation that were often cited in a more general sense.⁵¹ The fourth point, which pledged citizens to cooperate with their fellow citizens in accomplishing the aims of the clean-up week, is more representative in its identification of community participation as a characteristic of the ideal urban citizen.⁵² For example, an earlier article, in 1934 had asserted that,

groups of various kinds. For example, most of the activities encouraged in the issue of *Quatre Temps* discussed above, require some amount of cooperative effort.

⁵⁰ The pledge reads: "As I am here to do the most good and avoid all evil, I pledge myself to do all within my power to see that my city is kept clean, beautified, and hygienically sound: and to that objective I pledge myself to encourage all artisans, professionals, and producers by employing and using their services, to the end that the economic and civic life of my city be advanced and happiness and contentment and confidence shall prevail at all times, even in the humblest of our homes or institutions." "Plans being made for clean-up week," *The Gazette*, May 1, 1936.

⁵¹ In the 1930s, when suffering due to the depression was widespread, and particularly leading up to the tercentenary, this connection was often formulated in terms of tourism and the potential economic benefits it could bring to the city as a whole. For example, a letter written by the president of the Montreal Board of Trade (and published in *La Presse*), likens tourists to customers come to see what a merchant (the city) has to offer: "de même qu'un marchand avisé s'évertue de presenter sa marchandise de la façon le plus attrayante possible, pour introduire les étrangers à venir nous visiter, devons-nous efforcer constamment de montrer notre ville sous son aspect le plus favorable." J.W. Nicoll, letter to the editor, *La Presse*, May 1, 1937.

⁵² The pledge reads: "As the city's strength is the composite strength of her constituents, institutions as well as individuals; and as a city cannot be efficiently governed unless all its citizens and taxpayers, and civic and public servants, collaborate to the utmost extent, so I solemnly pledge myself to do everything in my power, whether in the municipal arena, or in school, factory, workshop, home, club, or

whatever the practical benefits of cleaning and beautifying, it was the “true civic spirit of unselfish endeavour and responsibility” that the co-operative efforts of the campaign celebrated.⁵³ Such sentiments, along with exhortations related to the expression of civic pride, were frequently made in media coverage. Thus while the focus was always on the cultivation of quality individuals, a key characteristic of such individuals was their ability to cooperate with others, and contribute to community enhancement.

In addition to ideals related to responsible property ownership and community participation, another which appeared quite frequently in newspaper coverage later in the history of the campaigns (especially beginning in the mid 1940’s), was related to notions of cultural sophistication. An early expression of this particular ideal came in an article in 1940 where it was asserted that “La propreté d’une ville reflète le caractère culturel de sa population. Elle témoigne du goût et du sens esthétique de ses habitants.”⁵⁴ As I discuss in the next chapter, the articulation of beautification activities with notions of cultural refinement received considerable elaboration through the parades and beauty contests that were central features of the campaigns between 1946 and 1950. It can also be seen however, to resonate well with promotions of gardening within the campaigns, which began sooner, and extended more or less throughout the life of the campaigns.

In summary, during the campaigns of the 1930s and early 1940s, the articulations at the heart of a myth of beautification were made more explicit than they would be in

church, to work together with my fellow-citizens to achieve the aims and objects of Clean-Up Week, during that week, and throughout the whole year.” “Plans being made for clean-up week,” *The Gazette*, May 1, 1936.

⁵³ “Drive to clean-up city is launched,” (missing publication), May 19, 1934.

⁵⁴ “A city’s cleanliness reflects the cultural character of its population. It serves as a testimony to both the taste and aesthetic sense of its inhabitants.” “Effort d’embellissement qui devrait se soutenir toute l’année chez nous,” *La Presse*, May 25, 1940.

the future. Encapsulated in the notion of ‘civisme’,⁵⁵ these included the association of a series of individually-oriented civic ideals with specific activities. From this time forward, cleaning, painting and gardening were seen to express a respect and care for property, a commitment to community, and a degree of cultural refinement. Of course these ideals were to change somewhat over time—their initial articulation in the context of overtly moral or religious rhetoric for example, gave way to formulations that were more social and cultural in character (though no less judgmental in their implications). Nonetheless, at the point when gardening began to take on a more central role in the campaigns, it was against the background of explicit or implicit reference to these ideals. As I demonstrate below, flowers and gardens served as a means of translating a body of somewhat complicated rhetoric into compact and concrete significations.

Gardening for everyone: The introduction of the window box contests

Gardens, and window boxes in particular, were well-suited to take on associations with civic ideals, and their inclusion within the campaigns seems to have been enough much of the time to accomplish the articulation. Flowers have long been used to signify a variety of meanings.⁵⁶ In part because of the time which must be invested in it, gardening has long been a way of staking a claim or ‘putting down roots’—that is, establishing oneself in a particular location and shaping it to one’s purpose and preferences.⁵⁷ As such,

⁵⁵ Though there is no corresponding concept in English, it is translated as “a sense of civic responsibility.” *Larousse Concise French English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Paris, Larousse/SEJER, 2004).

⁵⁶ As Seaton describes, flowers have been deployed symbolically since classical times, though the specific significance has varied across cultures. Beverly Seaton, *The Language of Flowers: A History* (Charlottetown and London, The University Press of Virginia, 1995).

⁵⁷ As Drayton’s history of Kew Botanical Garden and its contribution to the cause of British

gardens are well suited to demarcating property, acting as indexes of ownership and, to the extent that they are well-tended, *care* of property.⁵⁸ They therefore served the myth of beautification well, taking on an association with ideals pertaining to property ownership easily, even where property was not in fact owned by those who cultivated it or ornamented it with window boxes. At the same time, gardening was also an activity in which good taste or a sense of aesthetic refinement was seen to come into play (in a way that it did not in relation to activities of cleaning and repair), making gardens themselves expressions of individual taste and refinement. Finally, the promotion of such activities in conjunction with large civic events such as the city's tercentenary and, later, its hosting of Expo 67, gave them a more tangible community significance than they might have otherwise had. Newspaper coverage that promoted gardening was also as a result full of rhetoric about expressions of civic pride and the importance of everyone 'doing their part'. Once made in this context, the connections between cleanliness and flowers, as well as between gardening and urban civic ideals, proved quite resilient, later requiring little justification, even as the style and content of the campaign changed. In this context, window box gardens in particular, came to speak the myth of beautification, giving the rhetoric and ideals which underlay it a tangible, depoliticized form.⁵⁹

imperialism demonstrates, this form of occupation has the benefit of appearing both natural and beneficent, because beautiful. Drayton, *Nature's Government*.

⁵⁸ Since a garden quickly betrays a lack of care in poor or excessive growth, a healthy and tidy garden serves as an index of care. See Joan Nassauer, "The aesthetics of horticulture: Neatness as a form of care," *HortScience* 23, no. 6 (1988): 973-77.

⁵⁹ Images of brooms and daisies also seem to have been made to speak in a similar, though more explicitly symbolic way, appearing during later campaigns in promotional graphics, and larger-than-life replicas used in parades and inauguration ceremonies. For example, a single daisy paired with a broom appeared in promotions for campaigns in the 1960s and again in 1976 and 1988.

Although gardening was only one recommended activity among several (including tasks of cleaning, repair, painting and so on), flowers and gardens came to take on a special significance in the annual campaign of the late 1930s. It is worth noting that this coincided with the completion and opening of the Botanical Garden in 1937.⁶⁰ While it may have been some time before many Montrealers were able to visit the Garden in person, its benefits to the city were discussed in articles appearing throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s, which brought attention to the social and cultural value of horticulture more generally.⁶¹ At the same time, two civic events of this period—the coronation of George VI (1937) and Montreal's tercentenary celebrations (1942)—seem to have had a significant role in crystallizing the connection between cleanliness and flowers. As events on the one hand, of international importance and, on the other, of enhanced touristic potential, they provided a persuasive rationale for expressions of civic pride. As celebrations of collective symbolic importance, they were events for which an ornamental use of flowers would have been considered appropriate even outside the campaigns. Thus the mayor's "Proclamation" preceding the 1937 campaign simply exhorted Montrealers to clean-up, paint and "Plantez des fleurs et aidez à embellir notre ville, en prévision du couronnement."⁶² A 1937 article made the connection between

⁶⁰ The Garden never had an official opening, but it was to a large degree complete by 1937, when it began receiving the public on Sundays, and school groups during the week. Bouchard, *Le Jardin botanique de Montréal*.

⁶¹ For example, see Marcelle Lepage, "Le Jardin Botanique de Montréal: Un oasis de beauté et un centre scientifique et éducationnel," *La Revue Moderne*, October, 1938; Ephrem-Réginald Bertrand, "Un jardin botanique à tous," *La Presse*, January 13, 1940; Jacques Rousseau, "Le Jardin Botanique de Montréal," *Almanach d'action sociale Catholique*, 1941, 17-22.

⁶² "Plant flowers to help embellish our city, in anticipation of the coronation." "Texte de la proclamation du maire," *La Presse*, May 1, 1937.

cleaning and planting flowers in the somewhat more dramatic terms of the feminine adornment of the city:

Montréal est la ville la plus représentative du pays. Ayons soin de la mettre en ordre en vue du couronnement. Rendons-la coquette, faisons-la minutieusement la toilette. Peinturons, fleurissons, modernisons nos propriétés—ce sera un souvenir impérissable du plus grand événement mondial de notre ère.⁶³

While the lead-up to the tercentenary included much reference to flowers and gardening, by 1942, with the war in full swing, things were toned down considerably. The celebrations themselves were scaled back, and much of the media coverage is more sober than in previous years.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, in one article, the president of the campaign is quoted, under the heading “Nettoyer ne suffit plus,” as saying: “Nous ne voulons pas seulement inviter les gens à nettoyer, mais à embellir, et à embellir surtout au moyen de fleurs.”⁶⁵

More concrete (and ultimately, I think, more influential) than such rhetoric however, was the founding in 1940 of a neighbourhood horticultural society in Papineau, which was to take on the initiation and promotion of horticulturally-oriented

⁶³ “Montreal is the most representative city of the country. Let’s take care to tidy her up in preparation for the coronation. Let’s make her pretty, groom her carefully. Let’s paint, plant, modernize our properties—it’ll be an imperishable souvenir of the most important global event of our era.” “But de la campagne de nettoyage, de plantation et d’embellissement,” *La Presse*, May 1, 1937. Though it may sound like hyperbole, claims regarding Montreal’s prominence on the national stage were well-founded, since it boasted the largest economy at the time. Paul-André Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la confédération* (Montreal, Boréal, 1992).

⁶⁴ The focus was largely on the role of salvage operations to support the war effort, and the importance of cleaning and repairing rather than replacing tools, buildings etc. For example, see "Clean-up drive to open May 9: Appeals will be made for conservation to aid war effort; salvage to figure," *The Star*, April 30, 1942. It is worth noting that, not only was the country at war, the city had begun in 1940 to default on the substantial debt accumulated during the depression, and its spending was subsequently placed under provincial control. Thus, the scaled back celebrations likely also reflect a lack of funds on behalf of the administration. Susan Mann, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).

⁶⁵ Under the heading, “Cleaning no longer suffices”: “We want not only to invite people to clean, but also to beautify, and to beautify especially through the means of flowers.” “Nettoyer ne suffit plus,” *La Patrie*, April 1, 1942.

beautification activities in the neighbourhood leading up to the tercentenary. Affiliated with the Fédération Horticole de Québec, and hosted by the Club Ouvrier de Papineau,⁶⁶ the Société horticole du quartier Papineau undertook in its first year the fabrication of window boxes for distribution to residents, the provision of gardening workshops, and the planting and maintenance of street trees, as well as more general clean-up activities. Considered a particularly challenging neighbourhood from the perspective of beautification in part because it was largely working-class, it was hoped that the residents of Papineau would set an example for the rest of the city.⁶⁷

In this context, it should be noted that the honorary president, Hector Dupuis, who was the alderman for Papineau, and a member of the city's executive committee, explicitly took credit for launching the 'movement' which the society was designed to serve. In an article describing the new society, it is clear that its founding represented goals of the administration at least as much, if not more than, the interests of the members themselves: "M. Hector Dupuis... s'est efforcé depuis un an d'intéresser ses électeurs aux avantages que procurent des rues plantées d'arbres, des maisons agrémentées de fleurs, et des terrains bien entretenus." Later he is quoted as saying, "Le but que je me propose en lançant ce mouvement, c'est de donner dans Papineau un exemple dont tous les autres quartiers de la ville pourront s'inspirer ensuite afin que Montréal soit véritablement une ville fleurie* en 1942, lors de son troisième centenaire."⁶⁸

⁶⁶ A social club for working class men.

⁶⁷ "Dans un quartier comme celui de Papineau, situé au coeur même d'une vaste agglomération ouvrière, la besogne qu'il faudra accomplir reste énorme. Dans d'autres quartiers plus éloignés du centre de la ville, comme Ahuntsic, la topographie se prête mieux à la culture des fleurs et à l'aménagement de parterres." "Campagne de civisme lancée dans Papineau," *La Presse*, May 13, 1940.

⁶⁸ "Mr. Hector Dupuis... has tried for a year to bring voters' attention to the advantages of tree-

As such, and given the society's location in a working class neighbourhood, its founding is an event in which the broader socio-political aims of campaign organizers and supporters start to become more apparent, suggesting that beautification was, at least in part, a hegemonic project concerned with ensuring a widespread consensus on urban aesthetic values.⁶⁹

Given the characterization of the Papineau neighbourhood as 'challenging', it seems likely the organizers felt that their efforts were not otherwise reaching this sector of the population. Certainly during the depression and early war years, the people of Papineau and other such neighbourhoods, would have had little to no disposable income to spend on repairs, paint or garden plants (hence the references to how cheap gardening was, and the provision of free window boxes). It is also possible that organizers of the campaigns considered the working class part of the problem they were trying to address—certainly there were somewhat veiled suggestions to this effect preceding the 1940 campaign.⁷⁰ At the same time, as Mann describes, during the 1930s, the municipal administration had seen the (un- or underemployed) working classes as a source of social unrest.⁷¹ The foundation of a horticultural society in a working class neighbourhood was

lined streets, of houses decorated with flowers, and well-kept lawns... The goal of launching this initiative is to make an example of Papineau, to inspire all other neighbourhoods so that Montreal will truly be a city in bloom in 1942, during its tercentenary." Ibid.

⁶⁹ Certainly this would be consistent with the movement that had inspired the instigation of the campaigns in the first place. As Wilson characterized City Beautiful proponents: "they sought cultural hegemony by asserting control over the definition of beauty and the manipulation of civic symbols." Wilson, *City Beautiful*, 81.

⁷⁰ For example, the article quoted above, which refers to ridding the city of the "slum habit." "The clean-up campaign," *The Gazette*, no date.

⁷¹ She writes, "According to the estimates of Camillien Houde, Montreal's populist mayor during most of the 1930s, some fifty thousand unemployed in Montreal were ready to revolt at a moment's notice. Easily enough therefore did local politicians persuade themselves and others that theirs was the thumb in the dike of social revolution." Mann, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec*, 236.

thus likely intended to foster social harmony as well as inculcate a wider public with aesthetic values deemed appropriate to a modern city.

Coverage of the first citywide “window box contest,” which was launched in connection with the Société horticole that same year, brought the concern with the working class even more to the foreground. Organized by the Fédération Horticole de Québec, the contest was to become an enduring feature of the annual campaign, in later years being administered by the Service des parcs and the Botanical Garden.⁷² Although prizes in this inaugural contest (and in those from 1962 onwards) rewarded homeowners and businesses for the quality of their lawns and the beauty of their flower beds as well as the most beautiful window boxes, the contest was nonetheless referred to as the “window box contest.” As such, it seems it was in large part the *accessibility* of beautification through gardening that organizers wanted to promote: a newspaper article promoting the inaugural contests read “Embellir la Ville n’est pas coûteux.”⁷³ Similar assertions were to appear in articles promoting the clean-up campaign more generally over the years, characterizing gardening as a cheap and rewarding means through which Montrealers might help to beautify the city.⁷⁴ Given that a window box could add at best only a small splash of colour to the urban landscape, it seems it was less the overall visual impact with which organizers were concerned, and more the solicitation of participation from a large

⁷² Its treatment in the newspaper coverage over the years however is uneven, being mostly absent for example, between 1942 and 1962 (though there was no coverage preserved of the campaigns at all between 1943 and 1945). Later references make it clear however, that it was held on a more or less annual basis. In later years, it was the Botanical Garden (under the umbrella of the Service des parcs) which was frequently credited with organizing and adjudicating the contests.

⁷³ “It’s not expensive to beautify the city.” “Embellir la ville n'est pas couteux,” *La Presse*, July 12, 1940.

⁷⁴ For example, see “Les joyaux de ma ville,” *La Presse*, May 17, 1963; “Les fleurs: Un loisir à la portée de tous,” *La Voix Populaire*, July 24, 1974.

number of individuals, and perhaps especially from those of modest means. Not only was much made of the involvement of the Société horticole du quartier Papineau, but coverage of the contest contained multiple references to the participation of “all classes.”⁷⁵ In one article, it was explained that, “Il n'est pas nécessaire, en effet, de dépenser de fortes sommes pour enjoliver les abords d'un habitation, voire d'une usine ou d'une manufacture. C'est principalement une question de choix, d'agencement, d'ordonnance.”⁷⁶ Further, readers were reassured that if they needed help, park superintendents would be happy to provide information and advice and perhaps even free seeds and seedlings.⁷⁷ More important than any specific intentions regarding the working class, was the manner in which widespread participation would aid the cause of beautification in a general sense. That is, the more people could see that others were participating, and the more the urban environment (or people’s perception of it) changed as a result, the more a sense of consensus around a particular aesthetics, and its associated ideals, could be developed.

Window boxes made a special contribution in this regard, for two reasons. First, because the window box was a particularly visible sign of beautification. Other activities were also important to creating widespread and lasting change in the appearance of the

⁷⁵ For example, an article about the award ceremony reported that “[t]outes des classes de la société étaient représentés parmi les gagnants du concours.” “100 laureates félicités de leur travail,” *La Presse*, September 20, 1940.

⁷⁶ “In fact, it’s not necessary to spend a lot of money to beautify the grounds of a residence, nor indeed, of a plant or factory. It’s principally a question of choice, layout and order.” Of course, questions of ‘choice, arrangement and order’ were ultimately questions of taste. Thus, the prizes were awarded “pour avoir décoré avec le plus de gout leurs parterres, pelouses, jardinets et rebords de fenêtres au moyen de fleurs ou d’arbustes.” “Embellir Montréal,” *La Presse*, September 23, 1940.

⁷⁷ As the author put it, perhaps optimistically, “Les spécialistes ne manquent pas qui peuvent donner des conseils aux amateurs. Les surintendants de nos parcs publics, par exemple, ne refuseront certes pas d'aider et dans certains cas, de fournir des graines et des plants. Au besoin, on tirera sur les pépinières provinciales et fédérales où, là également, les demandes devraient être accueillies avec faveur.” Ibid.

urban environment, but they could not speak as loudly as a garden. The absence of trash or debris for example, signifies only in negative terms—as an offense *not* committed. And a freshly painted fence requires a relatively sharp eye to pick it out.⁷⁸ A well-tended garden or window box however, is clearly marked by the intentionality and regularity of its cultivation. Further, window boxes are more visible than other horticultural improvements, both because of their placement—on windows and balconies rather than behind fences—and the style in which they tend to be planted (even now): using annual bedding plants that produce colourful flowers all season-long. They are not only visible, but eye-catching, to passersby.

Second, window boxes would have been influential by virtue of the fact that planting and tending them was likely to be a more pleasurable activity than sweeping the sidewalk, or clearing away trash and debris. People who were motivated by the contests to take up gardening, and found some success with it, would be more likely to continue with their efforts in the future. As one article put it, on the occasion of the awarding of prizes for the window box contest, “Piqué au jeu, les Montréalais voudront sans doute d’ici les fêtes de 1942 continuer à améliorer leurs maisons en les entourant d’une parure de fleurs ou d’arbustes.”⁷⁹ When they did, and especially because the connections between gardening and civic ideals were revived to a certain degree year after year, they would likely ascribe to their efforts and the results civic as well as personal meanings. At the

⁷⁸ Of course the context of the campaigns themselves would have heightened people’s perceptions of such interventions, especially within their own neighbourhoods, where they were familiar with the usual state of things. However, most forms of beautification would have registered negatively on perception, attuning people to problem areas and local failures to care for property rather than to the positive efforts of others.

⁷⁹ “Inspired by the challenge, Montrealers are likely to continue improving their houses by surrounding them with flowers and bushes.” “Embellir Montréal,” *La Presse*, September 23, 1940.

same time, their perception of other window boxes and gardens, or the lack of them, would also be influenced in a more durable way than if they had simply been exposed to the rhetoric on its own.

What was the effect of such a consensus, or, which is perhaps more realistic to answer, what was the projected effect—the vision of the city promoted along with gardening? I think the answer lies in the notion of the “ville fleurie”⁸⁰ which Dupuis referred to in reference to his hopes for the Société horticole du quartier Papineau. His use of this phrase speaks to a vision of the city at a time of celebration, but it also evokes a larger utopic potential. This phrase was to reappear in the rhetoric of campaigns in the 1960s, and in relation to a program of urban renewal undertaken by the Drapeau administration in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A description of a tour of Papineau, taken in the context of promoting the window box contest, gives an idea of what was envisioned in the ville fleurie. The tour began at the neighbourhood greenhouse, located on the grounds of a building belonging to the Service des Travaux publics:*

Il se trouve que la cour elle-même en est fort embellie. Les fenêtres des chantiers sont décorées de fleurs. Dans les carrés, on cultive des fleurs de toutes les couleurs, petunias, cosmos, mufliers, oeillets d’Inde, cannas, phlox, pieds d’alouette, etc.... Le groupe a visité ensuite des potagers et jardins cultivés dans des courts et des terrains vagues, sur plusieurs rues, s’arrêtant pour examiner des nombreuses boîtes de fleurs sur les galeries et aux fenêtres. Les potagers et jardins des fleurs sont pour la grande partie, cultivés par des chômeurs qui y trouvent un passe-temps salutaire.⁸¹

⁸⁰ ...“flowering city” or “city in bloom.”

⁸¹ “It so happens that the yard itself is much embellished. The workshop windows are decorated with flowers. In the squares, flowers of all colours are being cultivated: petunias, cosmos, snapdragons, marigolds, cannas, phlox, larkspur, etc ... The group then visited vegetable and flower gardens being harvested in yards and vacant lots, on numerous streets, stopping to examine the many flower boxes hanging on balconies and in windows. The vegetable and flower gardens are for the most part grown by the unemployed who find it a beneficial hobby.” “Embellir la ville n'est pas couteux,” *La Presse*, July 12, 1940.

The ‘ville fleurie’—which I think best evokes the concept at the heart of the myth of beautification—was one to which even the jobless could contribute, and which could be enjoyed by Montrealers in all neighbourhoods of the city. As the promotion of later campaigns demonstrates, and to discussion of which I now turn, it is based on the premise that if everyone does their part for beautification, however small, the city will be transformed and become a more beautiful and harmonious place. It is what you get, in other words, when everyone upholds the ideals of an urban civisme: respecting and caring for property, contributing to their community, and demonstrating cultural refinement. As an accessible and also highly legible form of beautification, and as the primary unit out of which the ville fleurie was to be constructed, the window box was the form most conducive to bearing this myth—a fact to which its role in campaigns of later years clearly attests.

Later window box contests and the dream of the ‘ville fleurie’

The dream of the ville fleurie was elaborated upon in later campaigns, particularly in 1965, as the city prepared to host Expo 67. That campaign also placed a heavy emphasis on the use of window boxes as a means of making gardening cheap and accessible. If everyone did their (small, affordable) part, reasoned politicians and journalists alike, then the whole city would be made beautiful: “Pour une somme modique,” Lucien Saulnier, the president of the city’s executive council was quoted as saying, “vous pouvez fleurir vos balcons et vos fenêtres, et faire ainsi de Montréal un vaste jardin.”⁸² As if to provide an image of the city so transformed, in the same year Sun Life

⁸² "For a small fee, you can make your balconies and windows bloom and thus make of Montreal a

Insurance donated 14,000 tulips, which were planted en masse in downtown Dominion Square. In one photograph, documenting a ceremony to recognize Sun Life's contribution to the beautification campaign, the tulips at the bottom of the photograph blend seamlessly into the heads of people in the crowd such that, at first glance, the tulips and people seem to be of a single, colourful mass: literally, la "ville fleurie."⁸³ "Si chaque citoyen dépensait la modique somme de \$1 à l'embellissement de Montréal en achetant des fleurs qui décoraient, par exemple, les fenêtres et les balcons," Saulnier was quoted as saying "les Montréalais pourraient égaler le don de 14,000 tulipes qui vient de faire la Sun Life Assurance Co., au carré Dominion."⁸⁴

If all three of the ideals at the heart of the myth of beautification came together in the window box garden, those related to community participation and property ownership were particularly prominent in references to the ville fleurie. However, the collective significance of the major events around which the vision of the ville fleurie seems to have coalesced (i.e., first, the city's tercentenary, then Expo 67), was nonetheless expressed in individualistic terms: it was not a matter so much of everyone working together, as of each citizen doing his or her part, which was largely circumscribed by property boundaries. Thus, one's responsibility lay with what one owned and/or where one lived. Whether one owned one's home or not, it was *that* space for which one was responsible, and it was primarily through its care that residents could express their

large garden." "Le rêve de M. Lucien Saulnier: Montréal, jardin fleuri," *Montréal-Matin*, May 15, 1965.

⁸³ "Embellissons la métropole," *Metro Express*, May 15, 1965.

⁸⁴ "If each citizen were to spend the modest sum of one dollar for the beautification of Montreal, by buying flowers that would, for instance, decorate windows and balconies," Saulnier was quoted as saying, "Montrealers could match the donation of 14,000 tulips made by Sun Life Assurance Co., in Dominion square." "Décorer de fleurs tous les balcons," *La Presse*, May 15, 1965.

commitment to civic values, and acknowledge their mutual dependence on those who lived near them (and the appearance of whose house and yard affected the property value of theirs). Thus, it is not surprising that the painting of fences was one of the activities residents were encouraged to undertake in conjunction with gardening.⁸⁵ Further, it was often asserted, “if everyone sweeps in front of his door, then the whole city will be clean.”⁸⁶ The city beautified is a city of well-claimed spaces, in which everyone is happy with their share, despite unavoidable disparity (hence the different categories in the beautification contests of the 1960s).⁸⁷ In this context, window boxes gardens—mounted on private property but visible from the sidewalk—had a special affirmative power, signifying not only participation in the campaigns, but acceptance of the social contract underlying the project of beautification, as well as the fact of its unequal rewards.

When, in 1965, the working-class neighbourhood of Saint-Henri received a donation of 250 window boxes to adorn houses facing onto one of its parks, the media coverage portrayed residents as not simply grateful for the donation, but ‘honoured’ by the opportunity to participate in the beautification campaign.⁸⁸ This was a quite different

⁸⁵ For example, an article from the 1965 campaign sums up the minimal required elements of beautification, referring to a photograph of a small yard in front of a modest duplex: “...cette maison, qui n'est tout de même pas neuve, revêt un caractère printanier avec cette petite clôture peinturée et garnie de diverses sortes des fleurs.” “La semaine d'embellissement se clôture chez nous,” *Le Mardi*, May 18, 1965.

⁸⁶ First appearing in news coverage of the campaign in 1946, this slogan (frequently identified as a Chinese proverb), was especially prevalent during the 1960s, surfacing in speeches made by politicians and organizers of the campaigns, and appearing in official ‘proclamations’, as well as emblazoned on the side of allegorical floats. It did for cleanliness what the window box did for beauty, at once giving it a civic significance and celebrating the organizational logic of collective urban life according to property ownership.

⁸⁷ The window box competition was joined by a larger Concours d'aménagement paysager (landscaping contest) in 1962, with six additional categories representing a variety of garden situations—three for residents and three for businesses.

⁸⁸ As a local paper described the situation, “notre prestige a pu souffrir quelques accrocs ces derniers temps...” Residents had turned the park into “une véritable corbeille de fleurs” on the occasion of

framing of a situation that was in many ways similar to that of Papineau in 1940, where window boxes seemed to be a means for the city (and campaign organizers) to reach the working class.⁸⁹ Now it seemed rather that they had become a means for the working class to ‘speak’ to the rest of the city. An article in *La Voix Populaire* encouraged readers to make the most of the opportunity which the campaign presented: “allons-nous prouver à Montréal que nous sommes fiers de notre coin et que nous meritons l’attention des autorités à tous points de vue.”⁹⁰ The article goes on to preview a parade and ceremony that will be held as part of that year’s beautification campaign, including the installation by city officials of window boxes at two homes in the neighbourhood—signifying (it is clear) the city’s commitment to support the residents of St-Henri in their efforts to beautify the neighbourhood.

Such assertions and performances involving window box gardens, suggest that, as significations, they had by this time been fully appropriated by their audience: the civic ideals for which previous campaigns had argued, were now incorporated as settled, even implicit, meanings in significations such as the window box—which now enabled, not only participation in the campaigns and contests, but also an expressive commerce of flowers and gardens that exceeded the specific content of the campaigns. The installation of window boxes was thus seen to communicate specific sentiments (such as pride) and to

the campaign, and were to be rewarded with a parade and ceremony presided over by Saulnier. “C’est un honneur peu commun qui échoit à Saint-Henri. Sachons en profiter pour nous illustrer devant le tout-Montréal. Décorons! Pavoisons!” “St-Henri et Pointe St-Charles à l’honneur,” *La Voix Populaire*, May 12, 1965.

⁸⁹ Though it should be noted that the provision of window boxes in Saint-Henri was due to a donation from a private company (Imperial Tobacco), rather than the work of a neighbourhood group supported directly by the city.

⁹⁰ ... “let’s prove to Montreal that we’re proud of our area and that we deserve the attention of the authorities on all perspectives.” *Ibid.*

be a means for the community to take action (in the form of soliciting a particular response from the administration). Their use in these ways, alongside assertions that, for example, “...si nous vivons dans un entourage agréable, la vie n’en sera que plus belle pour tous,” did not require explanation.⁹¹ It was no longer a question of educating people about the significance of gardens, but of showing what could be done with them.

Summing up: What is civic beauty?

Although it is hard to say from newspaper coverage alone how the beautification campaigns changed the appearance of the urban environment, or people’s perception of it during this period, it is clear that, at the least, it influenced the significance that people ascribed to things like window boxes, gardens and flowers more generally. The campaigns should be credited with promoting the idea that gardening was a form of civic and social action, as well as adding a local layer of meaning to the more general indexical significance of gardens with regard to property and its care. As I discuss to some extent below, gardening in public or publicly visible spaces today continues to be associated with similar civic ideals, though they are less explicitly or precisely referenced. Indeed, the city has itself, over the years, benefited from such associations when it has invested in horticultural beautification of various forms. The installation of hanging baskets, streetside planters and flowerbeds are visible and meaningful to the public in a manner they would not otherwise be, not only marking municipal interventions in the urban landscape, but also signifying prosperity and civic pride, attesting to the cultural

⁹¹ “...if our surroundings are nice, life will simply be more beautiful for all.” "Jean-J. Mercier vous parle," *La Voix Populaire*, May 12, 1965

sophistication of its residents, and so on. Of course, such articulations work both ways, and it is clear from photographs which began to appear in the late 1950s (of alleys filled with garbage and debris, vacant lots and so on), that part of what the campaigns accomplished was to enhance people's perception of problem areas within the city—the identification of which could be blamed either on residents, or on a negligent administration.⁹²

The civic significance established for gardens through the beautification campaigns was also in part what enabled the Botanical Garden to defend its relevance over the years in the face of threats to its funding. As I discuss in the next chapter, it influenced Henry Teuscher's original design of the garden, and was also a major factor in the public approval which the Garden was to win through its involvement in the development of city parks, and in the care of trees, gardens and green spaces around the city from 1962 to the late 1980s. The involvement of the Garden in the window box contests (and also in the parades of the late 1940s, discussed in the following chapter), can be seen as a precursor to this direct civic engagement.⁹³ To this day, and as evidenced by the special issue of *Quatre Temps*, it continues to promote beautification efforts around the city, particularly those initiated by citizens.

In closing this discussion, it seems important to say a few words about beauty, for what is 'beautification' if not an attempt to make the city more beautiful? Perhaps the

⁹² For example, see "Ruelles... (title cut off)," *La Presse*, April 23, 1959; and "Semaine de l'environnement," *Montréal-Matin*, April 29, 1975.

⁹³ While the contest was in the 1960s and 70s often attributed to the Service des parcs, or the Service des sports et loisirs (the city departments which included the Botanical Garden), the media coverage implicates the Garden in a variety of ways from year to year. For example, registration forms were mailed, and inquiries were directed to, the Botanical Garden, and the award ceremonies were often held there. The Garden is also often reported to have provided the judges.

main thing which newspaper coverage of the campaigns make clear, is that it was neither a personalized, nor a strictly objective conception of beauty that was at stake in the activities that were promoted. Though gardening was not generally promoted as a means of creative personal expression, it was also not expected to conform to a particular style or standard. The media coverage did not instruct people on *how* to clean and beautify, it simply emphasized the importance of doing so. Of course, references to improvements undertaken ‘in good taste’, and the centrality of the window box contests (which evaluated and rewarded the effects produced), do suggest that assessments of quality were possible, but the concern seems to have been less with the creation of unique or arresting visual effects, and more with thoroughness, skill in execution and ‘good taste’ (the specificities of which are hard to identify from textual evidence alone). At the same time, descriptions of the city beautified (e.g., of the ville fleurie) were visually evocative without referring in any way to the experience of beauty.⁹⁴ If life was expected to improve as the urban environment was cleaned and beautified, it seems this was because the city would become a more pleasant, rather than visually exciting place to live.

In the context of the beautification campaigns, ‘beauty’ was associated with values rather than specific qualities. It was the heading under which consensus about the visual characteristics that would be valued and prioritized in the urban environment was sought, and as such, was generally understood in terms that were, for the time, implicit. Coverage prior to 1940 is quite thin on descriptions or illustrations which might give a sense of what those characteristics were understood to be. The window box (and other gardening)

⁹⁴ For example, see the description above of the beautifications undertaken in Papineau, in 1940. “Embellir la ville n'est pas couteux,” *La Presse*, July 12, 1940.

contests seem to have been one of the main ways in which beauty could be evaluated and demonstrated, if not defined. It was at the time of their introduction that references to ‘good taste’ began to appear, though what that entailed was as vague as notions of beauty.⁹⁵ Though never explicitly set out as such, the qualities sought seemed to include, most prominently: neatness, order and naturalistic forms of ornamentation (particularly flowers, but also grass and trees).⁹⁶ Beginning in the 1960s, winning entries in various contests were sometimes pictured and/or described in newspaper coverage and they provide some confirmation of this sense. The homes were modest in size, but in good repair, and their yards neatly, though often quite abundantly, ornamented with shrubs and gardens.⁹⁷ The impression they give is not so much of a remarkable *beauty*, as of being exceptionally well cared for. But this is not surprising, for taking into consideration the ideals circulating in promotions of the campaigns, the signification of care (for property, community and appearances generally) seems to have been at least as important if not more important than the nature or scale of beauty created.

In summary, what is meant by ‘beauty’ in a civic context, seems to be both historically specific, and quite vague. It has more to do with the institution and maintenance of aesthetic norms—what people agree things should look like in general,

⁹⁵ As one article put it, “...c'est principalement une question de choix, d'agencement, d'ordonnance.” "Embellir Montréal," *La Presse*, September 23, 1940.

⁹⁶ For example, as one of the articles already quoted, put it: “La beauté et l'attrait d'une ville ou d'un province dépendent des efforts d'un chacun, et la valeur des citoyens se reflète dans *des demeures propres, bien peinturées, des pelouses bien entretenues et ornées des fleurs.*” “But de la campagne de nettoyage, de plantation et d'embellissement,” *La Presse*, May 1, 1937; emphasis added.

⁹⁷ Indeed, as I discuss below, beginning in the late 1940s, with the production of spectacular beautification parades, impressions of abundance seem to become part of what was considered beautiful. For representative photographs, see “Les joyaux de ma ville,” *La Presse*, May 17, 1963; “629 entries in garden contest,” *The Montreal Star*, August 30, 1973. It should also be noted that at least as common as photographs of ‘beautiful’ homes, if not more, were photographs of what was *not* beautiful—houses in disrepair, alleys full of trash and so on.

without needing to discuss it—than with the occurrence or production of something beautiful in a singular sense. Indeed, from this point of view, beautification should be understood not in terms of making something ‘more beautiful’ but of agreeing to consider beautiful certain ways of organizing the environment and relating to one another. As such, and given the way promotions of the ville fleurie tended to emphasize the importance of *everyone* doing their part (in other words, even those in poor neighbourhoods, or without the ‘natural’ inclination), the myth of beautification can be understood as a means of denying economic disparity and class difference, and of substituting a vision (if not an experience) of the city, in which a beautiful life was available to everyone who was willing to do their part.

The tree pit garden—a contemporary beautification?

According to the recollections of Maurice Beauchamp, former chief arborist for the city, tree pit gardens became popular in Montreal in the early 1980s, during the Opération un million de fleurs* campaigns (wherein, as discussed in Chapter Five, the city gave away annual flower seedlings to enable people to beautify their yards and plant window boxes). In their eagerness to participate in this initiative as well as the province-wide Villes, villages et campagnes fleuris competition, some residents without gardens began planting the earth around street trees with these flowers.⁹⁸ Now included in official

⁹⁸ Maurice Beauchamp, email to the author, February 6, 2011. I have also observed the practice undertaken in Toronto, and New York, though I know nothing of the history of their appearance in these cities.

beautification programs, the tree pit garden is an increasingly common example of a citizen-initiated beautification initiative.⁹⁹

While the non-beauty of tree pit gardens is consistent with what I argued above regarding the consensual or normative nature of beauty in a civic context, it is also worth noting that tree pit gardens often do not even display characteristics of neatness or order. In these cases, although they are clearly cultivated, as opposed to wild, spaces, they do not signify *care* (for property, appearances and so on) in the same way that a well-tended garden does. And yet, as the special issue of *Quatre Temps* celebrates—referring to it as “un geste simple qui a un impact majeur sur une communauté”—the tree pit garden is still considered civic, as well as environmental, in significance.¹⁰⁰ Are the haphazard and unkempt ones, however common, simply failures of the form, or do they suggest a discontinuity within the history as I’ve outlined it so far? While I think that the answer to both questions could be ‘yes’, I also suspect that the model of signification I have been working with so far is itself a bit idealistic; it may be that an actual garden—as opposed to an image of or verbal reference to one—can communicate in modes other than that of

⁹⁹ These are administered at the neighbourhood as opposed to borough level, by the city’s éco-quartiers. Several éco-quartiers in Ville-Marie, Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve and Plateau-Mont-Royal, hosted ‘adopter un carré d’arbre’* campaigns in 2012, offering free plants, soil, mulch and information sessions to residents willing to make and care for such gardens. For example, see "Adopter un Carré d’Arbre à Montréal," *novae: Le Média du Développement Durable au Québec*, <http://novae.ca/actualites/2012-05/adopter-un-carré-d'arbre-à-montréal> (accessed Nov. 16, 2012). Éco-quartiers are municipally funded neighbourhood organizations that provide a variety of community-based environmental education services. As the introduction provided by the Éco-quartier Peter-McGill puts it, “Éco-quartier est un programme d’action, d’initiative, de sensibilisation et de responsabilisation environnementale créée en 1995 par la Ville de Montréal afin d’inciter au quotidien les Montréalais en général à améliorer la qualité de leurs milieux de vie, ainsi qu’à réduire l’impact sur l’environnement de leur mode de vie.” “À propos d’Éco-quartier Peter-McGill,” *Website of Éco-quartier Peter-McGill*, <http://www.eco-quartierpm.org/> (accessed May 11, 2011). The éco-quartier program was created by Pierre Bourque during his tenure as mayor of Montreal (after retiring from his post as director of the Botanical Garden).

¹⁰⁰ ...“a simple gesture that has a major impact on a community.” Albert Mondor, “À vos fleurs, citoyens!,” *Quatre Temps* 33, no. 2 (2009), 17.

signification, making its inscription with particular qualities and ideals less prominent or less important to its overall functioning. If this is true, what we understand by ‘beautification’ or ‘civic beauty’ may be even more vague than my analysis so far has suggested.

Despite its introduction and continued promotion within the context of civic beautification initiatives, there are two central characteristics of the tree pit garden that distinguish it from older forms such as the window box. The first is its perceived environmental significance, and the second is its cultivation on public as opposed to private land. Environmentally speaking, tree pit gardens are promoted as directly beneficial: providing soil cover for trees and therefore reducing loss of moisture through evaporation, contributing to local cooling effects, and enhancing urban biodiversity.¹⁰¹ However, particularly with regard to the first two claims, as the gardener pointed out, these benefits could also be accomplished by the colonization of the same soil by wild plants, which would be more likely to be drought tolerant and adapted to the punishments of sidewalk growing conditions. Also, there are a variety of ecological benefits that could be served by plants carefully selected for different purposes (e.g., providing animal and insect food sources or toxin-absorbing capacities), but tree pits tend to be planted with brightly-coloured ornamental species with little or no such benefit. Much of the environmental significance attributed to tree pit gardens seems to be due to the association of environmental values with gardens generally, as well as the potential for equating beautification with environmental action—an articulation accomplished in part

¹⁰¹ See Mondor, "À vos fleurs, citoyens!" and "Adoptez un carré d'arbre," (unpublished powerpoint presentation) http://www.ecoquartierduplateau.org/ecoquartier_du_plateau_adopte_carre_arbre.html (accessed April 4, 2011).

through the campaigns of the 1970s (which I discuss in Chapter Five).¹⁰² It is perhaps with regard to more indirect environmental benefits that tree pit gardens can be seen as uniquely beneficial: that is, by bringing greater awareness to the health of street trees, and engaging people in relationships of care with their surroundings.¹⁰³

With regard to their location in public space, the cultivation of tree pit gardens can be seen in part as opportunistic: gardening has become increasingly popular in recent years among younger urban residents, who often don't own property.¹⁰⁴ Especially in Montreal, where space for gardening is increasingly limited, tree pits can be as good as it gets for some residents. The rise in popularity of guerilla gardening—the cultivation of either public or neglected private land without permission to do so—has given such sites an added visibility and significance.¹⁰⁵ That said, I think the public nature of tree pit

¹⁰² The association of gardens with environmental values is a history that, to my knowledge, remains to be written. I discuss some developments specific to Quebec and Montreal in Chapter Five. For now I note that gardening is frequently understood as a form of stewardship or care of the natural world. For example, as Lorraine Johnson puts it, writing about the importance of the place-based knowledge which gardening yields: "This alertness is, I think, the key to finding a way to live on this earth with spirited wonder and mindful humility—necessary approaches if we're to begin the crucial work that is ahead: the work of healing the planet. We need people to connect with their home places and learn about them and understand them and see and feel and know what they're doing to them, and what's happening to the earth. We need stewards and nurturers and people who care. We need gardeners." Lorraine Johnson, *The Gardener's Manifesto: Changing the World and Creating Beauty One Garden at a Time* (Toronto, Penguin Canada, 2002).

¹⁰³ As the article in *Quatre Temps* puts it, "Il permet aux citoyens d'acquérir une meilleure conscience de leur lien étroit avec la nature et de développer un plus grand respect des arbres et des végétaux en général." Mondor, "À vos fleurs, citoyens!" 17.

¹⁰⁴ Although documentation of such trends tends to be proprietary, a good sense of the spirit and style of younger converts to urban gardening can be found on YouGrowGirl.com—a website and community forum that has gained such popularity since its launch in 2000, that its creator, Gayla Trail, has become an important voice in garden culture, publishing to date two books, writing a national column for the *Globe and Mail*, and freelancing for major periodicals such as the *New York Times*, *O Magazine*, *Organic Gardening Magazine* and others.

¹⁰⁵ Several books have recently appeared on this practice. For example, see Richard Reynolds, *On Guerrilla Gardening* (New York, Bloomsbury, 2008); David Tracey, *Guerilla Gardening: A ManualFesto* (Gabriola Island, BC, New Society Publishers, 2007). The practice has its origins in the efforts of New York City activists of the 1970s who fought for the right to reclaim abandoned and derelict private property for the benefit of disenfranchised and often impoverished communities. However, as Gina Badger argues, the

gardens does change their significance from the perspective of beautification. To begin with, especially given that, in Montreal, the cultivation of tree pits is permitted, and even in some areas encouraged by municipal authorities, they can be seen, like the window box, to increase the accessibility of gardening, and therefore the number of people who are able to take part in beautification initiatives. Their promotion can be seen to be continuous in many ways with the aims of earlier campaigns: seeking not only to create actual visual or environmental effects (which, as with the window box, are minimal), but more importantly to inculcate in residents common aesthetic and civic values related to the urban environment. These are well encapsulated in a description of the 2011 program for the borough of Plateau-Mont-Royal, which reads, “L’embellissement des carrés d’arbre* augmente la biodiversité en milieu urbain et favorise la lutte contre les îlots de chaleur. Ce type d’horticulture crée également un effet d’entraînement à la propreté et au respect d’arbres. La splendeur des fleurs ne cesse de nous inspirer!”¹⁰⁶

At the same time, the incorporation of environmental values in the discourse of beautification changes what given statements imply, and how specific interventions speak, suggesting that the underlying myth has also changed. In particular, while the window box spoke (and to a certain degree I think, still speaks) of civic responsibility, the tree pit also speaks of environmental responsibility. Perhaps the greatest evidence of an underlying shift in emphasis is given in the fact that, in Montreal, responsibility for

pratice has more recently lost much of its political force, as specific tactics, such as ‘seed bombing’ are taken up for more narrowly aesthetic purposes. Gina Badger, "Digging, sowing, tending, harvesting (making war-fair)," *Public* no. 41 (2010): 122-35. Nonetheless, individual gardeners who decide to plant a tree pit garden, may see their actions as meaningful not only in their local impact, but also in terms of a global gardening movement.

¹⁰⁶ “The beautification of tree pits increases biodiversity in urban areas and fights against heat islands. This type of gardening also creates a ripple effect toward cleanliness and fosters a respect for trees. The splendor of flowers continues to inspire us!” “Adoptez un Carré d’arbre,” 2.

beautification programming now resides for the most part with éco-quartiers. In this context, gardening (and other activities promoted by éco-quartiers) tends to be presented as a form of voluntary action, as opposed to a civic responsibility, having a special rather than a normative significance. For example, on the website of the éco-quartier Peter-McGill, under “Implication citoyenne”¹⁰⁷ it reads, “Si vous voulez vraiment que ce soit VOTRE quartier, impliquez-vous.”¹⁰⁸ Adopting a tree pit is presented as a pleasurable social activity: “L’été approche, pourquoi ne pas profiter des beaux jours pour enjoliver votre environnement? Seul, en couple, avec votre plus jeune, avec grand-maman ou avec votre voisin, mettez les mains au terreau en plein cœur de la ville et *réalisez un joli carré d’arbre fleuri!*¹⁰⁹

The person who decides to make a garden in a tree pit is undertaking an action which, rather than simply being the horticultural equivalent of ‘sweeping in front of one’s door,’ may be understood additionally in terms of ‘making a difference,’ in the urban environment. In other words, gardening a tree pit is a creative act which adds something to the urban environment, rather than simply fulfilling an obligation of property maintenance. In the introduction to the special issue of *Quatre Temps* quoted above, the editor makes vague reference to impending environmental catastrophe (“J’en ai assez d’entendre que le ciel va bientôt nous tomber sur la tête”), and exhorts readers to “Prenez les choses en main. Il n’est pas nécessaire d’être un expert pour faire une différence

¹⁰⁷ ...“Citizen involvement.”

¹⁰⁸ “If you really want it to be YOUR neighborhood, get involved.” “À propos d’Éco-quartier Peter-McGill,” *Website of Éco-quartier Peter-McGill*.

¹⁰⁹ “Summer is coming, so why not take advantage of the fine weather to beautify your surroundings? Alone, as a couple, with your youngest, with grandma or with your neighbour, put your hands in the soil in the heart of the city, *and make a pretty tree-pit garden!*” Ibid; emphasis in original.

remarkable.”¹¹⁰ Indeed, concerns about ‘the environment’ seem to loosen the way membership in the larger community is organized: responsibility is no longer necessarily constrained by property (or residential) boundaries, but is to a certain degree diffused¹¹¹ Further, the meaning of one’s action is in part contained within the act itself—it ‘makes a difference’—rather than simply being aggregated with others equal in scope. It is less a question of assenting to a shared contract, and more of contributing (in however modest a fashion) to a ‘movement’ for change.

At the same time however, tree pit gardens also seem to belie a continuity with more traditional ideals of property ownership. That is, in their frequent use of fences, or fence-like enclosures of various kinds. In light of their location in public, and the openness and generosity which is implied in their creation—a garden which everyone can enjoy, and for which the gardener takes no credit—the fencing of tree pit gardens stands out. No longer a marker of property boundaries, and being redundant from the perspective of keeping the contents separate from what surrounds them (since the sidewalk is itself a kind of containment device), the fence can only—as the gardener noted—serve a communicative function. I suspect that the installation of a fence (or its sign, a structure that acts like a fence) is viewed in large part as a practical decision: that is, to alert people to the fragility of the garden’s contents so that they don’t accidentally walk through it or deposit their garbage bags there. However, the fact that this demarcation is seen as necessary, itself gives me (and the gardener) pause. Is it really true that people don’t

¹¹⁰ “I’m fed up with the idea that the sky is falling... Take your fate into your own hands. You don’t have to be an expert to make a tremendous difference.” Lalut, “vous êtes le héros.”

¹¹¹ Though many gardeners may choose sites close to their home or business, presumably for reasons of convenience, personal satisfaction or, in the case of a business, economic gain.

notice a garden without a fence? Or, as the gardener suggests, that these particular gardens are often not recognizable as gardens? Perhaps both these assertions are at least partly true, and the fence expresses a certain defensiveness in its redundant staking of the garden's territory. As such, the fence does not enable the tree pit garden to reproduce (an updated version of) the myth of beautification so much as betray its continued relevance. While the tree pit challenges the exclusive articulation of gardening with property ownership, the fence upholds the coincidence of its communicative and territorial functions, treating open space and soil not simply as an opportunity to promote the growth of other life forms (and the well-being of one's local environment generally), but as a site for the inscription of social values—an ownership if not of property, then at least of a venue for speech. The character of this speech however, seems to me more complicated and unstable than that suggested by Barthes' mythology.

For Barthes, the material of a given signification is relatively irrelevant to its operation mythologically. He writes, "the materials of mythical speech (the language itself, photography, painting, posters, rituals, objects, etc.), however different at the start, are reduced to a pure signifying function as soon as they are caught by myth."¹¹² But it seems to me that, as far as the tree pit garden, and perhaps even in the window box is concerned, the specific materiality of plants *does* matter—in fact, their reproduction of (or at least vague reference to) the myth of beautification depends on it. This is primarily because it is the plants' tendency to grow, wilt and go to seed, which makes them particularly well-suited to acting as an index of care. While I think this property of living plants becomes seamlessly incorporated in their significance wherever they are

¹¹² Barthes, "Myth Today," 114.

represented (e.g., in images or discourse) in exactly the manner that Barthes suggests, it is not necessarily the same when one encounters them in person.

The significance of a window box, or a well-manicured lawn and garden is perhaps easily ‘read’ by passersby (so much so that the experience may be largely unconscious), but an overgrown or less perfectly arranged garden communicates in a manner which is more complicated. It could be argued that this is simply a question of clarity—whether or not a given garden actually succeeds as a signification—but it seems to me that the tree pit garden, a signification that has power despite frequently and clearly *not* being what it is said to be, demonstrates that there is more to it than this. It is inflected, though in a way that is hard to specify, with the singularity of the intentions that underlie its making: sometimes tree pit gardens seem defensive; sometimes they appear almost desperate in their claim on space and soil, and at other times, merely whimsical. In this imprecision, they do more than signify; they *communicate*, though I am not ready yet to say more precisely how I mean that, except to note that, there is a phenomenology as well as a semiology, that influences how the tree pit works.

What does the tree pit’s imprecision, or perhaps its surplus of effect, say about the window box in contrast? As I suggested above, I think the fact that the materials in question are alive contributes to their specific signification constituted in the window box, but the difference is that their phenomenology is more binary, simply either confirming or disrupting expectations. That is, if they do what they are supposed to do—if they are relatively well-tended and otherwise conform to conventions—their full potential is realized in a glance. One registers their significance without needing even to consciously acknowledge it. If they are poorly tended however—weedy or overgrown—or unconventional in some way, then they may generate a more conscious response. It is

likely however, now that the form and its significance have been so durably established, that this response will itself follow a well-worn trajectory: one in which the opposite significance is ascribed to the delinquent form. That is, the window box gone to seed or grown thick with weeds, signifies a *lack*, or at least deficient quantity of, civic responsibility (care for property, appearances and so on).

Together, the window box and the tree pit suggest that the garden is a cultural form both conducive to and potentially disruptive of signification. In addition to the specific materiality of the plants themselves, I think this disruptive potential may also be due to an inherent flexibility of the form (demonstrated by the heterogeneity in style, content and upkeep of tree pit gardens). When it comes to gardens, anything involving the intentional cultivation of plants within a relatively constrained locale seems to qualify, at least as far as everyday use and appreciation goes. This flexibility goes along of course with the much-celebrated accessibility of gardening as a means of participating in beautification. However, the disruptiveness of the tree pit, pertains not only to its signification of the myth of beautification, but also I think to a more general *code* of garden types and styles, which helps to orient our use and appreciation of them, but does not in any obvious way include tree pit gardens. That is, while it may be relatively easy to identify a tree pit garden as a garden, they tend to be much more heterogeneous in style than other forms of public garden, and as such, cannot be classified according to an existing repertoire of styles. As I discuss in Chapter Three, such processes of classification are bodily as well as visual and historical: the tree pit doesn't 'fit', this is something sensed—in an experience of surprise, or incongruity—rather than consciously

interrogated. It suggests a communicative agency of gardens that is more complex than Barthes' mythological framework allows.¹¹³

At the level of a more expert (though not necessarily professional) gardening discourse, the flexibility of garden form is also met with considerable efforts from various sources—including botanical gardens, but also popular magazines, gardening clubs and so on—to 'educate' gardeners about conventions of style and maintenance practices. In other words, there is the potential for a diversity of interpretation of the form (to which the tree pit attests), but in actuality, a great deal of consensus about what a (real or well cared for) garden should look like.¹¹⁴ Hence the gardener's disdain for the tree pit garden.

This tension helps to contextualize the wholehearted endorsement of tree pit gardens by *Les amis du Jardin*. The *Quatre Temps* article provides detailed suggestions for how to succeed in making a tree pit garden, encouraging readers to take the more economical and environmentally sustainable route of planting perennials species as opposed to annual flowers (which according to the gardener is by far the norm). Included is a list (with photographs) of perennial plant species that will thrive in this situation. Indeed, given that perennial plant species are traditionally the domain of more experienced gardeners (i.e., those with a more refined eye), the article can be read in terms, not only of encouragement to turn one's horticultural skills to civic and environmentally beneficial ends, but also of an education aimed at effecting a certain degree of refinement in the form. Thus, through the intervention of *Les amis du Jardin*,

¹¹³ That said, as I explore in Chapter Three, his later semiological thinking and in particular, his notion of the text as a living entity whose effects exceed those attributed to conventional authorship, serve to advance my thinking about this complexity.

¹¹⁴ This tension is related, I think, to that described in the Introduction: between the aesthetic potential of gardens (to be challenging of expectations) and their more common normative effects.

the Garden's scientific and aesthetic expertise is brought to bear on even the most unruly of garden forms. At the same time, and as I hope the following chapters demonstrate, it has long been part of the Garden's mandate—and an important element of its survival, politically and economically speaking—to offer a horticultural service which is perceived as socially and environmentally beneficial. I turn now to a consideration of one way that the Garden has been understood to do this, from within its boundaries, and through its very design.

CHAPTER TWO: The Perennial Garden and Henry Teuscher's pedagogical vision for the Montreal Botanical Garden

Located in the east end of Montreal, across the street from the Biodome and the Olympic stadium, the Montreal Botanical Garden bills itself as “one of the world’s greatest botanical gardens.” It is seventy-five hectares in size, and has a collection of 22,000 species and cultivars.¹ This collection is housed in ten greenhouses, an arboretum and thirty thematic gardens. Aside from the arboretum (which is more gardenesque in design), the larger landscape in which the different gardens are arranged is relatively flat and picturesque (though tidily maintained), with several ponds and a forested area in the middle. The gardens are designed to reflect different cultural traditions as opposed to botanical systems of classification.² Many of the gardens include within them a considerable interpretative infrastructure, including pavilions, temporary and permanent exhibits about other aspects of the culture represented in the garden, and a substantial amount of cultural programming (though not the ones frequented by the gardener, who prefers a less thoroughly augmented garden experience).³ All in all, it is, as the gardener reports, a very beautiful place, well populated with a variety of birds and other animals

¹ As a comparison, the collection Kew Royal Botanic Gardens in London, which is the largest, has 30,000.

² This gives the Garden a horticultural as opposed to a more purely botanical, or ecological disposition. While botany is the science concerned with the biological relationships between plant species; horticulture consists of the science, practice and business of their cultivation, particularly (as far as this thesis is concerned) in ornamental contexts. Botanical gardens have long supported research and education in both realms.

³ For example, the Japanese garden hosts a daily tea ceremony, and the Chinese garden hosts a spectacular display of lanterns during the months of September and October.

and, especially in the less popular gardens, quite peaceful (if not always quiet, thanks to the traffic on Boulevard Pie IX). Though she sometimes complained about how large it was, and how easy it was to get overwhelmed, she later called it a “profoundly pleasant” place to spend time. In some ways, or at certain moments, it is, to paraphrase Simon Pugh, the only place she wants to be.

In partnership with the Université de Montréal, the MBG hosts the Institut de recherche en biologie végétale.⁴ But perhaps the most interesting thing about the MBG is that, unlike most botanical gardens with a serious research mandate, it also has a substantial social vocation, which is articulated as follows in its mission statement:

Le Jardin s'intègre parfaitement au tissu urbain de Montréal. Véritable conscience verte de la ville, le Jardin est à l'origine des politiques de plantation d'arbres, de préservation des milieux naturels et de la sensibilisation* des citoyens à la nature. Il a développé et entretient une relation privilégiée avec la population montréalaise. Il fournit à la communauté une expertise et un soutien incomparables à l'embellissement du paysage urbain, ainsi qu'à l'aménagement et à la gestion des espaces verts.⁵

While it could be argued that the Garden’s social significance has declined in recent years and that it prioritizes objectives designed to enhance tourism rather than the daily lives of Montrealers, the Garden’s history has since its inception been closely tied to that of the city.⁶

⁴ An institute for teaching and research in plant biology since 1990, it helped to found the Centre sur la biodiversité (Biodiversity Centre), a research and teaching facility on the site of the Botanical Garden that was opened in 2011.

⁵ “The Garden is perfectly woven into the urban fabric of Montreal. In keeping with the green conscience of the city, the Garden is at the origin of tree planting policies, of the preservation of natural environments and of citizens’ awareness toward nature. It has developed and maintains a privileged relationship with the people of Montreal. It supplies an expertise and provides incomparable support to the community, in terms of the beautification of the urban landscape, as well as for the development and management of green spaces.” "Mission," *Website of the Jardin Botanique de Montréal*, <http://espacepourlavie.ca/en/mission-1> (accessed Feb. 7, 2013).

⁶ Though the Garden’s mission statement says nothing about tourism, a media kit available

Envisioned by Marie-Victorin as a scientific and cultural endeavour of benefit not only to Montreal, but also Quebec society more generally, the Garden was taken on initially as a shared responsibility of the city and the province (and governed at an arm's length from the politics of both), but it became a property of the city in 1942, when the administration was forced by a hostile provincial government to take over all responsibility for costs of its continued operation.⁷ Direction of the garden had until that time been governed by a special commission composed of both city officials and scientific advisors (including Marie-Victorin himself), with significant influence over the Garden's direction residing with the latter group. In 1942 however, the composition of the commission was changed to reflect the new situation, giving city officials substantial control. Although Marie-Victorin himself managed to maintain a certain amount of influence until his death in 1944, subsequent directors had difficulty maintaining independence from city politics.⁸

through its website characterizes its activities in the following manner: “By constantly pursuing excellence in these three realms—tourism, education and scientific research—the Montréal Botanical Garden has won Montrealers’ hearts.” “A world of colours and fragrances,” 3. The garden’s inclusion in the new *Espace pour la vie**—a veritable megacomplex of ‘nature museums’ (including the Biodome, Insectarium and Planetarium) that has been the focus of substantial investments leading up to the city’s 375th birthday—also suggests that tourism is central to its continued development.

⁷ Though the city provided the land and granted approval for the construction of the Botanical Garden, much of the money to do so came from the province, and through provincial and federal make-work programs. Leading up to its opening in 1939, over \$11,000,000 had been spent on the Garden’s construction. Adélard Godbout, who had criticized this spending while in opposition, was elected premier in 1939. He denounced the Garden as a waste of money and began almost immediately to cut funding to various aspects of its operation, going as far as to demolish a greenhouse which was near completion and, in 1940, cutting off payments for heating costs of the existing greenhouses and the administration building. If the city had not stepped in to take over these payments, the Garden certainly would have closed. In 1942, the city exchanged ownership of another building for the Garden’s administration building (then owned by the province), after which point the Garden became sole property of the city. DesRochers, *Étude historique*, 26-7.

⁸ Ibid, 27-8. Of course, Pierre Bourque, who also occupied a variety of positions within the city administration while working at the garden, and who was an ally of mayor Jean Drapeau, can be seen to have managed this relationship to the Garden’s benefit.

Before the Garden's practical implication in municipal politics however, ideas about life in the city influenced its design. Writing about the exhibition gardens of the Montreal Botanical Garden from the vantage point of his retirement, Henry Teuscher, asserted that their main function was "to interest people in having gardens of their own."⁹ As the author of the Garden's original design, his motivation for interesting people in gardening was civic in a sense quite similar to that inscribed in the beautification campaigns. He believed strongly in the power of gardens to ameliorate many social ills pertaining to life in the city. As such, and given the timing of its construction (coincident with an increasing role of gardening in the campaigns), I take its relationship to the campaigns as a starting point for my analysis of one of the gardens within it.

The central task of this chapter is to prepare the way for a concerted analysis of one area within the larger Botanical Garden: that of the Perennial Garden, which is the largest of the exhibition gardens (at 8000 m²), and one of the first to be completed (in 1937). Along with the other exhibition gardens, its design is generally characterized as 'classical' or 'French'. It is rectangular in shape and visually dominated by a central pathway which traverses its length, flanked on each side by parallel though not perfectly symmetrical configurations of square and rectangular flower beds, and anchored by identical fountains and pergolas that run perpendicular to it—one at the eastern-most end, and the other approximately three-quarters of the way to the other end. In the middle, a rectangular reflecting pool also lies perpendicular to the central pathway, on its south side. Overlooking this pool, and running along the southern edge of the garden is a

⁹ Henry Teuscher, "Criticism of and suggestions for the outdoor plantings in the Montreal Bot. Garden," *Memories: An unpublished autobiography and other writings*, 1975, Bibliothèque du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal, call number 0255 TEU T4.1.

raised walking path. Given that it has remained structurally unaltered since its installation (unlike many of the other gardens), the Perennial Garden is celebrated, along with the other exhibition gardens, as an emblem of designer Henry Teuscher's vision. This was one of the gardens in which he put into practice his strategy for botanical and horticultural education, as outlined in his "Program for an ideal botanical garden."

In the chapter which follows this one, I attempt to both describe the effects of the contemporary Perennial Garden (as experienced by the gardener, but also in terms of its implication in more general social processes), and to characterize the more general capacity that these effects suggest. My strategy for enabling this analysis, is to trace multiple analogies that help to make the garden's effects and their significance more apparent. Most importantly, I attempt to understand the significance of changes in the Perennial Garden's form by tracking them alongside changes in garden-related media (in particular, the photographs that appear in guides to the Garden over the years). But to enable this juxtaposition, I use the present chapter to consider the relationship between a media form operating within the beautification campaigns—that of the parades des fleurs*—and the Perennial Garden as it appears in photographs from the 1940s and 1950s. Once I have established in this way, the outlines of the garden's original semiotic structure and the potential implications of that structure (as well as, in the process, a certain amount of historical context), it will be possible to identify and theorize the implications of changes to the garden's internal form over the years (and then to juxtapose this with the changes observed in the garden guides).

Before entering into this analysis, I present a brief history of botanical gardens in general as a means of situating the Montreal Botanical Garden and the influence of its mandate for popular education, which was so important at the time of its founding. This

will help to make the possible implications of certain past effects (which I can only observe in a limited sense through photographs and textual evidence) more apparent.¹⁰ While most botanical gardens prioritize scientific research and popular education, often portraying themselves as “living museums”, their role—especially during colonial times—has historically been both more substantial and more complicated than this. Indeed, a consideration in particular of the social and political work accomplished through botanical gardens in different eras, suggests that even when they are given more exclusively civic roles, they carry with them the traces of other capacities.

The history of botanical gardens in general

The first botanical gardens were created in Padua and Pisa, between 1543 and 1545. As Tomasi notes, unlike the *Hortus medicus* (or ‘garden of simples’, which housed collections of medically useful plants), and Renaissance pleasure gardens (intended for retreat and contemplation), these gardens were conceived explicitly for scientific study.¹¹ This scientific vocation, though interpreted in a variety of ways, remains the main characteristic distinguishing the botanical garden from other forms of public garden. However, botanical science has rarely been enough on its own to sustain them, and the history of those gardens is largely a story of the search for uses of plants and gardens that would ensure profitability (whether economic or political), and/or public support. In the

¹⁰ Though perhaps this is what is always implied in providing ‘historical context’ for a given situation or phenomena.

¹¹ Lucia Tongiorgi Tomasi, "The origins, function and role of the botanical garden in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy," *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 25, no. 2 (2005): 103-15. Of course this does not mean that such study was not also religiously significant—being seen, for example, as a means of recreating Eden. Luke Morgan, "Early modern Edens: The landscape and language of paradise," *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 27, no. 2 (2007): 142-8.

brief discussion which follows, I focus on the social and political dimensions of this history, and in particular, the observation, made by Richard Drayton in his history of Kew Gardens, that historically, botanical gardens have been, above all else, tools of government.

While the earliest botanical gardens were attached to universities, the rising popularity of botany among princes and aristocrats ensured that the majority of those created during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had royal or aristocratic patronage. Some of these were open to the public—such as the Jardin du Roi in Paris (later the Jardin des plantes) as of 1640—others, like the royal garden at Kew, were kept exclusively for the pleasure of the monarch (though their facilitation of what Drayton calls “miraculous political gifts” was considered to be in the national interest).¹² Such gardens, which contained an increasingly rich diversity of exotic species brought back to Europe by colonial expeditions, served as a means of aestheticizing power as well as developing the science of botany. As Drayton puts it, “Exotic plants, by their sheer strangeness and beauty, provided a kind of dignity behind which arbitrary power could hide. Botanical classification moreover... embroidered these objects of wonder into the fabric of universal truth.”¹³ The botanical garden’s mastery of nature was the sign of a *sanctified* authority.

As colonial endeavours expanded during the eighteenth century however, producing an increasing inundation of new plants, such gardens took on—not only an important role in the progress of botanical science and its associated schemes of

¹² Drayton, *Nature's Government*, 30.

¹³ Ibid, 45.

classification, as is often celebrated¹⁴—but also a greater variety of economic and political uses. In the second half of the eighteenth century, botanists aided in the domestication of plants that were of economic value and strategic importance. For example, plants collected in the East were transferred to plantations in the West via botanical gardens in Europe—a practice which was sometimes enormously profitable (as with commodities such as coffee or spices), and at other times, practically beneficial to colonial ventures (e.g., as when new crops provided a cheaper or more reliable food source for feeding slave populations). At the same time, the establishment of a scientific agriculture, both at home and abroad—and of which the botanical garden was a particularly powerful sign—was seen as a means of ‘improvement’, and thus served to justify both conquest and coercion of other peoples.¹⁵ Thus by the time Kew, which is now uncontested as the world’s largest and most important botanical garden, made the transition from royal pleasure grounds to scientific institution (through the 1780s and 1790s), it was thoroughly integrated with a larger colonial program.

In what Drayton calls England’s “second empire” (which gained momentum over the second half of the nineteenth century), Kew’s economic and political importance increased as it took on an increasingly substantial administrative role, instituting and coordinating a vast network of botanical research stations and gardens throughout its

¹⁴ See for example, Nicolas Robin, "The influence of scientific theories on the design of botanical gardens around 1800," *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 28, no. 3-4 (2008).

¹⁵ As Drayton notes, “...the verb ‘to improve’, which we use in the sense of ‘to ameliorate’ or ‘to perfect’, originally meant to put to a profit, and in particular to enclose ‘waste’ or common land.” Drayton, *Nature’s Government*, 51. In addition to contributing to national economic prosperity, the conquest of other lands and peoples was sanctioned by the belief that it was a means of rescuing God’s gifts from inefficient and improper use, and thereby of realizing His purpose (i.e., of providing for His people, and enlarging the domain of Christendom).

colonies.¹⁶ During this era, the discovery and cultivation of new economically valuable plants was pursued more systematically at the same time that new approaches to botanical research facilitated understanding and treatment of pests and diseases threatening existing crops (which were due in large part to colonial plant transfers in the first place). Botanical gardens were also used during this time as a means of strengthening claims to new territories: both by providing evidence of improvement, and enabling social engineering (e.g., as when indigenous populations could be encouraged to take up agriculture as opposed to other activities not suitable to colonialist purposes). As Drayton puts it, “...we may see British Imperialism, over the long term, as a campaign to extend an ecological regime: a way of living in Nature. It was premised on the virtues of sedentary agriculture and husbandry, private property, and production for exchange, and ultimately manufacture.”¹⁷

Botanical gardens were indispensable to the success of this campaign—not only for the strategic knowledge they produced, but also as a sign of the universal value of the associated benefits (to be shared, it was implied, with those whose land the garden improved), and as a site for putting into practice the patterns of social organization that had given rise to the form in the first place: in particular, via a systematic cultivation of land, a scientific relation to plants and a hierarchical division of labour. As Drayton shows, the botanical garden became a landscape form with manifold social significance, not only because colonialism was inherently a project of occupation (and therefore of

¹⁶ By the end of the nineteenth century, Kew administrated over eighty gardens around the world. Ibid, 262. Drayton does not provide an exact number, but notes that while there were twenty-eight in 1880 (the majority of which had been founded before 1820), in the last two decades of the century, more than twice that number were created.

¹⁷ Ibid, 229.

landscape design), but also because the evolution of British society during colonial times was—at home as well as abroad—organized around the rationalization of a particular relation to plants (i.e., via scientific agriculture).¹⁸ Botanical gardens founded in postcolonial times, or outside the British empire cannot be considered tools of government in exactly the same way. However, I contend that, not only does the continued scientific prominence of Kew keep certain colonial themes alive, such gardens continue to serve, if in a less deliberate, more diffuse sense, as tools of social organization—at least to the extent that relations to land and vegetation can be seen to structure aspects of communal life. In fact, as I explore below, the challenge presented by the modern city to the stability of existing social relations (no longer tied to the productivity or history of the land), can be seen to have given a renewed social importance to botanical gardens.

In North America, the first botanical gardens weren't founded until the second half of the nineteenth century, and in Canada, not until the early twentieth century.¹⁹ As Lighty describes, the majority of the early US botanical gardens and arboreta were created by universities and colleges as adjuncts to botany departments. As descriptive botany gave way to more laboratory-focused research, these gardens were often turned over to horticulture programs and opened to the public. Since the second half of the twentieth century, it is therefore more common for botanical gardens to be organized

¹⁸ As Drayton repeatedly emphasizes, the colonial project of improvement was also pursued in Europe—via the long campaign for enclosure of common lands, and with it, the conversion of British and Irish peasants to a capitalist model of agricultural production. *Ibid.*

¹⁹ The first American botanical garden was in Missouri, created in 1859. The first Canadian botanical garden was opened in 1916 by the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

around the presentation of design traditions as opposed to phylogenetic schemes.²⁰ As James Corner emphasizes, the contemporary botanical garden is an “exemplary hybrid landscape” condensing a variety of “use programs” into a single form.²¹ While some North American botanical gardens continue to prioritize research, many others—especially those owned by municipalities or philanthropists as opposed to universities—serve a broader mandate, often prioritizing popular and environmental education.²² As public institutions, such gardens can be seen to enhance the cultural prestige of the cities that host them, and/or the legacy of private philanthropists who support them.²³ Such gardens may also conduct research; particularly in a municipal context however, research generally requires rationalization—often in economic terms.

²⁰ That is, as opposed to the genetic divisions of the plant kingdom. Lighty, "North American public garden." It is worth noting however, that some botanical gardens also organize their collections by regions of the world, thus prioritizing the ecological as opposed to cultural significance of different species. For example, the botanical garden at the University of California, Berkeley is organized entirely around regions, and planted in a naturalistic fashion.

²¹ As he asserts, “Programmes for public interaction, recreation, display, collection, research, cultivation, commerce, ecology, conservation and invention are all structurally inherent to the botanical garden.” James Corner, “Botanical urbanism: A new project for the botanical garden at the University of Puerto Rico,” *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 25, no. 2 (2005), 123.

²² The other prominent example of a Canadian botanical garden *not* attached to a university and therefore serving a broader public as well as providing a venue for research, is the Royal Botanical Garden (RBG) in Hamilton (established around the same time as the MBG). Interestingly, the RBG’s mission is much more focused (on science and education) than that of the MBG, whose historical implication in the city’s administration is still reflected in its identification of a ‘social’ as well as cultural, educational and scientific vocations.

²³ According to Lighty, this benefit was first realized in North America around the turn of the 20th century, when cities began building conservatories as symbols of “cultural maturity and economic prowess...” Lighty, “North American public garden,” 8. But as Drayton describes, this has been an effect of botanical gardens almost as long as the form has existed. Providing context for the early identity of Kew as a public pleasure ground—“a place for the amusement and edification of the nation”—he writes, “...the botanic garden, from the sixteenth century, had always had a political meaning as spectacle. As it summoned the variety of nature to one climax, and ordered and named the pleasures of colour, form, and smell, the garden served to make power beautiful and perhaps natural. Popes, princes, aristocrats, or rich merchants, sought to adorn themselves with flowers and fountains. Some among them came to open these grounds to the crowd, for nothing would be lost by impressing the public with the majesty and generosity of their founders or proprietors. With such pleasure grounds, the rulers of cities similarly showed their cities as gentle and prosperous.” Drayton, *Nature’s Government*, 180.

Sometimes botanical gardens are seen to conduct research that is considered economically beneficial on a societal level.²⁴ In others, research need not be rationalized because it is translated directly into a source of revenue for the garden. As Corner points out, many of the activities of gardening, such as “cultivation, seeding, grafting, transplanting, pruning and other horticultural techniques lead to the production of new species and forms and their subsequent sale for commercial use.”²⁵ Thus the botanical garden has become the “logical” site for the production of new commodities.²⁶ It is therefore not uncommon for gardens to sell plants directly to visitors, usually though a garden gift shop or nursery.²⁷ As the MBG’s Garden of Innovations—which is sponsored by a manufacturer of landscaping materials and supplied by commercial growers—demonstrates, botanical gardens may also *market* plants and other garden products to visitors.²⁸ Variations on this arrangement—wherein support from a private partner is

²⁴ As when, for example, the MBG defended its importance in the early years of its existence by citing the economic benefits generated through plant testing and breeding. For example, see Ephrem-Réginald Bertrand, "Un jardin botanique à tous," *La Presse*, January 13, 1940; and Jacques Rousseau, "Les avantages économique d'un Jardin botanique," *La Patrie*, July 30, 1950.

²⁵ Corner, "Botanical urbanism: A new project for the botanical garden at the University of Puerto Rico," 129.

²⁶ As Hunt notes, this is not a new role for the botanical garden: since at least the end of the seventeenth century, and particularly in North America, botanical gardens have supported their research in part through the sale of plants to commercial growers. John Dixon Hunt, "Afterword," *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 25, no. 2 (2005), 146.

²⁷ At the MBG, the gift shop sells a limited selection of perennials, annuals and indoor plants.

²⁸ See "The Garden of Innovations," *Website of the Jardin Botanique de Montréal*, <http://espacepourlavie.ca/en/gardens-and-greenhouses/garden-innovations> (accessed Dec. 28, 2012). Though as I argue below, many areas of the MBG can be seen as implicitly supportive of commercial horticulture, the marketing of plants and other garden materials is most explicit in the Garden of Innovations, where new varieties of garden plants are presented along with new materials for garden and landscape construction (e.g., paving stones, walls, containers and so on). It is, as the gardener complains, a somewhat garishly colourful space, since all the plants are designed to be *noticeably* better than existing varieties, and to become objects of desire for gardeners. They tend to be bigger and/or brighter, to be unusual in colour, or to have new forms of variegated foliage. It is here that the MBG can be explicit about what is implicit in the other gardens within its boundaries: that horticulture is not only an art and a science,

publicly associated with a particular building, garden or research program—are increasingly common as a means to ensure stable funding for two social ‘goods’ that are often portrayed as indulgent in fiscally restrained times (that is, research and gardens).²⁹

Understanding the broader (i.e., postcolonial) politics in which botanical gardens currently participate, requires an interrogation of the influence of sponsorship and other forms of private partnership, upon which many gardens have come to rely (and which I unfortunately do not have space to treat comprehensively here).

All that said, the continuing importance of Kew, as a model to which botanical gardens around the world aspire, should not be underestimated: even gardens such as the MBG, which has always been earnestly municipal in its identity, must be considered to a certain degree in light of its legacy (as well as those of other influential colonial gardens, such as the Jardin des plantes). For a start, the very characteristic which distinguishes botanical gardens from other kinds of garden, is inherently intertwined with imperialist values: that is, as a collection of plants that is valued first and foremost for its comprehensiveness, it gives form to the enduring fantasy of containing the whole of the world within one’s own domain. Such fantasies have, in turn, their own uses. As

but also a business.

²⁹ As Lighty notes, municipally owned public gardens are increasingly becoming privatized in order to ensure a continued existence, due to “...the increasing reluctance of taxpayers to pay for ever more programs, abetted by politicians’ propensity to direct more of that tax base to subsistence services unrelated to our cultural and intellectual well-being.” Lighty, “North American public garden,” 10. The exhibition greenhouse attached to the MBG’s reception centre, which was renovated in 1995, is named the “Molson Hospitality Greenhouse,” and HSBC is currently listed as a “partner” in an environmental education program for secondary students. In other gardens, the role of private partnerships has been even more substantial, and contentious. For example, numerous buildings of the Missouri Botanical Garden are named after Monsanto—a transnational agricultural biotechnology corporation, responsible for—among other things—the development of genetically modified crops capable of surviving the application of pesticides, and for lobbying to create legislation prohibiting traditional agricultural practices such as seed-saving.

Marianne Klemun describes, writing about botanical gardens in the Habsburg countries of the early nineteenth century, even in countries without a significant colonial regime, such gardens served as theatres where the staging of colonial dramas could serve the consolidation of collective political identities. As she puts it, botanical gardens displaying exotic species “...opened a discourse where a community could discover itself—the familiar through the foreign, and its identity by virtue of contrast with the ‘other’.”³⁰

While it could be argued that the question of national identity is, since (at least) the 1960s, in the background of almost every cultural undertaking in Quebec, the focus of such exercises in the Botanical Garden, has always seemed to me to have been the city.³¹ It is Montrealers, not Quebecers, who are seen to identify with the garden, and to whom many of its projects (both within and outside its borders) have been addressed.³² This is in large part due to the fact that the garden was, up until 1995, funded and administered from within different departments of the city. It therefore had to be justified in municipal terms. The Garden’s implication in city politics will be a recurring theme in the discussion of later chapters; suffice it to say for now, that while the Montreal Botanical Garden cannot be seen as untouched by a colonial legacy, or nationalist politics, its municipal identity is so much more prominent in the materials I consider, and with respect to my

³⁰ Marianne Klemun, "Space, state, territory, region and habitat: Alpine gardens in the Habsburg countries," *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 28, no. 3-4 (2008), 415. She describes the development of the first alpine garden in this context, identifying it as a means for the crown to appropriate, through science, the values of a people whose territory it hoped to acquire (i.e., the Tyrolean Alps), and through which it wished to define and unify its domain.

³¹ That said, it does come to the foreground in some ways: for example, in gardens such as the Quebec Corner, and in interpretative materials focused on species indigenous to Quebec.

³² For example, in the Garden’s mission statement, its social vocation is conceived explicitly as responding to the needs of Montrealers: "...Over the years, it has fostered a special relationship with the people of Montréal and lends the community invaluable expertise and support..." "Mission," *Website of the Jardin Botanique de Montréal*.

questions about public gardens in general, that I have for the most part bracketed a deeper consideration of these themes.

The second legacy of colonial botanical gardens it is worth taking note of here, is their perceived contribution to projects of social engineering—both in Europe and abroad. For example, as Drayton notes, the idea that access to open space, and the appreciation of natural beauty would have a “civilizing” effect on the lower and middle classes—so central to the public parks movement—was also important to the garnering of political support for continued public expenditure on Kew in the early and mid-nineteenth century. As its director at the time put it, “...the minds of the middling and lower ranks are enlarged and enlightened by a display of all that is most beautiful and lovely in vegetable creation; and thus a gradual improvement must ensue in the habits and morals of the people.”³³ As late as the 1850s, Kew was still being called upon to produce flowers, trees and shrubs for the ornamentation of public parks, and to provide on its grounds, an adequate display of carpet bedding to attract a greater visiting public. Colonial gardens abroad were sometimes seen even more explicitly in terms of their capacity to produce social change, giving new meaning to the term “agricultural extension” when they selected individuals they judged to be influential in the local community to work in the garden. These individuals, it was hoped, would help to spread agricultural knowledge and expertise within the community, so that members could be convinced to take up farming as opposed to occupations less conducive to colonial aims.

Aside from alerting us to these potential uses of botanical gardens—which I think are relevant to the social and political disposition of the MBG at its founding, particularly

³³ Drayton, *Nature's Government*, 188.

because the rhetoric of civic improvement used by Teuscher employed similar discursive themes—I think it is important to take seriously the fact that botanical gardens have historically been so conducive to the aims of colonization. While the social and political functioning of a garden such as the MBG today should not be seen as wholly continuous with the legacy of a garden such as Kew, it is also not wholly discontinuous. Without being able to specify precisely the nature of the relationship (since, for one, I am unwilling to posit a single model of historical change), I presume that past capacities structure contemporary capacities—if in an indeterminate sense, and to a partial degree. Discussing past uses of botanical gardens is, as such, a means of providing a productive context for the analysis of contemporary use—in a sense analogous to the way that the manipulation of background colour and lighting changes the way we see a given object. That is, it helps to bring certain effects more clearly into focus. This is particularly important when studying botanical gardens, since as Drayton demonstrates, much of their utility in the past has resided in their capacity for cloaking social and political agendas in an apparently beneficent, and even natural, scientific authority.

Teuscher's vision and its realization in the Perennial Garden

In 1943, approximately six years after the Garden was opened to the public, Teuscher wrote an article for *The Municipal Review of Canada* in which he described the role of a botanical garden in improving citizenship among urban residents. He wrote,

Modern man, living in his man-made desert of stone called the *city*, is a being without roots. His habitation is no more than a temporary shelter, to which he feels no attachment and which he changes at least once a year. He is imbued with a sense of struggle against all and sundry and is so completely self-centred that he gives no more consideration to his fellow-men than to the rest of nature... It seems that from our forefathers who had to wrest a precarious existence from nature yet knew full well their place in it, we have taken into our modern,

mechanized mode of living nothing other than a misunderstood notion of nature having to be conquered by man... This attitude, this “mis-orientation” of man in nature, is at the root of more of the evils of the city than can be outlined here.³⁴

The botanical garden was conceived by him as a means of providing urban residents, not only contact with nature, but a “systematic education” regarding their relation to it, thereby disposing them to become better citizens.

Teuscher’s beliefs—though quite zealously articulated—were quite consistent with contemporary thinking about urban planning. As Dagenais notes, planners and administrators believed that creating the right kind of environments, would engender social harmony as well as physical well-being among its citizens. At the same time, a desire to reconcile the city with nature, and in particular, to make it serve the ends of society, was “charactéristique de la modernité et présent dans bien des réflexions sur la ville de cette époque [the early twentieth century].”³⁵ The association of flowers and gardens with the civilizing effects of “nature” was also well-established by this point, thanks not only to the public parks movement of the nineteenth century, but also to the City Beautiful and other horticulturally themed reform movements of the early twentieth century.³⁶ The utility of a botanical garden for the ends of socialization was thus, for many, self-evident.

Teuscher however, took things a step further when he insisted that a simple contact with nature was not enough, and that a “systematic education” was required. In

³⁴ Henry Teuscher, "Value of a municipal botanical garden," *The Municipal Review of Canada*, September, 1943, 6-8.

³⁵ Dagenais, *Faire et faire*, 15.

³⁶ These included Montreal’s own beautification campaigns, and the Garden City movement (which was less influential, finding application in only a few residential areas of Montreal). In all cases, the ‘nature’ in question was of course, already thoroughly cultured.

undertaking such an education, he believed it “...must be so simple and its means so attractive and pleasurable that the public will learn without realizing that it is being taught.”³⁷ He emphasized two different pedagogical strategies corresponding to two different styles of garden, both of which were found in the original plans for the Botanical Garden. On the one hand he emphasized the benefits of introducing people to the principles of plant ecology—“the live end of the science of botany”—and set aside a large area of the Garden for the presentation of plant groups that appeared together in different ecosystems.³⁸ On the other, as mentioned above, he believed the beauty of flower gardens to be especially powerful in soliciting a lasting interest in plant life. Accordingly, he gave the exhibition gardens a formal structure and simple organization that made the most of massed floral displays. In this juxtaposition within the Garden of natural and formal presentations, two versions of nature were clearly demarcated—nature ‘for itself’, and nature ‘for man’.³⁹ As such, the Perennial Garden (along with the

³⁷ Henry Teuscher, "Program for an ideal botanical garden," in *Memoirs of the Montreal Botanical Garden*, vol. 1, English ed. (Montreal, Montreal Botanical Garden, 1940) 3.

³⁸ He wrote, “If we can reproduce in a botanical garden in truly natural manner and in large enough samples to assure a good effect some of the most characteristic types of vegetation in the vicinity, and if we can explain in simple, clear language and in not too many sentences how the various plants are adapted to the conditions under which they grow and on which they depend, we shall always meet with deep interest.” Teuscher, "Program for an ideal botanical garden," 4. According to the guides published over the years (which describe them as under development), the Ecological Groups were incomplete until the 1980s—at which point they were only partially realized as planned by Teuscher: the Flowery Brook had in part taken their place (as of 1976), while the remaining areas were eventually replaced by the First Nations gardens (created in 2001). The latter garden is organized in any case around ecological principles, though also heavily augmented by a circuit of interpretative panels describing the ethnobotanical traditions of different First Nations cultures. The only other garden in the present-day collection demonstrating an ecological organization is the Quebec Corner (which, interestingly enough, used to be called Plants of the American Indians).

³⁹ As he put it, describing the differences between a “rock garden” and an “alpinum” (the former being found more often in a residential setting), “A formal layout is suggested for the display of the true rock garden plants as a contrast to the alpinum; and since the plants shown here are suggested for the use of man, it seems only appropriate to display them in a distinctly man-made garden.” Teuscher, "Program for an ideal botanical garden," 9.

other exhibition gardens) provided an education, not only in the variety of plant species conducive to cultivation in Montreal gardens, but also, the proper relation of man and nature.

In this explanation of the Botanical Garden's layout, Teuscher was effectively articulating a pedagogy of Beaux Arts garden design. An eclectic approach influential mainly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it drew equally on traditions of both formal French and picturesque English garden design and was characterized by “[a] composition with a sense of balance, the mixing and juxtaposition of natural spaces, the imitation of nature in its unspoilt state, together with the presence of hierarchical, geometric and perspective interventions...”⁴⁰ As Morales emphasizes, Beaux Arts gardens were always designed in relation to architecture or, in the case of larger gardens, “...to the city seen as a huge edifice.”⁴¹ In this, Morales argues, they were complementary and sometimes explicitly subservient to the ideals and goals of the City Beautiful movement, serving as a means of organizing and controlling the “metropolitan phenomenon.”⁴² Thus Teuscher’s desire to establish, within the Garden as a whole, the proper relation between man and nature, can be seen as contributing to a larger moral and political agenda that was complementary in many ways to that of the beautification campaigns in general. In the Perennial Garden, this relationship was characterized by the creation of order and the exercise of control. In images of the Perennial Garden from the 1940s, 50s

⁴⁰ Ignasi de Solà Morales, "The Beaux-Arts garden," in *The History of Garden Design*, ed. Monique Mosser and Georges Teyssot (London, Thames and Hudson, 1991) 401. Desrochers also makes this observation about the Garden as a whole. DesRochers, *Étude historique*.

⁴¹ Morales, "The Beaux-Arts garden," 399.

⁴² Ibid, 408.



Figure 2. Perennial Garden, looking southeast toward the Administration Building (1943). Courtesy of the Montreal Botanical Garden.



Figure 3. Perennial Garden, looking north (1966). Photo by Romeo Meloche. Courtesy of the Montreal Botanical Garden.

and 60s, masses of blooming flowers contrast with the straight lines of pathways and flower bed borders, producing simultaneously, impressions of floral abundance and order.

In the two images appearing in the first guide to the Botanical Garden (published in 1944), masses of a single identifiable species of flower occupy the foreground.⁴³ The profusion of blooms contrasts markedly with the linearity of the structures which contain them, as well as those in the background. For example, the first provides a view looking north, down the length of the garden. In it, the strip of lawn running up the middle organizes the image: paralleled on either side by a succession of rectangular flowerbeds, it leads the eye from a mass of flowers in the foreground towards a small chalet and two long pergolas running perpendicular to the main pathway at the far end of the garden. Indeed, it is hard to say whether it is the flowers or the straight lines of the garden and its structures which constitute the primary subject of the photograph. The rectangular bed of *Astilbe* appearing in the foreground at the bottom of the image both disrupts and reinforces the image's linearity, since the plants themselves are anything but linear (though they are planted in two long rows). The foliage extends in all directions, and the flowerheads in the foreground nod beyond the rectangular frame of the garden. They are tidy and well-contained, but palpably organic—*other* to the straight lines which they are

⁴³ Because I present a more in-depth analysis of guides below, I simply note here briefly the context in which these images appear. The 1944 guide was published before the garden was fully complete (in fact, the brief history provided in the guide notes that construction had by then been halted for three years due to the ongoing war). As noted above, the city had by this time taken full responsibility for its funding. It is possible therefore to read in its pages, a certain need to justify the worth of the Garden as a municipal investment. The introduction lists several ways in which a) plants are vital to the well-being and progress of human society; and b) the Garden provides benefits to the citizens of Montreal. Therefore, “...il est très utile qu'une ville de grande étendue renferme des oasis où le public puisse prendre contact directement avec le monde végétal et apprendre à le mieux connaître.” *Le Jardin botanique de Montréal*, 1944, XCD00, P6435, V1950.3-1/3, Archives de Montréal, Montreal, 1. In this context, it seems appropriate to read in the images presented, a certain rhetorical function; in particular, the need to convey the Garden’s social and cultural as well as scientific value.

made (mostly, or at least superficially) to obey. The way they lean slightly beyond the straight edges of the flower bed, and billow, rather than rise straight from their stems, is suggestive of both the effort and the achievement of the garden's clean lines. In the second image, a similar contrast is achieved, though the verticality of the *Delphinium* is accentuated by the lines of the administration building looming on the horizon, suggesting an even more convincing imposition of order. In both photographs, despite the fact that flowers occupy the foreground, it seems to be the rectilinearity of their arrangement, and the fact of their containment, which is on display as much as their specific aesthetic qualities.⁴⁴

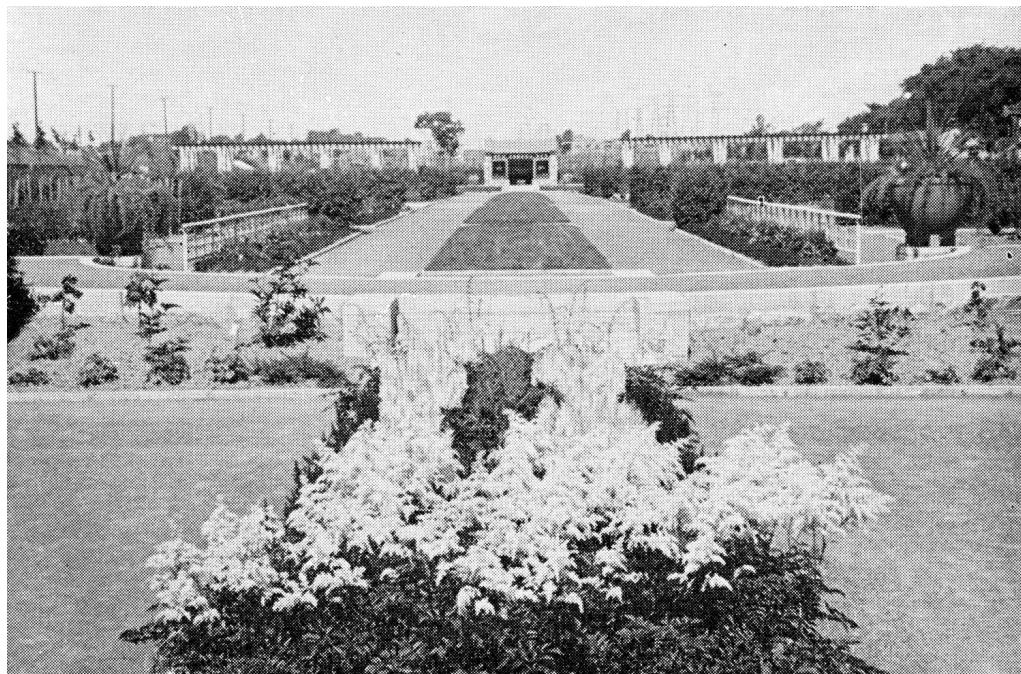


Figure 4. Perennial Garden, looking north (1944). *Le Jardin botanique de Montréal*, 1944, XCD00, P6435, V1950.3-1/3, Archives de Montréal, Montreal. Courtesy of the Archives de Montréal.

⁴⁴ The sense that order was centrally important to the beauty and benefits attributed to the garden is strengthened by the remark, appearing in the introduction to the 1944 guide, that "le Jardin botanique n'est pas un endroit banal; c'est un parc *mieux ordonné* et plus variés que les autres, où le citadin peut venir oublier les laideurs et les trépidations de la vie moderne." *Le Jardin botanique de Montréal*, 1944, 1; emphasis added.



Figure 5. Perennial Garden, looking southeast toward the administration building (1944). *Le Jardin botanique de Montréal*, 1944, XCD00, P6435, V1950.3-1/3, Archives de Montréal, Montreal. Courtesy of the Archives de Montréal.

Teuscher's stated intent was to create a structure that both maximized the impact of floral beauty, and whose organization was easy to navigate. The majority of the individual beds in the Perennial Garden were therefore originally planted with different varieties of only one, or possibly two, species. As Teuscher specified, this "makes it easy for visitors to find the particular type of flower they may be looking for and to compare similar varieties; while on the other hand it provides a brilliant display in each of the individual gardens at one particular time."⁴⁵ However, perhaps more importantly in relation to the civic outcomes Teuscher associated with such an education, the overall effect was a demonstration of gardening as a site where nature thrived under human control, where its vital energy was not only effectively, but quite visibly, tamed for

⁴⁵ Teuscher, "Program for an ideal botanical garden," 6.

aesthetic ends. Thus as much as Teuscher may have believed passionately in the “oneness” of nature, the Perennial Garden celebrated its subordination to the ends of culture.

To a certain degree, this is what gardens are always about, for it is by controlling the growth and arrangement of plants and other elements that a garden can be set apart to act as refuge from both the cruelty of untamed nature and the excesses and imperatives of human society. It is thus through gardens that we gain safe access to what would otherwise overwhelm us. As Simon Pugh asserts, every garden thus signifies both a loss and a pleasure gained: the presence of ‘nature’ signifies a precultural bliss, while markers of human intervention remind us that it is the distance created by its control which enables an experience of pleasure.⁴⁶ It is the quality of control exercised that enables individual gardens to speak more specifically about the relationship between nature and human culture in a given time and place. In the Perennial Garden of the 1940s, 50s and 60s, it seems to have been important that control be both exacting and visible as such. Given the contrast between, on the one hand, the formality and intensity of maintenance apparent in photographs from this period, and on the other, Teuscher’s assertions about nature, as well as what was demonstrated elsewhere in the Garden (via the ‘ecological groups’), it seems that the Perennial Garden was not really about nature as such, even

⁴⁶ For Pugh, this dynamic of pleasure and control is always individual as well as sociocultural—in other words, psychosexual. As he puts it, after Eden, and the *hortus conclusus*, gardens “are symbolic of the control of pleasure through abstinence... The initial prohibition of the first Garden (‘Thou shalt not...’) is signified by that part of the garden which nature claims and which must therefore be defined as taboo. Within the garden, nature is, like uncontrollable bliss, prohibited. Far more cruel (to make available and to ban simultaneously) than any primitive anarchy, this prohibition establishes the basis, the condition, of social tutelage based upon self-control.” Pugh, *Garden-Nature-Language*, 103.

indirectly. It was in fact about the city, and the potential for a scientific knowledge and management of nature to improve ways of living there.

While Teuscher's aim was to create a garden that would both inspire an interest in gardening and educate visitors about plants in general, the garden's structure and layout facilitated a mode of perception which, while not entirely counterproductive to these aims, enabled visitors to take up a position in relation to the garden which had other implications. This is because, in contrast to gardens smaller in size, less rectilinear in design, or planted in a less homogeneous fashion, large portions of the Perennial Garden could be surveyed from several positions within it.⁴⁷ Thus as much as Teuscher hoped people would take the time to search out the labels for individual plant varieties (and thereby learn something about them), the garden itself encouraged a much less focused mode of perception.⁴⁸ Given at the same time, the strict linearity of its layout, and the degree to which the plants themselves were contained by different aspects of the garden's structure as well as intensive maintenance, visitors would have been encouraged to take up a point of view that evoked a sense of mastery. In part because the plants were identified and organized in masses, and made to behave in a manner which rendered them all the same (at least within a given variety), the visitor could see them all at once, and evaluate whole beds at a glance. This was the point of view, not of a gardener, who

⁴⁷ Indeed, taking up these positions was encouraged by the Garden's structure: for example, the placement of fountains and pergolas at either end, with the individual beds aligned symmetrically on either side of a central corridor, marked the view down its length as the important one. A raised walking path on the west side, also enabled an elevated view of the garden as a whole.

⁴⁸ The organization according to species would also have encouraged an exclusive attention to flowers, as opposed to the plants as a whole, since within groupings of individual species, all the plants would have bloomed at the same time, producing relatively short-lived 'brilliant displays'. Thus, especially if Teuscher was right about the lack of horticultural sophistication to be expected from visitors, people would presumably have been drawn principally to those areas of the garden that were the most colourful at the time of their visit.

spends most of his or her time tending to plants up-close (and with intimate knowledge of their ever-present capacity to exceed control), but of one who rules over, or surveys and manages plants: a monarch, a landscape architect, or—perhaps most likely, given the self-consciously municipal identity of the Garden—park superintendent. While the garden as a whole could be seen (like all botanical gardens) as a sign of a beneficent authority, its traversal encouraged visitors to identify with that authority.

The floral abundance laid out before visitors standing at one end of the garden, or strolling the raised walkways on its west side was, above all else, well-ordered and well-managed. It was quite literally a demonstration of what could be done with plants, in gardens—the *point* of horticultural science and expertise, especially in the public sphere. In this context, plants gained a two-fold visibility: being seen in terms both of what was beautiful about them (and conducive to use in a garden), and what was known about them (principally, as far as the visitor was concerned, their names).⁴⁹ In fact, in the garden as Teuscher laid it out, they were beautiful *because* they were knowable, since it was the grouping by species that made impressive floral displays possible. Thus, by building a botanical garden, the city made a new cultural amenity (garden plants) available for both edification and ornamentation. At the time the Botanical Garden was created, most Montrealers did not have the space to make substantial gardens of their own, and few of the city's parks or public spaces contained gardens or significant vegetative ornamentation.⁵⁰ The Perennial Garden would therefore have created a powerful

⁴⁹ In other words, they were illuminated by a visibility simultaneously horticultural and botanical.

⁵⁰ As Jean de Laplante details, and as I discuss further in Chapter Four, aside from Parc Lafontaine (which contained flowerbeds and a greenhouse), the city parks that were completed by this time, were rather minimally ornamented with trees and shrubs. Of park development under Claude Robillard,

impression on visitors, providing less an education with respect to the plants themselves, and more an appreciation of gardening expertise.

To understand more fully what this disposition towards ‘nature’ (or, more precisely, towards gardens as a site of its control), implied about life in the city, it is helpful to consider the garden in light of certain aspects of the myth of beautification. As I now attempt to demonstrate, in the context of parades mounted during the late 1940s and early 1950s, the performative articulation of flowers, gardens and beautiful women with ideals of urban citizenship, was consonant in unexpected ways with the semiotic structure of the Perennial Garden.

The era of the ‘parade de fleurs’ in the beautification campaigns (1946-49)

Although the Botanical Garden administered various aspects of the window box competitions in the 1960s, its earlier involvement in the campaigns seems to have been limited to participation in the parades held between 1946 and 1951.⁵¹ While the newspaper coverage in the early war years was somewhat subdued (and there is no coverage preserved between 1943 and 1945), by 1946 the tone was almost jubilant, and the events of the campaigns decidedly more festive.⁵² It was as if the civic enthusiasm

the director of the inaugural Service des parcs (established in 1953), de Laplante writes, “Au chapitre de la verdure, on ne débordait guère le souci d’utilité—c’est à dire masque une clôture par une haie d’arbustes, planter des arbres pour créer un coin d’ombre pour des jeux paisibles, etc.” de Laplante, *Les parcs de Montréal*, 142.

⁵¹ This is not to say with certainty that the Botanical Garden was not in any way involved in the campaigns outside the parades, just that, if they were, it was not important enough to the campaigns to warrant mention in the newspaper coverage.

⁵² For examples of coverage of wartime campaigns, see "La campagne annuelle de nettoyage," *Le Canada*, April 30, 1942; and "Clean-up plus," *The Star*, May 5, 1942.

which had been fostered leading up to the city's tercentenary in 1942—the celebration of which had been all but cancelled due to the war—was now finally allowed full expression.

This was the beginning of a sustained period of prosperity for the city. As a port city, Montreal received a substantial portion of the benefits from wartime production.⁵³ Thousands of men who had been un- or underemployed throughout the depression went back to work. In addition, women—many of whom had never worked before—joined them in unprecedented numbers. It was, as such, also a time of social upheaval. As Mann observes, while the government and industry alike facilitated the entry of women into the labour force, their presence there was disquieting, and even alarming, for many.⁵⁴ At the same time, wartime production empowered unionized workers, leading to a record number of strikes (even some by non-unionized workers)—which, combined with the rise in membership of leftist groups during the depression, and the declining influence of the Catholic church, signaled the threat of a more significant social disorder.⁵⁵ In this context, it is hardly surprising that citywide beautification campaigns—an existing medium of social consensus—should have been undertaken with such enthusiasm during this time. Not only did Montrealers have something to celebrate, they also needed an occasion to come together and affirm the increasingly tenuous social contract which the activities of beautification helped to sustain.

⁵³ Of Canadian cities, Montreal had “the largest number of employees in the war industries.” John A. Dickinson and Brian Young, *A Short History of Quebec* (Toronto, Copp Clark Pitman, 1993).

⁵⁴ Mann, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec*.

⁵⁵ Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal*. As Mann describes, the perceived significance of this constellation of events and circumstances, was also coloured by the policies and personality of Maurice Duplessis, who was premier of Quebec from 1936-39 and 1944-59, and who used an amplified sense of external threats to Quebec society as a means of strengthening support for his leadership. Mann, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec*.

That said, the change in tone of the campaigns may also have had something to do with a change in leadership. From 1946 to 1950, their organization was directed by the Chambre de commerce des jeunes. Presided over by ‘Miss Montreal’ (or “la reine d’embellissement”⁵⁶), the winner of a city-wide beauty contest, these campaigns culminated in an elaborate parade des fleurs. Both the beauty contest and the parade seem to have generated considerable interest and excitement, meriting detailed newspaper coverage and numerous photographs, especially in the first year. According to this coverage, the parades were spectacular affairs attended by thousands of Montrealers.⁵⁷ They staged a performative articulation of beauty, civic responsibility and cleanliness on a large scale, in what one article referred to as “...un hommage collectif à notre belle métropole symbolisée par la charmante Mademoiselle Montréal.”⁵⁸ Featuring large quantities of real flowers and mobile ‘gardens’ (in the form of allegorical floats), they produced, if only briefly, an *experience* (as opposed to simply an image) of la ville fleurie. In a manner structurally if not formally analogous to the Perennial Garden, they presented spectators with an abundance of beauty that was nonetheless, well-ordered. The first one, in 1946, was described in the following manner:

For more than an hour people of all ages filled windows and balconies, and gathered on the sidewalks to see the procession of flower-decked cars carrying bevies of beautiful girls, the attractive floats, glistening fire trucks, city watering

⁵⁶ ...“the queen of beautification.”

⁵⁷ Several articles in 1946 report an attendance of 100,000. For example, see "La 'Parade des fleurs' a été couronnée de succès," *Le Devoir*, May 4, 1946. In 1948, 200,000 spectators were reported by one paper. "Le choix de Miss Montréal 1948 tombe sur une jeune fille travaillant chez Johnson & Johnson," *L'Est Montréalais*, June, 1948.

⁵⁸ “...a collective homage to our beautiful city, symbolized by the lovely Miss Montreal.” "Offensive joyeuse contre la laideur et la malpropreté," *La Presse*, May 3, 1946.

trucks, and giant snow-clearing vehicles, while a half dozen bands in the parade played marching music and popular aires.⁵⁹

Both flowers and women appeared throughout the parades: the women rode on the floats and in cars, sometimes distributing flowers to spectators on foot; the flowers decorated everything from floats to cars to the women themselves. The quantity of each seems to have been an important component of their significance: descriptions of the parade generally included various attempts to convey the great quantity of women and flowers involved. Numbers were often given (e.g., from fifty to over two hundred women, depending on the year, and in 1948, 25,000 flowers), and lists were sometimes provided of the different flowers featured. But more generally, we read of floats “literally covered” with flowers, “bevies of beautiful girls”, “profusions of flowers” and so on. My impression is that the presence of women and flowers *in abundance*, was as important as how beautiful they each were individually. This perhaps reflected the fact that what was being promoted was environmental beauty (as in, that which is all around), but more likely I think, it was because what the flowers and girls did was *embody* beauty, as opposed to represent it. They were not symbols, but *instances* of beauty, and the more the better from the perspective of beautification. At the same time, Montreal was a city which had been hit hard economically by the depression.⁶⁰ Although the war had brought an influx of jobs which helped to alleviate the poverty suffered during the work shortages of the Depression, the production of anything in abundance, but especially something as non-

⁵⁹ "Parade of the Flowers Features Montreal's Annual Clean-Up Week," *The Gazette*, May 4, 1946.

⁶⁰ In some neighbourhoods during the depression, 40% of residents were without work. Dickinson and Young *History of Quebec*. Perhaps more importantly with respect to beautification efforts, the city went into substantial debt in its attempt to alleviate poverty and mitigate the threat of social unrest. As Mann reports, by 1940, it had begun to default on its 400 million dollar debt. Mann, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec*.

essential as flowers, would still have been powerfully symbolic for Montrealers, as a heralding of a return to prosperity, and the sanctioning of optimism as opposed to caution and conservation with regard to the future.

If the parades celebrated abundant beauty, however, they also celebrated at the same time the production of order within and through the modern city. The association of beauty (both floral and feminine) with order, was accomplished through a variety of means. First, in the background, was the structure and rhetoric of the beautification campaigns which had been making this and similar connections (e.g., between beauty and cleanliness) both implicitly and explicitly since at least the 1930s.⁶¹ Second, the structure of the parades themselves made a similar articulation, juxtaposing processions of police, firemen and shiny municipal vehicles with beautiful women, their arms loaded with flowers.⁶² Third, the content of the allegorical floats reproduced similar juxtapositions (in the form for example, of a float demonstrating broom-making and sweeping, followed by one demonstrating the results of home gardening).⁶³ All in all, the parades both demonstrated and celebrated the fact that municipal order and cleanliness made, not simply beauty, but its abundance, possible. The number of women exceeded the logic of the beauty contest, and the flowers were so numerous they were given away. And yet it all

⁶¹ And likely before, though I can't say for sure since there is no newspaper coverage in the collection under consideration between 1916 and 1930.

⁶² Generally speaking, the parades were divided fairly clearly between processions of municipal employees and vehicles, and the floats and beauty contest winners, which came second (though women and flowers appeared to a certain degree throughout).

⁶³ In 1946, a float contributed by the Jardin Botanique was entitled "La récompensée" and was described in the following manner: "Après avoir vu les tableaux du nettoyage et jardinage, le spectateur admirait les résultats du travail accompli. Le char allegorique du Jardin Botanique disparaissait sous une profusion des fleurs, plus belles les unes que les autres." "La 'Parade des fleurs' a été couronnée de succès," *Le Devoir*, May 4, 1946. According to the newspaper coverage, the Botanical Garden contributed floats in 1946, 1947 and 1948.

unrolled in an orderly fashion, overseen not only by municipal authorities, but also a queen whose beauty took its form in grace and good manners.

In fact, a consideration of the contests which crowned the queen may help to further specify the form of beauty the parades celebrated. As Patrizia Gentile argues in her history of beauty contests in Canada, such contests were never really about beauty, as such. They were rather a means through which women's bodies could be deployed as "tools in reifying abstract ideals like femininity, nation, community, or 'whiteness', which then became part of collective consciousness."⁶⁴ The contests mounted as part of the beautification campaigns in Montreal were consistent in many ways with the ideals and procedures governing beauty contests in general at the time.⁶⁵ For example, the reports of the criteria for the contest downplayed the role of contestants' physical qualities, specifying that the winner should be, "...agée entre 17 et 26 ans; avoir au moins 10 années d'étude et être parfaitement bilingue. La beauté ne suffit pas pour se faire élire. La reine doit avoir de la personnalité, savoir s'exprimer dans tout milieu avec aisance et en un mot bien représenter la ville."⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Patrizia Gentile, *Queen of the Maple Leaf: A History of Beauty Contests in Twentieth Century Canada* (PhD dissertation, Queen's University, 2006), 18.

⁶⁵ Such contests had been popular in North America since the early 1920s, when the first Miss America pageant was mounted. The first Miss Canada pageant was held in Montreal in 1923, organized to coincide with the city's winter carnival. In the years following, similar pageants were subsequently held in communities across the country as part of fairs and festivals, or to promote tourism, but another Miss Canada pageant was not organized until 1946 (this time in Hamilton, Ontario). Ibid. Since no mention is made of the national contest in the coverage of the beautification campaigns that year, it is not clear whether Miss Montreal would have gone on to represent the city there.

⁶⁶ "...between seventeen and twenty-six years old; must have at least ten years of schooling and be perfectly bilingual. Good looks are not sufficient to get elected. The queen must have personality, be able to express herself with ease in any context and—in a word—represent the city well." "Le choix de Miss Montréal 1948 tombe sur une jeune fille travaillant chez Johnson & Johnson," *L'Est Montréalais*, June, 1948 (date illegible). That said, it does seem that a certain body type was required. In another article from 1948, the age, height, weight and hair colour of each of the five finalists in the contests was published. "Tâche ardue de 10 juges," *La Presse*, May 14, 1948.

As Gentile reports, non-physical criteria were common in beauty pageants during this time. Organizers frequently insisted that such events were not in fact beauty contests, or, not that kind of contest, in an attempt to avoid association with the sexual or commercial connotations of some of the larger contests (e.g., Miss USA, which was sponsored by a bathing suit company). As organizers reassured Montrealers, “Le choix de Miss Montreal ne se fait pas comme dans les villes américaines, par un défilé en maillots de bain. La procedure est plus décente.”⁶⁷ Rather than seeking to evaluate feminine beauty as such, “...pageants appropriated the beauty contest model to project a symbol that encapsulate[d] ideals proudly held by a community.”⁶⁸ These women served not only to honour and inspire the beautification efforts of Montrealers, and delight parade attendees (as the newspaper articles reported), but also to model ideals of femininity and citizenship which, after the War, required some bolstering. As Mann describes, the presence of women in the wartime labour force caused the elites of Québécois society—the values of which were at that time still heavily influenced by the Catholic church—much anxiety:

Women were abandoning their sacred duties in the home to scurry after the excitement and the cash of vulgar jobs in industry. They were exposing themselves to moral and physical dangers: the road to prostitution led inevitably from the promiscuity of the factory to that of the brothel. Those who narrowly escaped that fate nonetheless bore the traces of industrial health hazards. Their strength was undermined and their constitution poisoned. What kind of children would they produce?⁶⁹

⁶⁷ “The selection of Miss Montreal does not follow the American tradition, with a parade in swimsuits. The process is more decent.” "Le choix de Miss Montréal 1948 tombe sur une jeune fille travaillant chez Johnson & Johnson," *L'Est Montréalais*, June, 1948; (date illegible).

⁶⁸ Gentile, *Queen of the Maple Leaf*, 57.

⁶⁹ Mann, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec*, 256. As Mann discusses in some depth, from the perspective of many elites, Quebec society had been on the brink of dissolution since the 1920s, due in equal parts to the declining power of the Catholic church, economic volatility and growing federal influence over provincial matters. Throughout this period and well into the 50s, the

Beauty contestants were thus required both to embody traditional qualities of the ‘good woman’ (e.g., respectability, submissiveness, wholesomeness and so on), and—consistent with what Gentile calls the “cult of personality” associated with societies of mass production and consumption—to display a ‘genuine’ and likable personality.⁷⁰

However, as much as such ideals resonated with the changing culture of Canadian society as a whole, they were also significant in relation to issues and circumstances specific to life in Montreal. For example, while an emphasis on personality and the ability to express oneself with ease in a variety of situations was consistent with contests elsewhere, its relevance to the ideals of citizenship promoted via the beautification campaigns would also have resonated in a special way for Montrealers attending the parade and participating in other aspects of the campaign. In particular, these qualities, as well as the educational requirement—which ensured that contestants would possess a minimum of social and intellectual competency—aligned well with the (until then) vague notions of cultural sophistication and refinement that had appeared previously in campaign rhetoric. While the window box contests had encouraged the cultivation and expression of ‘good taste’ through gardening, the contestants in the beauty contest *personified* the cultural competency that provided the foundation for such modes of self-expression and social participation. As I discuss below, the presentation of the queen and her ‘court’ on garden-themed floats, strengthened the notion that the quality (i.e., the beauty) of the urban environment reflected the quality of its citizens. Miss Montreal

maintenance of traditional gender divisions, particularly within the family, was seen as a means of strengthening Quebec society against dangerous external influences.

⁷⁰ ‘Personality’ was often equated with ‘poise’ and ‘charm’: the ability of a woman to conduct herself in a manner which was graceful and articulate, but not artificially or rigidly so. Gentile, *Queen of the Maple Leaf*, 60-72.

demonstrated both what was required for, and what could be gained through, the proper pursuit of activities such as gardening.⁷¹

Descriptions of the first Miss Montreal also reflected the importance of community involvement to ideals of urban citizenship.⁷² She was reported to be not only beautiful—blond, blue-eyed and slender—but a charming, genuine young girl who served in numerous local organizations (e.g., the Red Cross and the Ligue de la jeunesse feminine, an organization carrying out volunteer social work). She also practiced a variety of sports, was an aviation enthusiast and spent the summer on a lake with her family.⁷³ In other words, she was a modern girl but still perfectly feminine, a personification of the ideal urban lifestyle: she made the most of recreational opportunities and modern amenities available in the city, but maintained a connection to nature and family via time spent “dans le nord.”⁷⁴

As a representative of Montreal, the ideals embodied by la reine d’embellissement pertained specifically to life in the city. Her appearance along with other pretty young women on floats decorated to look like gardens further strengthened the association

⁷¹ As one article put it, describing the appearance in the parade of the contestants of the beauty contests together with a profusion of flowers, “En se présentant sous des dehors aussi attrayants, cette leçon ne pourra manquer d’inculquer le goût du beauté dans l’esprit des spectateurs.” “Offensive joyeuse contre la laideur et la malpropreté,” *La Presse*, May 3, 1946.

⁷² The importance of ideals related to the respect for and care of property was of course evident in every other aspect of the parades.

⁷³ “Un honneur bien placé,” *La Presse*, May 1, 1946.

⁷⁴ ...“in the north.” Her family is also described: “Une famille très agréable, très distinguée qui partage aujourd’hui l’honneur qui échoit à leur charmante représentante.” Ibid. In 1947 and 1948, the descriptions of Miss Montreal were less detailed. From the newspaper coverage, we know only that Miss Montreal 1947 was eighteen years old, of Swiss origin, and lived in Notre-Dame-de-Grace. “Devenue reine pour douze jours,” *Le Canada*, May 5, 1947. In 1948, she was twenty years old and “...elle accomplissait modestement son travail au département de publicité chez Johnson & Johnson...” “Le choix de Miss Montréal 1948 tombe sur une jeune fille travaillant chez Johnson & Johnson,” *L’Est Montréalais*, May, 1948.

between gardens and civic ideals. According to the newspaper coverage, these floats represented the highlight of the parades. In 1947 and 1948 it was the Botanical Garden's float that carried the queen and her court. The 1947 float was described as follows: "Appearance of the last float of all marked the high point of the parade. This was the throne car of the Queen of the Beautification Campaign, a beautiful garden scene with real flower-beds and herbaceous borders glowing with the choicest blooms, which made a lavish setting for the reigning beauty and her lovely maids of honour."⁷⁵



Figure 6. Allegorical float of the Botanical Garden in the 1947 Parade des fleurs. Courtesy of the Montreal Botanical Garden.

⁷⁵ "Bright Day Marked Beauty Parade Carrying Clean-Up Drive Message," *The Gazette*, May 19, 1946.

It is worth considering this float in some detail: as the “high point”, it can be seen to encapsulate both the mode and content of signification enacted via the parades. Here, signs of abundance and of order multiply and overlap, causing the women and the garden to mirror one another: the garden is where the women, as representatives of a refined beauty, belong, but it is also the realization, in landscape, of the same ideals. Just as the women embody both beauty (in abundance) and its restraint, so the garden gathers together a surplus of goods, and arranges them according to an order considered beautiful. In both cases, beauty unchecked would be too much: the physical grace of the women, and the social meaning of the garden, are made possible, through a judicious restraint.

In this context, the float can be seen to have served as a model for the ‘ville fleurie’—one in which either the women or the garden, could be viewed as a civilizing influence. From one point of view, specifically that informed by lingering concerns over social disorder, the women signified the stabilizing influence of the feminine on the city—the natural grace which turns prosperity to social good, rather than allowing it to devolve into hedonistic excess. It is their presence which makes of the city a garden rather than a jungle. From another—that informed by the rhetoric of the beautification campaigns—the cultivation of the garden is also a cultivation of the city’s (i.e., Miss Montreal’s) true potential. Without it, her beauty would fade from view, obscured by physical and social disorder, its meaning unappreciated. As a whole, the float is a realization of the more general logic underlying assertions made in the beautification campaigns about the relationship between city and citizen: one in which the environment—whether in the form of garden, or the city as a whole—is seen to both shape and reflect the quality of its citizens. As such, it gave back to spectators an image of themselves as sophisticated and

prosperous. Further, and perhaps more importantly, while much of the rhetoric in previous campaigns focused on what Montreal could become *if* it was beautified, the float, and the parade as a whole presented the city *as* beautiful. That is, with its music, its colour and movement and its deployment of living exemplars, it provided a visceral experience, as well as an image, of beauty. Beautification was in this moment not simply a question of keeping up appearances, but of discovering that “Flowers and cleanliness add to the *joy* of life.”⁷⁶

The civic importance of the Botanical Garden—whose name appeared plainly on the front of the float, and was credited in the newspaper coverage—both supported and was bolstered by these readings. That is, the idea that a garden could make life better for everyone, was made credible by the fact that the city had itself made a garden that was open to all Montrealers—one for whose technological and cultural prowess, the float was an advertisement. Covered in what appears to be live turf, and a garden composed of real garden plants—as opposed, for example, to potted Chrysanthemums, which is what one might expect in such a context—and complete with arbour, cedar hedge and overflowing window boxes, not to mention large fabricated flowers (on the sides of the float, and in the form of a giant blossom affixed to the back of the queen’s throne), it presented a depiction of vegetative abundance that was, in a sense, hyper-real, especially given how early in the spring it was.⁷⁷ As such, and as a garden *on wheels*—bearing the marks of concerted effort and skill, as well as deliberate (though by no means heavy-handed) order—it would have

⁷⁶ "Face Lifting Program Opens," *The Montreal Daily Star*, May 6, 1946; emphasis added.

⁷⁷ The spectators appear to be dressed in winter coats, and the trees are still bare. In this context, the use of real flowers so far ahead of the season, would have seemed slightly miraculous to a public only recently emerged from the cold and colourless landscape of winter, not to mention years of economic hardship.

been clear to parade-goers that such a production was only possible thanks both to the city's growing prosperity, and the wonders of modern (horticultural) science.⁷⁸

By 1950 however, the parade seems to have morphed into a more general civic celebration, featuring not only a Queen but also a King of Beautification, members of the Greek and Chinese communities dressed in “colourful national costumes”, a Red Cross float demonstrating blood donation and transfusion, and “Indian warriors led by Chief Poking Fire...in full war paint.”⁷⁹ With highlights such as the presentation of “two hockey sticks by members of the Junior Canadian hockey team” to the King of Beautification, it seems that the event had gained something of a life of its own. Perhaps not coincidentally, in 1951 the organization of the campaign was taken over by the apparently more sober Ligue du progrès civique, who, though they did hold a parade in 1952, did away with the beauty contest and the allegorical floats, preferring, it was reported, to keep the proceedings focused more closely on the goals of the campaign.⁸⁰

It was also in 1951 that the second guide to the Garden appeared, showing couples and families strolling the paths of the Perennial Garden and taking photographs; it now appeared a thoroughly social as well as a scientific and educational space, not unlike that of the parades in many ways. It was certainly no less abundant in its provision

⁷⁸ Though it was also—taking into consideration the circumstances of its construction—due to the premier’s willingness to sponsor work programs during the depression.

⁷⁹ "Clean-up drive theme pointed up by annual beautification parade," *The Gazette*, May 22, 1950.

⁸⁰ Besides, as one article put it, “Policiers, pompiers et travailleurs manuels de la municipalité avaient fort belle allure, et leurs véhicules, d’une propreté et d’un fini impeccables, pouvaient toujours illustrer le bon exemple...” “Rajeunir Montréal,” *La Presse*, May 19, 1952. The Chambre de commerce des jeunes did manage to mount one last parade in grand style, in 1955. In the late 1950s and the 60s, campaigns often included a similarly scaled-down parade, composed mainly of municipal vehicles and employees. The allegorical floats, when present, featured giant garbage cans and brooms rather than live flowers. Eventually (by the early seventies), the parades were downgraded to much smaller processions involving the inauguration of new parks, the planting of trees and other ceremonies designed, it seemed, primarily for the sake of generating photographs to accompany newspaper coverage of the campaign.

of beauty, but it was also, clearly, edifying. Interestingly, the ceremonial processions that eventually replaced the parades in the beautification campaigns were often reported to begin at the Garden, and when there was no procession, inauguration and award ceremonies were often held there. Thus, once it had become involved in the campaigns (through the creation of floats for the parade), the Garden maintained a continuous visibility in them.

The Perennial Garden in context

As I hope the foregoing discussion has demonstrated, both the parades des fleurs and the Perennial Garden, can be read as deploying a similar semiotic structure—one organized around an abundant beauty and its control via social or scientific means of ordering. Keeping in mind the role of gardens and gardening in the beautification campaigns as a whole, as well as Teuscher's pretensions regarding the civic potential of a properly designed botanical garden, I turn now to a very brief consideration of those photographs of the Perennial Garden presented in the second guide to the Botanical Garden (published in 1951), as a means of suggesting what kinds of use it was given at that time, particularly from a social perspective. This will provide a point of comparison with respect to the gardener's experience of the garden (to which I turn shortly), but it also opens up some questions in need of theorization in the following chapter.

Teuscher believed that people treated plants in the city with disinterest out of ignorance, and that it was education about their importance that was required in order to encourage a more respectful treatment not only of plants, but other people, and the urban environment more generally. However, in light of photographs of the Perennial Garden which appear in the second guide to the Botanical Garden (published in 1951), I

think that what it more reliably provided, was the opportunity to *practice* a form of cultural sophistication which—thanks in part to the beautification campaigns, and in particular the more visceral articulations accomplished by the parades—was associated with horticultural appreciation. If the parades presented a uniquely well-ordered spectacle celebrating this association, then the Perennial Garden provided a stage whereupon citizens could, in turn, perform their understanding of it.

In the 1951 guide to the Garden, all six photographs illustrating the text which describes the exhibition gardens (including three of the Perennial Garden), feature people—almost exclusively couples and families—“strolling” beneath pergolas and along the pathways of the gardens, or inspecting particular features, such as the reflecting pool in the Perennial Garden.⁸¹ In each case, the visitors are dressed quite formally. Most of the men wear suits—or at least a dress shirt and pants—while the women and girls all wear dresses. It is clear that a visit to the Garden was understood to be a special occasion, one especially suited to family outings, and one with a social significance in which appearances mattered.⁸² Further, it was presented in this instance as a site where

⁸¹ As if to underscore the importance of this first activity, one of the captions reads “Here and there through the formal gardens are pergolas to offer shade to *strolling* visitors.” *Jardin Botanique de Montréal*, 7; emphasis added. I should note that there is one photograph featuring a woman on her own, posing rather enigmatically behind a large *Chrysanthemum* blossom, with what appears to be a wall of the same flowers rising behind her. Given this backdrop, and the lack of a caption referring to any of the exhibition gardens, it seems as if this photograph was taken elsewhere—perhaps in one of the exhibition greenhouses, where more ostentatious floral displays were often mounted. In any case, its appearance in this section of the guide is somewhat puzzling. Given the preceding discussion, I can’t help but read it as supportive of a more general articulation of femininity, floral beauty and ideals of cultural refinement similar to that performed via the “parades de fleurs.” *Jardin Botanique de Montréal*, 1951, 6.

⁸² Of course, it is possible to overstate the significance of this observation, since what people generally wore in public during the 1950s was considerably more formal than it is now. However, the use of the Garden as a destination for special (i.e., romantic and family) outings is amply reinforced in a 2006 exhibit mounted by the Library of the Botanical Garden, in which Montrealers were invited to submit photographs they had taken in the Garden over the years. As the introduction to the exhibit (now in online format) reads: “Ces photos et leurs commentaires sont les témoins des liens étroits qui se sont tissés au fil des ans entre les visiteurs et leur Jardin. On y reconnaît les sorties familiales du dimanche, les sorties avec la



Figure 7. Photograph of the Perennial Garden appearing in the 1951 guide to the Montreal Botanical Garden. *Jardin Botanique de Montréal/Montreal Botanical Garden*, 1951, XCD00, P6425, V1950.A-4, Archives de Montréal, Montreal. Courtesy of the Archives de Montréal.

particular cultural values were upheld. In the 1944 guide, Marie-Victorin had described the Garden as an oasis where "...le citadin peut venir oublier les laideurs et les trépidations de la vie moderne."⁸³ Images from the 1951 guide suggest it was also a space in which the nuclear family, that privileged unit of social and moral stability within

grande visite ou entre amis, les premières fréquentations, les fiançailles, les mariages, les participations aux activités diverses qu'offre le Jardin, etc." In the 1950s, the vast majority of photographs feature families, children and couples dressed much like those in the guide. In captions provided by the individuals who submitted the photos, the occasion is often identified as a first date, wedding, birthday or "Sunday visit." In over a third of the images from the 1950s (twenty-eight of eighty-two in total), it is clear the photograph was taken in the Perennial Garden."Souvenirs de famille au Jardin botanique de Montréal," *Website of the Jardin Botanique de Montréal*, <http://bibliojardin.espacepourlavie.ca/in/faces/details.xhtml?id=ec0b2f49-c8bc-406b-a366-319127a8966d> (accessed Feb. 7, 2013).

⁸³ "...the city dweller can come to forget the ugliness and trepidations of modern life." *Le Jardin botanique de Montréal*, 1944, 1.

Quebec society, could restore itself in the face of cultural change.⁸⁴ Product itself of various processes of modernization—particularly those pertaining to advances in botanical science and horticulture, but also to the idea that natural beauty could be considered an urban amenity), it was perhaps particularly important that the Garden should at the same time communicate its support of the social and cultural status quo.

Thus in the photographs, the gardens are pictured as the site of specific activities, which, it is implied by the formal dress and by the presentation of discrete groupings of visitors (i.e., not indistinct masses, and not individuals), were socially significant. We can observe not only *how* one was supposed to go about appreciating, or learning from a botanical garden (i.e., principally by strolling through it, taking photographs, and gazing into the pools and fountains), but also who did so (i.e., couples and families), under what circumstances (in formal dress). These depictions of the garden as a site of social significance suggest additionally that an active participation was required of visitors, who upon visiting, would be taking part in a social occasion in which they had a role to play, rather than simply forming the audience—as they did when they attended the parades des fleurs, for example. As such, it is clear that the garden was a site not only for learning about plants (and in the process, enhancing the social and cultural value of horticultural expertise), but also for *practicing* garden appreciation. In doing so, visitors would have refined the perceptual skills required to see an emerging social and cultural significance in plants, at the same time that they communicated to others their capacity to do so. In

⁸⁴ As Mann writes, “The family reproduced the nation...” While North American society in general saw a renewed emphasis on the importance of family, and an associated return to more traditional gender roles after the war, the pressure to conform was perhaps stronger in Quebec, where the well-being of state, church and family was widely felt to be thoroughly intertwined. Mann, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec*.

other words, to the extent that a garden can be seen to have a specific social significance, both the garden, and the activities of those who visit it, must be coded.

The nature of that code and its effects both within and outside gardens, are theorized explicitly in the following chapter. For now let me conclude by observing that the activities and comportment of visitors portrayed in the 1951 guide not only demonstrated how a garden was to be appreciated, but also conveyed the valuation of a more general civility towards other people, as well as an acceptance of the logic according to which access to different forms of space was allocated in the city. Acceptance of these values and conventions, it is implied, was a part of what the garden required of visitors. The strict demarcation of boundaries between garden and not-garden (e.g., the lining of edges separating garden from walkway), evoked other forms of boundary integral to social life in a modern, capitalist society—in particular, those associated with distinctions between public and private space. You stayed on the pathways of the garden as you strolled, took photographs, read plant labels and so on, just as you might look at and appreciate a neighbour's garden, but remain on the other side of the fence or the sidewalk to do so. In what was a time of upward mobility for many Montrealers, more and more readers and visitors would have understood the point of such conventions.

As such, and in conjunction with the discourses and activities of beautification more generally, the garden can be seen as a site for the production of both material abundance, and citizens sophisticated enough to properly appreciate it. Where did this leave Teuscher's hope of inspiring people to take up the activities of gardening themselves? If the Garden's primary accomplishment was that it provided people with practice appreciating gardens, that experience surely provided a foundation for the pursuit of horticultural activities at home. In the 1940s and 50s, more and more families

were able to purchase homes in the suburbs of Montreal, where they had more space to create substantial gardens of their own. At the same time, a shorter workweek gave people more time to spend on such activities.⁸⁵ Along with a shift from small to large-scale production in the horticultural industry (in the 1950s and 60s), this provided the basis for home gardening to become an increasingly accessible and popular activity.⁸⁶ Thus, as the Botanical Garden became more widely appreciated as a valuable social institution over the years, it also became relevant in a more personal way to an increasing number of visitors—addressing their individual interests and needs rather than presenting a site for social activities. As I discuss below, this change in the Garden’s audience was eventually matched by a change in its internal form and contents, such that the Perennial Garden can now address itself to ‘home gardeners’, as opposed to a public that needs to be tricked into learning the benefits of gardening.

⁸⁵ The distribution of Montreal’s population expanded considerably in the years 1941-1961. “In 1941, two-thirds of the Montreal region was still living within a 6.5-kilometre radius of the centre. By 1961 the same population would be spread over a 13-kilometre radius.” Jean-Claude Marsan, *Montreal in Evolution* (Montreal, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1981) , 322. According to Marsan, this migration was in part facilitated by a widespread improvement in the standard of living and a “gradual decrease in the amount of time spent in productive work.” Ibid, 324.

⁸⁶ The shift to large-scale production, combined with a variety of technological advances, made bedding plants readily available in much greater numbers. Between 1949 and 1970, sales of bedding plants increased from almost \$17 million to over \$60 million (wholesale). Of course, those numbers were to continue rising, to well over \$1.5 billion (wholesale) by 1997. Alvi Voigt, “Tracking floriculture’s rapid rise,” in “History of U.S. Floriculture,” special issue, *Greenhouse Grower Magazine*, Fall 1999, 130. This in turn made gardening more accessible (since it no longer required knowledge of propagation techniques), but also, more expensive. As Wilson notes, it also led to a decrease in the diversity of species under cultivation. Wilson, *The Culture of Nature*.

CHAPTER THREE: The Perennial Garden

For those who enter the Garden through the western entrance (primarily members, who do not need to purchase tickets), the Perennial Garden is the first garden one encounters. The gardener reports that, especially in early summer, when many of the more spectacular flowers are blooming, it is quite a colourful, floriferous corner of the Garden. It is never as crowded as the Chinese and Japanese gardens, but there are often many people walking its paths and taking photos. Though its external form, which has not changed since its creation, is characterized as “French”, the rectangular flower beds of varying sizes that display its plants, are now planted more informally than they originally were, with a much greater variety of species, and according to a style characterized as ‘English’.¹

Although it is still considered to be one of the most important gardens from the perspective of the garden’s collections—its contents represent some 1700 species and cultivars—its prominence within the Garden as a whole seems to have decreased somewhat over the years, as its treatment in promotional materials (particularly the illustrated guides) is less extensive since the addition and renovation (primarily during the 1980s and 90s) of other, more spectacular gardens. That said, the garden’s contents have also undergone renovations over the years, the most recent program of which began in 2001.² In contrast to images of the garden from guides published in the 1940s, 50s and

¹ Though it is not important to my analysis, the garden also now contains a bronze copy of the sculpture, *The Lover’s Bench*, by Lea Vivot, located just east of the reflecting pool on the raised walking path.

² This was when the horticulturalist currently in charge of the garden took over from the previous one.

60s, the majority of the beds in the garden have since the 1990s been turned over to mixed plantings that are more in keeping with contemporary horticultural trends—that is, emphasizing visual effects produced through variety and contrast, rather than the blocks of colour achieved through mass plantings—and less concerned with botanical classification. While individual varieties are still for the most part carefully labeled, their position in the garden is determined by aesthetic and horticultural rather than botanical criteria. At the same time, though it contradicts to a certain degree the garden's definition—as a *perennial* garden—annual bedding plants are planted throughout the garden to fill in blank spaces and provide season-long colour where perennials do not. Thus, while this garden now presents a beauty that is in many ways more subtle and varied in character than it did in the past, it has retained the crutch of colour as a means of sustaining interest in its contents.³

The Perennial Garden could be seen as ‘the gardener’s garden’, since experienced gardeners tend (I am told), to prefer perennial plants over annual ones. This seems to be partly a question of sophistication—“there is something too *obvious* about annual bedding plants” says the gardener—and partly a question of interest. Perennial plants change more over a season, and tend to be appreciated not only for the flowers they produce but also for their form and texture. Also, as the gardener puts it, “they are more clearly living *beings*, because they change over the season, and because their needs are more varied and subtle. They require more of you.”⁴ As such, and especially in comparison with culturally-

³ Of course, this is a common enough practice, though the gardener was disdainful of it.

⁴ Of course, she admits, not all gardeners are the same. For one thing, there are differences between working gardeners, garden designers, and amateur gardeners (who are however, often the most knowledgeable). For workers like herself (or at least, her past self), who care for gardens but do not design or build them, she claims a unique relationship with plants, writing: “There is something special about

themed gardens such as the Chinese Garden, or the First Nations Garden, the Perennial Garden is more oriented to gardeners. It demonstrates how a certain kind of garden—in particular, a ‘mixed border’—is made, as well as what is to be appreciated about it.

The gardener’s first visit took place on a slightly rainy day in June. She had walked by it many times, being somewhat discouraged by its size and the formality of its structure, and had never been particularly interested in spending an extended amount of time there. She arrived with her notebook, ready to compose a list of plants ‘of interest’. This was an activity she knew to be common among a certain group of garden visitors,⁵ but which, she confessed, made her feel tired, even before she began. Walking in the Perennial Garden however, whose mixed borders are quite similar in appearance and dimension to the gardens she had cared for in the past, she experienced two different forms of unexpected pleasure. First, she found that, despite its relatively manicured appearance from a distance, the garden was actually quite weedy in places. She wrote,

I was surprised by the way this showed that there is in fact a limit to resources within the Garden, which can otherwise seem at times quite limitless in its various bounties. But I was also surprised that what this produced in me was a kind of softening towards the garden, as if it needed me. Or at least as if a contribution from me was conceivable if not actually appropriate. My care, if not my actual labour, was wanted. This in turn made me realize that, in contrast, what often left me cold about other gardens, was the degree to which I was not needed: if the

working with plants that are not yours. About working with plants and not wanting anything from them, not needing to be responsible, for example, for what they contribute to the larger scheme of the garden. It is not so much the expertise you have, but the familiarity. The term ‘garden care’ encompasses it well: you can’t do a good job if you do not care for the plants, if you don’t feel something in relation to them. Which is not to say you like all of them. You of course develop preferences, and petty dislikes. Resentments even. But that is part of what makes it rich, especially after the fact, when it is no longer a necessity, and you start to forget the way eight hours feels.”

⁵ That is, those with their own gardens. To compensate for the fact that she had no garden, the gardener resolved to make a list of plant names she liked, and then to compose a poem with them afterwards—which, it must be acknowledged, was only modestly successful (since the poem was not very good).

garden is already perfect and complete, every feature fully explained, what does it matter if I visit?

Second, despite the fact that it was raining, and despite the rather focused task she had set for herself, she found herself inclined to wander the garden rather aimlessly and at length, naming to herself the plants she knew, reading their labels, and finding them suddenly mysterious (“how does it feel to be a *Pacific* bleeding heart?”), and sweetly apt (the common wildflower named everlasting). She searched out the labels for those plants she did not know, whose names seemed “wonderful but also inadequate, disconnected from the plants themselves and floating above them like a poem about something else, speaking not only of the plant, but a *world* I do not know: the world of the yellowish scabious, the hairy vetch, Timothy, squill.” And then, through all this, she found herself interrupted by memories of other plants and other gardens. Afterwards, she wrote:

The garden is a moist field of flowers and a field of memory, singing. Today, it sings blue, the colour of Penny’s garden, which was the garden of secret places—small wonders of plants hidden beneath proliferating bluebells and in the shade of the half-fallen willow tree, itself draped with a blue *Clematis*, out of control. This is where I first encountered the perfect, small blue of *Hepatica* which, when I found it years later growing wild in a Quebec forest, would appear to me a small miracle. It was also the only time I cared for Himalayan Poppies that actually bloomed, and blue *Corydalis*, which is yellow in the wild. Here, in the Perennial Garden, it is the impossible gentian blue that speaks out from the expanse of wet flowers and weeds, the voracity of growing things reminding me too of Penny, who loved her garden most in the spring, when it was small and tidy and not yet beyond her control.

It was hard for the gardener to say exactly, how this remembering happened, or where the unexpected feelings of pleasure that accompanied it came from. “There was something about the way the garden went on and on,” she said, “the way the flowers seemed to stretch so far into the distance, or around me on all sides. It was as if my remembering too, could go on and on. Even in the rain, being there, in the middle of all that, was deeply pleasing to me. I was happy, and calm at the same time. Happy to give

attention to each plant I came across, whether new or familiar; and calmed by the realization that the garden would not for some time be exhausted of this potential. There was no need to think of what to do next.” The plants seemed to call to her, she said. They called to her for recognition, drawing from her the names she knew, as well as memories of the gardens they occupied in her mind. In this way she seemed to travel beyond its boundaries to other times and places, even as her attention was drawn to the individual plants in front of and around her. The garden became more fluid, and textured, as she walked its paths. It called for her care, and offered up its weediness as a space she might occupy, a way in which she might belong there, despite the fantastic variety of plants—so many of which were unknown to her—and the garden as a whole somehow larger even than her imagination could hold.

Ultimately, visiting the Perennial Garden was pleasurable for the gardener in a way that was problematic: it was precisely those aspects of the garden that would normally detract from her experience which seemed to contribute most to her pleasure—that is, its weediness on the one hand, and its extensiveness, of plants as well as their labeling, on the other. There was not only a surprising but an involuntary dimension to her experience. When she writes that the garden ‘called to her’, soliciting both her memories and her care, it was not simply that the whole situation *reminded* her of situations in which she had been in the past. It was also not that she had to stop herself from weeding, as if that was an automatic response. It was more that, within the garden, her knowledge (of weeds and weeding, but also of the individual plants she encountered) became something she could *feel* as well as recall, and which gave added significance and texture to the plants she encountered. This was to a large degree involuntary, but it was also distinctly improvisational. While this aspect of the visit was in some ways set up

ahead of time (via a deliberately experimental approach to the visit), it also seemed that the degree to which the gardener was caught up in, or called to by the garden, influenced, and even enhanced her improvising.

I take the intertwining of these two aspects of the gardener's experience as impetus to theorize the garden's semiotic functioning in a manner which can account for a capacity of the garden to both compel certain forms of activity and attention, *and* accommodate a more playful engagement. While the gardener's experience was anything but representative, it also cannot be disregarded as reflecting a (merely) personal response. In fact, the thing that sets her apart from most garden visitors (her expertise), provides a uniquely revealing point of view on what is, nonetheless, a more general capacity of gardens. The central task of this chapter will be to describe and situate that capacity, starting from the observation that, in contrast to the window box—whose effects seem to be received and deployed visually (i.e., as significations)—this larger garden seemed to operate on a bodily as well as a visual level, engaging the gardener's practical expertise even as she attempted to pursue other, more disinterested activities.

This tendency toward bodily engagement of course makes the garden's effects difficult to track, because they operate to a large degree below awareness. This difficulty is compounded, I contend, by the fact that such effects are in many ways consistent with those produced at other sites, and via other practices. In the Introduction, I suggested that, generally speaking, in a given society, physical space is organized in ways analogous to that of thought and representation, and that this has implications for the way we understand the broader social and political functioning of gardens. This assertion is based on my reading of Pierre Bourdieu, whose concept of *habitus* I explore in some depth below. At base, the *habitus* represents a bodily incorporation of codes which are both

specific to a particular context, and generalizable to others. It suggests a capacity for responding to gardens, which (as suggested above) are coded for a particular kind of reception. This capacity both takes gardens as meaningful in particular ways, and is (usually) unaware of doing so. It is, as such, a productive ground for exploring how the garden's effects participate in the ongoing reproduction and modification of social relations outside as well as within its borders. Given that both habitus and certain aspects of a garden's coding tend to operate in a manner that is effectively transparent (by virtue of influencing what is seen and how), this analysis will require a preliminary work of deconstruction. Before exploring the concept of habitus further, I therefore describe in broad strokes the different kinds of code that can be seen to organize a garden such as the Perennial Garden.

The garden as text

To say that gardens are coded, is to say, after Barthes, that they operate in a manner that is, in certain key ways, *textual*.⁶ That is, despite the fact that, as John Dixon Hunt has argued, their exploration often does not unfold in a predictable fashion, they nonetheless solicit forms of *reading*.⁷ This otherwise largely unconscious reading can be illuminated by identifying—in a manner informed by the approach to literary criticism demonstrated by Barthes in *S/Z*—intersecting codes that structure the garden's use and appreciation. That said, the nature and extent of this reading will necessarily vary, according to both the visitor's interest and his or her knowledge of gardens and garden

⁶ And this may especially true of gardens such as the Perennial Garden, which is extensively and explicitly coded.

⁷ Hunt, "Stourhead revisited."

history, and it may often yield only the most general and vague frame for engagement; but it nonetheless influences the garden's reception.⁸ For example, at the most basic level, this entails the deployment of physical conventions which mark a given space as a garden (rather than, for example, a meadow): the demarcation of borders; use of walls or other forms of enclosure; a visually harmonious and/or ordered arrangement of plants; the presence of flowers, and so on.⁹ More specifically, in a botanical garden, the presence of interpretative panels and plant labels and often, a more highly ordered arrangement of plants, signify to visitors the garden's scientific and educational purposes.

Superficial as such significations may be, they nonetheless serve as important cues to comportment for visitors and constitute what I characterize as the garden's 'practical code': making it clear, for example, where to walk and what to look at, and the kinds of activities that are welcome (reading signs and labels, looking at individual plants or contemplating a given view) versus those that are discouraged (playing sports, picking flowers).¹⁰ In addition to ensuring a certain degree of order among visitors, and more importantly from Barthes' perspective, such 'reading' solicits forms of cultural knowledge

⁸ This is not, of course, to suggest there is a single 'correct' reading of a given garden, even for experts. As Hunt argues, this is not really possible in gardens, which change over time, can be entered or exited at several points, and often contain significations whose meanings are either multiple or become obscure over time. *Ibid.*

⁹ This list is not exhaustive, and none of the conventions are present in all gardens. I see them less as markers of garden status (ensuring positive identification one way or the other) and more as signs orienting possible responses to a given garden—that is, signifying something about a given garden in the quality of their appearance as well as in their absence. For example, while the presence of flowers is often what alerts people to the cultivated nature of a given space, their absence in a space marked as garden in other ways (such as a clearly demarcated border or a well-ordered variety of plants) might in itself permit various identifications or interpretations of the garden—as a shade, native plant or Japanese garden for example, or the work perhaps of a gardener prioritizing texture and shape as opposed to colour.

¹⁰The practical code is, I think, analogous to that of Barthes' "proairetic" code, which, according to Silverman, concerns knowledge regarding how different kinds of things work, are made etc. Kaja Silverman, "Re-writing the classic text," in *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1983).

which serve to position visitors in a particular way, and at the same time, to affirm the validity of that positioning. That is, in responding ‘correctly’ to the question of what to do in the garden, or how to use things like pathways, benches and fountains, visitors accede to the garden’s order, and their place within it. In this context, the garden is, like the literary text, an instrument of cultural reproduction, no matter how ‘progressive’ (i.e., educational) its aims.¹¹

Beyond the reading of these basic significations, gardens are also more or less historically coded—that is, they contain features and are structured in ways that position them in relation to different traditions of garden design.¹² They may also exhibit an associated style, or intensity, of cultivation.¹³ In some cases, gardens can in this way be identified as being a certain ‘type’ of garden; in others (as in the Perennial Garden) there may be references to a variety of garden traditions, or a more subtle influence of one tradition or another. A relatively sophisticated garden visitor, with knowledge of garden history, or at least experience visiting gardens, can identify (if not necessarily name) distinguishing features, and thereby, perceive a certain logic, if not explicit meaning, in the garden’s structure.

¹¹ This is similar to what Silverman writes about discourse (in the form of film, and literature), which “...requires readers and viewers who will identify with the subject it projects, who will agree to be spoken through them. In other words, it requires readers and viewers who will accede to the terms of its linear unfolding.” *Ibid*, 245.

¹² I think that what I call the stylistic code corresponds roughly to Barthes’ “semic” code, which, according to Silverman, pertains to what is known about different kinds of characters and places. *Ibid*.

¹³ For example, French gardens tend to be intensively maintained, strictly controlled borders, topiary and closely pruned hedges; while English gardens tend to feature plants that are (apparently) permitted a more ‘natural’ growth habit--though it is worth noting that such effects may require a similar quantity of care, if of a different quality.

To give an indication of the kind of (often unconscious) analysis which makes such identification possible, it's helpful to consider Pierre Bourdieu's definition of "art competence" in relation to the perception of gardens. He writes,

Artistic competence is [...] defined as the previous knowledge of the strictly artistic principles of division which enable a representation to be located, through the classification of the stylistic indications which it contains, among the possibilities of representation constituting the universe of art... The perception of the work of art in a truly aesthetic manner, that is, as a signifier which signifies nothing other than itself, does not consist of considering it 'without connecting it with anything other than itself, either emotionally or intellectually,' in short of giving oneself up to the work apprehended in its irreducible singularity, but rather of noting its distinctive stylistic features by relating it to the ensemble of the works forming the class to which it belongs...¹⁴

In other words, the perception of aesthetic (and sometimes historical) significance in a given garden can be seen principally to involve the recognition of which differences (and, implicitly, which resemblances) are the significant ones—a process of which individual visitors may or may not be aware. Even for visitors with less specialized interest or experience, it is often possible to perceive a certain amount of coherence among garden features, and thereby to identify a given style as a style, rather than the product of a singular design vision.¹⁵ Most people can at least, for example, distinguish between 'formal' and 'informal' or more 'natural' gardens.

¹⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, "Outline of a sociological theory of art perception," in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* Columbia University Press, 1993) 222; emphasis in original.

¹⁵ I use 'style' here to refer to that collection of garden elements, aesthetic qualities and techniques of cultivation that characterize gardens belonging to one tradition or another of garden design. One need not be able to enumerate such details or name the style to which they belong in order to recognize their intentionality and historicity. Gardens are represented in such a variety of popular cultural forms—as images on cards and calendars, as settings in novels and films, in advertising, as tourist destinations—that visitors may draw on a background familiarity with the major tropes of garden design without necessarily being aware of it. More generally, the recognition of style as such need not be conscious, since as Bourdieu argues, the discriminatory abilities that underlie such forms of perception are largely implicit. Pierre Bourdieu, "Codification," in *In Other Words*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1990) 79. Of course, the discriminatory work demanded by "contemporary" gardens (discussed above, and where a singular design vision is likely to have greater influence) requires more expertise, and a

In the case of the Perennial Garden, even if visitors do not read the interpretative panel that identifies the garden's style as "French," the linear arrangement of beds, fountains and pergolas, as well as the uninterrupted view of the whole provided by the garden's organization around a central pathway, make the formality of its intentions recognizable. Even for visitors who have not visited a classically "French" garden before, its tropes are recognizable thanks to the appearance of such gardens in photographs and films.¹⁶ While visitors may or may not make such connections explicitly or consciously, they support a more general recognition of the difference between the Perennial Garden (as well as the other exhibition gardens), and the rest of the Botanical Garden, which for the most part demonstrates a more naturalistic, English style of planting.¹⁷

In public gardens—especially botanical gardens, where there is often a significant educational mandate—stylistic coding can be seen as largely pedagogical in its aims: that is, it encourages visitors to appreciate gardens as objects of design and history, as well as beauty and utility. However, as I attempt to demonstrate below, the social and cultural effects of such coding go beyond this education, contributing to or coinciding with broader processes of socialization and cultural reproduction.¹⁸ In the Perennial Garden,

more conscious interpretative process.

¹⁶ The garden at the Palace of Versailles in France being the most prominent and well-photographed example of such a garden.

¹⁷ In addition, the juxtaposition of styles found in the individual beds within the Perennial Garden—some of which are planted formally, but most of which constitute more informal 'mixed borders'—underscore the differences which matter to perceiving (i.e., distinguishing between) the two styles on a larger scale. It matters little (except perhaps to garden historians), that the designation of the two styles as English and French is not very precise (more on this below). That said, the opposition 'French-English' is important in a semiotic sense, being analogous to the oppositions 'formal/informal' and 'man-made/natural'. As I discuss in more detail below, I do not believe that the designations speak in any significant way to the political tensions attending the categories of French and English elsewhere in Quebec society.

¹⁸ At the same, the use and appreciation of the garden is influenced by other texts, and other sites,

the garden can be seen to shape relations between visitors and plants as well as dispositions towards home gardening—largely via a more fundamental coding expressed in its organization and composition. This coding does not *control* visitor experiences, but it does demand attention (though often at a level below conscious awareness). As Barthes would put it, gardens are, like myth in general, *interpellant*. Designed for a particular audience of visitors, one composed precisely of those capable of recognizing and responding to their mode of address, they are not simply available to be read, but *speak* to those who enter.¹⁹ By engaging visitors in this direct (though generally unremarkable) manner, they facilitate certain forms of perception and action. Thus, with the goal of eventually connecting an analysis of the present day Perennial Garden with the history of beautification campaigns in Montreal, I explore below the possibility that, in a garden, the generation of cultural consensus is not only a matter of producing in the ‘audience’ a response of recognition, but also one of action.

Thus, it is not only the successful reading of a garden’s code that is culturally reproductive, but also the fact of its translation into new or reinvigorated practices and modes of perception that have application outside the garden. If a window box succeeds simply by having a particular meaning recognized—that is, taken for natural or

which prepare visitors to receive it in a particular way—the garden is in this sense “intertextual” (as Barthes puts it), but as far as its social effectivity goes, it is also more than this, as I discuss below. Roland Barthes, “From work to text,” in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structural Criticism*, ed. Josué V. Harari (New York, Cornell University Press, 1979) 73-81.

¹⁹ Of encountering a mythologized object in the form of a Basque-style chalet in Paris, Barthes writes, “I feel as if I were personally receiving an imperious injunction to name this object a Basque chalet: or even better, to see it as the very essence of Basquity. This is because the concept appears to me in all its appropriative nature: it comes and seeks me out in order to oblige me to acknowledge the body of intentions which have motivated it and arranged it there as the signal of an individual history, as a confidence and a complicity: it is a real call, which the owners of the chalet send out to me.” Barthes, “Myth Today,” 124-5.

obvious—a garden succeeds when certain activities or modes of appreciation become natural for visitors, when they know *what to do* while they are there, regardless of the level of their prior knowledge or expertise.²⁰ This mode of address is arguably more powerful, since it engages processes of perception in an active fashion, creating the potential for introducing or reinforcing practices and expectations which, because unconscious (or, at least, seemingly ‘natural’), facilitate the generation of consensus around some of the same issues addressed in a more explicit manner by the beautification campaigns. Addressed to the body, the garden’s practical code is to a certain degree, stratified: the answer to the question of what to do in a garden, varies depending on who responds. It was, for example, quite a complicated question for the gardener, who was there as a visitor, but found herself susceptible to coding that pertained to the garden’s care.

At the same time, to say that a garden is like a text (in Barthes’ sense), is to take its coding as both inescapable *and* multiple. If we recognize in the garden, those qualities that distinguish it from the garden as ‘work’—that is, the garden authored, interpreted and otherwise complete—the garden visit may then become, not exactly open-ended, but at least, singular and irreducible.²¹ As I explore next, the gardener’s improvisation of the garden visit depended not only on her purpose for being there (i.e., to experiment) but also her expertise, and the specific susceptibility it entailed with respect to the garden’s coding.

²⁰ Of course it is worth noting that the garden’s success in this regard is to a certain degree facilitated by its interaction with other media forms. For example, the depiction of gardens in literature, magazines, film and so on. More on this below.

²¹ As Barthes puts it, the text “...can only be itself in its difference...its reading is semelfactive... and yet completely woven with quotations, references, and echoes.” Barthes, "From work to text," 77.

Habit and the garden's practical code

As a starting point, it is important to note that, what seemed to enable the garden to speak, in the first instance, was not a deliberate form of signification but an apparently unintentional and problematic aspect of its appearance: the weeds. While weeds might be more properly (from a strictly semiotic point of view) interpreted negatively—as a degradation or mutation of signifying intention, or as noise—the gardener responded to them in a positive fashion, as if they signaled a welcome, an openness of the garden to her expertise and care. They were not signs in that moment so much as cues, awakening and sharpening her perception to particular aspects of the garden's practical as opposed to stylistic code.²²

These aspects are inscribed not by design or historical precedent but through the labour of those who care for it. They are immediately legible only to gardeners with experience that is either extensive or based on similar conditions to those found within a given garden, appearing primarily in the form of tasks to be completed, as well as the potential for evaluations of work recently done. Because this reading of the practical code requires a knowledge of not only *what* is done in a garden, but more importantly, *how*, and because it is only direct experience with specific tasks that grants the necessary expertise in a reliable and durable fashion, it must be seen as addressed, not only to processes of cognition (enabling the identification of plants by name, for example), but more

²² If weeds can still be seen to operate as signs in this context, it is in a secondary (though not superficial) fashion: that is, discursively, as resources for characterizing or evaluating a given garden's maintenance regime (e.g., as 'highly manicured' versus 'a bit neglected'), and for identifying, justifying and circumscribing different tasks (as is required when work is shared between several gardeners, or in communications between employer and employee).

importantly and in the first place, to the body, which is where practical capacities reside, as habits of perception and action.

Many philosophers and social theorists (especially pragmatists such as C.S. Peirce, John Dewey and William James, but also Henri Bergson, Pierre Bourdieu and Gilles Deleuze) have identified habit as a fundamental mechanism through which human beings engage with the world. Viewed positively, and especially at the moment of formation, it can be seen, not simply as a sensory-motor mechanism that enables unconscious (and therefore highly efficient) patterns of movement and perception, but as a capacity of intelligence which, being prior to reflection, enables interaction and learning on an environmental as well as social level.²³ In this it reflects, not only an adaptation formed in response to experience (within a given environment), but also, as Dewey puts it, the fundamentally *cooperative* nature of human capacities otherwise presumed to be inherent and atomistic. Likening habits to bodily functions, he writes, “Breathing is an affair of the air as truly of the lungs. Seeing involves light just as certainly as it does the eye and optic nerve. Walking implicates the ground as well as the legs; speech demands physical air and human companionship and audience as well as vocal organs...” As such, habits can be seen as “ways of using and incorporating the environment in which the latter has its say as surely as the former.”²⁴

²³ Though as Peirce emphasized, it could also be the *product* of reflection, for “the whole function of thought is to produce habits of action.” Peirce, “How to make our ideas clear.”

²⁴ John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology* (New York, Modern Library, 1922), 15. The difference in the case of habit (as opposed to bodily function), is that what counts as environment is more broadly social and cultural as well as physical, and the outcome of the interaction is a moral question, as well as one of survival.

From this point of view, habit is a product of the openness of the human body, and ultimately, of intelligence, to the world—a tendency not just to be affected by one's surroundings, but further, to “constitute the self” in a manner which is fundamentally responsive, as opposed to willful or mechanistic.²⁵ As Deleuze writes, the concept “concerns not only the sensori-motor habits that we have (psychologically), but also, before these, the primary habits that we *are*; the thousand passive syntheses of which we are organically composed.”²⁶ Though it is largely (or usually) unconscious, the constitutive role of habit in human development and everyday life suggests that human agency is at base much more broadly relational than common sense and psychological models acknowledge. This observation has been viewed by different thinkers as reason for both optimism and profound cynicism. For Peirce, habit was the means through which correct or efficient action could be generalized, and provide the substance for processes of collective evolution.²⁷ For Dewey, a progressivist as well as a pragmatist, recognizing the

²⁵ It is so-called “bad habits” which make this most clear. Dewey writes, “These traits of a bad habit are precisely the things which are most instructive about all habits and about ourselves. They teach us that all habits are affections, that all have projectile power, and that a predisposition formed by a number of specific acts is an immensely more intimate and fundamental part of ourselves than are vague, general, conscious choices. All habits are demands for certain kinds of activity; and they constitute the self. In any intelligible sense of the word will, they are will. They form our effective desires and they furnish us with our working capacities. They rule our thoughts, determining which shall appear and be strong and which shall pass from light into obscurity.” Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, 25.

²⁶ Gilles Deleuze, "Repetition for itself," in *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York, Columbia University Press, 1994) 74. The extension of habits to the organic components of human life (indeed of life in general), does not however imply that the processes involved are not intelligent. Deleuze characterizes habit as a “contraction” of elements that occurs via a “passive synthesis” which, though unconscious, forms the basis for conscious activities. He writes, “When we say that habit is a contraction we are speaking not of an instantaneous action which combines with another to form an element of repetition, but rather of the fusion of that repetition in the contemplating mind. A soul must be attributed to the heart, to the muscles, nerves and cells, but a contemplative soul whose entire function is to contract a habit.” Ibid.

²⁷ Characterizing “habits of conduct” as “destined”, he asserted that “...the pragmaticist does not make the sumnum bonum to consist in action, but makes it to consist in that process of evolution whereby the existent comes more and more to embody those generals which were just now said to be destined, which is what we strive to express in calling them reasonable. In its higher stages, evolution takes place more and more largely through self-control, and this gives the pragmaticist a sort of justification for making

central importance of environment in human development was the basis for optimism about the potential for social science to engineer a better society; and for Deleuze, habit reflected “the productive, physiological capacities of the flesh” which were in turn the basis of a philosophy of becoming that located difference and the potential for novelty within the most mundane repetitions.²⁸

For Pierre Bourdieu on the other hand—who uses the term *habitus* in order not to be burdened by the mechanistic connotations that can accompany ‘habit’, and also to encompass a larger constellation of dispositions—it is seen in the first place as the privileged site of social and cultural reproduction. While acknowledging what he sees as a modestly inventive capacity of habitus, he emphasizes the constraints it imposes on action and perception, seeing it as a *susceptibility* to processes of socialization that tend to be conservative of existing social and economic relations.²⁹ This is in part due to the manner in which habitus serves to incorporate (in individual bodies) a “practical logic” which integrates physical and social space. Constituting a system of “durable, transposable

the rational purport to be general.” Charles S. Peirce, “What pragmatism is,” *The Monist* 15, no. 2 (1905), 433. <http://www.cspeirce.com/menu/library/bycsp/whatis/whatpragis.htm> (accessed April 27, 2013).

²⁸ Brian Massumi, “Like a thought,” in *A Shock to Thought: Expression After Deleuze and Guattari*, ed. Brian Massumi (New York, Routledge, 2002), N. 31, xxxvii. As Massumi emphasizes, if resemblance (between acts or perceptions separate in time) characterizes the activities of habit, it is a resemblance *produced*, in each instance new. For Deleuze, repetition necessarily contains a difference—that of the contemplating mind registering a succession of contractions in time. Thus there is no mindless activity; even the growth of plants embodies awareness. He writes, “What we call wheat is a contraction of the earth and humidity, and this contraction is both a contemplation and the auto-satisfaction of that contemplation. By its existence alone, the lily of the field sings the glory of the heavens, the goddesses and the gods—in other words the elements that it contemplates in contracting...” Deleuze, “Repetition for itself,” 75.

²⁹ It is important to emphasize that Bourdieu does not however see habitus as a mechanism of social control, characterizing it instead as a reactivation of social structures, through practice, which necessarily introduces change, even if that change is generally modest, and constrained by the history of conditions and relations that gave rise to the habitus. He writes, “...the habitus... is what makes it possible to inhabit institutions, to appropriate them practically, and so to keep them in activity, continuously pulling them from the state of dead letters, reviving the sense deposited in them, but at the same time imposing the revisions and transformations that reactivation entails.” Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1990), 57.

dispositions” for action and perception that are taken for granted and therefore largely unconscious, the habitus not only enables action within a particular ‘field’ of social standing and/or endeavour, but also ensures that the associated orientation to the (social and physical) world will be experienced as both sensible and meaningful.³⁰ This is why the gardener not only knew what there was to do in the Perennial Garden, but also perceived it, immediately, as meaningful and sensible in its organization, style, and so on.

In the formation of habitus, processes of bodily training instill, at the same time, a *belief in*, as well as practical and social competency for, participation in a given field. A field delineates a bounded realm of social space where lives and opportunities are shaped by similar social, cultural and economic conditions, as well as a specific history of relations among members (who are necessarily differentially distributed in terms of their access to different resources and their relative status within that field). Reflecting more a tool of analysis than a stable sociological entity, a field can be highly specialized, corresponding to a particular occupation or profession, or it can be inclusive of all individuals belonging to a particular socioeconomic class in a given time and place. Thus, for example, the gardener can be seen as possessing a gardening habitus, which enables her to perceive and respond to aspects of the Perennial Garden which other, less expert visitors may miss, but which is also undergirded and perhaps modified by more general perceptual and cognitive dispositions acquired as a result of her social, cultural and economic positioning.

Organized around a handful of principles applicable to a variety of settings within a given field, practical training addresses the body as “a living memory pad, an

³⁰ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 53.

automaton that ‘leads the mind unconsciously along with it’, and as a repository for the most precious values...”³¹ These principles take the form of basic oppositions (e.g., inside/outside, male/female, straight/bent) transposable across contexts, and appearing in proverbs, ritual, rules of etiquette, norms of comportment, the organization of physical space, routines of work, and so on. As a result, postures and movements of the body, while unconscious, are nonetheless “highly charged with social meanings and values, [thus instilling] a sense of the equivalences between physical and social space and between movements (rising, falling, etc.) in the two spaces,[thereby rooting] the most fundamental structures of the group in the primary experiences of the body which, as is clearly seen in emotion, takes metaphors seriously.”³² In this context, the structuring of physical space and the organization of objects is seen to mirror (metaphorically) the basic social divisions of a given society as well as the relations between humans and the natural world.

To the extent that action within a give physical space engages a bodily knowledge about how it is organized and what it means (practically speaking), it also displays a comprehension of that space. As Bourdieu asserts, the ongoing search for recognition constitutes “one of the motors at the origin of all... investments.”³³ In other words, people

³¹ Ibid, 68.

³² “For example,” Bourdieu continues, “the opposition between the straight and the bent... is central to most of the marks of respect or contempt that politeness uses in many societies to symbolize relations of domination. On the one hand, lowering or bending the head or forehead as a sign of confusion or timidity, lowering the eyes in humility or timidity, curtseying, prostration (before a superior or a god); on the other hand, looking up, looking someone in the eyes, refusing to bow the head, standing up to someone, getting the upper hand... Male, upward movements and female, downward movements, uprightness, versus bending, the will to be on top, to overcome, versus submission—the fundamental oppositions of the social order...are always sexually overdetermined, as if the body language of sexual domination and submission had provided the fundamental principles of both the body language and the verbal language of social domination and submission.” Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 71-2.

³³ Pierre Bourdieu, "Symbolic violence and political struggles," in *Pascalian Meditations*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2000) 166.

are susceptible to processes of socialization in part because they want their actions to be seen as meaningful by others (i.e., appropriate, wise, astute, and so on), and thereby ultimately to protect or improve their standing within a given field. For Bourdieu, social action always turns in part on efforts to accumulate and consolidate *symbolic* (as opposed to social, cultural or economic) capital.³⁴ Such efforts may become particularly apparent in a space such as that of a botanical garden, where comprehension of a (more or less) specialized form of knowledge is not only engaged but—necessarily, because of its location in public—displayed to others.³⁵ As Catt emphasizes, bodily and perceptual processes of socialization are always communicative as well as practical—indeed this is precisely what makes the transmission of habitus possible.³⁶

Though the examples Bourdieu provides are most relevant to non-industrialized societies, where ritual still plays a prominent role in social life and where social divisions and customs are more rigorously and homogeneously upheld, I want to explore here the possibility that gardens can be considered similarly integrative of physical, social and (as Bourdieu puts it, to encompass relations with the non-human world) *cosmic* space.³⁷ To

³⁴ He defines symbolic capital as “...the form that one or another of [the species of capital] takes when it is grasped through categories of perception that recognize its specific logic or, if you prefer, misrecognize the arbitrariness of its possession and accumulation.” Bourdieu and Wacquant *Invitation*, 119.

³⁵ If the photographs from the 1951 guide to the Garden seem to capture and exaggerate this aspect of the Garden’s functioning, it is in part because garden appreciation was a still-emerging realm of social competency at that time.

³⁶ Isaac E. Catt, "Pierre Bourdieu's semiotic legacy: A theory of communicative agency.," *The American Journal of Semiotics* 22, no. 1-4 (2006): 31-56.

³⁷ Indeed, research on landscape preferences suggests this is a reasonable proposition. Joan E. Nassauer has observed that not only do aesthetic preferences with regard to the appearance of private and public landscapes tend to be relatively homogeneous within cultural groups, and persistent over time, but people make social and moral attributions on the basis of this homogeneity, evaluating the owners of a given property based on how its external features (such as lawn and garden) are tended. Nassauer, "The aesthetics of horticulture."

the extent that some degree of aesthetic consensus continues to hold in contemporary cities, sites such as the Botanical Garden—a public space with an explicitly educational mandate, and which is municipally funded and celebrated—would seem to play a special role in generating and/or reproducing that consensus. In this I contend that, not only are public gardens coded for particular forms of appreciation (i.e., encouraging some behaviors and activities and discouraging others), but the experience of reading and responding to that code contributes to the elaboration and articulation of practices and values acquired or applicable outside its borders. In particular, through the analysis which follows, I hope to show that, through a coding expressed in both its organization and style of presentation, the Perennial Garden serves to provide a horticultural training in activities and forms of perception compatible with practices and values that are deeply implicated in maintaining consensus around particular ways of living in the city. These ways of living entail a specific aesthetic for the urban landscape as well as the disposition of citizens toward nature and environment or, at least, a particular class of non-human beings found throughout the city (i.e., plants).

From this point of view, not only the gardener (and other expert visitors), but also the more casual visitor to the Botanical Garden can be seen as a practitioner in relation to the garden's coding.³⁸ This implies that the practical code is (at least) *double* in its functioning: speaking not only of tasks done and undone, but also of the modes and specific activities of garden appreciation: in particular, making it clear what to look at, and how. Of course, this does not imply a uniformity of experience for visitors. The

³⁸ Including tourists, who often spend much of their visit taking photographs—a practice which, I argue, is coherent in important ways with other more gardening-specific activities also facilitated within the Perennial Garden.

different aspects of the practical code are essentially illegible for some visitors—those who lack the required practical expertise or, conversely, are blinded by it (seeing only the weeds, for example). At the same time, even those who share similar dispositions may, under differing circumstances (both accidental and deliberately cultivated) have very different experiences. Indeed, the gardener had quite a different experience of the Perennial Garden on subsequent visits. On one occasion, when she visited with a camera in hand, focused on the task of taking photographs, she reported that she found its appeal to be much more superficial in character, and at the same time, overwhelming, since each individual bed presented to her another photograph to be taken.³⁹ Taken together, the two experiences would seem to reflect the potential for divergent forms of engagement with the garden, influenced not only by external circumstances and the intentions or active orientation of the visitor and the circumstances of his or her visit, but also other factors, harder to specify and perhaps having to do with the garden itself.⁴⁰

While habitus may help to contextualize certain aspects of the garden's functioning, it cannot on its own account for divergent responses. What is most important to me, is the particular difficulty of theorizing a deliberately playful or experimental approach to the garden visit which, in the case of the gardener, was nonetheless clearly influenced by an involuntary activation of habitus. Bourdieu's framework does not rule out the possibility of a certain reflexivity with regard to habitus, but it is for the most part silent on the possibility that habitus might be engaged in a playfully creative fashion (as

³⁹ "You can't take a picture of everything," she wrote, "so you start to focus on what is unusual, or unusually beautiful."

⁴⁰ For example, in the gardener's case, differences in circumstance between visits included, for a start, the intention to engage in one activity or another while in the garden (e.g., list making versus photographing), weather, her energy level, the time available, and previous exposure to the garden.

opposed to one focused solely on solving problems, or advancing one's position).⁴¹ The role of the garden itself would also appear to be severely constrained on his account, being (apparently) thoroughly subjugated to the broader social and cultural projects of which it is merely an instrument. In contrast, the use of 'habit' by Dewey and Deleuze puts the environment (however broadly understood) on equal footing with human agency: action and perception imply a horizon of engagement which is more than social in its implications—or, perhaps more precisely, for which 'social' is much more open-ended in definition. Similarly, while Barthes' view of the literary text as a process of cultural reproduction is in many ways sympathetic with Bourdieu's assertions about the generative principles structuring habitus and practice,⁴² he also sees in it an invitation to play and critique that is potentially disruptive of cultural hegemony. Indeed, as process, the text is to a certain degree, an agency in itself—a site which depends on human engagement for its existence, but to which visitors and gardeners alike can't help but respond.

It is to these possibilities, and the role they give to both experimentation and the garden itself, that I will eventually turn in order to account more fully for the garden's functioning. First however, I present an analysis of the contemporary Perennial Garden which explores in greater detail the functioning of its practical code. I then turn to consideration of specific garden-oriented media (i.e., guides to the Botanical Garden), as a

⁴¹ Bourdieu is often criticized for failing to account for moments of rupture or, perhaps more importantly, the cultivation of novelty. For example, see Massumi, "Like a thought." While for Bourdieu, change of both practice and habitus is theoretically possible, it can only be pursued via small modifications, enacted over long periods of time, and through a rigorous, bodily training informed by the type of reflexivity only a critical sociological analysis can produce. See Bourdieu, "Symbolic violence and political struggles."

⁴² Particularly in the sense that both posit a coding of cultural materials which is to a certain degree inescapable for its audience.

means of discovering, by analogy, some of the broader social and cultural implications of that code.

The contemporary Perennial Garden's practical code

If the Perennial Garden in its original form positioned visitors as citizens first, and would-be gardeners second, the contemporary Perennial Garden presumes a widespread interest in, if not expert knowledge of, gardening. It both instructs, and solicits consensus on a contemporary garden aesthetic—one often characterized as being more ‘natural’ or informal than those that have come before, and which is particularly conducive to reproduction in residential gardens. The garden style associated with this aesthetic is characterized, in a didactic panel at one of the garden’s entrances, as being English, as opposed to French. This distinction accounts for changes wrought over at least twenty years of piecemeal renovation, the progress of which seem in various accounts of the garden’s evolution to be taken as inevitable—the outcome of a natural progression rather than deliberate program.⁴³ For example, the gardener reports that, on one of the didactic panels found within the garden, it is reported simply that the gardens used to be planted “in the French style, in keeping with the plans laid out by Henry Teuscher in the 1930s. Today they are displayed in English-style borders.”⁴⁴ In the two brief articles about the perennial garden published in *Quatre Temps* the journal of Les Amis du Jardin Botanique de Montréal, changes to the garden’s contents are characterized as ‘personal touches’

⁴³ It is difficult to date precisely many of the changes, since they have not been documented as such.

⁴⁴ "By Jove, a touch of England in a French-style garden!" Sign in the Jardin des vivaces/Perennial Garden of the Montreal Botanical Garden.

imposed by the horticulturalists in charge of the garden during different periods.⁴⁵ The resulting style of planting, which I will continue to refer to as English, is one which has been so influential in North American gardens that its specific perceptual effects are, on first glance, hard to see.⁴⁶ Especially for the gardener, they simply are what a garden looks like. That said, given the Perennial Garden's existing layout and architecture, the English style of planting appears there in a somewhat unique context.⁴⁷ Before discussing the

⁴⁵ The lack of rationale is, of course, not entirely surprising, given that the Perennial Garden is one of the exhibition gardens: its purpose is to demonstrate to visitors the best that horticulture currently has to offer—not only in terms of the varieties that are available, but also the ways in which those plants can (or perhaps, should) be used in one's own garden. Changes described in the *Quatre Temps* articles include the removal of the garden's roses to the new Rose Garden (in 1976), the addition of annual flowers to provide season-long colour (the evidence of which first appears in the 1967 guide to the Garden), the addition of ornamental trees (by 1992), and coniferous shrubs (after 2001). See Yolande Mindt and Martin Paquet, "De l'ombre vers la lumière," *Quatre Temps* 28, no. 1 (2004): 7; and Sylvie Perron, "Le Jardin des vivaces," *Quatre Temps* 16, no. 3 (1992).

⁴⁶ The designation of English is overly general, since there are several different traditions which have claimed the label since the eighteenth century. The style of planting found in the Perennial Garden has much in common with the techniques and style developed by Gertrude Jekyll (and popularized through her prodigious writings), and which, Helmreich argues, represented a compromise between the “wild” and “formal” English gardens. Anne Helmreich, *The English Garden and the National Identity: The Competing Styles of Garden Design, 1870-1914* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002). I also think it would be fair to say that the most recent round of changes (which began in 2001), are influenced by the more recent “new perennials” movement, which, in addition to colour, emphasizes the importance of an attention to the shape, texture, density and capacities for movement of different perennial species. Tim Richardson, “Whatever happened to the rules of colour?” *Country Life*, vol. 202, 2008, 66-9.

⁴⁷ While it is possible in a general sense, to interpret certain of these changes in terms of larger historical changes, I am not convinced that is instructive here. As Hodgson puts it, “The grid on which many Québec gardens are today based is a complex one: a rigid, formal pattern dating from the seigniorial regime, but enlarged and softened by the influence of the English ruling class, then again modified as the French habitants ascended to urban life and the middle classes, and eventually to power.” Larry Hodgson, *The Garden Lover’s Guide to Canada* (New York, Princeton Architectural press, 2001), 27. According to Hodgson, this last group brought with them a penchant for brightly colored annuals, whose appearance in the Perennial Garden (in the 1960s) does correspond roughly with a period of enhanced national pride among Quebecers, and an improvement in opportunities for francophone Quebecois. Mann, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec*. However, the transition from a French to English style of planting (which begins to be apparent in photographs from the 1980s) does not correspond in any obvious way with changes in the balance of power in Quebec society, except perhaps to mark a period when francophone heritage came to be less dramatically at stake (by virtue of being protected both by law and the increased power of separatist political parties at provincial and federal levels). In any case, not only are the means of making the case for such interpretations beyond the scope of this thesis, it is beside the point of my interest in the garden’s practical code. At the same time, and as I discuss below, I think the Botanical Garden is explicitly concerned with presenting itself and its activities as apolitical. If political content finds its way in, it is by virtue of being concealed as such; whereas the politics of nationalism depends explicitly on recognition. There are other areas within the Botanical Garden where it would make more sense to

techniques and effects of this style, I will first briefly discuss the contents of the garden, and the way it is organized, and how this is contextualized by its situation within the larger Botanical Garden.

As discussed above, botanical gardens are generally constituted as a series of collections. As such, they are, almost by definition, preoccupied with *variety*, measuring the degree of their importance by the number of taxa represented in their collections.⁴⁸ In this context, variety implies, at once, both quantity and difference: a large number of botanically distinct individuals. Teuscher specified that the Perennial Garden should always include a survey of the “best” varieties of available perennials (e.g. those that, in his opinion, balanced attractiveness with reliability and resilience).⁴⁹ Now it is more a question of what is ‘interesting’—that is, what is uncommon, or new (from the perspective of the horticulturalist). In any case, it is certain that a wide selection of common weeds would not do.

While this collection of plants used to be presented in beds planted with different varieties of one or two species (reflecting in its pedagogy a balance of botanical and horticultural aims), it is now organized almost entirely around horticultural criteria. Although a few of the beds are still grouped according to genus (e.g., the non-hardy bulbs, which must be dug out every fall and replanted in the spring), the majority feature a mix of species, with some representing specific situations or purposes (such as those planted for

pursue such themes; for example, the Quebec Corner.

⁴⁸ That is, the number of taxonomically distinct groupings of plants. The Montreal Botanical Garden has at different points in its history, on this basis, claimed to be: the second most important garden internationally (behind Kew), “in the top three” or, more recently “one of the largest and most important” in the world. See for example, “A world of colours and fragrances.”

⁴⁹ For Teuscher, this evaluation was objective, though it depended more on the application of specialized expertise than specific criteria.

fall colour or length of blooming), but most simply present arrangements that are visually attractive. As a result, while the individual beds used to contribute in a more rigidly controlled fashion to the overall visual impact of the garden, they work together now in a manner which is much more impressionistic in its impact, unfolding rhythmically as opposed to rationally as one travels the garden's paths, creating a field of harmonious differences quite pleasant to gaze or glance upon, but less bold or clearly defined as a whole. While the layout and style of planting originally found in the Perennial Garden suggests that it was at its best when viewed from positions that enabled a survey of large portions of the garden, the style of planting in the contemporary garden invites a more ambulatory looking. The straight pathways make it easy to walk without needing to watch where you step, at the same time that the variation of colour and textures within the individual beds sustains visual interest from one end of the garden to the other. It is best suited to a mode of perception which is at once impressionistic and analytical: that is, glancing from one bed to another as you walk, taking in the vegetative tableaus of colour and texture, but also picking out individual species— though not for the sake of sustained investigation so much as to appreciate the contribution they make to the whole, and perhaps to learn their name for the sake of future reference.

While still presented in small groupings of the same plant, (so that when they bloom, they produce a strong visual impact), these groupings are much smaller than they were in the past, and more irregular in form. The different species are arranged in a manner that prioritizes contrast: not only in the colour of flowers and the time of blooming, but also height and shape, as well as colour and texture of foliage. This makes it easier to distinguish one species or variety of plant from another, at the same time that each is shown to its advantage, and the extent of variety across the garden as a whole

is enhanced. As the gardener observed, such variety generates a sense of unfettered possibility: "...everywhere you turn, possible combinations, possible mutations..."⁵⁰ In the context of a botanical garden (and especially in an otherwise classical or French setting), the English style of planting *aestheticizes* what is otherwise of primarily scientific value—that is, botanical variety. Variety is in this context a cultural value with multiple interpretations (e.g., aesthetic as well scientific). To put his in terms consistent with Bourdieu's analysis, underlying the notion of 'variety' as a cultural good, is the opposition 'one/many', which can be seen as an organizing principle influencing not only the content but also the style of the Perennial Garden, and the ways in which its appreciation is conceived and practiced.⁵¹

There are a series of activities for which the Perennial Garden's current style of planting is particularly conducive, all based on forms of looking, and oriented toward the selection of plants for use in one's own garden: searching out or discovering unfamiliar plant species; observing what a given species looks like at maturity, in a particular season, or in combination with other plants; composing lists of plants to suit a particular situation or demand (e.g. fall blooming); and the formation of preferences for particular plant varieties or plant combinations. These are perhaps exactly the types of activity you would

⁵⁰ Of course, it is possible to arrange the contrasts badly, so that variety simply generates an overwhelming jumble of difference. It is also possible, as the horticulturalist currently in charge of the Perennial Garden cautions, to have too much variety, such that "les nouveautés se succèdent à un rythme quasi infernal" Mindt and Paquet, "De l'ombre vers la lumière." Variety is not in itself beautiful, and must be deployed judiciously. As the *ABC Guide* for volunteers giving guided tours of the Botanical Garden puts it: "Le but est de présenter un aménagement à l'aspect naturel et équilibré où la beauté de chaque plante est mise en valeur sans être un fouillis total. Tout doit être pensé et calculé sans rigidité ni symétrie" Catherine Gouillard, *ABC-Guide: Les jardins extérieurs, Document préparé à l'intention des guides bénévoles du Jardin botanique de Montréal*, 2003, Bibliothèque du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal, call number 0951.1 G6.1, 11.

⁵¹ As in, one versus many, or one among many—which implies at once both the uniqueness of the individual and its value in relation to a larger whole.

expect to be facilitated within the Perennial Garden, which is explicitly intended to provide inspiration and information to support home gardening practices. However, it is worth noting that the activities described pertain to only one aspect of gardening, and that the Perennial Garden provides a context for considering plant selection in which there are few constraints on that activity. Located in full sun, with ample space, good soil, irrigation, and relatively unlimited resources (at least compared to the average home garden), the plants of the Perennial Garden can be appreciated for their appearance alone—not, for example, their fitness for a difficult environment or ease of propagation.⁵² At the same time, the heterogeneity of individual beds in relation to the homogeneity of the larger structure, has the tendency of directing attention inward, to the plants and how they are arranged, rather than to their relation to the garden as a whole or the larger landscape. Further, the size of the beds reproduces a scale familiar to the backyard gardener, and is suggestive of a personalized as opposed to problem-oriented design process, where preference matters as much, if not more than anything else. If there is anything to *do* in such a garden (aside from take photographs, which I discuss below), it is to form and refine preferences, gather ideas and make plans to acquire new plants for one's own garden.⁵³ All this makes the garden supportive of an approach to gardening in which plant selection (as a prelude to acquisition) is a central concern.⁵⁴

⁵² Those beds planted thematically address the horticultural dimensions of a presumed prioritization of visual effects: e.g., plants that will bloom for a long time, or at a particular time of year.

⁵³ Which is why the gardener, who does not have a garden of her own, chose as an activity the collection of material for a poem about gardens.

⁵⁴ Reflecting, in other words, a commercial horticulture. I should note however that visitors can learn about other aspects of gardening through the Garden's Horticultural Information Service, which is located in the Administration building. Below I discuss ways in which a garden itself might provide opportunities to practice more than plant selection and therefore promote alternative approaches to gardening.

Although it is characterized in relatively mundane terms, the transformation of the garden's contents to reflect an English style of planting has resulted in changes which are ultimately structural in relation to the experiences and perspectives it affords. In particular, I contend that it provides a training ground for the refinement of specific perceptual skills and appetites. While the original Perennial Garden was addressed to more explicitly social concerns embodied in the activities of garden appreciation, the contemporary garden operates more intensively on individual capacities of perception, cultivating the ability to discern, through difference, the specific visual effects created by different plant species (individually and in combination). While these skills have their most direct application in the realm of home gardening, they are also generalized to a certain degree by their compatibility with the practice of amateur photography, which I discuss shortly.

In order to specify some of the broader social and cultural implications of the Perennial Garden's perceptual and phenomenological affordances, I want to discuss representation of the Botanical Garden as a whole in a series of guides published between 1944 and 2001. I contend that there have been significant changes in the representational style these guides present, particularly as seen in the content and composition of photographs included. These changes are roughly chronologically coincident with changes in the Perennial Garden's planting style, but more importantly, the results are practically analogous as well as complementary in their effects. Though the guides to the Garden serve a variety of purposes,⁵⁵ taking them literally as guides—that is, as tools of

⁵⁵ In addition to helping orient visitors in their tour through the gardens, the guides may have been retained as souvenirs by many visitors. It also seems likely that they would have served as a promotional tool. It is not clear from the guides themselves in what context they were distributed (e.g. whether they were

orientation—suggests that, like the garden itself, they can be read didactically. Thus, if the garden facilitates practice in activities of looking (over other sense modalities), and an attention to plants that is at once impressionistic and analytical, such lessons are reproduced within the guides in the form of images that indicate not only what to look for in the gardens, but also how. I argue that together they promote and/or facilitate similar ways of relating to plants—that is, one which is narrowly visual as well as *acquisitive*.⁵⁶ As such, analyzing the guides is a way of contextualizing and extending the observations made so far about the contemporary Perennial Garden.

As seen from the point of view of the guides, the Garden is a site for a mode of seeing which is epitomized by, though not restricted to, the view from behind a camera. This may seem a rather banal observation: the guides are illustrated with photographs, so how could they provide a point of view that was anything but photographic? First let me note that it is only the ubiquity of colour photographs in a variety of contemporary media which makes it nearly inconceivable that a guide to the Garden should be illustrated in any other way. However, it is worth noting that, to serve their conventional function (of orientation and instruction), the guides *could* (in another time and place perhaps) be composed of garden maps, plans, and plant lists—or at least of a more balanced mix of such representational forms. The decision to use photographs to represent the Garden is certainly consistent, in an unremarkable way, with larger cultural trends, but this does not

provided free of charge, or sold to visitors). Certainly the later guides (e.g. those published in 1991 and 2001), which take a more lavishly illustrated book form, would have been sold. Indeed the most recent is currently available for sale in the Garden's gift shop.

⁵⁶ This term, which is given further context below, is used by Susan Sontag in her critique of photography. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York, Dell, 1977).

make the resulting effects on how the garden is perceived insignificant. It does however make them hard to see.

The changes I observe begin to appear in the 1980s, shortly after a dramatic increase in both the popularity and accessibility of photography as a cultural practice.⁵⁷ They also coincide with a period of substantial expansion in garden magazine publishing that brought a new dimension of visuality to popular garden discourse.⁵⁸ As such, they should be understood, in part, to reflect a process of broader cultural change, at the same time that they illuminate the historicity of certain perceptual habits, and assumptions about what is valued in the Botanical Garden.⁵⁹ As I discuss, the use of particular types of photograph over others magnifies the effects of photography on garden appreciation, encouraging a distinctly photographic mode of seeing the Garden, and suggesting that it is the qualities associated with certain kinds of photograph—particularly those of bright colours and high contrast—that are most valued there.

⁵⁷ In the late 1970s and early 1980s, camera manufacturers began producing cameras with a variety of functions designed to make cameras more versatile, and the production of quality photographs easier: for example, zoom lens, autofocus, and electronic flashes appeared during this time. Coinciding with these developments, was a dramatic increase in the production and services of the photographic industry as a whole (and especially camera sales, which in 1978 exceeded 20 million units sold in the U.S.). See Lydia Wolfman, *1984-1985 Wolfman Report on the Photographic Industry in the United States* (New York, ABC Leisure Magazines Inc., 1985), 12. Wolfman charts the growth in “gross national photo product” against gross national product (US) between 1963 and 1983, demonstrating a steep increase in the former as compared to the latter between 1975 and 1980 (implying a growth in the industry above and beyond the growth of the economy in general).

⁵⁸ Several popular titles appeared for the first time in North American markets during the 1980s and early 1990s (e.g. *Fine Gardening*, *Garden Design* and *Country Garden*). Such publications, printed in full colour, tend to give more space to photographs than to text, and have created a discourse around home gardening that is highly visual, prioritizing those effects which produce spectacular photographs.

⁵⁹ While I attribute a certain intentionality to the representational choices I describe, I also think that there is something pervasively and invisibly influential about photographic media. Thus I know that many of the effects I identify are likely different than those intended by the creators of the guides, and that much of what I observe in the Garden’s changing representational style reflects its response to external pressures that demand a continuous evolution—such that, the possibility of presenting something new (via macro photography, for example) may in this context, be a justification in itself.

I begin this analysis with a consideration of the way the guides' composition has changed over the years.

Garden guides: Image content

At least seven different guides to the Botanical Garden have been published since 1944.⁶⁰ In addition to functioning as tools of orientation, they also serve rhetorical ends: demonstrating the extent and variety of the Garden's collections, as well as highlighting what is most valued within them, and presenting the institution as a whole from a perspective suited to its strengths and priorities. Implied in this rhetorical project, are certain imperatives specific to the Garden's status as a municipal institution. As I will discuss some of these further in Chapter Four, let it suffice for now to say that the Garden has, at various points over the years, had to justify the investments made by the city in its construction, maintenance and development.⁶¹ Though this justification has always been articulated in both scientific and social terms, the practical realization of the Garden's

⁶⁰ In the city archives, there are guides with publication dates in 1944, 1951 and 1967, as well as two others without dates. These last two can be dated approximately—1976-9 and 1980-6—on the basis of comparison with other records that indicate when particular gardens (described in the guides) were added or renovated. See Dossier XCD00: P6435, V1950.3-1/3; P6425, V1950.A-4; P6426, V1950.1/1967; P6521, V1950.8; P6529, V1950.16. The two most recent guides, published in 1991 and 2001, are held at the library of the Botanical Garden.

⁶¹ This can be read in newspaper coverage that, periodically over the years, describes the many benefits that the Garden offers the city. Leading up to and following the drama of events in 1942 (when the city had to rescue the Garden from closure by the province), there were several articles discussing the costs versus the benefits of a botanical garden. There were a few more in the early 1950s, and then again in the late 1960s and early 1970s. See Jacques Rousseau, "Le Jardin Botanique de Montréal," *Almanach d'action sociale Catholique*, 1941, 17-22; Jacques Rousseau, "Les avantages économique d'un Jardin botanique," *La Patrie*, July 30, 1950; André Laporte, "Le coût véritable du Jardin botanique: moins d'un million," *Le Devoir*, July 31, 1972. More recently, a controversy over administrative control of the Garden in the 1990s, led to the departure of director Pierre Bourque, who used the considerable public interest in the controversy to launch his (ultimately successful) campaign to become mayor of Montreal. For a summary of newspaper coverage concerning this controversy, see André Bouchard, "Le Jardin botanique de Montréal... dans les quotidiens francophones de Montréal du 13 au 19 janvier 1992," *Quatre Temps* 16, no. 1 (1992): 4.

social and scientific “missions” has changed a great deal over the years. While the text of the guides in some ways obscures such change (by reproducing the rhetoric), the photographs appearing in the guides document a changing emphasis within the institution as a whole that provides a means of understanding some of the broader implications of the way the contemporary Perennial Garden operates. In particular, while photographs appearing in the earlier guides (e.g., particularly that of 1951), can be seen to be concerned with the explicitly social aspects of beautification (as discussed in Chapter Two), those appearing in later guides, suggest a different relation to beauty. That is, the Garden as pictured through the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first is a site where beauty—*natural* beauty in particular—is discovered and continually cultivated, through what I contend is a specifically photographic mode of attention. In this, the guides imply (as far as nature is concerned), the Garden is no longer concerned primarily with education, or even socialization (as Teuscher was), but rather with its *aestheticization*. This shift in priority is signaled primarily through a change in representational style, as measured by a marked change in the type of photographs presented in the guides over the years. It is also signaled however, by a change in the content of those photographs, and the overall emphasis they help to convey.

Much of the variation in content of the guides is related to changes to the overall composition of the Garden over the years. There have been several new gardens added since the mid 1970s, many of which feature substantial cultural programming, often in the form of permanent exhibits housed in special buildings (e.g. as found in the Chinese, Japanese and First Nations gardens). These gardens are presented in different ways than the more traditional gardens (e.g. using photographs that depict buildings, special events and interpretative programs as well as the gardens themselves), but their inclusion has

also led to a change in the order of presentation, as well as fewer photographs of the older gardens. While the guides prior to 1991 all follow a circuit which travels in a clockwise direction around the administration building (thus coming first to the Exhibition Gardens), the 1991 and 2001 guides move in the opposite direction—arriving more quickly at the newer, more heavily interpreted gardens, and finishing with the Exhibition Gardens. The gardener suggests that this represents an implicit demotion in importance for the Exhibition Gardens; when she traveled in that direction, she was always exhausted (both physically and perceptually) by the time she got to that end, with little energy remaining to properly appreciate them.⁶²

Perhaps more interesting than these changes in content however, the role that people have in the included photographs has changed markedly over time: in the earlier guides they are shown interacting in various ways with both the gardens and other people, but in later guides, people are either absent or barely visible within the gardens themselves. In this particular change, the Garden seems to go from being a site of social activity—in which other people were part of what one saw while visiting—to one of more solitary and aesthetically focused pursuits.⁶³ In other words, in recent guides, the Garden is depicted less as a *place*—with all that implies about the variety of histories and meanings issuing from the human activities there—and more as an impersonal source of visual splendor. While this change in presentation is qualitatively quite striking when considering the guides most distant in time from one another, it is not as easy to perceive

⁶² Consequently, in her visits to the Botanical Garden, she always chose her entrance strategically, depending on which gardens she wanted she wanted to give more attention.

⁶³ Of course this is not to say that either of these representations is an accurate reflection of what actually goes on in the gardens, but rather to highlight the differences in what is implied about the Garden as a result.

the change in progress from one guide to another. In an attempt to both confirm my impressions of this change, and track it over time, I found it useful to construct a rough quantitative measure: that is, a count of photographs with people-based content, proportional to the total number of photographs.

Aside from the first guide, which contains relatively few photographs that include people (only three), depictions of people in the gardens tends to decrease over the years even though the number of photographs rises steadily.⁶⁴ In 1951, just under two-thirds of the photographs contain people—often in the foreground.⁶⁵ In 1967, this proportion drops to less than one third, though there are still people to be found in the foreground of several images; in the 1970s the people are much smaller in size, though they still appear in almost one quarter of the photographs; but by the 80s, there are only four photographs including people even though the total number of photographs had more than doubled from 1951.⁶⁶ In 1991, a quarter of the photographs again include people, but unlike earlier guides, the vast majority appear in the context of activities apart from exploring the gardens themselves—in depictions of cultural programming, the horticultural school, the Insectarium, and so on. Photographs of the gardens themselves are for the most part

⁶⁴ The 1944 guide also contains proportionally fewer pictures of the actual gardens, and more of buildings and facilities. This is likely due to the fact that the landscape of the Garden itself was not particularly impressive at this time, being newly planted (with immature trees), and incomplete in some areas.

⁶⁵ Sixteen of the total twenty-eight.

⁶⁶ In 1967, ten photographs of a total thirty-six included people. In the guide from the 1970s, it was nine of a total forty. In 1980, the total number of photographs was sixty-one (of which only four included people).

devoid of people. In the 2001 guide, which is the largest and most well-illustrated by far, there are only three photographs that include people at all.⁶⁷

Interestingly, in the course of the disappearance of people from photographs of the Garden—specifically, in the guide from the 1980s—text is introduced to describe the Garden’s “social vocation” (or, in 2001, its “social mission”). This is seen to include all those beautification activities undertaken by the Garden in the city at large—which, in the 1980s were considerable. Though the Garden’s role was significantly diminished in this regard after 1987, the 1991 and 2001 guides still link the notion of a “social vocation” to the activities of this era, calling itself the city’s ‘green’ or ‘ecological conscience’, and claiming as a result a special relationship with Montrealers.⁶⁸ As such, it seems to me that, while the Garden was itself originally portrayed a *site* of social (as well as scientific) importance, its social importance is now seen to reside in the *institution*, which is active in the city more broadly.

The depiction of the Garden’s scientific capacities also changes noticeably over the years, though not in a manner which is as easily measured through image content—in part I think because this is an aspect of institutional identity that does not lend itself particularly well to photographs. That said, it is worth noting that between the first (1944) and most recent (2001) guides, the number of photographs depicting scientific facilities

⁶⁷ In the 2001 guide there are 122 photographs in total.

⁶⁸ For example, in the 2001 guide, under the heading of “La mission sociale et culturelle,” it reads, “Véritable ‘conscience écologique’ de la ville, le Jardin a un rôle fondamental à jouer dans le développement d’un ‘Montréal vert’. Très engagé dans l’aménagement urbain, il a su développer une relation privilégiée avec la population et a contribué à faire de Montréal une ville fleurie.” Jean-Jacques Lincourt, *Jardin botanique de Montréal* (Anjou, QC, Éditions Fides, 2001), 18.

goes from six (comprising 32% of the total) to zero.⁶⁹ Further indication of shifting priorities is provided however by a more subtle change in organization of content. While the scientific value of the Garden is discussed in the introductory pages of the first two guides, the opening pages of the 1991 and 2001 guides characterize the Garden as a place of wonder and beauty—un “paradis sur terre”⁷⁰—and restrict references to its scientific capacities to special sections discussing its different missions or vocations.⁷¹

There are likely a number of ways in which these shifts could be contextualized by larger social and cultural changes—what I think it is important to emphasize is the way a decrease in emphasis on social activity within the guides is accompanied by an increase in emphasis on aesthetic value. Thus while the text of the 2001 guide asserts that the scientific and social missions of the Garden remain essential to its activities, the balance—and, as I discuss below, the style—of images suggest that beauty, science and social significance are now valued separately, with (a particular kind of visual) beauty becoming a clear priority above all else. Thus the last paragraph of the introduction to the 2001 guide suggests that, when people leave the Garden, what they will take with them is—not a greater understanding of plants, or a feeling of calm and goodwill—but beautiful images:

⁶⁹ Of course, their proportion relative to the total does vary, but in this case, the proportion seems less meaningful, since, compared to the depiction of gardens, there are a limited number of interesting photographs that can be taken of the library, labs, production greenhouses and so on. . The numbers in the guides appearing between 1944 and 2001 only vary modestly, which makes interpretation of their significance problematic.

⁷⁰ ...“paradise on earth.”

⁷¹ Interestingly, the guides from the 1970s and 80s mention scientific activities in the introduction, *and* in special sections devoted to the Garden’s different vocations. The 1967 guide does not address the scientific activities of the garden until almost the end of the guide, in two short paragraphs. According to Bouchard, this corresponds with a period of decreased scientific activities within the Garden. Bouchard, *Le Jardin botanique de Montréal*.

J'espère que ce guide vous permettra de découvrir le Jardin botanique de Montréal avec autant d'émerveillement qu'il m'a été donné de le faire, et que vous aurez le même plaisir que moi à parcourir ses sentiers. Je compte aussi sur les magnifiques photographies de Louise Tanguay pour vous permettre de vous remémorer vos plus beaux souvenirs, vos meilleurs moments passés dans ce paradis sur terre.⁷²

The extent to which this represents a de-politicization of the Garden's significance, is a question I treat below.

In the context of this shift in emphasis from the social and scientific to the aesthetic, it is interesting to consider the changing treatment of the Perennial Garden. Being one of the oldest gardens, it has a prominent role in the first three guides—appearing in the opening pages, and in a proportionally large number of photographs. Then, in the following three guides, which put newer gardens in the spotlight, it is all but absent.⁷³ However, it seems to have enjoyed something of a renaissance in the most recent guide, where it appears again in several photographs.⁷⁴ I attribute this in part to its ongoing renovations, which have given it qualities compatible with the more focused aesthetic presentation of the Garden that the recent guides demonstrate. In particular, as I discuss below, it is uniquely amenable to a particular type of photograph—one that is far more common in the 1991 and 2001 guides than in those previous. Although it would

⁷² “I hope that this guide will enable you to discover the Montreal Botanical Garden with the same sense of wonder I experienced in creating it, and that you will find similar pleasures to mine in exploring its paths. I’m also counting on the beautiful photographs of Louise Tanguay to help you recall your best memories, your best moments spent in this paradise on earth.” Lincourt, *Jardin botanique de Montréal*, 8. Of course, as I discuss below, the photographs presented in the guide—particularly because they are those of a professional photographer—can have very little in common with memories of the Garden, at least to the extent that those memories are formed on the basis of more than the view from behind a camera. If the guide is a souvenir, it is less in the sense of preserving an experience of the Garden, and more in the sense of collecting beautiful “moments” that are valued in and of themselves.

⁷³ There is only one photograph of the Perennial Garden in the guides from the 1970s and 1980s; in the 1991 guide, there are two.

⁷⁴ Four, of a total 122.

be overstating the relationship to say that the garden is *designed* to make such photographs possible, the fact that its new style is both compatible with their production and coincides chronologically with their appearance in the guides, supports my contention that the guides and the garden work in complementary ways to encourage a particular way of seeing plants.

Garden guides: Changes in representational style

If the content of photographs included in the guides indicate *what* visitors should look for in the gardens, their compositional style provides an indication of *how* visitors should do that looking. Though it is difficult to draw clear-cut lines in the case of each and every photograph, there have been significant changes over the years in the way the photographs appearing in the guides are composed. In those published before 1980, the vast majority of photographs are landscapes: that is, while the size of objects depicted may vary, there is enough background included, in sufficient focus, to make it possible to situate them in relation to a larger landscape (e.g. trees, buildings, sky). Such photographs invite a certain amount of imagination on behalf of the viewer: what it might feel like to be there, what kinds of things might happen. Even when there are no human figures included, there is a certain narrative potential in such photographs. Beginning with the guide from the 1980s however, the majority of included photographs demonstrate a composition with a more restrained view, providing little to no legible background or contextual information.⁷⁵ In recognition of the fact that these photographs are of widely

⁷⁵ That is, just over half, when photographs of things other than gardens (e.g., building interiors, scientists at work, etc.) “historical” photographs, and others I considered uncategorizable (e.g., some ‘cut-outs’ of larger photographs and non-photographic images) are excluded.

varying scale and that it is the nature of the subject in focus which matters most to my analysis, I refer to them as either ‘singular’ or ‘field’ close-ups.⁷⁶ In the singular close-up, a single plant (or flower, or other plant part) is at the centre of the photograph, either filling the frame, or due to a shallow depth of field, standing out sharply from a fuzzy background. In the field close-up, the depth of field is greater, and there is usually more than one species of plant in focus (though there are a few which feature masses of single species in different colours). In both cases, there is no horizon and no other (legible) background details to provide context and a sense of location or scale. Together the two types of photograph provide impressions of select moments within the garden, rather than comprehensive information about its contents, or a taste of its narrative possibilities. As I discuss below, the fact that such photographs comprise the majority of those included in the recent guides, suggests that a key component of appreciating the Garden is the cultivation of a relatively detached, distinctly photographic sensibility, one capable of perceiving the aesthetics of difference—both as something to be admired in a given arrangement, and as that which produces individual species. In exploring the two types in more detail, I consider photographs of the Perennial Garden included in the 2001 guide.

The field close-up is the type of photograph in many ways most well-suited to portrayal of the Perennial Garden since the style of planting there makes it particularly easy to produce them. Its deployment of contrast on a smaller scale than associated with other planting styles makes for a high number of interesting photographs within a relatively small area, meaning that it is not necessary to gain access to elevated

⁷⁶ I should note that some appear to be the product of cropping a photograph that may or may not have been composed originally as a landscape.

viewpoints, or to wait for the right lighting, since there are always a variety of vantage points that will produce quite pleasing images.⁷⁷ While many of the gardens in the Botanical Garden are conducive to such photographs, most are not quite so abundant in opportunities for doing so. With its rectilinear arrangements of beds, each one different in composition, the Perennial Garden solicits a continuous succession of relatively close-range snapshots.⁷⁸ At the same time, the field close-up permits a form of looking which is similar to what I described above regarding what is facilitated by the garden's structure and style of planting: that is, because of the relatively large depth of field in such a photograph, it is possible to pick out individual species from the group, but always in the context of their aesthetic relation to one another. Thus, although looking at a photograph differs in important ways from walking through a garden, the effect with regard to what can be appreciated about the plants (and the garden) is analogous.

In the 2001 guide, two of the four included photographs demonstrate this composition.⁷⁹ Just as the “English” style of planting foregrounds the visible differences

⁷⁷ There is historical evidence to suggest that this is not a coincidence, given that the garden is planted in the English style: both William Robinson's “wild garden” and Gertrude Jekyll's somewhat more formal interpretation of the “cottage garden”, were pictorial in their aesthetic, presenting to the garden visitor a series of garden “pictures” or tableaus composed of carefully selected groupings of plants. See Helmreich, *English Garden*. As Richardson puts it, Jekyll saw gardens as “...living canvases for ‘picture-making’, with flowers providing the ‘paint’ palette to be used in the carefully planned creation of semi-abstract compositions...” Tim Richardson, “Whatever happened to the rules of colour?” *Country Life*, 2008, 66-9. In fact, Jekyll used photography as a means both of documenting her work and in the course of developing new plans. She provided photographs that provided the basis for etchings used in Robinson's *The English Flower Garden*. Tony Mott, “Gardens and Photography,” in *The History of Garden Design*, ed. Monique Mosser and Georges Teyssot (London, Thames and Hudson, 1991) 471-82.

⁷⁸ At least, if that's what you're there to do, as the gardener found when she visited the Perennial Garden with her camera on other visits, when she was not so focused on taking photographs, she did not feel compelled in the same way. However, as she notes, many people do visit the gardens with camera in hand, and appear to spend much of their time taking photographs.

⁷⁹ See Lincourt, *Jardin botanique de Montréal*, 76-7. On the webpage for the Perennial Garden, there are several more examples (five of the seven photographs presented demonstrate either a field or singular close-up composition). “Perennial Garden,” *Website of the Jardin Botanique de Montréal*,



Figure 8. Images of the Perennial Garden included in the 2001 guide to the Garden, Lincourt, Jardin botanique de Montréal. Courtesy of the Montreal Botanical Garden.

between species, so these photographs reduce the garden to its effects of contrast—depicting not individual species or the garden as a whole, but the visual relationships between a particular grouping of plants. By selecting a point of view which foregrounds the most interesting or prominent visual contrasts between different plants, and by keeping a relatively wide swath of these plants in focus while excluding any background, an abstract tableau of colour and vegetative form is created. The two field close-ups of the Perennial Garden included in the 2001 guide achieve these effects by taking a point of view that includes a high density of plants in bloom. Those on the website however

(presumably taken more recently) demonstrate that similar effects are possible with a mix of blooming and non-blooming plants. In both cases, the effect is decorative as opposed to narrative, and the garden is portrayed primarily as a source of pleasing images.

The singular close-up is similarly devoid of narrative meaning. Where the field close-up portrays relationships between species however, the singular close-up focuses on individual species (sometimes even individual plants or plant parts). In the context of a guide to a botanical garden, it is conceivable that these photographs would enable a close consideration of details—those that are of interest in unusual species for example, or plant parts that would normally go unnoticed. This might facilitate a scientific interest in the Garden's contents. However, the subjects treated in these photographs are for the most



Figure 9. *Echinops* in the Perennial Garden. Photograph by Louise Tanguay, from the 2001 guide to the Garden. Courtesy of the Montreal Botanical Garden.

part popular flowers or those of horticultural interest, and if their depiction is illuminating, it is of aesthetic rather than botanical value.⁸⁰ Perhaps more significantly, we might also expect some photographs to depict plants in relationship to birds and insects, as a means of highlighting aspects of their biological and ecological importance; but aside from one photograph of a butterfly in the 2001 guide, we do not.⁸¹ Instead, the singular close-up photographs included in the guides demonstrate what is to be gained from considering the flowers contained in the Botanical Garden's collections as objects of beauty detached, though not in isolation from their (garden) surroundings. There is one photograph of this type included in depiction of the Perennial Garden in the 2001 guide; as if to acknowledge that its singular beauty nonetheless benefits from its juxtaposition with other species, it is taken from a point of view that makes a colourful, fuzzy background of the flowers behind it.⁸²

Both these types of photograph represent quintessentially photographic modes of seeing, since it is the camera that provides us with both the technology and the occasion

⁸⁰ This is consistent with the Garden's tendency to prioritize horticultural over biological or ecological criteria. In the 2001 guide, horticultural mainstays such as roses, peonies, daylilies, sunflowers and irises, appear as subjects several times. The majority of these photographs portray only the blossom, or part of it, and crop out other plant parts. There are a few exceptions to this emphasis in the 2001 guide, mainly in the section portraying tropical plants located in the greenhouses.

⁸¹ It accompanies text about the annual "Papillons en liberté" exhibition held in one of the exhibition greenhouses, though the plant on which it rests is not identifiable. See Lincourt, *Jardin botanique de Montréal*, 35.

⁸² Interestingly, though the fourth included picture of the Perennial Garden is, by my categorization, a landscape, it is not one that is easily inhabited by the viewer, and instead demonstrates another, less prevalent form of specifically photographic seeing: the panoramic view. Although such photographs promise a comprehensive representation, they depict a point of view impossible to reproduce without a camera. Because they present more than it is possible to see through binocular vision, it is disorienting to look at such a photograph carefully, especially if you *have* been there before—the experience is akin to standing in two places at once. Barthes commented that, for him, tourist photographs of landscape never satisfied because, "...photographs of landscape (urban or country) must be *habitable...*" Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, English ed., trans. Richard Howard (New York, Hill and Wang, 1981), 38. But the garden presented panoramically is a landscape impossible to inhabit, even virtually.

to view aspects of the plant (or garden) we would not otherwise see (at least not in this way). While it is somewhat obvious how this is the case for macro photography (which produces a level of detail not available to the naked eye), it is also true of the field close-up: it is the frame the camera provides which makes it possible to abstract a particular arrangement of plants from a much larger whole, while at the same time making it appear self-contained.⁸³ The fact that depiction of the Botanical Garden is weighted heavily (in recent years) towards these types of photograph, suggests that this is an important aspect of how its assets are viewed: as a source of photographic beauty.

As Susan Sontag suggests, however, this is (almost) the same thing as simply saying that the Garden is beautiful. In a culture pervaded by photographic images, and because of the photograph's tendency to beautify, we tend to find aesthetic value in the objects and views which photograph well, such that, “[p]hotographs, rather than the world, have become the standard of the beautiful.”⁸⁴ In showing us the Garden as a source of photographic beauty, the guides are both convincing with respect to the extent of that beauty, and suggest that it is best appreciated through a photographic mode of attention—that is, to the unique aesthetic qualities of individual plants, as well as to the impressionistic effects created by their arrangement with others.

The thing about photographs is that they change the way we see the world. This is in part because of the way the constraints of the technology, as well as its relationship to other media, tend to lead to the proliferation of particular viewpoints. While it is hard to

⁸³ As the gardener notes, the selectivity of such shots makes it possible to portray a given garden as more visually diverse, or more abundant, than it appears in person.

⁸⁴ Sontag, *On Photography*, 85. As Sontag observes, in part by making new perspectives and details available for aesthetic appreciation, and in part more simply by signaling that a given object or scenes merits our attention, photography “inexorably beautifies” the world. *Ibid*, 107.

identify this effect in a contemporary context, John Stilgoe provides an instructive historical example. He shows how, around the turn of the twentieth century, the concurrent rise of amateur photography and automobile touring as recreational pastimes, contributed to the predominance of a particular aesthetic of landscape in the early twentieth century. This aesthetic responded to a number of conditions, including the invention of high speed film, the view from the road, the rectangular viewfinder and the need to avoid overexposure by limiting the amount of sky in a given shot, as well as existing preferences for picturesque landscapes. The proliferation of particular types of photographs—not only in private collections, but also in a variety of increasingly accessible media (e.g., postcards, calendars and magazines)—in turn contributed to the entrenchment of picturesque landscape ideals in North American culture. Such ideals—which take form in those qualities and perspectives that people notice and look for in a given scene—fluence the way we see the world, particularly because, as Stilgoe points out, we forget we are looking at photographs of landscape, and think we see the landscape itself.⁸⁵ Further, because photographs are always understood to be *of* something (real), while being at the same time—because photographs—necessarily beautiful, we respond to them as if they are showing us something essentially true about the object.⁸⁶

Such effects are amplified by the still-growing popularity of photography as a hobby and as an essential accompaniment to family life, since more and more people

⁸⁵ John Stilgoe, "Popular photography, scenery values and visual assessment," *Landscape Journal* 3, no. 2 (1984): 111-22..

⁸⁶ Even stronger, as Sontag asserts, "Instead of just recording reality, photographs have become the norm for the way things appear to us, thereby changing the very idea of reality, and of realism." Sontag, *On Photography*, 87.

have experience producing the kinds of photographs presented in the guides.⁸⁷ It is interesting to note that the changes I am observing began to appear at roughly the same time as handheld cameras with built-in zoom lenses were introduced (in the late 1970s and early 1980s). Given that it was technically possible to take such photographs before, their increasing prevalence in the guides at this time suggests that they reflect a new way of looking at the world—one which is related to the popular uptake of previously specialized points of view, as well as the increased ease of producing them.⁸⁸ As it happens, the singular and field close-up are very easy photographs to compose—it is a matter of simply identifying the individual specimen, or grouping of plants that will provide the most visual interest, and then of zooming in to fill the frame with the subject. While amateur close-ups (of either variety), may not equal those of a professional photographer, their *resemblance* of those images, is enough to establish them as documentary of the garden's essential character, and to inscribe in the photographer the associated perceptual habits. In other words, such a photograph may lack something in impact, or attention to detail, but it will look like what a picture of a garden is supposed to look like, and thus seem to represent the garden in a transparent way. Here photography

⁸⁷ Camera and film wholesaling in the US produced over twenty-six billion dollars in revenue in 2011. While sales are still recovering from a substantial dip during the 2008-9 recession, and competing with increasingly high-quality camera phones, the industry is still expected to grow 2.5% up to 2016. Nima Samadi, "Picture of health: Innovations and price drops will propel digital camera sales," in the IBISWorld database, <http://clients1.ibisworld.com/reports/us/industry/default.aspx?entid=926> (accessed Feb. 17, 2013). Although it is hard to say whether the reporting methods are commensurate, this can be compared with the figure provided by Wolfman for "gross national photo product" in 1983, which was over sixteen billion. Wolfman, *Wolfman Report*, 10.

⁸⁸ In saying this I don't mean to suggest that professional photographers were directly influenced by the activities of amateur photographers, but rather that the interplay between the technology of the camera, the perceptual activities facilitated and required by photography and the proliferation of photographs, exerts an influence on ways of seeing that is culturally pervasive.

takes on a relationship with the garden that is not only analogous, but also recursive, since the practice of photography tends to magnify its influence on our perceptual habits.⁸⁹

To the extent that people do visit the Garden to photograph it—which the gardener reports to be very common—their experience is likely to be constrained both by a focus on visual qualities, and by the need to take up those viewpoints that produce good photographs. In the case of close-up photographs (of either the singular or field variety), this entails a disregard for context, and a narrow focus on formal visual qualities. Given that the more this kind of specialized vision dominates our experience, the less likely we are to notice or feel fully those qualities which come to us through other sense modalities, the predominance in the guides of images which reproduce viewpoints only available through the lens of a camera (and which cannot be imaginatively inhabited, as a landscape can), encourages a disposition towards the garden which is not only disinterested (in an aesthetic sense), but also relatively disembodied.

Implications of changing styles

At this point it is worth considering again the changing social significance of the Garden over the years as depicted in the guide photographs. The impact of an increasing prioritization of relatively abstract compositions over (potentially narrative-rich) landscapes, is reinforced by the disappearance of human figures from those landscapes that are included. Between changes in the content of what is pictured, and the style of its presentation, the guides now present the Garden from a perspective of relative

⁸⁹ This is I think the (somewhat undertheorized) premise of Sontag's analysis of the cultural significance of photography, who refers repeatedly to the "habit-forming" nature of photography: that it depends not only on widespread exposure to photographs, but also experience taking them. See in particular the essays entitled "The heroism of vision," and "The image world." Sontag, *On Photography*.

detachment—one which is ultimately part of a larger shift away from a social significance integral to the Garden itself, to one associated predominantly with the external activities of the institution. In this movement of aestheticization, the politics of the Garden—as for example, a site of social engineering—are erased. Though popular education is still clearly an important part of what the Garden does, it is as a site of strictly personal edification as opposed to one where the civic life of the city as a whole is seen to benefit.

At the same time, as Sontag observes of photography in general, but which is particularly true of the relatively abstract compositions found in close-up photographs, they have an alienating effect on relations between viewer (or photographer) and subject. In order to make a new kind of beauty available for appreciation, they disconnect the subject from its context and highlight its aesthetic value. This in turn makes of the subject an object to be acquired (in the form of a photograph), rather than, for example, a life form to be studied, a place to be honoured and enjoyed. As Sontag writes, “Despite the illusion of giving understanding, what seeing through photographs really invites is an acquisitive relation to the world that nourishes aesthetic awareness and promotes emotional detachment.”⁹⁰ In the long run, subjects that are photographed frequently (such as flowers) tend to become clichéd, appearing less interesting in real life the more we see them in images. As Sontag warns, photography creates beauty, but it also uses it up.⁹¹

If such photographs have a social significance, it resides outside the frame, within the practice of amateur photography—in collections which people make of them, or in the symbolic value attributed to the capacity for their creation (i.e., having an ‘eye’ for

⁹⁰ Ibid, 111.

⁹¹ Ibid, 85.

their production). As I discuss below, the garden seen through the lens of a camera reflects an approach to garden appreciation ultimately compatible with a decorative and commercial as opposed to an experimental or more inclusive horticulture—that is, one in which people buy and maintain rather than grow and share plants. As a mode of engagement with the garden, taking a photograph draws on the same perceptual dispositions as activities associated with the selection of plants (described above). In both cases, there is a tendency to regard plants from a point of view that is at once impressionistic (i.e. attuned to broad visual effects) and analytical—in the search for the individual angle, plant or detail worthy of attention (and therefore acquisition). Thus between the guides, which promote the garden as a potentially endless source for the production of beautiful but relatively meaningless photographs, and the garden itself, which facilitates both the refinement of personal horticultural tastes and certain forms of amateur photography, aesthetic appreciation becomes coincident with acquisition. Variety, the founding principle of botanical gardens, is embodied here as a (literally) endless search for the one (shot or plant or visual effect) among the many.

Rethinking habitus

I want to return at this stage to consideration of some of the concepts grounding the above analysis in order to summarize the perspective on the Perennial Garden they have helped to create, and suggest how they might require some stretching to better accommodate both the gardener's experience and the garden's more culturally conservative effects. I will then conclude by exploring an alternative vision for the Perennial Garden—one oriented toward facilitating a more experimental gardening practice among its visitors, and which helps to throw the broad social and cultural

implications of the existing garden into sharper relief. This amounts, I think, to a preliminary exploration of what the concrete products of a pragmatic criticism might be.

The Perennial Garden was originally envisioned by Teuscher as a site for civic rejuvenation through public education. However, as the analogy with the parades des fleurs helped to demonstrate, this ultimately served to repair and shore up, rather than challenge, the existing order of things. In the contemporary Perennial Garden, the perceptual training facilitated within the garden is similarly conservative in its overarching cultural program: in particular, it provides support in various ways for a capitalistic conception and practice of horticulture. Most importantly, by prioritizing a particular kind of visual effect over other, potentially extra-visual, effects, in a context where there are few material constraints, the Perennial Garden enables visitors to perceive plants as aesthetic objects, and to conceive of gardening as an exercise in plant selection and arrangement. Once you view plants this way, gardening becomes a form of outdoor decorating, concerned primarily with putting the right plant in the right place.⁹² It draws on dispositions and capacities already prevalent within capitalist society, having much in common, not only with photography, but also, for example, shopping for clothing (perhaps an original site for development of the ability to form and express preferences). It involves making a selection from an array of possibilities and creating visually appealing combinations, and it is considered a form of self-expression.⁹³

⁹² In fact there is a popular gardening book by this name: *Right Plant, Right Place: The Indispensable Guide to the Successful Garden*; though it should be noted that ‘right place’ is in this case understood to include consideration of plants’ cultural requirements as well as their specific aesthetic qualities.

⁹³ Thus for example, in an article about the emulation of the English cottage garden by American gardeners, the “American cottage garden” is celebrated as creating a “personalized, intimate space, rather than the continuation of the neighbour’s lawns... it suits our democratic way of life; it is a highly individualized style that even the rich can choose...” Cheryl Weber, “American cottage gardens: An



Figure 10. View of the present-day Perennial Garden, looking north (2006). Photograph by Michel Tremblay. Courtesy of the Montreal Botanical Garden.

As such, though the Perennial Garden speaks most directly to experienced gardeners, it does not address a specialized habitus in doing so; rather, it bolsters existing dispositions and the ways of life they inform. In this context, the promotion of ‘home gardening’ helps to encourage an interest in plants, ‘nature’ and the local environment that is easily turned towards culturally conservative ends. Similar to Sontag’s warning about the way photography ensures complacency in the context of shrinking political choices (given that “[t]he freedom to consume a plurality of images and goods is equated with freedom itself”), a capitalist interpretation of horticulture helps to ensure that people accept existing constraints on access to land and other resources within the city.⁹⁴ At the

English tradition transplanted,” *Garden Design* no. 4 (1989): 28-37.

⁹⁴ Thus the recent proliferation of books and magazine articles on the topic of “container” and

same time, when it encourages a relation towards plants which is superficially aesthetic, and acquisitive rather than collaborative or experimental (alternatives I explore below), horticultural education helps to perpetuate a disposition towards landscape more broadly which assumes that reconstruction or embellishment is better than tending and cultivating what is already there. This in turn ensures that those with access to the required resources (i.e., land, sunlight and cash) wield disproportionate influence over the shape, appearance and ecological character of the urban landscape.

That said, the gardener's own experience in the Perennial Garden demonstrates that its code is not read the same way under all circumstances. Perhaps in part because her chosen activity while visiting put her non-ownership of a garden in the foreground, she produced a reading of the Perennial Garden that exceeded in many ways the forms of perceptual training it is coded to facilitate. This is not to say however, that the garden's code was disregarded, or (which is to say something similar) that the gardener managed to overcome her habitus. Rather, her improvisation of the visit seemed to be in part inspired by the (involuntary) engagement of particular dispositions. Specifically, the appearance of weeds in locations she did not expect to find them awakened in her echoes of the feelings associated with the physical tasks of gardening, and memories of gardens and plants she had cared for. While in another context, such an activation of habitus would have led to a visit perceptually dominated by evaluation and appraisal (i.e., her 'professional' eye), the gardener's chosen activity turned these feelings and memories toward different purposes (or, more precisely, the purpose of difference). As she walked the garden, she felt the

"small space" gardening, goes hand in hand with the continued growth of the suburbs: those who can, move to where the land is cheaper, and those who can't, find ways of making do, beautifully.

garden call to her for her care. But instead of weeding, she was reading the names of plants and thinking about a poem, and somehow, as a result, the plants became disconnected from their usual relations. Rather than speaking simply in terms of shape, colour and texture, or serving as signifiers of the species or variety of plant they were planted there to represent, they became floating signifiers, attached more prominently to images and sensations from other times and places (some of them imaginary). Drawing these in one on top of the other, the garden became a fluid, multiply textured place—coded, but also irreducibly heterogeneous.

In this instance, habitus was a resource as well as a constraint, enabling experimentation with the garden's code. For Bourdieu, this is precisely what habitus is not supposed to be able to do, since it is a mechanism of reproduction. Nonetheless I maintain that it is a bodily, habit-based engagement with the garden which activates both its culturally conservative effects and its more experimental potential. What is needed, I think, is to conceive of that capacity for engagement not as a structure, but a capacity for an ongoing process of reading, and to substitute an active environment (following Dewey and Deleuze), for the concept of field.

In *S/Z* where Barthes writes about the coding of literary texts, the mechanism which is seen to both activate and re-inscribe cultural knowledge (and the consensus it implies), is connotation, defined as “a correlation [of meanings] immanent in the text.”⁹⁵ This refers, not simply to the knowledge required to comprehend what is (really) being said in a given text (or a garden), but a conflation of reader and text within a history

⁹⁵ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, Inc., 1974), 8.

indiscernible as such (at least in the first place). He writes, “This ‘T’ which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite or, more precisely, lost (whose origin is lost).”⁹⁶ He or she does not simply receive or respond to the text, but is already incorporated within it, is “irrecoverable from it.”⁹⁷ Both text and reader are born of and partake in a larger, pre-existing system of codes—one which resides, not in the minds of individual readers so much as in the process of reading (which involves both reader and text).

If we understand a visit to the garden to be a kind of bodily reading that responds to and engages multiple codes (with the practical code being of greatest interest here), the set of activities privileged by the garden’s structure and style can be seen as its connotations: what it ‘makes sense’ to do while in the garden. That said, for Barthes, even when it is conventional, reading is not a passive reception, but work. The undertaking of particular activities constitutes not a passive acceptance of instructions but a production of consensus: this *is* what we consider beautiful, this *is* what a garden is for. At the same time, a text (or a garden) always contains a certain amount of variability: its use and meaning are, in a sense, overdetermined by the wealth of codes informing both its design and appreciation. Especially in a garden—which is constituted as an environment as opposed to a narrative, and practically conducive to personalized activities such as reminiscing and fantasizing—an idiosyncratic or personalized reading is always possible, even if more radical alternatives are discouraged by the redundancy of the garden’s coding. In the Perennial Garden, a hegemonic reading is encouraged not only through

⁹⁶ Ibid, 10.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

the garden's style and structure, but also through its representation in various media (such as the guides), and formal rules governing behavior. A deliberately heterogeneous reading, in contrast, which Barthes calls a *writing* of the text, explores its more or less latent plurality, resisting the imposition of a correct interpretation or mode of appreciation, and seeking instead its specific forms of play.

Here 'playing' must be understood in all its polysemy. The text itself *plays* (like a door on its hinges, like a device in which there is some 'play'); and the reader himself plays twice over: playing the Text as one plays a game, he searches for a practice that will re-produce the Text; but, to keep that practice from being reduced to a passive, inner mimesis... he also *plays* the Text in the musical sense of the term.⁹⁸

It is important to note that, as this analogy suggests, the heterogeneous reading requires a certain degree of cultural competence. The nature of one's play, and its effects, are influenced by how one comprehends, or is implicated in, the garden's code. Thus the gardener's improvisations made use of aspects of the garden's coding—e.g., the way it operates simultaneously as a catalogue of botanical variety and as an aesthetically pleasing display of different plant combinations—while playing with the form of activity such a structure could possibly enable. She could not have done so had she not, immediately and intuitively (via habitus), understood what 'the point' of the garden was (i.e., what there was to do there). The fact that she anticipated boredom, and therefore devised an alternative activity, was productive, not only of a sense of the garden's broader potential, but also observations about the key components structuring its appreciation in general (which might otherwise have gotten lost in an experience of boredom). For example, the gardener identified the size and extensive variety of plant life within the

⁹⁸ Barthes, "From work to text," 79.

garden, as aspects of the garden that gave the impressions and feelings she experienced over the course of her visit their specific tenor. In the context of playful activity, as opposed to a more conventional form of documentation, she was able to fully explore these feelings and their contribution to her overall experience so that later, their importance to the overall analysis was easier to articulate.

At the same time, to see the gardener's experimentation as an ongoing process of reading (as opposed to a willfully directed and discrete series of actions), we must avoid suggesting that her observations, and the analysis which has been constructed around them, can be taken as comprehensive. A different activity, and a different day in the garden (for example, a less weedy one) would likely have produced a different emphasis, and an analysis informed by other characteristics of the garden.⁹⁹ There is, as such, a role for the garden itself in its writing: producing effects other than those explicitly intended in its design and maintenance, and changing (however subtly) with the weather, time of day, and passing of the seasons. It is these variables which give a tone or specific character to activities pursued by visitors (experimental or not), and which distinguish the garden from other texts (not composed of living beings or being as noticeably changed by processes of growth and decay). Thus, exceeding the intentions of any one designer (and often, of the gardeners who care for it), the garden constitutes a unique communicative agency. At the same time, like a literary text, it depends on being read: it is nothing but a random assortment of living things without activation by an audience attuned to the constellation

⁹⁹ For example, something observed by the gardener, but ultimately peripheral to the most memorable aspects of her experience, was the use of annual flowers within the perennial garden, and the way this was somewhat at odds both with the purpose of the garden, and its aesthetic of harmonious contrast. Had these plants figured more prominently in her experience, it likely would have led to a somewhat different analysis of the Perennial Garden.

of effects, meanings, and activities of which it is composed. In fact, perhaps this can be considered the defining contradiction of a garden: it is a text (a coded environment) which both has a life of its own in relation to its author(s), and depends on its readers (its visitors) to make it live. Thus the gardener, who was attuned to the garden's practical code (in its double sense) but also disposed to find something else there, was able to produce a reading (writing) of the garden in which its code could generate effects heterogeneous to its intentions. However, while the gardener's experience demonstrates that any garden can be made the subject of an experimental reading, especially by a visitor disposed to do so, it seems worth asking whether some gardens might in themselves be more open-ended in their effects, and if so, under what circumstances. Beyond variations in the weather and the seasons, where in the garden, does a potential for distortion, or openness (depending on your perspective) reside? The second garden I consider in depth provides an opportunity to pursue such questions.

In the meantime, as a tentative response to the challenge I set out at the beginning of this thesis, I turn to an exploration of those aspects of the Perennial Garden I think can most productively accommodate more experimental practices of garden criticism. Taking inspiration from certain contemporary design practices, and more politically oriented traditions of garden-making, I imagine an alternative contents and organization for it, which also provides a final analogy through which the politics of the actual Perennial Garden can be clarified.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ I am particularly inspired by the gardens of Gilles Clément (elements of whose *Jardin en mouvement* I discuss below), but there are also other designers who create aesthetically challenging gardens (e.g., Bernard Lassus, whose design process is frequently grounded by extensive historical research), and/or are more inclusive in the audiences they address and processes they implicate (e.g., Louis Le Roy). See Bernard Lassus, *The Landscape Approach*, trans. Stephen Bann, Paul Buck and Catherine Petit (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); and Jan Woudstra, "The eco-cathedral: Louis Le Roy's expression

Making the Perennial Garden differ

On the website of the Botanical Garden, the Perennial Garden is described as “a treasure trove of ideas for home gardeners.”¹⁰¹ While this seems compatible with Teuscher’s objectives—that is, to inspire an interest in plants and gardening—the use of the term ‘home gardeners’ (as opposed simply to ‘gardeners’) is telling. That is, there is an underlying assumption: that gardening is one thing for everyone, and in particular, that it is tied to home ownership. This ultimately constrains the potential for the civic outcomes he envisioned, as well as the environmental awareness which in its modern day mission the Garden claims to promote.¹⁰² Even bracketing the association with home ownership however,¹⁰³ the Perennial Garden addresses a rather exclusive audience: it grows under conditions that are unique for a site in the city, where space, sunlight and good soil are hard to come by, and residents often have limited financial resources to acquire plants. The majority of urban gardens are limited in one way or another, making gardening a question of either a much more strategic, restrained design process, or disappointment. The lack of constraints operating in the Perennial Garden make it clear that, to the extent

of a ‘free landscape architecture’,” *Die Gartenkunst* 20, no. 1 (2008): 185-202. My thinking about how the Perennial Garden might be made more inclusive of gardeners of less privileged means, is also influenced by familiarity with a variety of politically oriented community garden projects and artistic installations. For an introduction to the history and politics of such efforts, see Badger, “Digging, sowing, tending, harvesting (making war-fair).”

¹⁰¹ “Perennial Garden,” *Website of the Jardin Botanique de Montréal*.

¹⁰² As part of its social mission, the Montreal Botanical Garden “serves as the City’s environmental conscience, promoting tree planting policies, the preservation of natural environments and public awareness.” “Mission,” *Website of the Jardin Botanique de Montréal*.

¹⁰³ After all, many renters in Montreal find ways to garden, though it is more often in containers or community garden plots, rather than large perennial borders (in part because it is difficult to take such a garden with you when you move).

that it is intended to inspire actual gardening, it is a relatively small percentage of visitors who can hope to succeed in creating the effects demonstrated there.¹⁰⁴

Imagine, in contrast, a perennial garden designed around an alternative understanding and experience of gardening—one in which material constraints provide a framework of problems to be addressed in the garden’s design and use. Assuming the same basic structure, how might changes to the contents and organization of the garden make it function differently? As a starting point, the contents of the garden might be determined by practical and economic as well as aesthetic and horticultural criteria. Thus, rather than prioritizing new, rare and visually spectacular plant varieties, included plants might be required to be either readily available (i.e. already present in the city, growing wild or in other gardens), or easily propagated (e.g., by collection of seed or cutting, or by self-seeding). Such a garden would speak to the experiences of a broader audience of visitors, and it would help to develop an approach to gardening that is more fully empowering of civic and environmental agency. But it might also be aesthetically interesting: putting visual criteria second in the selection process would put design at the forefront of the garden’s mandate, requiring that more be done with less. The perceptual training afforded by such a garden would likely pertain to a variety of aesthetic experiences, as opposed to simply those associated with the production of harmonious

¹⁰⁴ Of course, one could argue that inspiration need not be based on reality, and that catching a glimpse of inaccessible horticultural riches is part of the pleasure in visiting such a garden. In her notes, the gardener suggests as much when she writes about the way her pleasure was in part a response to the size of the garden, and the quantity of plants to be discovered there, asserting that variety in this context was not just about difference “but also newness and desire.” As a ‘collection’, the Perennial Garden is thoroughly informed by the logic of acquisition: confesses the horticulturalist in charge of it, “Il y a en moi un collectionneur mégalomane... Je veux tout essayer, tout posséder.” Mindt and Paquet, “De l’ombre vers la lumière.” As such, it provides much in the way of fodder for fantasies about making or remaking a garden of one’s own (whether real or imagined).

visual contrast. For example, a garden composed of plants displaying more muted differences in colour, texture and so on, can produce effects that are visually quieting, providing opportunities either for physical and perceptual rest, or to view plants more closely (i.e., at a range where the less highly contrasting qualities of individual species become visibly distinct).¹⁰⁵ Alternatively, a garden designed to produce experiences of surprise and delight, might experiment with unexpected pairings of plants or techniques of cultivation, creating visual effects which are strange or whimsical as opposed to harmonious.¹⁰⁶ While such a garden may not be evaluated as conventionally beautiful (i.e. photogenic), it can still engage, and ideally broaden, visitors' aesthetic appetites.

In addition, the application of a thematic organization to the garden's contents (similar to that found in parts of the existing Perennial Garden, but more inclusively designed), might address values associated with plants in the urban landscape that go beyond the horticultural. That is, rather than length or season of blooming, individual beds might be planted with species that grow well in poor soil, dry conditions, or intense heat (conditions often found on urban sites); with species that rehabilitate polluted soil; or with those that are easily maintained (and therefore can be planted in gardens belonging to less able-bodied gardeners, or in common spaces). Such a garden would display not only different species as such and their aesthetic relation to one another, but also the nature of their potential contribution to urban environments.

¹⁰⁵ With greater structural variations, gardens can also be designed to put scent, texture and sound at the forefront. In fact the Montreal Botanical Garden includes a garden—called The Courtyard of the Senses—that attempts to do exactly this, though it relies on visitors to close their eyes while visiting it.

¹⁰⁶ Gilles Clément is an example of a landscape architect who designs gardens that include the potential for surprise. In achieving this effect, he relies in part on plants that are capable of movement (through self-seeding) or grow large very quickly. Espaliering, pruning plants in unusual ways (e.g., as with different forms of topiary), or grafting different plants together to create singular hybrids, can also create unique shapes and unexpected effects within a garden.

Perhaps more important than the kind of explicit demonstration of possibilities such a garden can make however, is its facilitation of activities associated with a different approach to gardening. Ideally, these activities would draw out the garden's extra-horticultural values, as well as engage visitors in what would likely be a more challenging aesthetic experience. The inclusion of different structures or forms of garden furniture can be productive in this manner. For example, in the section of the Parc André-Citroën (Paris) devoted to Gilles Clément's *Jardin en mouvement*, one finds low, square platforms located throughout the garden (which takes the form of an ever-changing meadow). Unlike benches, which tend to be positioned either on the sidelines, or at prioritized viewpoints, these platforms encourage visitors to take up activities of observation from the garden's centre, below the normal line of sight, where it is whole plants and insect activity that dominate the view, as opposed to carefully arranged bouquets of colour. They suggest that visitors occupy the garden for an extended period of time, in a variety of positions, as opposed to taking a brief rest or appreciating a particular viewpoint on the way through.¹⁰⁷ For Clément, whose approach to garden design foregrounds a deep understanding of the garden's ecology, observation is the primary task undertaken by a gardener, and what enables him or her to facilitate a creative evolution of aesthetic effects. The placement of platforms, especially in gardens such as Clément's, where self-propagating plants abound, encourages visitors to track the movement of plants and their changing patterns of growth, blooming, ripening and decay over the season.

¹⁰⁷ These platforms recall a larger platform, constructed by Clément at the site of his original experiments for the *Jardin en mouvement*, and about which he wrote, "The platform became a raft for the field, and the field, a place in which to immerse oneself." Gilles Clément, "Working with (and never against) Nature," in *environ(ne)ment: manières d'agir pour demain / approaches for tomorrow*, ed. Giovanna Borasi (Milano, Italy, Skira Editore, 2006) 90-103.

Another form of activity for which this garden would be conducive, is the actual collection by visitors of seeds and cuttings, turning the garden into a source, not only of inspiration, but also, actual (future) plants. Of course, such activities require a certain amount of education and formal training,¹⁰⁸ but it is not too hard to imagine the garden serving as site and source of materials for hands-on workshops in which visitors are able to actively experiment, making the garden generative not only of wishes to be fulfilled (in the form of plant purchases) but also new skills and, perhaps, new gardens, in places where they might not otherwise be made.

Ultimately, such activities would enable practice with skills and perceptual capacities supportive not only of a process-based as opposed to purchase-based horticulture, but also ways of relating to plants that are based on a more comprehensive understanding of what plants can do, and what they contribute to urban environments. When attention is directed to the (potential and actual) movement and reproduction of plants, as well as to their capacity to create a physical as well as aesthetic difference in their surroundings, then plants begin to seem less like objects of beauty, and more like agents of creative change. Seeing plants in this way might in turn enable horticulture to become experimental in relation to the situations it is deployed to address, leading not only to new kinds of garden, but also, different gardeners. Once the need for money, property, good quality soil and full sunlight is moderated by knowledge of techniques for gardening in compromised circumstances, the main barriers become time and organization—i.e., being disposed to cooperate with others in your neighbourhood, or

¹⁰⁸ Particularly because in the case of both seeds and cuttings, correct timing and method of collection are crucial to success.

finding other gardeners with whom you can exchange seeds or plants. In this context, social skills and capacities take on relevance alongside the more strictly horticultural, and there is, eventually, the potential for developing new social forms: that is, new groups, roles and relationships organized around a more inclusive practice of gardening. Thus a garden can become the site for cultivating, not only plants, but also, the ‘gardeners to come.’¹⁰⁹ That is, to the extent that it is experimental, we can’t say ahead of time where gardening might lead—what kinds of values it might give rise to, and to what new subjectivities and ways of living.

While it is often suggested that gardens are always in some sense ‘about’ the relationship between nature and culture, in the context of hopes for an experimental horticulture, perhaps it makes more sense to—like the gardener—see every garden as being ‘about’ gardening. This implies an expanded definition of gardening, and that everyone (at least everyone who pays attention to gardens) can potentially engage in it. It also suggests—since not everyone who appreciates gardens has one of their own—there is something to be gained in conceiving of gardening in perceptual and imaginative as well as practical terms, and that, just as Barthes re-conceives reading as writing, gardening and garden appreciation can be seen as part of the same general undertaking: one in which processes of interaction and intervention matter more than the substance of what is made.

In contrast to this expanded view of its potential, the existing Perennial Garden’s structure facilitates limited forms of engagement, serving to refine and reproduce existing ideas about what gardens and gardening can be. It is worth noting that the two

¹⁰⁹ This is a paraphrase of Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of ‘the people to come’. There is “another possible community” of gardeners that resides in those practices and experiences enacted at the margins of a more conventional (i.e., commercial) gardening practice. Deleuze and Guattari *Kafka*.

alternative uses of the Perennial Garden described above—as a site of intensive observation and source of material for propagation—depend on activities currently forbidden in the Botanical Garden. Collecting seeds, or stepping off the path are seen as activities likely to damage the Garden.¹¹⁰ From the perspective of the Garden's administration, making the Perennial Garden more inclusive would create problems of conduct: once gardening doesn't depend on land ownership and plant purchasing, it must involve other activities, and these tend to disregard boundaries and hierarchies. Thus the garden's exclusivity goes hand in hand with a need to protect and control its contents.

The point however, is not that it is surprising that a botanical garden should present a conventional and highly controlled rather than experimental view of plants and gardening. As the history presented above shows, botanical gardens have long been instruments of governance that depend on the production of a particular kind of order. Because they are organized around the logic of housing and displaying a *collection* of plants cultivated for the purposes of research and learning, their exclusivity can also be interpreted as a means of protecting the integrity of that collection. However, the promotion of gardening in this context—whether read in Teuscher's stated aims for the exhibition gardens, or the prioritization of horticultural as opposed to botanical modes of organization across the Garden as a whole—generates additional social and cultural implications. In particular, a garden composed of an apparently limitless variety of species makes it seem as if choosing the right one is all that matters. In a society where garden plants are for the most part purchased, it is therefore bound to speak to a limited

¹¹⁰ In the rules listed on the Garden's website, it reads: 'No one may pick any plants, seeds, fruit or vegetables.' "Rules," *Website of the Jardin Botanique de Montréal*, <http://espacepourlavie.ca/en/rules> (accessed Feb. 7, 2013). Throughout the garden, visitors are forbidden from leaving the paths of the gardens by a variety of signs and low fences.

audience of visitors, or to limit what it is able to do, for everyone. Thus, just as the collection and cataloguing of plant species by early botanical gardens contributed to far-reaching and multi-faceted projects of colonization, so the aestheticization of that catalogue in gardens such as the Montreal Botanical Garden now contributes (albeit in a modest, quite pleasant way) to the entrenchment of capitalist values in North American society.

It is not however that rhetoric about civic engagement (and now, environmental awareness) was or is disingenuous, just that the values underpinning it are both unspoken and deeply conventional. The Perennial Garden is a place where visitors can look but not touch. A synecdoche of ‘the good life,’ it promises a world that includes potentially limitless opportunities for activities of leisure and personal expression. But it is a world to which you gain entry only by participating in the consumer economy; that is, just as you must pay an admission fee to visit the garden, you may only make your own garden by working hard, saving money and buying land suitable for that purpose. Then you can go shopping for plants to fill it. Until then, and especially in this garden, the other activities of gardening will constitute trespassing or stealing.¹¹¹

The above discussion attempts to bring to light an otherwise well-concealed complexity of gardens; it attempts to connect them with a broader range of social and cultural effects than those with which garden criticism normally concerns itself. In doing so, I have identified both a reproductive function and a facility for the creation of

¹¹¹ In contrast, it is possible that, for the gardeners to come, such activities will have a legitimate (if not legal) role in the making, and appreciation, of gardens. In fact, it may be that the pursuit of such activities despite their prohibition, will be precisely what enables gardening to exceed or make creative use of its inherited conventions. In fact, to a certain extent, in practices such as guerrilla gardening, it already does.

divergent effects: through the provision of specialized perceptual training, gardens provide the basis for a broader aesthetic consensus (concerning the urban landscape more generally, and the relationship between people and plants). But they are also always to a certain degree open to repurposing—that is, to activities of writing, as opposed to the more passive reading upon which reproduction depends. As I hope is by now clear, though this observation, and others like it, are articulated as oppositions, it is certainly not a question of ‘either-or’. Both genres of effect are contained as potentials of the garden’s code, and their mutual interaction is considerably more fuzzy in practice than my presentation perhaps suggests. At the same time, creative engagement requires something to push against. Thus the specificity of the garden’s code colours every departure and distortion, as much if not more so than accidents of circumstance (such as weeds) and irruptions of the personal (in the form of things like memories).

Keeping this sense of the garden’s capacity to structure social relations—however modestly or mundanely—in mind, I turn now to consideration of a garden which seems to demonstrate effects that are not opposed to this capacity (as if were simply disruptive or excessive of a given code), but *other* to it. Before doing so however, I lay a good deal of historical groundwork.

CHAPTER FOUR: The municipal appropriation of beautification and the origins of the Botanical Garden's "social vocation"

In the place of splashy parades and beauty contests, the 1951 beautification campaign opened with a theatrical production.¹ Unfolding in two parts, and composed of a series of narrated "tableaux vivants", the show dramatized both the founding of Montreal as well as familiar aspects of contemporary urban life, emphasizing the heroic efforts of city workers battling "...les spectres de la maladie et de la peur, les fléaux du feu et de la saleté. À l'individu, au foyer, à la famille, à la communauté, la société doit protection. C'est pourquoi, quatre services municipaux, faisant la lutte à ces malèfices, accomplissent régulièrement une tâche sans cesse plus lourde."² While the campaigns had their origins in voluntary civic initiative, this production marks a shift that brought municipal services in beautification efforts more to the foreground—both within the campaigns and outside them—and which eventually culminated in the Service des travaux publics taking over the campaigns entirely in 1961.³

¹ The campaign was organized in 1951 by the Ligue du progrès civique rather than the Chambre de commerce des jeunes, which had led the previous five campaigns.

² "...the spectres of disease and fear, the plagues of fire and filth. For the individual, for the home, for the family, for the community, society needs protection. That's why four municipal services are fighting these evil forces, regularly performing an increasingly heavy task." "L'heure est venue de faire la toilette de notre ville," *La Presse*, May 11, 1951. Along with the health officials, police and firefighters, 'Joe le nettoyeur' of Travaux publics is portrayed here as a modern day hero. Joe, whose costume looked much like Bonhomme, the mascot of Quebec's winter carnival, appears on and off in newspaper coverage of the campaigns in the 1950s.

³ A 1961 article in *La Presse* explained of the change in leadership, this was not because of any perceived failure on behalf of the other organizations but "parce que cette année, l'on voulait faire servir le service de la Voie publique d'agent de liaison entre tous les organismes intéressés à l'embellissement de la ville, et que l'on voulait faire de la campagne d'embellissement, une initiative non pas seulement de 10 jours, mais de tout l'année." "La métropole a jusqu'au 20 mai pour s'embellir," *La Presse*, May 11, 1961.

In the 1960s, newspaper coverage began to include descriptions of work being done by the city not only within the campaign but outside it. For example, on the occasion of the 1964 campaign, the mayor published a “Proclamation” which described not only work done, but money spent:

The City of Montreal, on its part, is making possible the development of attractive parks, installing flower baskets and fine-looking trash baskets. Thanks to weeks of beautification preceding this day, a score of vacant lots have been developed into islands of greenery, flowers and peace. Taking only the items of cleaning, beautification and hygiene, the city is spending more than 35 million dollars this year, and this does not include the millions and millions of capital expenditure. The City is doing its part and wishes each person to feel obliged to do his.⁴

Promotional messages such as these became increasingly common through the 1960s and 70s, making of the campaigns an opportunity for the city to improve on its public relations, and in particular to publicize its increasing investment in park development and the horticultural ornamentation of the city’s public spaces.⁵

The creation of the Service des parcs in 1953 as a service separate from Travaux publics (where the care of parks, gardens, playgrounds and sports fields had previously resided), initiated a period of intense development of the city’s park system. Though there had been a growing movement, especially since the launch of the Service d’urbanisme in

⁴ Jean Drapeau, "Proclamation," *The Gazette*, May 8, 1964. Increased activity on behalf of the city seems also to be accompanied by a more negative orientation towards the participation of citizens, who were, on the occasion of the campaigns, asked to *not* litter, *not* damage trees, and so on. For example, in an article entitled, “Montréal site de beauté et d’agrément: L’effort du service des parcs mérite la collaboration du public,” a detailed description of new parks, trees planted and other horticultural work completed by the Service des parcs, is followed by the assertion that, “Il est à souhaiter que cette semaine de l’embellissement soit pour tous un rappel à respecter davantage arbres et fleurs, à ne pas piétiner inutilement et à ne pas éparpiller aux quatre vents papiers et journaux.” “Montréal site de beauté et d’agrément: L’effort du service des parcs mérite la collaboration du public,” *La Presse*, May 25, 1957. While residents in the past had been exhorted to action out of pride for the city or a sense of moral responsibility, by the mid-sixties they were more often asked simply to cooperate with city workers. The citizen’s part, once presented as a joyful expression of optimism and pride, now often amounted, aside from potentially participating in contests, to simply disposing of garbage correctly.

⁵ Indeed, by the 1980s, the campaigns consisted of little else.

1941, to increase the number and distribution of parks within the city, the majority of the land acquired to this point had gone undeveloped.⁶ A major task of the new service was therefore, to oversee the development of new parks, to outfit them with trees, shrubs and flowerbeds, and see to their maintenance. Between 1953 and 1961, fifty new parks were developed.⁷ This pace of development continued through to 1970—with an acceleration between 1961 and 1964, when sixty-four were added⁸—and the budget of the service, along with its workforce, grew accordingly.⁹

During the same period, the city initiated a concerted effort to ornament certain areas of the city (predominantly its main thoroughfares)—with an increased planting of street trees, as well as window boxes and hanging baskets of flowers, and a little later (it seems) with large sidewalk containers planted with flowers.¹⁰ It is hard to say exactly when some of these activities began, because documentation is only available from 1954 onward (one year after the Service des parcs was formed). However, given that there is no discussion in the newspaper coverage of the beautification campaigns of such activities before this time, and given that the separation of the Service des parcs from Travaux

⁶ The Service d'urbanisme represented the first real investment in urban planning in Montreal. Between 1942 and 1952, the total amount of park space in Montreal rose from 1754 to 2734 acres. Jean de Laplante, *Les Parcs de Montréal (1953-1968)*, 1968, Bibliothèque de l'Université de Montréal, Montreal, call number poMUNICIMONTREALePM.

⁷ de Laplante, *Les parcs de Montréal*.

⁸ *Rapport annuel 1964*, 1965, XCD00, P6420, V.1950.A-1/3, Archives de Montréal, Montreal.

⁹ This increase is apparent when considering the budgetary credits allocated to the service in five year blocks. From 1953 to 1958, this amount totaled 9.7 million. Between 1963 and 1968 it totaled 24.6 million. Jean de Laplante, *Les Parcs de Montréal (1953-1968)*, 1968, Bibliothèque de l'Université de Montréal, Montreal, call number poMUNICIMONTREALePM.

¹⁰ Chaput emphasizes the importance of trees to the Montreal landscape: “Depuis le début des années 1950, une série de mesures touchant l’embellissement de la Ville avait été mise en œuvre, avec une place de choix réservée aux arbres d’ornement.” François Chaput, *Les ormes en milieu urbain: La situation montréalaise*, 2005, DOCS1, 160770, Direction des grands parcs et du verdissement, Montreal, 1.

publics marked a new commitment to parks and green spaces, it seems likely that such efforts were comparatively minimal before this time, and/or focused mainly on parks.¹¹ According to the annual reports produced by the Service des parcs, by the mid 1950s the Service was planting flowerbeds on boulevards, and installing hanging baskets and window boxes.¹² As I discuss below, by the early 1960s, there were a greater number of such installations, as well as large sidewalk containers planted with trees and flowers, and much greater numbers of shrubs and perennials planted in parks.

The investment in parks thus turned into a broader campaign of beautification and ‘greening’¹³ that intensified leading up to Expo 67, and which was eventually seen to necessitate an Office d’embellissement* to oversee beautification efforts year-round.¹⁴ Perhaps even more importantly (for my interests), in 1962 the Botanical Garden took over operation of the production greenhouses for the city (which had been located on the

¹¹ This is not to say that no such ornamentation would have taken place, just that it wouldn’t have been undertaken by the city. In her history of Canadian horticultural reform movements of the early twentieth century, Edwinna von Baeyer discusses the activities of horticultural societies, chambers of commerce and improvement societies, all of whom created and looked after gardens in public spaces, such as the grounds of churches, hospitals, schools, government buildings and so on (though she also notes that the depression compromised many of these efforts). von Baeyer, *Rhetoric and Roses*.

¹² Alongside a photograph of a city employee tending to a flowerbed running down the middle of a grassy boulevard, the 1956 annual report reads, “The division adorned the city with 197,000 annuals, 83,000 bulbs, 9,423 shrubs, 110 flower boxes and 125 lamp standard flower baskets...” *Rapport Annuel/Annual Report '56*, 1956, Bibliothèque de l’Université de Montréal, Montreal, call number poMUNICI MONTREAL ePM. It may have taken a year or two however, for people to notice: in 1957, an article in *La Presse* announced that, “Dans trois semaines, les lampadaires des principales artères seront à nouveau ornés de corbeilles fleuries du meilleur effet.” “Montréal site de beauté et d’agrément: L’effort du service des parcs mérite la collaboration du public,” *La Presse*, May 25, 1957; emphasis mine.

¹³ By which I mean literally the noticeable increase in vegetation that was sought during the years of that the Service des parcs existed.

¹⁴ The Office d’embellissement was launched in 1965, and was run by a ”committee” of bureaucrats from different city departments, but attached to the mayor’s office. "Le maire lance une vaste campagne d’embellissement," *Le Devoir*, April 10, 1965. Though there is no coverage preserved between 1969 and 1973 (and almost none in 1967-9), by 1973, the office had one dedicated staff member. The “coordinator”, Paul-Émile Sauvageau, is frequently featured in photographs and quoted in newspaper coverage of the campaigns in the 1970s. See for example, "Ne négligez pas la beauté de votre ville," *Montréal-Matin*, July 17, 1974.

grounds of the Botanical Garden since 1959), as well as responsibility for planting and maintaining the plants grown there.¹⁵ This involved the creation of a new division within the Garden's administrative structure, named Horticulture extérieure.¹⁶ Especially after it was enlarged to include the Division des arbres* of the Service des parcs in 1964, the transfer enabled the garden to take on a substantial role in determining the nature and quality of vegetation in the city during a period of concerted greening. The idea that Montreal could be made into a 'ville fleurie' via beautification efforts, was not to come to prominence in the rhetoric of the campaigns until 1965.¹⁷ However, the entry of the Botanical Garden into civic horticulture can be seen in part, as preparing the way for this vision of the city, and, in the excitement that characterized the years leading up to Expo, making it to a certain extent real for people. In 1964, the Botanical Garden presented an

¹⁵ This included annual flowers as well as indoor plants, and plants for producing cut flowers used at events and in municipal buildings around the city. A nursery was added in 1963, at which point the Garden began producing shrubs, vines and perennials as well.

¹⁶ In other words, "external horticultural services." It is important to note that, while the activities of horticultural production represented a new responsibility, it was not the first time that the Garden had been put in charge of planting and caring for plants outside its borders. A newspaper article in 1942 reports that in the course of dissolving the Service des parcs et terrains des jeux, the Garden was to be put in charge of everything having to do with horticulture: "Tout ce qui trait à l'horticulture dans les parcs tombe sous la juridiction des autorités du Jardin Botanique. À elles incomberont la décoration et l'ornementation de nos parcs. La ville a pris en considération que le Jardin Botanique est puissamment organisé pour s'occuper de ce dernier chapitre, ayant à sa disposition un personnel compétent et averti." "Le Jardin botanique prend soin des parcs," *La Presse*, June 17, 1942. I have found little documentation of this arrangement, aside from a decision on behalf of the Commission municipale du Québec (which governed the city between 1940 and 1944). This decision pertained to the absorption of the Service des parcs et terrains des jeux by Travaux publics, and puts Henry Teuscher, who was the Garden's curator at the time, in charge of municipal gardens. "Extrait d'une ordonnance (no 532) de la Commission municipale de Québec rendue le 30 décembre 1942," 1942, VM1, S3, 63780/105, Archives de Montréal, Montreal. Given that I have found no additional documentation, it is impossible to say exactly what that entailed or how long it lasted. Both Bouchard and Desrochers—the authors of the two comprehensive histories of the Garden—do not mention it, and portray the transfer in 1962 as entirely new. Bouchard, *Le Jardin botanique de Montréal*; DesRochers, *Étude historique*. Dagenais however, uses the 1942 article to anchor a narrative in which the Garden was forced to give up its scientific mandate early in its history, becoming little more than an organ of the municipal administration thereafter. Dagenais, *Faire et fuir*.

¹⁷ Though, as I discuss in Chapter One, it appeared at least once before that, in a statement from the city councilor in 1940.

annual report of its activities proclaiming the achievement of “Un jardin plus beau... dans une ville plus belle.”¹⁸ If the beautification campaigns in the first half of the twentieth century prepared the way for the notion of a city made beautiful by window boxes and well-tended lawns, it is perhaps not too hard to imagine that making the city *more* beautiful would involve a change in scale: that is, not just decorating and tidying the city, but making of it a veritable garden (or forest).

At the same time, the enlargement of the Botanical Garden’s mandate presaged an increase in the visibility and influence which administrators and employees of the garden would come to have in the city as a whole. The Garden’s work also served to enhance the visibility of the municipal administration, in a manner similar, I think, to what Dagenais asserts about efforts on behalf of earlier administrations to create more parks in the city: “Dans la ville qui se développe et se peuple, les parcs représentent une manière pour les élus de se rendre visibles aux yeux de la population et d’étendre, littéralement, le domaine municipal à l’ensemble du territoire.”¹⁹ Trees, flower beds and hanging baskets demonstrated not only the growing prosperity and cultural sophistication of the city, but also the attentiveness of the administration to the everyday lives of Montrealers.

The materials I consider here present a small window on such efforts during the 1950s and 1960s, and in particular on the role of the Botanical Garden as horticultural activities intensified in the 1960s. I also provide a brief analysis of the sidewalk planter as a horticultural form (or media), as a means of specifying the significance of such changes

¹⁸ “A more beautiful garden... in a more beautiful city.”

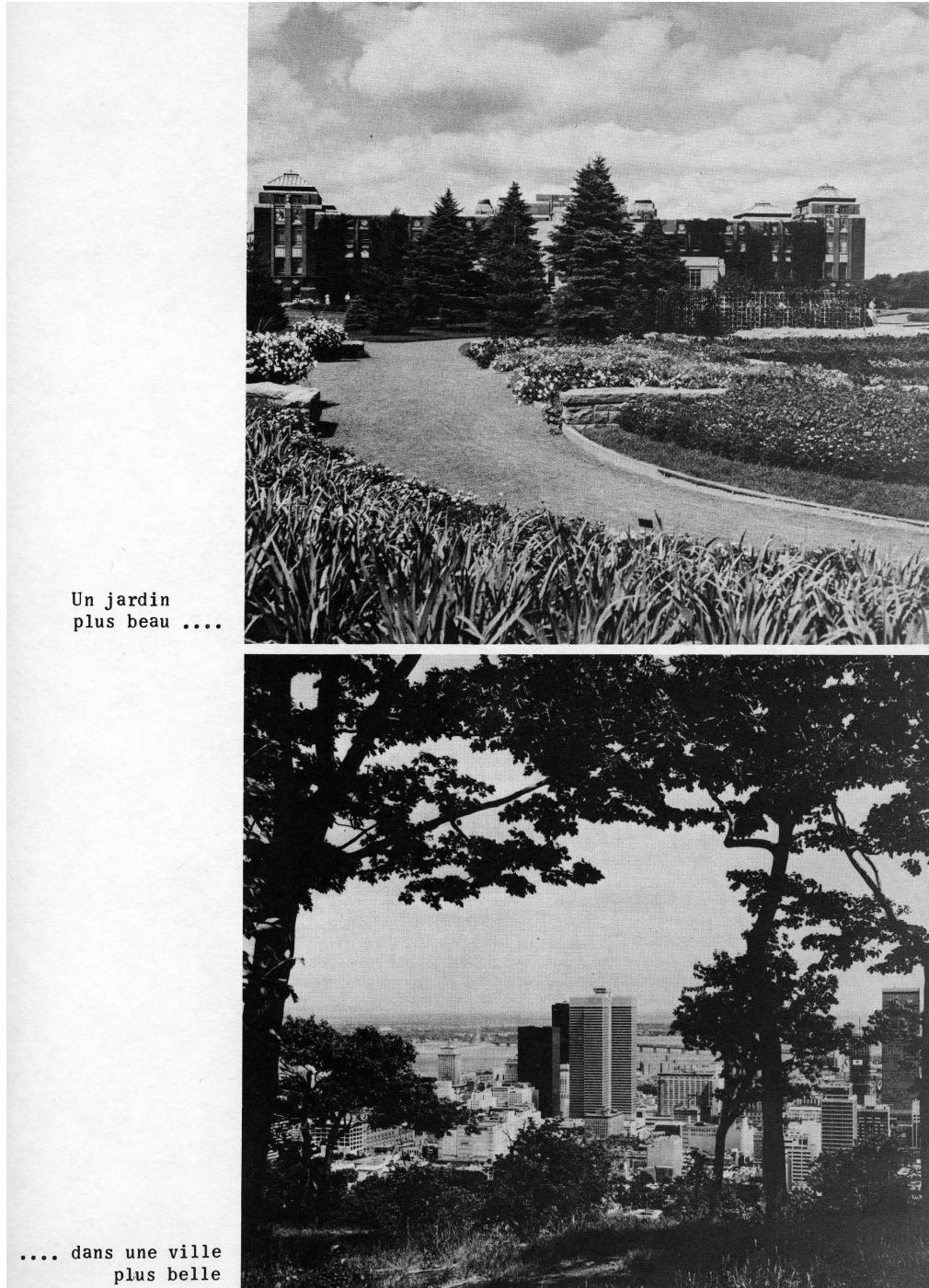
¹⁹ “In a growing city, parks represent a way for elected officials to render themselves visible to the public, and to literally extend the municipal sector to the rest of the country.” Dagenais, *Faire et fuir*, 71.

to the urban landscape during this time. Similar activities were undertaken in the late 1970s and early 1980s, though in much grander fashion, and a history of the city's efforts outside the beautification campaigns provides useful context for understanding the role of gardens and gardening in later initiatives.

The creation of horticulture extérieure and the extension of the Garden's expertise

The words “Un jardin plus beau... dans une ville plus belle” are accompanied in the 1964 report by two photos: the first is of the annual flowerbeds in front of the administration building in the Botanical Garden (“un jardin plus beau”); the second presents a view of downtown Montreal, taken from within the trees atop Parc Mount-Royal (“une ville plus belle”). What is interesting about these photos, aside from the fact that neither is very beautiful, is that in both, the trees obscure or nearly obscure a view of the buildings. The photo taken in the Botanical Garden *almost* reproduces a common perspective of the Administration Building but is taken at an angle that puts a cluster of coniferous trees squarely in front of it. Given the prevalence elsewhere of photographs putting the Administration Building at the centre of this scene, and its operation as a sign of the Garden itself,²⁰ it is strange to see it here mostly occluded (though still identifiable). The second photo also comes close to reproducing a common view of the city (from atop Mount Royal); here the trees are not directly in the way, but they crowd the centre of the photograph so tightly that we get only a hint rather than a full view of downtown. It is as

²⁰ A good example is provided on the opening page of the 1951 guide to the Garden. *Jardin Botanique de Montréal/Montreal Botanical Garden*, 1951, XCD00, P6425, V1950.A-4, Archives de Montréal, Montreal, 1.



Un jardin
plus beau

.... dans une ville
plus belle

Figure 11. Title page from the *Rapport annuel 1964*. *Rapport annuel 1964*, 1965, XCD00, P6420, V.1950.A-1/3, Archives de Montréal, Montreal. Courtesy of the Archives de Montréal.

if the report promises such an abundance of trees and flowers that the city will become *unrecognizably* beautiful.²¹

In 1960, the provincial Liberals had finally unseated the long-dominant Conservatives, and embarked on a program of secularization and massive public investments, the considerable social, cultural and economic impacts of which were to become known as the Quiet Revolution. Quebec's rapid modernization was accompanied by a growing sense of possibility for the province, and increasing national pride.²² As if to confirm such feelings, in 1962, Montreal was named the host for the 1967 International and Universal Exposition. All in all, it was a time for thinking big, and for ambitious programs of landscape change.²³ As such, the expansion of the Botanical Garden's mandate, which also occurred in 1962, coincided with a substantial intensification of citywide beautification and greening efforts already underway. Horticulture extérieure initially took over the horticultural (as opposed to aboricultural) services of the Division des arbres of the Service des parcs, which accounted for roughly a third of the division's employees, budget and other resources.²⁴ In 1964, the administration of the remaining services was also shifted to the Botanical Garden, more

²¹ Indeed, over a decade later, André Champagne claimed: "...mon but à titre de directeur des parcs était de remettre la ville dans l'état où Jacques-Cartier l'avait découverte en 1534." "André Champgne, grand patron des parcs à Montréal, parle de GPC," *Journal de Montréal*, June 12, 1978.

²² Mann, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec*.

²³ To which, for example, the creation and augmentation of the islands for Expo attested in a very concrete way.

²⁴ According to the report submitted by the head of the Division des arbres prior to the transfer. "Rapport de remise-reprise," November 30, 1961, S2, SS2, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal.

than doubling the number of employees working at or out of the Garden, and extending its influence to include all publicly-maintained vegetation in the city.²⁵

Initiated at the beginning of André Champagne's tenure as director of the Service des parcs, and after a brief stint as superintendant of the Botanical Garden (from 1958 to 1961), some historians have interpreted this development as an attempt on his part to ensure that the Botanical Garden would continue to be seen as a valuable civic institution in the context of increasing pressure to rationalize city services.²⁶ Indeed, this is not an unreasonable supposition, given that the Garden had previously been seen to represent an unjustifiably large expense (most dramatically in 1942, when the province had threatened to close it), and that the public seemed to require periodic reminders of the various benefits it served.²⁷ There are also indications in documentation of the transfer of responsibilities (which is minimal), that the rationalization of the garden's role in relation to the administration was a salient concern. In the cover letters which introduce the annual reports produced by the Botanical Garden for 1962 and 1964, the superintendant makes explicit reference to increased efficiencies. For example, in 1962 he wrote, "Le Jardin botanique possédant une tradition horticole bien établie, il semblait logique d'y rattacher ce secteur d'activités. Les ressources en hommes et en matériel peuvent être

²⁵ Excluding lawns, which were the responsibility of the Division d'entretien, also within the Service des parcs.

²⁶ See Bouchard, *Le Jardin botanique de Montréal*; and DesRochers, *Étude historique*. It is also worth noting that Bouchard also sees this period as one of relative stagnation within the Garden itself, particularly with regard to its research activities.

²⁷ See note 61 in Chapter Three.

utilisées plus efficacement. C'est un gain pour le Jardin, le Services des Parcs et la Cité tout entière.”²⁸

Perhaps even more convincing, and certainly more colourful, are two reports prepared by Henry Teuscher in advance of the transfer, and which make a vivid case for the value of horticultural expertise in park planning and maintenance. Sometime between April of 1961 and March of 1962, Teuscher consulted on the shrubs, perennials and ornamental trees that would be produced by the new division and used in planning new parks. He produced two reports corresponding to two different lists of plants under cultivation by the Service des parcs.²⁹ His comments, though clearly based on his own point of view, reflect an approach to beautification which is thoroughly horticultural, and distinct from that of engineers, planners or landscape architects. As such, and as a senior administrator at the Garden (not to mention its architect), the reports he authored provide an indication of some of the values and assumptions informing the pursuit of a ‘ville plus belle’.

²⁸ “The Botanical Garden has an established horticultural tradition, and so it seemed logical to also include these activities. Resources, in terms of men and materials, can be used more efficiently. It’s a bonus for the Garden, Parks Service and the city as a whole.” Yves Desmarais, “Letter to André Champagne,” December 31, 1962, S2, SS2, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal. Also see, Yves Desmarais, “Letter to André Champagne,” April 22, 1965, S2, SS2, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal. There was also a report produced in 1963. Unfortunately, aside from a series of monthly reports produced in 1983 and 84 (after the Service des parcs was absorbed by Travaux publics), these are the only such reports of activities at the Botanical Garden that I have found.

²⁹ The reports he wrote are not dated, but based on the dates of corresponding documents, I have concluded they were produced between April 14, 1961 and March 26, 1962 (which is also consistent with the dates covered by the file in which they are contained). Henry Teuscher, “Report on the list of shrubs suggested by the Tree Department for general planting,” S2, S22, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal; Henry Teuscher, “Report on the catalogue of the Municipal Greenhouses,” S2, SS2, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal.

In the first report, Teuscher comments (in a generally negative fashion) on the list of plants currently available from the city greenhouses, and makes recommendations with regard to how the design process might be altered to best make use of the Garden's expertise and resources. In the second, he provides explanations of annotations he had made to another list, prepared cooperatively by the Division des arbres and the Division technique of Travaux publics, on plants for common use in parks. This report details the shortcomings of plants he had recommended removing from use in parks, but also includes a list of what he considered superior plants, in cultivation at the time by the Garden (and therefore available for propagation).³⁰ What makes this report of particular interest, is that documentation of the response from the city's chief landscape architect (Walter Goshorn) has also been preserved, making it possible to verify that a good proportion of Teuscher's suggestions—despite their often scathing delivery—were indeed taken up in at least one planning document for future park development. Of fifty-six species rejected by Teuscher, only four were retained for use. And of fifty suggestions for new species to cultivate, twenty-three were incorporated into the revised list prepared by Goshorn.³¹ As such, and even though I do not have further documentation which would

³⁰ Although the corresponding list is only available for the second report, it is clear from comparisons that the 'catalogue' and the 'list' contain contents that are to some degree different, but significantly overlapping.

³¹ Goshorn's response is contained in four documents: a letter to the director of the Botanical Garden (Walter Goshorn, "Letter to Yves Desmarais, Surintendant, Jardin botanique," March 28, 1962, S2, S22, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal , Montreal); and three other documents recording his comments and the revised list of plants. Walter Goshorn, "Corrections suggérées à la liste du 14 avril 1961," March 26, 1962, S2, S22, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal; Walter Goshorn, "Entente du 14 avril 1961 sur des listes de base d'arbres, arbustes, plantes rampantes et grimpantes pour l'aménagement des parc municipaux (annotated)," March 26, 1962, S2, SS2, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal; Walter Goshorn, "Listes des plantes projetées selon les corrections sugérées par le Jardin botanique," March 27, 1962, S2, S22, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal.

conclusively show the extent to which the new list was adhered in the future, Teuscher's reports document a vision for the potential contribution of the Garden to the project of greening and beautifying the city.

The reports can also be read as an assertion of the relevance of horticultural expertise to the planning and design of city parks. In particular, Teuscher makes reference several times to the knowledge and resources of the Botanical Garden, and their utility with respect to the design and planting of more beautiful parks. The Garden had since its creation maintained an annual test garden in which plant varieties could be evaluated for their performance in Montreal's climate. More generally, the collections themselves, which were also monitored for the performance of different species, as well as ongoing research programs to develop new varieties, also represented a considerable body of knowledge and expertise that now found application in a context where its benefits might be made apparent to a wider public. For example, commenting on the small number of perennial groundcovers included in the list of available plants, he wrote,

The Botanical Garden offers a wide choice of excellent ground cover plants, many of which are not available in the trade in Canada. I have brought them together because I have always been interested in them, and I have always hoped that our parks would eventually start using them. All of them are easily propagated and can be quickly produced in quantity. The new set-up offers the opportunity of introducing them.³²

That said, much of what he asserts with regard to the importance of a specifically horticultural expertise is implicit in his prioritization on the one hand, of a more finely-tuned discrimination between different varieties of plant, and on the other, their care. At the same time, the tone and unqualified character of his comments, which are for the

³² Henry Teuscher, "Report on the catalogue of the Municipal Greenhouses," S2, SS2, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, 5.

most part, negative, underscores this assertion. For example, at the beginning of the second report, he writes,

This list is most of all entirely without imagination and is simply dreary. Most of these plants are the old standbys which have been planted entirely too much all over the place. Many of them are actually ugly. Because of the fact that they have not much individuality they have in the parks frequently been subjected to a routine pruning, so-called, which consists in a ‘haircut’. This prevents them from flowering and makes them all look alike.³³

I don’t think he implies that questions about plant selection and maintenance practices had never before been considered, but rather that he (and the Garden) could bring to bear on them a greater body of knowledge, which both drew upon and offered access to a greater range of plants, thanks to the ongoing research and development activities of the Garden. Tested by the Garden itself, these plants would be of a higher quality to begin with, better suited to their environment, and—to the extent that his admonishments about planting techniques, soil amendment and pruning were heeded—better cared for. They would therefore be healthier and perform better.

That said, what was wanted exactly, in terms of appearance, is not at all clear reading Teuscher’s reports. Varieties that he recommends are “handsome” or “superior” or “successful” but otherwise without specific aesthetic qualities (aside from what they are not: “straggly” or “ugly” or “coarse”). It seems to be more important to him that they are reliable, hardy and easily maintained. If beauty is sought here, it is through distinctly horticultural means: the successful cultivation of healthy, site-appropriate vegetation. As general or vague as much of what Teuscher emphasizes is however, his recommendations

³³ Henry Teuscher, "Report on the list of shrubs suggested by the Tree Department for general planting," S2, S22, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal, 1.

are based on a projected *tending* of the city. It is not enough to plant trees and shrubs and water them a few times—their needs must be anticipated, and their potential realized through plant-appropriate care. His comments give an idea of what it might mean—both practically and perceptually—to treat the city like a garden.

Teuscher's critiques of certain planting and maintenance practices also imply that a greater degree of discipline is required in the execution of work in parks. For example, referring to coniferous shrubs that had died in large numbers in one of the parks, he writes, “They died because they were not properly planted nor taken care of. Evergreens do require more care immediately after planting than deciduous trees, and one cannot just stick them into a sterile soil without preparation.”³⁴ His derogatory reference to the ‘haircuts’ given to shrubs perhaps conveys even more clearly his disdain for existing practices. He believed that the Botanical Garden would make a valuable contribution to the appearance and quality of the city’s parks, in part by facilitating a greater degree of control over the results. Thus he suggested that the Botanical Garden be given a greater role in the planning process, writing that, “...through close cooperation between the Botanical Garden and the planning landscape architects, it should be possible to produce something outstanding and well superior to anything that has been done in former years.”³⁵

³⁴ Henry Teuscher, "Report on the catalogue of the Municipal Greenhouses," S2, SS2, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal, 4.

³⁵ Ibid, 3.

Gardening the city

Since the Division des arbres had been located prior to the transfer at the site of the Louis Dupire greenhouses, on the grounds of the Botanical Garden, the new arrangement initially involved minimal changes. Employees of the new Horticulture extérieure continued the work they had been responsible for in the past: growing a variety of plants in the greenhouses (and, beginning in 1963, a new outdoor nursery at the Botanical garden), providing indoor plants for municipal buildings and offices, as well as flower arrangements for special events, planting flowerbeds and hanging baskets around the city, and seeing to the maintenance (e.g., watering, fertilizing, pruning, etc.) of all these. By 1962, this work had taken on a new urgency, as the division attempted to realize beautification goals for Expo 67.³⁶

By the end of 1964, after the dissolution of the Division des arbres, as well as a considerable increase in the production and planting of trees, shrubs and flowers (coinciding with a steadily increasing number of parks requiring horticultural maintenance), it is clear that the transfer had amounted to a substantial expansion of the Garden's official mandate and influence on the appearance of public spaces around the city.³⁷ The annual report produced in 1964 covers the activities of both the Garden

³⁶ Lefebvre refers to the urgency underlying his team's efforts as they worked towards Expo, in his contribution to the 1962 annual report: "Le domaine des parcs est à peine demi couvert, pour ce qui est des plantations d'arbustes. Il reste donc beaucoup de travail à faire dans les années qui viennent, si nous voulons voir nos parcs dans leurs plus beaux atours, verdoyants et colorés, pour recevoir les visiteurs de 1967." *Un coin de Jardin botanique qui rayonne par toute la cité de Montréal*, 1962, XCD00, P6421, v.1950.A-2/1, Archives de Montréal, Montreal.

³⁷ After the dissolution of the Division des arbres, the total number of employees working out of the Botanical Garden's Horticulture extérieure rose to 328, compared to 197 employees working within the Garden proper. *Rapport annuel 1964*, 1965, XCD00, P6420, V.1950.A-1/3, Archives de Montréal, Montreal. Of course, given the location of the Division des arbres prior to the transfer, and the continued occupation of the majority of these employees with work outside its borders, it is possible that this increase in employees was not experienced as significant for others within the organization (aside from the

proper and Horticulture extérieure (which by then included aboriculture). It presents tables showing substantial increases in plant production, planting and maintenance work during the first three years of the new division. Noting that there was a less steep but nonetheless upward trend evident before the transfer of responsibilities in 1962, it is most interesting to compare the numbers from 1961 and 1964, since these show the pace of increase after the Botanical Garden took over.³⁸ The number of parks that the division was responsible for, rose from 130 in 1961 to 194 in 1964 (an increase of approximately 50%). Production of indoor and flowering plants, also rose by approximately 50% during this time, while the planting of bulbs and annuals rose by over 70%.³⁹ The increase in production of shrubs, vines and perennials was even more substantial, in part perhaps due to the establishment of a new nursery at the Louis Dupire greenhouses in 1963. Taking account of both growing and mature plants, an increase of over 100% is demonstrated.⁴⁰ As for the Division des arbres, 1964 was the first year that the Botanical Garden had managed its services (so it is not possible to track the Garden's contribution in the same way), but it is worth noting that since 1959, the city had increased the number of trees planted by a very large margin—in 1964 the total was almost four times what it had been

administrators involved). In addition, de Laplante claims that the transfer did not have a great impact on the operation of Service des parcs as a whole. de Laplante, *Les parcs de Montréal*. However, the involvement of the Garden in parks and other spaces around the city did eventually become quite symbolically important, as I will discuss.

³⁸ The numbers provided start in most cases in either 1959 or 1960. *Rapport annuel 1964*, 1965, XCD00, P6420, V.1950.A-1/3, Archives de Montréal, Montreal.

³⁹ The number produced rose from 204,673 in 1961, to 298, 006 in 1964 (most of which were annuals for flowerbeds and hanging baskets). The number planted rose from 147,864 in 1961 to 254,188 in 1964. Ibid.

⁴⁰ In 1961, there were 26,824 plants either growing or ready to plant, and by 1964 this number had risen to 56,577 plants. The increase in numbers planted did not match this pace—reaching only an increase of only 40%—presumably because not all of the plants included in these totals were mature by 1964. 17,384 plants were planted in 1961, and 24,521 in 1964. Ibid.

in 1958. It had for two of the intervening years been even higher—over six times as high in 1960 and over seven times in 1963.⁴¹

Overall, what I think these comparisons show is that, the Garden's entry onto the scene of civic horticulture came at a point in time that was significant for the city as a whole: the number of parks, trees and flowers (in a variety of uses) was increasing at a rate that would have been noticeable, at least on the main thoroughfares (where the hanging baskets and boulevard plantings were located), and in the neighbourhoods well-served by parks.⁴² The increased production and planting, also coincided with a certain degree of diversification in the effects created. A comparison of lists of the plants cultivated for planting in park flowerbeds both before and after the transfer of responsibilities shows an increase in the number of varieties under cultivation. While thirty-three were listed for planting in 1961, forty-eight were planned for 1964 (an increase of almost 50%). Many of these represented new varieties (with different colours and sizes of blossom) of common plants, such as petunias, geraniums and zinnias, but some were new additions

⁴¹ It is important to note however, several important qualifications. First, many of these trees seem not to have survived long—the number of fellings jumped along with the number of plantings (though by a smaller margin). In 1964 the number felled (13,036) was equal to almost half of the number planted that year. Second, most years, half or more of these plantings were made in Parc Mont-Royal; when you look at the plantings in other parcs and on the street, the rise in planting is much smaller (roughly doubling the 1958 levels). So between trees dying, and the concentration on Mont-Royal, the effects overall were unlikely to have been as noticeable as the numbers suggest. *Ibid.*

⁴² Indeed, in numbers provided in later reports, it is clear that 1962-64 represented the period of the largest increases in plantings of annuals. Though the number of annuals, shrubs and trees in the city as a whole rose by a large margin in 1967, when the islands were planted for expo, plantings around the rest of the city fell off. In 1967, only 197,000 annuals were planted (as compared to 254,188 in 1964), and when the numbers rose the following year, they returned to a level only marginally above 1964 (259,000). Cf. *Rapport annuel 1964*, 1965, XCD00, P6420, V.1950.A-1/3, Archives de Montréal, Montreal; Jean de Laplante, *Les Parcs de Montréal (1953-1968)*, 1968, Bibliothèque de l'Université de Montréal, Montreal, call number poMUNICIMONTREALePM; Jean de Laplante, *L'important, les parcs de Montréal 1968-69*, 1969, Bibliothèque de l'Université de Montréal, Montreal, call number pomUNICI MONTREAL ePM. Especially when taking into consideration the large number of shrubs and perennials planted between 1962-64 (and which presumably remained in following years), it is clear that these years were extraordinary from the perspective of vegetative augmentation.

altogether.⁴³ While such changes may not have been equally noticeable to everyone, the expanded palette of colour and diversity of forms would have enhanced the effects of an increased quantity of flowers, making the areas of the city augmented by hanging baskets, window boxes and flowerbeds more visually interesting as well as more abundant.

Of course, there is a certain amount of imaginative projection (and generosity) involved in such statements—it is hard to know how things actually looked and felt for residents. Though the documentation in the 1964 report includes photographs (mainly of employees carrying out various tasks rather than demonstrating the results), it relies heavily on numbers and graphs to demonstrate the division's accomplishments. The impression one gets as a result, is of a preoccupation not so much with beauty, as with the achievement of demonstrable increases—in more parks, more flowers, more trees.⁴⁴ This may be related in part to the fact that absolute success with regard to the ideals of beautification—that is, creating a comprehensively “green”, flowering city—was in some ways out of reach, despite the grand aspirations of the era.

In 1964, the city only had 3200 acres of park space, much of which was still undeveloped.⁴⁵ As a newspaper article in 1959 had warned, this was far below the goals

⁴³ See Claude Lefebvre, "Memo to Fernand Laporte, Contremaître des Serres," November 15, 1960, S2, SS2, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal; and Claude Lefebvre, "Liste des plantes annuelles à cultiver pour plantation dans les parcs printemps 1964," July 2, 1962, S2, SS2, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal.

⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that, consistent with Bouchard's characterization of this period as one of relative stagnation within the Garden, there is little evidence in the 1964 report to support the claim of “un jardin plus beau.” The more vital of the Garden’s efforts seem to have been directed outward during this time. See Bouchard, *Le Jardin botanique de Montréal*.

⁴⁵ Although I don’t have documentation of the exact proportion developed by this time, it is clear that this was the case, given both the pace of work described in the 1964 annual report, and the fact that by 1967, only 2900 acres had been developed. Jean de Laplante, *Les Parcs de Montréal (1953-1968)*, 1968, Bibliothèque de l’Université de Montréal, Montreal, call number poMUNICIMONTREALePM.

set in the city's master plan for green spaces: 4000 acres or 13% of total city lands.⁴⁶

While the total amount of park space was to rise by 1968, the gains appear in large part to be due to annexations of other towns and cities (which would have reduced the total percentage), as well as the creation of a new tree nursery for the city (which would never be usable as park space). 5200 acres of park space was claimed, but less than 2900 were available for use.⁴⁷ As de Laplante documents, Montreal faced an uphill battle in acquiring park space throughout the twentieth century, as so much of the central city was already densely populated, and the creation of parks required in most cases the expropriation of private property, which was often extremely costly.⁴⁸ While the annexation of smaller towns and cities to Montreal did over the years provide the city with access to more undeveloped land, some of which was turned into the city's larger 'nature parks,' these lands have increasingly been turned over to development.⁴⁹ In a newspaper article in 1972, Montreal ranked well below major American cities in its provision of park space on a per capita basis, providing only 2.1 acres for every 1000 residents.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Dollard Morin, "Un patrimoine menacé," (missing publication), February 28, 1959.

⁴⁷ Jean de Laplante, *Les Parcs de Montréal (1953-1968)*, 1968, Bibliothèque de l'Université de Montréal, Montreal, call number poMUNICIMONTREALePM.

⁴⁸ de Laplante, *Les parcs de Montréal*.

⁴⁹ Writing about green space more generally (as opposed to parks), Sylvia Oljemark, reports that much of this land was bought up by developers in the 1970s, and has gradually been developed in various ways. She writes, "Between 1986 and 1994, 50% of Montreal's forested lands were built over; between 1994 and 2001, 750 hectares were lost to rampant, relentless development and the losses continue." Sylvia Oljemark, "Montreal's greenspace story: Past and present," "Montreal's greenspace story: Past and present(unpublished manuscript, 2002), , accessed April 4, 2011, <http://www.greencoalitionverte.ca/issues.htm#history>.

⁵⁰ Cincinnati and Washington were at the top of the list, with 10.1 and 9.9 acres (respectively) for every 1000 residents, cities such as New York (with 4.7 acres). Pittsburgh (3.8) and Detroit (3.7) also ranked ahead of Montreal. Jean-Paul Lefebvre, "More green space needed," *The Montreal Star*, May 27, 1972. While

That said, it is interesting to note that, in the same article, one commentator is quoted as saying that “one must not look only at the quantitative aspect. The quality is also important. And I believe Montreal, in the field of maintenance, might be ahead of many other cities.”⁵¹ It may be that the considerable increases in the production and planting of trees, shrubs, perennials and flowers, reflected a strategy for greening that did not rely on large expanses of lawn (i.e., as found in parks). Indeed, when Chaput claims (echoing newspaper coverage of the late 1970s and early 1980s) that Montreal had long been known as “la ville verte,”* he emphasizes the contribution of its street trees, writing that, “L’arbre est sans contredit, l’élément dominant du paysage montréalais.”⁵²

If the increasingly prolific use of horticultural interventions that did not require land, was a means of creating a vegetatively enhanced urban environment even where development was dense and the concrete unyielding, this strategy was to a certain degree compromised during this period by the fact that many of the trees planted did not survive very long. Before Horticulture extérieure took over the Division des arbres in 1964, the program had focused on the planting of large numbers of young saplings, many of which did not survive very long: in five of the years between 1957 and 1964, the number of trees that were felled—whether due to disease, injury, the inhospitality of the urban environment in general, or to make way for development—was equal to roughly half or

a 2002 study by the National Post showed the situation to have improved somewhat in recent years, at 4.7 acres for every 1000 residents, Montreal ranked last of major Canadian cities. Anne Marie Owens and Mary Vallis, "The intangibles that define a community," *The National Post*, October 17, 2002, A1.

⁵¹ Jean-Paul Lefebvre, "More green space needed," *The Montreal Star*, May 27, 1972.

⁵² “The tree is unquestionably the dominant element of the Montreal landscape.” François Chaput, *Les ormes en milieu urbain: La situation montréalaise*, 2005, DOCS1, 160770, Direction des grands parcs et du verdissement, Montreal, 1.

greater of the number planted.⁵³ This situation made the total number of trees slow to rise, despite substantial increases in the numbers planted.

By 1967, Horticulture extérieure had taken steps to improve the survival rate of the trees it was planting—using larger (more mature) specimens, and planting them in smaller numbers so that more attention could be devoted to their ongoing care.⁵⁴ The degree to which this improved results is hard to assess however, in part because of the escalation of the Dutch Elm Disease which was to begin soon after.⁵⁵ While the disease had been widespread in Quebec since 1950,⁵⁶ it did not begin to kill trees in Montreal in great numbers until the 1970s. Once it took hold, despite extensive efforts (involving the removal of diseased *and* healthy trees, and the spraying of DDT), 90% of the city's elms were lost to the disease.⁵⁷ Of an original population of 50,000 trees, city forestry engineer Pierre Rocray estimates that today only 500 elms remain in Montreal.⁵⁸

⁵³ In 1957, the number planted exceeded the number felled by only 103 trees. In 1958, the number felled exceeded the number planted. Jean de Laplante, *Les Parcs de Montréal (1953-1968)*, 1968, Bibliothèque de l'Université de Montréal, Montreal, call number poMUNICIMONTREALePM.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ From the limited documentation I have, it does seem that in 1967, the number of trees planted was much closer to the number added to the total inventory than it had been in the past. Ibid. Whether this success was replicated however, is less clear. In 1968, though 7,358 trees were planted, 6,972 had to be removed. This does not include elms that were removed (236). Jean de Laplante, *L'important, les parcs de Montréal 1968-69*, 1969, Bibliothèque de l'Université de Montréal, Montreal, call number poMUNICI MONTREAL ePM.

⁵⁶ Pomerleau, Renée. 1961. History of the Dutch elm disease in the province of Quebec, Canada. *The Forestry Chronicle* 37 (4): 356-67.

⁵⁷ Danny Rioux, "Dutch elm disease in Canada: Distribution and impact on urban areas and research," (presentation, XII World Foresty Congress, Quebec City, 2003), <http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/ARTICLE/WFC/XII/0274-B1.HTM>, (accessed Jan. 16, 2013). These numbers are corroborated by city forestry engineer, Pierre Rocray. Pierre Rocray, email to the author, 2011.

⁵⁸ Ibid. That said, it is worth noting that, while the estimated loss of nearly 50,000 trees is a substantial one, proportionately, it is not as great as it would have been in other cities where elms are estimated to have constituted up to 50-80% of the total urban forest. Rioux, "Dutch elm disease in Canada: Distribution and impact on urban areas and research(presentation, XII World Foresty Congress, Quebec

That said, in the 1960s, these losses were still for the most part in the future. Montrealers seemed to notice that something was being done differently around the city, and in general the efforts of the Service des parcs were appreciated. Public approval is reflected in laudatory newspaper coverage that appeared at this time. For example, in one 1964 article (from the city's dossier on beautification campaigns), it was reported that,

In recent years the administration has given a lot of encouragement to its landscape engineers and the experts of the parks department. Everywhere, city parks and playgrounds, even the grassed areas in traffic complexes have their flower beds. Light standards in some districts now bear huge flower pots as a matter of routine. Where once gardening was almost the preserve of the individual homeowner, the city itself now sets the pace.⁵⁹

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, recognition of the Garden's role in these activities also began to appear in newspaper coverage. For example, in an article appearing in the winter of 1966, Yves Desmarais, the Garden's director at the time, describes in detail the work being done in the city's parks and public spaces, identifying it as work *of* the Garden (as opposed to work simply administered there): "Apart from the garden itself, we also supply all the flowers for the city's public buildings and special functions. We also do all the plantings and upkeep of all the flowers and trees in public

City, , (accessed Jan. 16, 2013). In 1962, when a full inventory was first made but before the elms began to die in large numbers, the total number of trees in the city was 223, 370. By the end of the 1968, that number was 313, 955, making the total percentage of elms between roughly 16 and 22%. See Jean de Laplante, *Les Parcs de Montréal (1953-1968)*, 1968, Bibliothèque de l'Université de Montréal, Montreal, call number poMUNICIMONTREALePM; Jean de Laplante, *L'important, les parcs de Montréal 1968-69*, 1969, Bibliothèque de l'Université de Montréal, Montreal, call number pomUNICI MONTREAL ePM.

⁵⁹ "Beautification week," *The Montreal Star*, May 9, 1964. Another article reported: "Practically everywhere you look this summer there is something beautiful awaiting your use or admiration—an ornamental park strip gouged out of a baking asphalt parking lot, an inviting open-air swimming pool, a flower market, a bandstand, a fountain, a flower basket, a tree in a bucket brightening a bleak street. Not to speak of 30,000 new trees planted last spring..." Dusty Vineberg, "Parks Department Keeps City Attractive," *The Montreal Star*, July 13, 1963. Although most of the articles from the late 1950s and 1960s that I have seen are generally in positive in tone, I should notice that the Service des parcs was not without its critics. For example, see the following article, which criticizes the Service for disorganization, delayed projects, the dissolution of the Division des arbres and loss of services at the Jardin botanique: "Après 15 ans d'action, le Service des parcs a perdu son élan," 1968, D1900, Reel 244, Archives de Montréal, Montreal.

parks and streets and those hanging baskets on various boulevards.” Later, regarding preparations for Expo 67, he added, “we are working to have all the parks in the best of shape by then and we will be responsible for the maintenance of all plantings at Expo.”⁶⁰ A press release and newspaper article authored by Parks director André Champagne in 1967 and 1970 respectively, are similarly explicit with regard to the Garden’s contribution.⁶¹ An article in 1972 defends the Garden against the insinuation by Mayor Jean-Drapeau, that the garden represented a major expense for the city, by providing detailed information about the work performed outside the garden itself (which accounted for the majority of its budget at the time).⁶²

The power of such statements, along with the visible evidence of the Garden’s contribution to the urban landscape, are demonstrated by the fact that the Garden continued to be seen as a major influence even after its responsibilities were reduced. In 1971, the mandate of the Service des parcs was reduced by the creation of a new Service des sports et loisirs.⁶³ The Botanical Garden continued to oversee the production, planting and maintenance of plants and green spaces during this period, but was later absorbed into Travaux Public (in 1979), where management of these services eventually moved outside the purview of the Botanical Garden and its administrators.⁶⁴ However,

⁶⁰ Helen Rochester, "A glassed-in wonderland for everyone," *The Montreal Star*, February 19, 1966.

⁶¹ André Champagne, "14 million au Service des parcs," 1967, D1900, Reel 244, Archives de Montréal, Montreal; André Champagne, "L'orgeuil de la métropole: Le service des parcs de Montréal," *Revue municipale*, March, 1970.

⁶² André Laporte, "Le coût véritable du Jardin botanique: moins d'un million," *Le Devoir*, July 31, 1972.

⁶³ In other words, to the Department of Sports and Leisure. Park planning and development, and various pedagogical activities of the Garden were transferred at this time. de Laplante, *Les parcs de Montréal*.

⁶⁴ It appears that the module “Exécution des travaux” of the Service des travaux publics had taken

this did not stop Pierre Bourque, the Garden's director beginning in 1980, and by far the biggest promoter of the Garden's external influence, from continuing to promote awareness of what he called the Garden's "social vocation."⁶⁵ Even now, the idea that the Garden contributes to the broader urban environment and the daily lives of Montrealers, continues to have some currency even if it is true in a much more limited sense.⁶⁶

Horticulture as a tool of municipal politics

Perhaps even more important than the increase in municipal (if not scientific) importance that the Garden experienced during this period, is the way in which the administration can be seen to have developed a new communicative repertoire through horticultural activities. I mean this not only in a semiotic sense, but also in an emphatic sense, and though further description of this evolving use of gardens will have to wait until Chapter Six, suffice to say for now, that installations such as hanging baskets and sidewalk containers served to both mark the fact of intervention by the administration, and

over these activities by 1987. See *L'entretien des parcs*, 1987, Bibliothèque du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal, call number 0900.353 M6.2.

⁶⁵ For example, in texts authored by Bourque in the early 1990s (leading up to his departure from the Garden and entry into politics), the Garden continues to receive credit for beautifying the city. For example, in his report "Le Jardin botanique en 1992... et vers l'an 2000," he writes, "Si Montréal est une ville verte et une ville fleurie, elle le doit principalement à l'action constante du Jardin botanique qui depuis 30 ans a été étroitement impliqué dans l'embellissement de tous les quartiers de notre ville." Pierre Bourque, *Le Jardin botanique de Montréal en 1992... et vers l'an 2000*, 1988, Bibliothèque du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal, call number 0951.8 B6.1. In another, he and his co-authors are more explicit, writing about the Botanical Garden that, "Il fournit les courbeilles des fleurs des grandes artères commerciales. Il voit à l'aménagement paysager et horticole des parcs. Il assure plantation, le renouvellement et l'entretien des quelque 325,000 arbres qui bordent les rues..." Written in 1991 (or so it seems, from references to events within the text), this text was, as far as I have been able to determine, unpublished. Pierre Bourque, Johanne Landry, and Annick Poussart, "Montréal: Le pari de la douceur," DOCS1, 26267, Direction des grands parcs et du verdissement, Montreal.

⁶⁶ For example, and as discussed in Chapter Two and Three, by serving as the city's "environmental conscience." In the most recent guide to the Garden (discussed in Chapter Three), the Garden is said to have maintained "une relation privilégiée avec la population..." thanks to its contributions to Montreal's reputation as a "ville verte." Lincourt, *Jardin botanique de Montréal*, 18.

characterize its activities in a positive way. As a concluding note to the preceding historical discussion, I now present a brief attempt to envision the impact and socio-political significance of such activities, based on some of their contemporary effects.

Given that such ornamentations are now a common element of the urban landscape, it is somewhat difficult to imagine the impact of their appearance, or to gain the objectivity to properly see the kinds of effects they produce now. From photographs in the Botanical Garden's 1964 annual report, and a list of 'recipes' for hanging baskets compiled for use in 1961, we can however get an idea of the kinds of plants that were used, and—in consultation with the gardener—how they would have looked. Slightly more than half of the plants were of a cascading form, while the rest were upright and shrubby. The colours of the flowers—mainly geraniums, petunias and nasturtium—appear for the most part to be a mix of red, pink, yellow and orange (with the exception of one recipe which called for white, yellow and orange flowers). Together these plants would have produced large balls of brightly coloured vegetation dripping off the lampposts.⁶⁷

In contemporary Montreal, hanging baskets have been replaced in many areas by large concrete planters capable of sustaining the impact of a car (indeed, they are even found running down the middle of some streets).⁶⁸ Despite the differences in conditions

⁶⁷ Indeed, as the gardener points out, if hanging baskets were not planted with cascading plants, the plants would remain out of view (except from a distance) once the basket was hung.

⁶⁸ Though it should be acknowledged that the administration of most city services, including horticulture and care of parks—aside from large parks, such as Mont-Royal and Parc La Fontaine—is the responsibility of the boroughs and independent municipalities. Thus the number and style of streetside planters varies to a greater degree now than it would have in the past. It is not possible any longer to make observation about 'the city's' horticultural activities, though planters of one variety or another do continue to appear on the main thoroughfares and in the commercial districts of the city, and there is a visual coherence to these interventions within boroughs.

and constraints (planters are deeper, can hold water longer and are viewed from above), as well as differences in the type and size of plant used (consisting mainly in a broader palette of colours and a greater use of large perennial plants), a consideration of today's planters (via the gardener) will help to illuminate the operation of similar installations in the 1960s. There are at least two important constants: bright colours, and the creation of a fluid, somewhat excessive form. Together these effects create, at the height of summer, a dramatic impression of visual abundance. I asked the gardener to reflect on what these ornamentations of the urban landscape do, exactly. In response, she wrote about the planters she regularly encountered on her trips to the Botanical Garden, for which she traveled (by bike) through the boroughs of the Plateau Mont-Royal and Rosemont.

I am not sure where exactly the planters start along the bike path to the botanical garden, which extends all the way from Parc Mont-Royal to Parc Maisonneuve and beyond. I think it is shortly after you cross the railroad tracks, but sometime before you start to see the tower from the Olympic stadium on the horizon. I remember one of the first times I rode to the garden, coming upon this view, from within the lower income but still respectable neighbourhood of Rosemont: the stadium on the horizon, the way relatively safe and convenient by bike, the garden ahead. And I thought, I actually did think to myself, 'what a great city'. That you can come upon these sights, reach the garden itself, with its vast treasures, in such a pleasant manner. That a neighbourhood such as Rosemont should be adorned in this way with overflowing, brightly flowering, even exotic-looking, planters.

The plants are well chosen and maintained, just on the edge of garish. They are what I would call interesting plants, especially in a municipal context. No marigolds or petunias here. Though there is a lot of variegation. It is not quite cutting edge (which is anyway often unreliable), but the plants are ones that strike the eye as new and different in some way, though you will no doubt find them in abundance at the best nurseries. Fashionable, in other words, but executed with a certain amount of class. They do what they need to do to be noticed, without seeming to try too hard. We live a good life here, is what they say. And, the city both recognizes and provides for the cultural sophistication of its citizens (don't move to the suburbs).

This was not the first time the gardener had written about planters. Especially in Montreal—where they are, in her opinion, often particularly well-done—they are something she notices. It was one of the first things she decided upon arriving in the city:

Montrealers have good taste. “It’s not so much that I *like* them, as that I recognize them as doing everything containers are supposed to do.” Which is to be colourful, and to overflow. She notes that a large container is generally planted with a selection of plants that fulfill certain criteria of form and colour. As with the hanging baskets, flowers are not enough: there must also be tall plants, cascading plants, plants with coloured foliage and, more recently (though not always), plants which introduce a certain amount of movement. When these requirements are fulfilled, and assuming a container is both densely planted and adequately fertilized, you get, by early to mid summer, planters which are rich with a variety of colour (though hopefully not too much), and appear to be overflowing (ideally, in all directions).

The role of colour here is perhaps self-evident: bright colours get noticed. And this is in large part what a streetside container must do. That is, they must produce certain effects—such as brightening or softening the urban landscape—but also make it clear that those effects are intentional and part of a larger program. After years of beautification campaigns, such effects are widely read as signs of pride, prosperity and care, and, to the extent that they demonstrate a certain cohesiveness, they are attributable, for residents, to the municipal administration, and for visitors, to the city or neighbourhood in general.⁶⁹ In both cases, a positive impression can only be created to the extent that the planter or hanging basket is visible, as an ornamentation, not only to people walking by, but also from a car or bus. They are supposed to be, literally, *attractive*: attracting attention, and attracting people physically into a particular area of the city. It is no accident that we find

⁶⁹ The use of a common planting scheme in planters or similar colour combinations across different interventions, contributes to the sense of a larger program.

such ornamentations most often on the main thoroughfares—where they are seen by the highest number of people—and in commercial districts.

As for the fact of overflowing, the gardener suggests,

... the vegetative abundance makes the arrangement appear to be more than just a container with plants; it becomes almost sculptural. It allows the plants to show up against other elements of the urban background, creating a pronounced visual impact, especially for their relatively small size. Ultimately, by mid-summer, it turns the whole ensemble into something else: a plant-container assemblage that is different from a shrub of the same size, or a garden. There is something uniquely appealing about the way a planter can seem to contain a whole garden's worth of beauty.

Perhaps this appeal has something to do with the effect Simon Pugh describes, of gardens generally; which is to represent or remind us of wilderness in a setting of restraint, where there is no danger of it getting the best of us.⁷⁰ The effect is both pleasing and reassuring: an overgrown planter presents an abundance that borders on excess, but which is safe, because contained. In fact, this could be seen as the ultimate achievement of the city beautified through horticulture, because what could be more modern, than to both appreciate and master nature, to make it serve the ends of beauty in a milieu otherwise hostile to it?⁷¹

⁷⁰ Referencing Freud, he writes, “The intense yearning, the desire, that can be felt for ‘nature’ from the perspective of the cultural world is a desire which is partly sexual, substantially repressed, desire as fulfillment of signs which are bound to the earliest experiences of satisfaction.” Pugh, Simon. *Garden-Nature-Language*. P. 127. As such, he sees ‘The Garden’ as a mechanism of social control and cultural repression.

⁷¹ In this sense, perhaps they have something in common with the giant ‘feux de joie’ hosted in 1965 and 1966 by Jean Drapeau in his efforts to clean up the city before Expo. Citizens were invited to hand their old furniture and other junk over to city firefighters, who dumped it into one big pile at the Place Radio-Canada and then, at the end of the beautification campaign, to gather and watch it all burn. A collective cleansing by fire, which, presumably, prepared the way for the enjoyment of a more modern, civilized joy—perhaps in the form of gardening. For example, see "Une vaste campagne de nettoyage se terminera par un feu de joie," *La Presse*, May 13, 1965. In 1966, there were three bonfires, in three different locations.

I turn now to consideration of that event which can be seen, in some ways, to finally come through on the (explicit and implicit) promises contained in the promotion of gardening in the beautification campaigns over the years. With the Floraliess internationales in 1980, the city really would become a ville fleurie, in more ways than one.

CHAPTER FIVE: The horticultural romance of the Floralies internationales

The coming to Montreal of the Floralies internationales 1980, was heralded by politicians and journalists alike with great optimism. It was seen as a means of invigorating the lagging economy, bringing international attention to a city that was otherwise increasingly in Toronto's shadow, and—after the first referendum on Quebec sovereignty (held in May of 1980)—soothing political tensions. According to promotional newspaper coverage in late 1979 and the first half of 1980, not only was the horticultural exhibition intended to enable the creation of a magnificent floral park, it was also expected to attract millions of tourists, inject new life into the nascent horticultural industry and signal Quebec and Montreal's openness to the world.¹ The total economic benefits were projected to be as high as \$90,000,000.²

Perhaps even more important, during times that were environmentally as well as economically bleak, the promoters of the Floralies managed to find in an appreciation of ‘natural’ beauty an occasion for celebration.³ As premier René Levesque was quoted as saying in a speech given at the opening of the Floralies intérieures,

¹ For example, in one article, a study of the event’s touristic potential forecast “an extra 1.6 million tourist days,” which was seen to represent between \$44 and 47 million in revenue. “Floralies could make \$47 million for Montreal,” *The Gazette*, March 11, 1980. Such numbers tended not however, to appear in newspaper coverage closer to the opening date, when the emphasis was more on long term economic benefits, such as those having to do with the horticultural industry, or improved international relations. For example, see “Le véritable but des Floralies: développer l’horticulture chez nous” - Garon, “La Presse”, May 7, 1980; André Tardif, “Des fleurs pour oublier le béton de nos vies (Lévesque),” *Le Devoir*, May 17, 1980.

² Georges Lamon, “Un grand bal pour les Floralies, Des retombées de \$90 million,” *La Presse*, December 15, 1979.

³ As Yves Hébert details, during the 1970s, there were nine ecologically catastrophic events resulting in the rather severe pollution of waterways around Quebec. Yves Hébert, *Une histoire de l’écologie au Québec* (Quebec, Les Éditions GID, 2006).

Il est normal que la floraison d'un tel événement et d'une si belle manifestation coïncide avec le printemps, puisqu'elle vient comme lui éclairer, faire un peu oublier le béton de nos existences, dissoudre les éléments de pollution qui nous menacent aujourd'hui à l'échelle du monde et restituer à notre environnement technologique et urbain les admirables créations et la fraîche beauté de la nature.⁴

While the organizational review of the *Floralies internationales* states that one of the objectives for the exhibition was to "...sensibiliser le public aux problèmes de l'écologie et de l'importance de vivre dans un milieu naturel sain"⁵—suggesting at least a mild political program—in consideration of the newspaper coverage, and in the content of the exhibition itself, it is Levesque's comments which seem to capture the true cultural significance of the event's environmentalism. That is, it was not ultimately a question of protecting nature, but of being saved by it. This chapter will attempt to put into context both the event of the *Floralies*—which was centrally important to the emergence of a distinctly horticultural urbanism in Montreal, as discussed below—and the specific themes developed through it. I begin by briefly discussing the political and economic context in which the exhibition was brought to Montreal.

Montreal "à l'heure des *Floralies*"⁶

The 1970s had not been kind to Montreal. While the preparations for Expo 67 had stimulated the city's economy, the period following it was one of stagnation. In

⁴ "It's normal that the flowering of such an event and of such a beautiful manifestation coincides with the spring; it sheds some light, makes us forget the concrete in our lives, dissolves the elements of pollution that threaten us today on the global level, and restores our urban and technological environments with wonderful creations and nature's fresh beauty." André Tardif, "Des fleurs pour oublier le béton de nos vies (Lévesque)," *Le Devoir*, May 17, 1980.

⁵ "...to sensitize the public to ecological problems as well as to the importance of living in a healthy environment." *Les *Floralies internationales*: Bilan d'organisation* (1981), Bibliothèque du Jardin botanique de Montréal, call number 1159A8.1, 16.

⁶ ...“ready for the *Floralies*.”

addition to the negative effects of long term economic restructuring (much worsened by the recession of 1981-82), the administration struggled with a crippling post-Olympic debt as well as a lack of revenue.⁷ While the urban population had grown substantially between the end of the Second World War and the early 1960s, it slowed and then actually declined through the 1970s and early 1980s.⁸ Much of the decline was due to the substantial increase in the number of families moving to the suburbs during this time.⁹ Not only did this pose a revenue problem for the administration, it was also, according to Marsan, contributing to a declining quality of life within the city as taxes went up, infrastructure deteriorated and services decreased.¹⁰

As mayor of Montreal since 1960, Jean Drapeau was blamed by many for the problems faced by the city in the late 1970s.¹¹ Further, after the budgetary debacle of the 1976 Olympics (preceding which Drapeau had asserted that a deficit was impossible), he had little credibility with regard to spending estimates.¹² In the early days of planning for

⁷ Some of the negative effects of economic restructuring included rising unemployment and decreasing investment as many companies in the industrial, manufacturing and financial sectors closed or moved to Toronto. Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal*. Marsan provides a good summary of Montreal's economic woes during this time, and writes, “[d]epuis le début des années 1960, elle régresse dans tous les secteurs où elle avait auparavant le leadership...” Jean-Claude Marsan, “Montréal courtise la catastrophe,” *Le Devoir*, January 18, 1979.

⁸ Between 1966 and 1981, the population of the city of Montreal declined from 1,222,255 to 980,354. Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal*.

⁹ The end of the baby boom was also a contributing factor. In addition, and especially during the 1970s, many families left the province entirely—largely for economic reasons, but also (among anglophones) in response to new language laws and the rise of nationalist sentiment. Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal*.

¹⁰ Marsan, *Montreal in Evolution*.

¹¹ Drapeau was mayor from 1954-57, and from 1960-1986.

¹² This is evidenced by several political cartoons from this period linking pronouncements about the Floralisies with the Olympics. For example, see Dossier D24000, Reel 549, 1.22-28, at the Archives of the City of Montréal.

the *Floralies*, his administration was accused of misleading the public about their true cost, of a secretive decision-making process, and of prioritizing extravagant public works projects over solutions to the city's real problems.¹³ Perhaps most damning, from the perspective of the exhibition's environmental 'message', he was also seen to have little in the way of environmental credibility.¹⁴ However, the budget for the *Floralies* was quite low in comparison with other exhibitions, and not only did organizers succeed in keeping to that budget, the province covered the majority of the costs associated with the exhibition itself.¹⁵ As the post-exhibition report asserted, "Il était également prioritaire que la tenue des *Floralies* ne coûte absolument rien à la ville de Montréal et que nous respectons le budget de dépenses fixé par le gouvernement du Québec, tout en limitant sa contribution financière."¹⁶ A "comité de gestion" was therefore formed, with one of its central responsibilities being to ensure this was the case.¹⁷ Such measures may have gone a long way to quelling the concerns of critics: while it is possible to read an early opposition to the *Floralies* in both the content and the grandiosity of some of the promises

¹³ For example, see, respectively, Florian Bernard, "Vive opposition aux *Floralies*," *La Presse*, October 6, 1978; Jean-Claude Leclerc, "Les fleurs du maire," *Le Devoir*, October 4, 1978; and Jean-Claude Marsan, "Montréal courtise la catastrophe," *Le Devoir*, January 18, 1979.

¹⁴ As one editorial put it, referring to Drapeau as "old Mr. Asphalt," "Citizens' groups for years have assailed the mayor for innumerable environmental misdeeds, most recently for converting Île Notre Dame [sic] into a Grand Prix race track. Mr. Drapeau is planning his perfect squelch: he intends to transform the inside of the race track into one of the world's finest flower gardens." "Montreal's flower child," *The Gazette*, October 7, 1978.

¹⁵ The province ended up covering roughly seven of a total nine million in costs reported in the *Bilan d'organisation*, which appears to have excluded some of those associated with renovating the pavilions, covered through unspecified means by the city. *Bilan d'organisation*.

¹⁶ "It was also a priority that the *Floralies* cost the city of Montreal absolutely nothing, and that the budget set by the Quebec government be respected, all the while limiting their financial contribution."

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 33.

made about the benefits it would bring to the city, in the months leading up to the exhibition's opening, the newspaper coverage seems to have been for the most part favourable.

In this context, as noted above, the Floralies can be seen to have addressed several of the problems faced by the Drapeau administration. It was, in fact, part of a larger strategy of urban renewal: as Drapeau, Pierre Bourque and others promised, it was not only Île Notre-Dame that would receive a floral makeover on the occasion of the Floralies, but the entire city. Although to a certain degree such promises were designed to sell the event of the Floralies to a population that was, after the Olympics, skeptical about the benefits of hosting large international events, they were also tied to a broader promotional project: the production of Montreal as a ‘ville fleurie.’ Through a comprehensive program of renovation and revitalization, including a variety of horticultural interventions, the administration hoped to make the city more welcoming to young families who would otherwise move to, or stay in, the suburbs.¹⁸ Thus it seemed that the dream which had first surfaced during the beautification campaigns of the early 1940s, and then again during those of the early 1960s, would finally become a reality. I discuss the horticultural components of this larger program, which were gathered together under the umbrella of the ville fleurie” concept, in the next chapter.

Given their association with this program of revitalization, the Floralies were promoted both as a celebration of Montreal’s existing love of flowers and high ‘quality of life,’ and as the founding event for a new movement of horticulturally inspired civic engagement and environmental stewardship. For example, as Drapeau put it, referring to

¹⁸ See for example, "Montréal met l'accent sur la qualité de la vie," *La Presse*, August 11, 1979.

the fact that the exhibition site would become a permanent floral park, “[e]very summer our fellow citizens and friends will be able to enjoy still another place to go strolling, a place as interesting as it will be new and fascinating. In this way, Montrealers once again will give evidence of the importance they attach to quality of life.”¹⁹ And as Pierre Bourque claimed in a press conference in March of 1980, “Les Floralies donneront naissance à de multiples interventions qui font appel à une technologie douce permettant d’humaniser notre environnement urbain et d’améliorer cette identification nécessaire du citadin et de son milieu.”²⁰ In such statements, and in the various interventions associated with the Floralies, flowers and gardens stood as signs of the ‘good life’: indicating not only a socially and sensorially pleasurable, but also an environmentally friendly, and therefore *morally* good life. Thus, what the Floralies promised, was that bringing natural beauty into the city would make life better for everyone.

The exhibition was divided into two phases: the Floralies intérieures,* which focused on tropical and indoor plants, was held at the Vélodrome from May 17th to 29th. Considered a resounding success, it included installations from seventeen countries and drew 290,000 visitors. The Floralies extérieures,* on which my discussion focuses, was held on Île Notre-Dame from May 31st to September 1st. Comprised of forty hectares of gardens, it also included a network of canals, a picnic area, an outdoor theatre and some

¹⁹ "Flowers' power will be lingering Drapeau says," *The Gazette*, May 17, 1980.

²⁰ "The Floralies will give rise to multiple interventions using soft technologies to humanize our urban environment and improve the connection of the citizen to his surroundings." Examples provided by Bourque included the creation of community gardens, the renewal of local shopping districts, the creation of pedestrian streets, the planting of trees, the creation of new neighbourhood and nature parks, and the addition of landscaped areas in parking lots. "Les Floralies vont transformer Montréal," *La Presse*, March 19, 1980. Bourque was not only the director of the Botanical Garden and assistant director of Travaux Publics at this time, but also horticulturalist-in-chief of the Floralies. Consequently, in the documentation of the event's organization and in its promotion, his voice is a prominent one.

fifteen pavilions (containing restaurants, commercial vendors, educational displays, information kiosks, workshop spaces and exhibitions of garden-themed art). It was also the site, all summer long, of a variety of musical and theatrical performances—some roving, others taking place in designated performance spaces. Twelve countries, four provinces, ten municipalities, and numerous institutions and businesses contributed gardens. It drew 1, 400 000 visitors.²¹ A large number of scholarly and professional symposiums were also held in conjunction with both phases of the exhibition. Although it was hailed as a great success by organizers, the number of tickets sold fell well short of the numbers promised in early newspaper coverage, and the impact on tourism was also disappointing, particularly with regard to the number of visitors from outside Quebec.²² Assessments of the benefits to the horticultural industry were mixed.²³ Nonetheless, the

²¹ *Bilan d'organisation.*

²² For examples of early predictions regarding ticket sales, see Rodolphe Morissette, "Une 'surprise' de Drapeau: les Floralies de 1980 à TdH," (missing publication), October 3, 1978; and "Montréal possédera l'un des plus grands 'parcs floraux' d'Amérique," *La Presse*, February 16, 1979. One article stated that based on the city's experience with Expo 67, it was reasonable to hope for between eight and nine million visitors. "Montréal doit être une ville fleurie," *La Presse*, May 22, 1980. Another article suggested that "pas moins de 100,000 personnes par jour" were expected. Paul Pouliot, "L'horticulture rencontrera la culture sur l'Île Notre-Dame," *La Presse*, May 27, 1980. Much of the shortfall was blamed on poor weather, but inadequate publicity outside of Quebec was also identified as a contributing factor, even before the exhibition opened. See "Les Floralies souffrent du complexe olympique," *La Presse*, April 21, 1980; also, "Floralies to be permanent park," *The Gazette*, September 3, 1980; "Montreal's big flower show 'a failure': Ottawa," *The Gazette*, no date. Only 20% of visitors came from outside Quebec. *Bilan d'organisation.*

²³ For example, an official within the ministry of agriculture was quoted as having said that Quebec's horticultural industry had "missed the boat" with regard to capitalizing on the increased interest in gardening that the exhibition was seen to have engendered, but a later article reported that this individual had been mistaken, and that everyone involved in the Floralies was "unanimés à déclarer, avec enthousiasme, que les Floralies internationales de Montréal ont apporté une contribution de première grandeur au progrès de l'horticulture ornementale chez nous." See "Floralies did nothing for Quebec's growers," *The Gazette*, September 15, 1980; Paul Pouliot, "Les Floralies ont contribué à l'essor de l'horticulture," *La Presse*, October 15, 1980. In a 1984 article celebrating the "réussite totale et éblouissante" of the Floralies, Pierre Bourque claimed that growth of the horticultural industry had accelerated substantially since the exhibition. Conrad Bernier, "Les Floralies: un impact évalué à \$600 millions," *La Presse*, October 1, 1984. But in a 1987 article, the industry was described as being "en retard," with the majority of plants sold in the province still coming from growers elsewhere. Roch Côté, "Montréal proclamée première grande ville fleurie du Québec," *La Presse*, September 6, 1987.

more significant impact of the Floralies may have been felt on a social and cultural level, as a distinctly horticultural urbanism began to take shape in Montreal during the lead-up to the exhibition.

The ‘message’ of the Floralies and its environmental pedagogy

In the *Bilan d’organisation*, the exhibition was seen to have been a resounding success with regard to sensibilisation:

Le travail de conscientisation effectué équivaut à des années de travail et d’enseignement car les Floralies tout en mettant en oeuvre des moyens techniques et audio-visuels importants (brochures, reportages, diaporamas, affiches, cours, visites guidées) auront suscité une mobilisation extraordinaire. Des milliers d’éducateurs, d’animateurs ont porté le message des Floralies au cœur de tous les villages du Québec. Cet impact culturel influencera le comportement des gens pour longtemps et leur perception de la nature et des plantes.²⁴

But what exactly was the message of the Floralies, from an environmental perspective, and what were the intended outcomes of its diffusion?²⁵ Bourque refers to a “mobilisation extraordinaire” and to the “comportement des gens” and “leur perception de la nature et des plantes”—but it is not entirely clear to what kind of mobilization or

²⁴ “The awareness-raising work done by the Floralies is equivalent to years of work and teaching because they have also mobilized an extraordinary numbers of people through technological know-how and various audio-visual means (brochures, reports, slides, posters, lectures, guided tours). The Floralies message is now carried by thousands of educators and animators, to the heart of all villages in Quebec. This cultural impact will long influence people’s behaviours as well as their perceptions of nature and plants.” A quote from Pierre Bourque, the “horticulteur en chef” or head horticulturalist of the exhibition. *Ibid*, 29.

²⁵ I use the qualifier ‘environmental’ here in its broad, political sense: that is, to denote a concern with and responsibility for environmental problems, and a valuation of qualities and entities taken as natural. This is, interestingly, in contrast with the terminology employed in Quebec, where ‘environmentalist’ denotes what Barr calls a technocentric, or more narrowly conservationist point of view, and ‘écologiste’ is the more radically political, but also more widely employed term—denoting individuals or groups “who believe that the environment will only be saved by global social and political changes.” Jane E. Barr, *The Origins and Emergence of Quebec’s Environmental Movement: 1970-1985* (Master’s thesis, McGill University, 1995). Given the fluidity with which terms such as ‘ecology’, ‘environment’ and ‘nature’ are used in the materials I consider, I do not attribute specific environmental philosophies to the authors, but do try to keep my own use of these terms consistent with their use in the materials in question.

changes in behavior and perception he is referring (though I discuss some possibilities below). In fact, as I attempt to demonstrate, despite its stated objective (of sensibilisation), the Floralies was not intended to address specific environmental problems or the practical and political aspects of creating more ecologically healthy urban environments. The “travail de conscientisation” was concerned primarily with inspiring an interest in and appreciation for plants and the practice of their cultivation. More generally and I think, more importantly, it was an exercise in articulating and celebrating certain socially and politically ascendant values—environmental or ecological in character—that were given form in gardens, particularly those that were seen to celebrate ‘natural beauty’. The specific environmental impacts of either the exhibition or of gardening in general—whether positive or negative—were not directly relevant to these projects, though a generalized concern for environmental problems was often referenced (as above). In the context of the Floralies, gardening was promoted as an environmentally positive act, not because of the specific effects it might engender, but because it was seen to express an appreciation for nature and natural beauty.²⁶

Traces of the Floralies’ environmental “message” and “travail de conscientisation” remain in a variety of forms. First, there is the content of the exhibition itself, which included a pavilion hosting interpretative displays from a variety of scientific institutions as well as the Ministère de l’Énergie et des Ressources naturelles du Québec and Parks Canada.²⁷ There were also several gardens judged by Bourque, in the *Bilan d’organisation*,

²⁶ As I discuss below, gardening was also seen as environmentally beneficial because of the role that gardening had had in the city’s beautification campaigns, which in the 1970s, articulated a new environmental significance for gardening.

²⁷ "Quebec Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources." Though it should be noted that the pavilion was not devoted solely to educational purposes—it also hosted commercial vendors and a

to be of ecological and educational importance. Some of these, such as those of the Ministère de l'Énergie et des Ressources naturelles and the Société d'énergie de la Baie James (SEBJ),²⁸ as well as the transplanted bog (discussed below), featured plants indigenous to Quebec. Others were regionally themed (e.g., the gardens of Quebec, Alberta and Canada).²⁹ While such inclusions attempted to solicit interest in plants and demonstrate the relations between them in a natural setting, different aspects of the exhibition itself also made it clear that it was a specific version of nature, and specific natural qualities that were being showcased.

First there is the relatively straightforward observation that there was nothing natural about the creation of forty acres of lawns and gardens containing mostly exotic and/or hybridized plant species, on an island that had originally been the product of human engineering, and had subsequently undergone substantial alterations in order to

restaurant, which occupied the first two floors. Educational exhibits were found on the fourth floor. This pavilion was visited by somewhere between 25% and 50% of visitors to the *Floralies extérieure* (the *Bilan d'organisation* contains drastically conflicting estimates). Cf, *Bilan d'organisation*, 51-2 and 70.

²⁸ The SEBJ is the subsidiary of Hydro-Quebec charged with developing the massive hydroelectric complex in Northern Quebec known in English as the James Bay Project. Its garden at the *Floralies* included a small pavilion describing the environmental mitigation and restoration measures employed during and after the construction of the La Grande hydroelectric project. It is interesting that this garden, which contained the most explicitly environmental content, was provided by an organization responsible for producing environmental change (some would say destruction) on a scale unprecedented in Quebec history. Although I have not been able to consult the interpretative materials for this installation directly, reading between the lines of the description provided in newspaper coverage suggests that it served an important public relations function for the SEBJ. See "La Baie James aux *Floralies internationales*," *Dimanche Matin*, April 6, 1980.

²⁹ *Bilan d'organisation*, 38. Bourque does not mention the USA garden, which was labeled the "Green Survival Garden", and described as being inspired by "un vaste mouvement écologique visant à améliorer la qualité de la vie urbaine." Pierre Bourque and François Linteau, *Les *Floralies internationales de Montréal 1980** (Montreal, Le gouvernement de Québec, Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation, 1982), 53. Aside from the fact that the plants had supposedly been chosen for their ability to withstand hostile urban conditions (many of them died over the first winter), the ecological dimension is otherwise unclear to me.

realize the designs for individual gardens. But it is also worth noting that chemical fertilization, pest and weed control were required to produce a visual spectacle worthy of the price of admission (for both visitors and vendors) while keeping the entire project on a tight budget.³⁰ Further, given the response of visitors and the press to the proliferation of weeds and pests in the early days of the exhibition, it is also clear that there was little appreciation or concern for certain non-human beings (i.e., weeds, groundhogs and pigeons). Readers and journalists alike complained about the proliferation of weeds in the early days of the exhibition,³¹ and at least one reporter wrote approvingly of the widespread use of herbicides to not only control weeds, but also to discourage groundhogs and squirrels from eating the plants.³² As Bourque characterized it after the fact, the Floralies was intended to celebrate, not wild nature, but “nature brought under control”³³

³⁰ According to one article, chemical fertilizers were applied once every two weeks throughout the summer, and the application of pesticides and herbicides was required in certain areas to keep the gardens weed and pest-free. Paul Pouliot, "50 jardiniers réussissent à garder l'île Notre-Dame verte et fleurie," *La Presse*, June 23, 1980. Indeed, as the gardener asserts, organic methods of fertilization could not have produced fast enough growth and blooming, while manual weeding and pest removal would presumably have been too labour-intensive, given that the gardeners charged with caring for the gardens on site were reported to have been overwhelmed early on by the volume of weeds. Paul Pouliot, "Floralies: les mauvaises herbes volent la vedette en maints endroits," *La Presse*, July 3, 1980.

³¹ For example, Elizabeth Doucette, "Les Floralies was disappointing and messy," letter to the editor, *The Gazette*, July 29, 1980; "Floralies mal fichues," letter to the editor, *La Presse*, August 22, 1980.

³² Pigeons and groundhogs alike were reported to have been deterred from eating plants by the wholesale application of Malathion to the soil. Paul Pouliot, "50 jardiniers réussissent à garder l'île Notre-Dame verte et fleurie," *La Presse*, June 23, 1980. A later article noted, without apparent concern, that there were by then far fewer groundhogs (and more flowers). Paul Pouliot, "Que sont donc devenues toutes les marmottes de l'île Notre-Dame?" *La Presse*, August 2, 1980.

³³ Pierre Bourque, "The Montreal Botanical Garden and the Floralies," in *Album Officiel: Les Floralies internationales de Montréal 1980*, ed. André Côté, Camille Larose, Lucie Lemonde and Jean-Pierre Paquin (Montreal, Le Groupe AMPM Ltée, 1980) 4.



Figure 12. View of the *Floralies exterieures* (1980). Photograph by Romeo Méloche. Courtesy of the Montreal Botanical Garden.

If nature was tamed, this did not, however, diminish its beauty, or its potential to delight and amaze visitors. A film documenting the exhibition likened a visit to the gardens to a “voyage enchanteur dans [un] pays de l’imaginaire,” and presented an almost eighty minute cinematic tour of the Île Notre-Dame, much of which is taken up (visually) with images of flowers, aerial views of the island as a whole, and sequences shot from a moving vehicle as it passes one garden after another.³⁴ As both the film and photographs from the exhibition demonstrate, though many of the trees were relatively small at the time of the exhibition, the gardens were vibrantly colourful and densely planted. Indeed, I contend that the uniquely prolific beauty of the *Floralies*—represented

³⁴ *Floralies 1980*, (Montréal, Les laboratoires de film Québec). There is also a much shorter treatment of the *Floralies intérieure* at the beginning of the film.

in promotional materials by expansive depictions of lush, colourful flowers and foliage—was centrally important to its message and the work of sensibilisation, which tended to be more inspirational than informative.

For example, a booklet designed to accompany classroom activities leading up to the Floralies, depicted on its cover two children running joyfully hand in hand through a field of flowers, but contained no ecological content (aside from mentioning the adaptation of plants to a particular climate), and very little botanical content, despite being thirty-one pages in length. Entitled, *Je t'emmène aux Floralies*,³⁵ and produced by the Commission des Écoles Catholiques de Montréal³⁶ in collaboration with the pedagogical committee of the Floralies, the booklet uses a cheerful talking daisy (“Marguerite”) to take students on a joyful tour through the history and uses of horticulture, and describes the different components of the exhibition. She identifies different types of plant (annual versus perennial, deciduous versus coniferous), but provides no information about the ecological relationships in which plants participate, or the environmental benefits that their cultivation in urban spaces may produce.³⁷ She finishes by encouraging students to “Vivre en contacte avec la nature, c'est une source de richesse et de joie de vivre,” but this is as close as she gets to including any environmental content in her promotion of the Floralies.³⁸

³⁵ ... “I'll take you to the Floralies.”

³⁶ Montreal Catholic School Commission.

³⁷ For example, under the ‘needs of life’ that plants fulfill, food, clothing, shelter and medicine are listed, but not oxygen! Anne-Marie Dupont and Suzanne Godin-Thibert, *Je t'emmène aux Floralies*, 1980, XCD00, P6538, V.1951.2, Archives de Montréal, Montreal, 10.

³⁸ “Living in contact with nature is a source of richness and joy of living.”



Figure 13. The cover of *Je t'emmène aux Floralies*. Courtesy of the Archives de Montréal.

Despite being intended for children, the festive, almost euphoric tenor of the text and its hand-drawn illustrations, encapsulates the inspirational as opposed to informative character of the exhibition's environmental message. In the introduction, it is characterized by Marguerite as “une fête extraordinaire” where “...il y aura des arbres, des arbustes et aussi des plantes à fleurs petites comme moi. Il y en aura beau, et elles

seront disposées de façon à plaire à ton regard et aussi à ton coeur.”³⁹ In this context, a visit to the Floralies seems to have been educational in a social and cultural as opposed to environmental sense.

This seems to have been true even of those aspects of the exhibition whose awareness-raising potential was much more substantial. In fact, perhaps the element of the exhibition that demonstrates most strikingly the prioritization of inspiration over information (or a superficial awareness over a more comprehensive understanding), was the transplantation of a peat bog from Northern Quebec to Île Notre-Dame. The inspiration for this project—celebrated as a ‘world first’ was reported to have come to Pierre Bourque in the course of consultations for the Société de l’Énergie de la Baie James (SEBJ).⁴⁰ He wanted to “...faire connaître au plus grand nombre de gens possible l’étrangeté et la beauté des tourbières nordiques. Le meilleur moyen de réaliser ce rêve, c’était d’installer une tourbière sur le terrain des Floralies 80.”⁴¹ Excavations were made at two different sites in the Caniapiscau region of Northern Quebec while the bogs were frozen, then labeled and transported some 1500 km, by truck, in 1200 blocks—one cubic metre in size, and weighing between 350 and 500 kilograms each. The blocks were then replanted in their original configuration, at a specially prepared site on Île Notre-Dame.

The bog can be seen in many ways as a synecdoche for the exhibition as a whole: while claiming environmental sensitisation as the impetus, its ‘transplantation’

³⁹ Ibid, 3.

⁴⁰ Among other services, the Botanical Garden had been contracted to grow seedlings for restoration work of the SEBJ, which was underway by this time in greenhouses located on Île Notre-Dame. Paul Pouliot, "La Baie James aura tiré profit des Floralies de Montréal," *La Presse*, March 28, 1980.

⁴¹ "... make known the strangeness and beauty of northern bogs to as many people as possible. The best way to realise this dream was to set up a bog on the grounds of Floralies 80." Paul Pouliot, "Une tourbière de la baie James à l'île Notre-Dame d'ici Pâques," *La Presse*, April 11, 1979.

was undertaken—and received—with little apparent concern for environmental impact. Not only was the project itself enormously resource-intensive,⁴² it would have left a substantial scar on the very landscape for which Bourque wanted people to develop an appreciation. Of course, that assumes that the two sites were not subsequently flooded during construction of the La Grande hydroelectric complex—a possibility that, while it would have gone a long way to explaining the rationale for transplantation in the first place, is not raised in any of the newspaper coverage I found.⁴³ In fact, far from being critical with respect to the impact and implications of the project, reporters tended to celebrate the scale of engineering that made it possible.⁴⁴ None of the newspaper articles I consider here make any reference to the environmental impacts on the landscape from which the excavations were made, or to the larger negative repercussions of the hydroelectric complex.⁴⁵ Coverage of other environmentally questionable aspects of the Floralies, such as the use of pesticides and herbicides, was similarly uncritical.⁴⁶

⁴² For example, based on the number of blocks which could be taken by a single truck, forty trips (of thirty-six hours) were required in total. Georges Lamon, "Une tourbière de la Baie James commence à migrer dans l'Île Notre-Dame," *La Presse*, March 23, 1979. Further, in the first few months following its transplantation, the bog absorbed between 45,000 and 68,000 litres of water per week. *Bilan d'organisation*, 50.

⁴³ Thus I have been able to confirm one way or the other what happened to the site in the long run.

⁴⁴ See Georges Lamon, "Une tourbière de la Baie James commence à migrer dans l'Île Notre-Dame," *La Presse*, March 23, 1979; Paul Pouliot, "Une tourbière de la baie James à l'île Notre-Dame d'ici Pâques," *La Presse*, April 11, 1979; "Un coin du Québec à l'état brut," *La Presse*, June 16, 1980. This may be related to what Barr notes was a reluctance on behalf of many Quebec environmentalists in the 1970s and early 1980s to criticize hydro-electric development because Hydro-Québec was seen as "a symbol of Quebec's entrepreneurial and financial accomplishment." Barr, *Quebec's Environmental Movement*, 136.

⁴⁵ A magazine article published later in time (during the exhibition) does however reassure readers that "Special care, of course, has been taken of the scar left when the blocks of peat were removed from the James Bay environment. SEBJ naturalists have planned the renaturalization of the area." "Floralies: Montreal becomes a city of bloom," *Civic Public Works*, August, 1980. There are also three other articles that report on the SEBJ pavilion and garden (located outside the Pavillon de Flore), which describe some of the environmental mitigation measures undertaken during the construction of La Grande. These articles portray the displays and garden as educational, rather than an exercise in public relations. "La Baie James

This apparent failure to fully exploit the awareness-raising potential of the Floralies, at least in the months immediately preceding and during the exhibition, suggests that everyone understood that the message of the Floralies was intended, not only to be inspirational as opposed to informative, but also apolitical.⁴⁷ I will have more to say about this below. For now I want to turn to a consideration of existing associations between horticulture and environmental values, which provide important context for the Floralies' message, suggesting that people already believed gardening to be an environmentally beneficial activity.

Indeed, the activities of gardening have long been seen as acts of care. As Robert Pogue Harrison argues, drawing on a diverse array of literary sources issuing from civilizations throughout history, 'the garden' appears over and over again, not only to signify paradise, but because "...history consists finally of the terrifying, ongoing, and endless conflict between the forces of destruction and the forces of cultivation..."⁴⁸ He characterizes the garden as the most perfect expression of the quintessentially human

présente son côté jardin," *Journal de Montréal*, April 5, 1980; "La Baie James aux Floralies internationales," *Dimanche Matin*, April 6, 1980; Paul Pouliot, "La Baie James aura tiré profit des Floralies de Montréal," *La Presse*, March 28, 1980.

⁴⁶ While some of the chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides may have been considered safe at the time, others considered toxic may also have been applied (though this is not discussed in newspaper coverage), as the federal government announced its intentions ahead of time to waive existing bans on any pesticides that participant countries deemed necessary to control of pests specific to the plant species imported for the exhibition. "Ottawa sera plus ouvert aux fleurs," *La Presse*, July 4, 1979. See also, Paul Pouliot, "50 jardiniers réussissent à garder l'île Notre-Dame verte et fleurie," *La Presse*, June 23, 1980.

⁴⁷ There were however, articles and political cartoons published during 1978 and 1979, that questioned the motives of Drapeau, and pointed out that there were environmental problems going unaddressed (such as the small proportion of city land devoted to parks and other green spaces compared to other cities). For example, a cartoon appearing in 1979 portrays Drapeau with flowers in his arms, saying "Let 'em sniff flowers!" while untreated sewage flows below him. *Montreal Monitor*, August 22, 1979. See also the following letter to the editor, which appeared after the Floralies were over: Linda Dicaire-Fardin, "Flowers but no trees," letter to the editor, *The Gazette*, December 2, 1980.

⁴⁸ Harrison, *Gardens*.

need to be grounded by a relationship of care. During the 1970s, such care gained a new social significance. As René Levesque put it in his “Message du Premier ministre du Québec,” which appears in a souvenir album of the Floralies,

...la pratique même de l'horticulture, dans son expression la plus simple, permet un contact facile et régulier avec la nature, tissé d'une multitude de gestes précis et patients... nous sommes de plain-pied dans un secteur de la science largement accessible à tous, où chacun de nous a surtout la capacité de comprendre et de prolonger la nature, d'agir en gardien de son intégrité.⁴⁹

By the time the Floralies came to Montreal, gardens and gardening were seen as *necessarily* beneficial to the environment. While a thorough-going history of this association remains to be written (and is beyond the scope of the present document), a few notes regarding the (roughly) concurrent rise of both a widespread interest in gardening and environmental values are in order. In some ways, the two phenomena can be seen as part of the same larger cultural shift, wherein a growing awareness of the unintended impacts of modern society, was accompanied by a widespread appreciation for all things ‘natural’.

Environmentalism and gardening

Though conservationist and preservationist movements had been active in North America since the late nineteenth century, the observance of the first Earth Day, in 1970, marked the entrance of environmental values into mainstream culture. In addition to the large national and international environmental organizations that became active around this time (e.g., Pollution Probe, Environmental Defense Fund, Friends of the Earth,

⁴⁹ “...even in its simplest form, the practice of horticulture allows easy and regular contact with nature, woven of a multitude of patient and precise gestures... we are in a widely accessible area of science, where each of us has the ability to understand and sustain nature, and to act as the guardian of its integrity.” René Levesque, “Message du Premier ministre du Québec,” in *Les Floralies internationales de Montréal de 1980*, ed. Pierre Bourque and François Linteau (Montreal, Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l’Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l’Alimentation, 1982) 7.

Environmental Action and the media-savvy Greenpeace), thousands of smaller, regional organizations formed as a means for citizens to raise awareness of local environmental problems and pressure governments to take responsibility for cleaning up and protecting ‘the environment’. In Quebec, the influential Société pour Vaincre la Pollution (SVP, as well as its anglophone counterpart, the Society to Overcome Pollution, STOP), and the Conseil québécois pour l’environnement were founded. The decade which followed saw the formation of inter-governmental agencies such as the UN Environment Programme, the passing of environmental protection legislation, and the creation of new governmental departments.⁵⁰

While the changes that took place in Quebec during this time were for the most part in line with those in the US and Canada more generally, there are a few differences, observed by Jane Barr in her study of the origins of Quebec’s environmental movement, that are worth noting here. First, most importantly, she notes that the underlying philosophy and associated values of the movement in Quebec were distinct from that underlying North American environmentalism in general. Most importantly, according to Barr, Quebec environmentalists have been more strongly influenced by social as opposed to deep ecological thought, and are less concerned with a preservation of wilderness, and more with a “projet de société”⁵¹ in which, “decentralized political power, participatory democracy, and soft technologies characterized by their conviviality” are valued

⁵⁰ Canada’s Department of the Environment (now Environment Canada) was created in 1971. Although Quebec did not establish a ministry of the environment until 1979, it established the Service de protection de l’environnement in 1971, which operated as a resource for municipalities attempting to control pollution. Hébert, *Histoire de l’écologie*.

⁵¹ ...“societal project.”

alongside a healthy environment.⁵² While I have not attempted here to identify in a systematic way the philosophical commitments of politicians or journalists writing about the Floralies, I do think this distinction may help to contextualize some aspects of the environmental ‘message’ of the Floralies. I return to this possibility below.

Barr also observes that the movement was somewhat slower to get started in Quebec than in the US or Canada more generally. As evidence, she cites the later appearance (by a few years) of environmental NGOs, the relative paucity of mainstream media coverage (up until the 1980s), and the delay in passing certain forms of environmental legislation (e.g. it was not until the late 1970s that laws were created enabling public participation in environmental decision-making).⁵³ By the time of the Floralies however, there were many indications that public concern in Quebec had caught up to that observed elsewhere in Canada and the U.S. As Vaillancourt wrote in 1981, after somewhat hesitant and uneven beginnings, the “mouvement écologique”⁵⁴ saw “un grand redémarrage”⁵⁵ in 1977, in part due to a widespread concern with Hydro-Québec’s plans to build thirty-five nuclear plants in the province. Following on the

⁵² Barr, *Quebec's Environmental Movement*. The term “projet de société” comes from Michel Jurdant, whose *Le défi écologiste* was a seminal work for the environmental movement in Quebec. He writes, “L’écologisme est un mouvement, un comportement, une façon de vivre, une philosophie, une éthique, une théorie politique, un projet de société ou tout cela à la fois, qui propose et expérimente de nouveaux modes de vie, sur les plans individuel, économique, culturel et politique, qui garantissent l’épanouissement et la souveraineté à la fois de tous les écosystèmes et de tous les êtres humains de la Terre.” Michel Jurdant, “Écologie et écologisme,” in *Le défi écologiste* (Montreal, Boréal Express, 1984), 68-9; emphasis in original.

⁵³ Ibid. As possible reasons for these delays, Barr emphasizes the impact of regional and linguistic isolation, the preoccupation of many politically engaged Quebecers with the issue of separatism, and the difficulties posed by the considerable diversity of perspectives and ideological commitments within the movement. Indeed, in this context, perhaps it is not surprising that gardening was so powerfully associated with environmental values by the time of the Floralies (since it is perhaps the quintessential ‘convivial soft technology’).

⁵⁴ ...“environmental movement.”

⁵⁵ ...“a great revival.”

parliamentary commission investigating this concern, many of the groups active in Quebec united to form a coalition in order to present a common front on important environmental issues. Though the coalition itself was somewhat shortlived, it was the basis for the formation of important alliances and awareness-raising activities. For example, beginning in 1979, different groups in Montreal took turns producing an hour-long radio program “pour mettre la population au courant de divers aspects de l’écologie politique,” while another committee took on publication of a newspaper entitled *Ecoville*.⁵⁶ It was also around this time that the mainstream media began to pick up on public interest in environmental issues: for example, in the summer of 1980, Radio-Canada produced a series of thirteen programs on the “mouvement écologique québécoise.”⁵⁷

One important congruence noted by Barr, is with respect to the importance of countercultural communities, which are seen to have played an important role in the development of the environmental movement in the US, Canada and Quebec. Vaillancourt notes the concurrent rise, in the early 1970s, of “un mouvement communautaire rural”⁵⁸ and urban environmental groups in Quebec.⁵⁹ The former gave rise to countercultural publications such as *Mainmise* and *Le Répertoire québécois des outils planétaire*, which advocated a ‘return to the earth’ and served as important venues for the diffusion of ecological thought and practice. Elsewhere in Canada, the late 1960s and 70s saw the birth of an influential but shortlived back-to-the-land movement described by

⁵⁶ ...“to make people aware of various aspects of political ecology.”

⁵⁷ Jean-Guy Vaillancourt, "Évolution, diversité et spécificité des associations écologiques québécoises: de la contre-culture et du conservationisme à l'environnementalisme et à l'ecosocialisme," *Sociologie et sociétés* 13, no. 1 (1981): 81-98.

⁵⁸ ...“a rural community-based movement.”

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Carol Martin in her history of Canadian gardening. During this time, many Americans avoiding conscription came to Canada and settled—as families or loosely-formed communities—on rural land.⁶⁰ They were joined by Canadian families disenchanted with life in the city, and longing for a more ‘natural’ way of life. As an article in Macleans magazine reported, “It is a North American dream of 1970, to escape the city, flee the rat race and get closer to the ‘reality’ of nature. The cautious who can afford it buy red-brick schoolhouses or farms. Others start communes which barely survive even one summer.”⁶¹

As a means to self-sufficiency, as well as a way of becoming connected to ‘the land’, gardening was of central practical and philosophical importance to the homesteading lifestyle. Though most families did not last, and the movement itself was quite short-lived, the dream of this lifestyle took hold more broadly, with gardening being seen as the principal means through which it might be realized in the city. As evidence of this development, Martin tracks the rise to popularity of Harrowsmith magazine, which was started in 1976 as a resource for homesteading families, but within the space of only two years had reached a circulation of 100,000, far exceeding its intended audience. In 1979, and in recognition of the fact that many of its readers lived in the city, the magazine devoted an entire issue to urban gardening.

In Quebec, there were several indications beginning in the late 1970s, that gardening was becoming an increasingly popular pastime, and an outlet for increasing environmental awareness. In 1978, the Fédération des sociétés d’horticulture et d’écologie

⁶⁰ Land was very inexpensive at this time thanks to the rural exodus which had been ongoing for decades as people moved to find work in the city. See Carol Martin, *A History of Canadian Gardening* (Toronto, McArthur & Co., 2000).

⁶¹ Alan Edmonds, "Would you give up 25,000 a year to find 'peace' doing chores on an island commune?" *Macleans*, 1970, 38-9; as quoted by Martin, *A History of Canadian Gardening*, 31.

du Québec formed. Representing 30,000 members from all the regions of Quebec, as Deschênes describes, “Cette nouvelle fédération regroupe des sociétés d’horticulture, des comités d’embellissement et d’autres organismes voués à la promotion de l’horticulture, à la protection de l’environnement et à l’embellissement du milieu.”⁶² As the president of that organization wrote in a 1978 article, city residents were particularly enthusiastic about gardening because, “Coincés entre le béton et le macadam par l’urbanisation progressive, les citadins ressentent profondément le besoin d’un certain retour à la nature... L’intérêt pour la naturisme et l’éveil d’une conscience écologique ont produit une véritable explosion verte en milieu urbain.”⁶³ Leading up to the Floralies, other articles reported that business was booming for growers and plant retailers.⁶⁴ In 1983, the first gardening magazine for amateurs appeared in Quebec. As the publishers enthused on the occasion of its launch, “De plus en plus de Québécois s’intéressent aux plantes ornementales...”⁶⁵ The magazine was however only in print for one year. It was until

⁶² "This new federation includes horticultural societies, beautification committees, and other organizations dedicated to the promotion of horticulture, environmental protection, and to the beautification of the environment." Gaétan Deschênes, *Histoire de l'horticulture au Québec* (Saint-Laurent, Québec, Éditions du Trécarré, 1996), 152.

⁶³ "Trapped between the concrete and the macadam by progressive urbanization, urban dwellers deeply feel the need for a return to nature ... Interest in naturism, and the awakening of environmental consciousness, has triggered a veritable green urban explosion." Michel Hotte, "La fièvre verte s'empare des citadins: Les Montréalais jardinent," *La Presse*, June 5, 1978.

⁶⁴ For example, see Pierre Vincent, "Une industrie... florissante, et un bon sujet de conversation," *La Presse*, June 12, 1979. Such observations were consistent with larger trends in North America. For example, total floriculture sales in the US (including cut flowers and indoor plants as well as potted outdoor plants and bedding plants) saw a seven-fold increase between 1970 and 1997, with bedding plants (i.e., annual flowers and vegetables), increasing twenty-five fold during the same period. Alvi Voigt, "Tracking floriculture's rapid rise," *Greenhouse Grower Magazine*, Fall 1999, 130.

⁶⁵ "More Quebecers have become interested in ornamental plants..." The magazine was entitled *Vertige*. Jean-Guy Martin, "Vertige: Un magazine consacré à l'horticulture," *Le Journal de Montréal*, April 21, 1983.

1991 that a magazine devoted exclusively to gardening could support a sufficient readership in Quebec.⁶⁶

In Montreal, the municipal government was relatively quick to pick up the language of environmentalism, and to see in gardening a means of inspiring citizens to sanction and even actively participate in the revitalization of an economically stagnating city. Characterizing deteriorating urban conditions in environmental terms both deflected responsibility and provided a means of action for administration and citizens alike. Thus, horticulturally-oriented municipal initiatives were often celebrated in environmental terms, even where many of their benefits were social and economic—as was the case, for example, with the city’s community garden program (launched in 1975). As one article in 1976 put it, describing the creation of a community garden in one of Montreal’s poorer neighbourhoods, “En ces heures de pollution, de montagnes de béton et d’asphalte, les autorités municipales ont déniché le moyen de faire un retour à la vraie nature.”⁶⁷

Newspaper coverage of the city’s beautification campaigns of the 1970s provides many examples of this type of discourse.⁶⁸ But in casting the activities of beautification in environmental terms, what was connoted by those terms was also enlarged. Perhaps most importantly, gardening was portrayed as a form of environmental action (i.e., in addition to being an expression of personal environmental values). This characterization built on meanings already associated with the activities of beautification, as established in Chapter

⁶⁶ *Fleurs, Plantes et Jardins* is still in print today.

⁶⁷ “In these times of pollution, of mountains of concrete and asphalt, municipal authorities have discovered a way to make a return to true nature.” Jean-H Mercier, “En plein ville... On cultive à la Petite Bourgogne!” *La Voix Populaire*, June 15, 1976.

⁶⁸ My consideration of this coverage begins in 1973; there is no coverage preserved between 1967 and 1972.

One: in particular, ideals of urban citizenship coalescing around property ownership, community participation and cultural sophistication. In fact, by the 1970s, the promotion of gardening in a civic context did not need to articulate its connection with such ideals; they could to a large degree be taken for granted. Thus for example, the concours d'embellissement (previously known as the window box contests) could in 1976 be renamed “compétitions horticoles” without losing the association with beautification more generally.⁶⁹ Similarly, despite the fact that gardening had a much more modest role in the campaigns of the 1980s, which were focused mainly on reducing littering and vandalism, the logo of the campaigns continued to incorporate a flower.⁷⁰

In the coverage preserved in the Montreal archives, the term ‘environnement’ appears for the first time in 1973, when the theme of the campaign is reported to have been “Environnement, embellissement.”⁷¹ Increasing use of environmental language

⁶⁹ As one of the organizers explained, “ce nouveau titre souligne le fait que les participants joueront de tout leur art et de leur science du jardinage. Ils offriront aux juges et à la population montréalaise des aménagements horticoles qui témoigneront de leur bon gout et de leur technique.” Nonetheless, he added, “Nous espérons... que ces compétitions horticoles rehausseront la beauté des rues de Montréal...” In other words, the capacity of gardens to beautify city spaces had become a settled fact, rather than something that required argument.”Des compétitions,” *La Presse*, July 31, 1976.

⁷⁰ Preserved coverage of the campaigns during the 1980s is minimal and ends in 1989, when the term ‘embellissement’ is dropped and references are instead to the “grand ménage.” The trend of decreasing involvement of citizens appears to have continued during this time, with campaign activities focused almost entirely on “sensibilisation” of the public, particularly with regard to littering and vandalism.

⁷¹ “Environment, beautification.” “Il faut que Montréal respire,” *Flambeau*, May 16, 1973. Beyond this mention however, I found no discussion of environmental themes elsewhere in the 1973 coverage. Prior to the 1970s, references were to beautification in general (“Embellissons!”), and beautifying the city or specific amenities within it—such as the streets, one’s yard, grounds, and so on. For example, see Paul Coucke, “Le 15 mai on brûlera toutes vos veilleries,” *Journal de Montréal*, April 14, 1965; “Proclamation,” *Le Devoir*, May 14, 1963.



Figure 14. Logo for the 1988 beautification campaign, as appearing in *La Presse*, on June 5, 1988.

through the mid to late 1970s, served to reinterpret the problems of beautification as environmental in significance, even though this was often only indirectly or superficially defensible. For example, littering and a general lack of cleanliness were construed as pollution.⁷² In other instances, a connection between beautification and environmental issues was based on false analogies. For example, in one article it was stated that “A juste titre, l’on peut qualifier cette campagne d’embellissement de campagne anti-pollution tellement les gens font des efforts pour donner à leur ville une atmosphère de fraîcheur et de couleur où il faut bon respirer.”⁷³ In another, Émile Sauvegeau, coordinator of the Office d’embellissement, was quoted making statements about the urgency of addressing

⁷² See "La Campagne d'Embellissement: une question de mathématiques," *Flambeau*, June 10, 1976; "Une Marguerite ne fait pas le printemps...," *Echos de la Petite Bourgogne*, 1977; Joseph Bourdon, "Tous urbanistes...," *Montréal-Matin*, September 7, 1975; Michel Morin, "La ville nettoyée en une jour," *Flambeau*, April 6, 1976.

⁷³ “We can rightly describe this beautification campaign as an anti-pollution campaign because so many people are making an effort to give their city an atmosphere of freshness and colour, where one can breathe easily.” “Malgré la fumée des cheminées Montréal se veut charmeuse,” *Montréal-Matin*, September 6, 1974. The title of the article says it all: beautification was a means of environmental action that left the city’s actual environmental problems untouched.

the problem of worsening air quality, while equating the planting of lawns and gardens with measures taken to reduce air pollution.⁷⁴ Such instances suggest an affinity between the two causes that was meaningful to residents despite being largely unsubstantiated in causal terms.

Of course, both the beautification campaigns and the environmental movement were concerned with the quality of physical environments, even if the scale and nature of the problems addressed were quite different. Many residents may have *felt* the same about air pollution and accumulating trash, perceiving a similar disregard for the well-being of a shared good. A 1979 editorial, which uses two and a half paragraphs of dire assertions regarding the state of the environment to introduce an appeal for participation in the beautification campaign, demonstrates the degree to which the two causes occupied similar discursive realms. Following on a long introduction that scolds society at large for allowing the escalation of environmental destruction, the author writes,

Cette longue préface pour introduire une seconde action, celle de l'embellissement. Mais à quoi bon fleurir un moribond; il faudrait alors plutôt parler d'embaumement. Nous reviendrons sur ce sujet primordial, sur ce combat vital contre la pollution de l'air de l'eau, du sol et de l'ouïe. Mais dès maintenant, combattions cet ennemi mortel qui nous empoisonne trahitusement et insidieusement et alors... nous parlerons d'embellissement, cet autre aspect de notre vie qui nous tient à cœur et qui est un autre noble souci de nos autorités, surtout municipale.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ "La campagne d'embellissement portée au domaine des édifices publics," *Flambeau*, October 8, 1974.

⁷⁵ "This long preface is to introduce a second action: beautification. But what's the point of growing dead flowers; we should instead be talking about embalming. We will come back to this important topic, on the struggles against the pollution of air, water, soil and our hearing. But let's combat this mortal enemy, treacherously and insidiously poisoning us now, and then... we'll talk beautification, this other aspect of our lives that we hold dear and which is another noble concern of our authorities, especially municipal." Roma Hains, "Que chacun fleurisse sa maison," *La Voix Populaire*, May 29, 1979; ellipsis in original.

Perhaps more importantly, from the administration's perspective, the two causes were characterized by the same communicative imperative: to motivate individual action on the basis of a sense of collective responsibility.⁷⁶

What seemed to take place in the meeting of these overlapping discursive territories, is that, what was denoted by terms such as “pollution” (frequently used to refer to the proliferation of things like trash and posters) was enlarged. Use of the term “environment” in a more general sense (as in ‘surroundings’ or ‘milieu’), also seemed to acquire some of the specific social significance associated with “the environment”. For example, one article, which described a neighbourhood-specific campaign in 1974, proclaimed, “BALCON 74 veut embrasser tous les problèmes d'environnement qui se posent aux citoyens, problèmes qui ne peuvent pas toujours se résumer à des problèmes de ‘boîtes à fleurs’...”⁷⁷ The activities it went on to promote all pertained to cleaning and renovations of private property, but were nonetheless described as a means of improving one’s “habitat”. Thus, it became possible to promote the window box contests as “...une façon agréable et peu dispendieuse de contribuer à l'amélioration de son environnement,” without specific justification in terms of environmental benefits.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Another way of characterizing this discursive affinity is in terms of the fact that in both cases, the city needed to demonstrate that it was taking action, without taking too much responsibility for the problem in the first place.

⁷⁷ “BALCONY 74 wants to embrace all the environmental problems faced by citizens, problems that cannot always be reduced to the 'windowboxes' problem... ” "La campagne Balcon 74 commence!", *Nouvelles de l'Est*, May 29, 1974.

⁷⁸ “...a cheap and enjoyable way to contribute to the improvement of the environment.” "Concours d'embellissement," *Flambeau*, May 21, 1974. See also "Le concours d'embellissement: Une contribution du citoyen à l'amélioration de l'environnement," *Flambeau*, May 28, 1974. As if to further emphasize the blurring boundaries between the two discourses, the dossier on the beautification campaigns contains articles from 1975 and periodically thereafter, that pertain to la semaine de l'environnement—most of which had to do with “poster pollution.” For example, "Les laideurs de Montréal," *La Presse*, April 30, 1975.

At the same time, it became possible to interpret the notion of ‘improving the environment’ in terms that were very narrowly local (i.e., encompassing one’s front yard), or predominantly visual.⁷⁹ Thus as far as newspaper coverage and the discourse of beautification were concerned, there seemed to be no difference environmentally speaking, between a vacant lot brought to life with gardens, a highly manicured lawn or a window box planted with brightly coloured flowers—if it was green, it was ‘green’. At the same time, certain kinds of gardens were even considered problematic from a beautification perspective: Émile Sauvegeau cited ‘front yard gardens’ as a ‘major problem’ from the perspective of beautification.⁸⁰ This further underscores the superficiality of the environmental values associated with beautification: if the environmental benefits of the gardens were important, then their location would not have mattered. The fact that it did confirms the continued primacy of aesthetic norms within the context of beautification. In the context of the beautification campaigns then, gardening continued to serve as a vehicle of social and aesthetic consensus, reinforcing values associated with property ownership and enabling landscape to serve as a marker of

⁷⁹ Though this did not preclude particular horticultural interventions from having substantive ecological as well as social and political impact. The creation of community gardens in vacant lots during this period, for example—in Montreal and elsewhere—must have brought substantial biological diversity to what were previously ecological wastelands, while also creating new sites for social interaction and new forms of economic empowerment.

⁸⁰ “Ne négligez pas la beauté de votre ville,” *Montréal-Matin*, July 17, 1974. Although Sauvegeau didn’t elaborate on why such gardens were a problem, it is the gardener’s opinion that he was probably referring to the cultivation of food gardens in front yards (often the only space with adequate sunlight), which even today is often undertaken in Montreal by immigrant gardeners, though it is no longer *problematic* in the way that it would have been forty years ago, when it still represented the transgression of an aesthetic norm. She explains that, in North America, the front yard is more conventionally reserved for ornamental cultivation (such as a lawn with flower beds). Food gardens, with their domestic connotations, belong in the backyard, out of view of passersby. This is how the creation of vegetable gardens in suburban front yards can be considered art: see Fritz Haeg, *Edible Estates, Attack on the Front Lawn* (New York, Metropolis Books, 2008).

prosperity and good taste, while also gaining an added social and moral significance via the environmental movement.

The emotional and transformative power of the Floralies

As I noted above, the Floralies were seen by the administration as an opportunity to advance its efforts to revitalize the city, and in particular, to solicit an increased recognition of and participation in the city's beautification initiatives (which in 1980, were identified by the slogan "Montréal, ville fleurie"). I turn to discussion of some of these initiatives shortly, but first attempt to show how the Floralies provided discursive opportunities to entrench and amplify existing associations between horticulture and environmental values, which in turn gave meaning to the ville fleurie program. In particular, the exhibition served, among other things, as a means of inspiring citizens to associate flowers and gardens, not only with environmental values, but also a sense of optimism, and cause for celebration. The beauty of nature was seen to inspire a myriad of positive emotions as well as hopes for a better future.

For example, as René Levesque suggested (above) in his speech at its opening—likening the exhibition to a spring flowering that would enable people to forget the concrete and pollution of urban life—the Floralies would be restorative and rejuvenating for Montrealers. Similarly, Bourque promised that the exhibition site would be characterized by an "...ambiance d'évasion et de rêve."⁸¹ It was thus in general an emotional and festive relation to the non-human world that the Floralies were seen to

⁸¹ "...atmosphere of escapism and reverie." "Les Floralies de Montréal: pour le tourisme, la beauté, le rêve," *Le Devoir*, March 19, 1980.

evoke. Though she was created for schoolchildren, Marguerite the talking daisy embodied this disposition perfectly.⁸² As an inscription at the front of her booklet put it, “Marguerite nous a permis de voir à travers les fleurs tout un monde d’amitié et d’amour. Par la nature, nous ne pouvons trouver que joie et beauté. Il ne nous reste qu’à y être attentifs.”⁸³ The newspaper coverage was equally idealistic and sentimental, implying that a love of nature (and plants in particular) was universal among Montrealers. For example, an article entitled “Les Floralies internationales de Montréal: Un bouquet de fraîcheur qui reconcile l’homme et la nature,”⁸⁴ quoted the commissioner general for the exhibition: “Les Floralies sont un lieu de rencontre entre l’homme et la nature, un lieu où le visiteur se promènera entre les fleurs et la verdure, la lumière et le spectacle, l’air et l’eau fraîche... En fait, les Floralies veulent non seulement protéger, mais aussi exalter la nature!”⁸⁵ And as one of the city councilors was quoted as saying, after attending a special mass in celebration of the Floralies, “...l’extraordinaire beauté des plantes ne pouvait que mettre de la gaîté dans nos coeurs.”⁸⁶

⁸² “Marguerite has allowed us to see a world of friendship and love through flowers. Through nature, we find only joy and beauty. We must simply pay attention.” In fact, the educational booklet was also distributed to representatives of the 54 comités d’embellissement formed to support the ville fleurie program. "Les Floralies de quartier: Allocution de Monsieur Yvon Lamarre," April 15, 1980, D24000, Reel 549, 1.349, Archives de Montréal, Montreal.

⁸³ The inscription was attributed to the minister of education. Dupont and Godin-Thibert, *Je t'emmène aux Floralies*, 3.

⁸⁴ “The Floralies internationales de Montréal: a bouquet of freshness that reconciles man and nature.”

⁸⁵ “The Floralies is a meeting place between man and nature, a place where visitors will wander between flowers and greenery, light and spectacle, air and fresh water...In fact, the Floralies want not only to protect, but also to exalt nature!” "Les Floralies internationales de Montréal: Un bouquet de fraîcheur qui reconcile l’homme et la nature," *L'Artilleur*, vol. 33, 1980.

⁸⁶ “...the extraordinary beauty of the plants could do nothing but bring joy into our hearts.”Yves Lachance, "Un heureux mélange de beauté et de fraternité," *La Voix Populaire*, May 27, 1980.

Such positive emotions were valued not only for their own sake, but also as a reflection of optimism with regard to the future that the exhibition was seen to warrant. The exhibition site itself can be seen as symbolic in this regard. The renovation of Île Notre-Dame between the spring of 1979 and the summer of 1980, was dramatized through newspaper coverage that detailed the extent and progress of the work undertaken, as well as doubts surrounding its timely completion.⁸⁷ The finished results were portrayed by some as nothing short of miraculous. As one reporter described it after having toured the site prior to its opening: “Le miracle s'est produit, l'île Notre-Dame revit... Elle respire, embaume, chante et grouille de monde... Ceux qui ne croyaient pas à une nouvelle transformation de l'île Notre-Dame seront émerveillés. Les 50 jardins qui s'étendent sur 260 [sic] acres de terrain sont la preuve vivante que le rêve est devenue réalité.”⁸⁸

Just as the island was transformed, so too, it was promised, would be the city. As the headline for one article proclaimed, “Les Floralies vont transformer Montréal.”⁸⁹ This transformation was to be due not only to the exhibition itself, and the associated ‘flowering’ of Montreal (via the ville fleurie program), but also to other horticulturally-themed initiatives similarly concerned with beautification and improvement of urban environments—particularly in poor neighbourhoods, and in commercial sectors of the

⁸⁷ For example, see Yvon Laprade, "L'île Notre-Dame ressemble à un champ de bataille," *Journal de Montréal*, May 25, 1980; Paul Pouliot, "L'automne a facilité les travaux," *La Presse*, November 26, 1980.

⁸⁸ “The miracle has taken place, l'île Notre-Dame has come back to life... She breathes, is fragrant, sings, and is swarming with people... Disbelievers will marvel at the transformation of l'île Notre-Dame. The 50 gardens spread over 260 [sic] acres are living proof that the dream has become a reality.” Martha Gagnon, "Comme au plus beau temps d'Expo 67, L'île Notre-Dame revit," *La Presse*, May 30, 1980. Another article, published later in the season, described the “miracle” of the Floralies as a combination of collective effort, ingenuity and good luck. "Le 'miracle' des Floralies extérieures," *La Presse*, June 14, 1980.

⁸⁹ “The Floralies are going to transform Montreal.”

city. These are, perhaps, examples of the ‘mobilisation’ that Bourque referred to in his assertions about the success of the exhibition with regard to sensibilisation (above).

Putting aside the fact that most of these were launched in the years leading up to the Floralies (and therefore can’t be seen to have been inspired by them, as Bourque’s assertions suggest), they reflect an intention on behalf of the administration to realize, through gardening, a broader environmental improvement within the city—even if what was entailed by ‘environmental’ was often largely aesthetic, or predominantly social and cultural in its effects. By bringing nature into the city, the exhibition and its associated programming was supposed to initiate a transformation of its public spaces and, in turn, an improved collective well-being. A utopic dimension was thereby imparted to the Floralies:

Si les interventions, qui vont impliquer nécessairement la consultation et la participation des Montréalais, se réalisent comme le prévoit M. Bourque, on ne reconnaîtra plus Montréal et elle pourrait devenir l’une des grandes villes où les citoyens bénéficient du plus grand nombre d’espaces verts et du meilleur environnement possible.⁹⁰

Such promises implied that changes to the urban environment would bring other (social and economic) changes, and a better, more beautiful life for everyone.⁹¹ It is here—in references to “technologies douce,” to the humanizing of the urban

⁹⁰ “If the interventions, which will necessarily involve the consultation and participation of Montrealers, happen as Mr. Bourque expects, Montreal will be unrecognizable and could become one of the big cities where citizens benefit from the largest number of green spaces and the best possible environment.” “Les Floralies vont transformer Montréal,” *La Presse*, March 19, 1980.

⁹¹ While the administration came through on the majority of its promises regarding horticultural beautification—implementing a variety of innovative projects during the remainder of Drapeau’s tenure, and eventually merit the title of “Green Survival City” (awarded by the American Association of Nurserymen) in 1983—such efforts were ultimately seen by many as too little, too late (Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal*) or as window dressing that ignored the source of the city’s real problems (Marsan, *Montreal in Evolution*). In this context, and as I discuss in the next chapter, the Floralies and the ville fleurie program, may have tried to do too much, painting a picture that was not just optimistic but utopic in tone, and implying change on a much larger scale than the interventions themselves could realistically accomplish.

environment and participatory decision-making—that the influence of social ecological thought on the environmental values specific to Montreal begins to show itself more clearly. However, it is important to note that, as utopic as Bourque's vision was, it was also entirely compatible with the commercial imperatives of modern horticulture. In fact, to the extent that the Floralies were portrayed as the event which would 'give birth' to this movement, it was dependent on it. One of the main benefits of the Floralies was to be the stimulation and promotion of Quebec's horticultural industry.⁹² Accordingly, one of the city's main beautification initiatives in 1980 was the creation of flower markets for the sale of plants around the city. The transformation which Montreal required at the time of the Floralies, and which the physical site of the exhibition symbolized, was, after all, economic in nature. Environmental values, and particularly the redemptive and restorative power of natural beauty, provided a theme that made an economic revitalization both believable and meaningful.

In summary, if the Floralies had an environmental "message" (as Bourque put it), or "un travail de conscientisation," it was more inspirational than educational or political in its intended effects. As such, the Floralies provided a major boost in the longer term project of getting people to both participate and believe in the power of horticulturally-oriented beautification strategies. I turn now to consideration of a site within the present-day floral park that is the legacy of the Floralies, and the specific initiatives undertaken around the time of the exhibition. I contend that these initiatives deployed flowers and

⁹² *Bilan d'organisation*, 16. Also see ""Le véritable but des Floralies: développer l'horticulture chez nous" - Garon," *La Presse*, May 7, 1980.

gardens in a distinctive and explicitly communicative manner—one that may shed light on the way some public gardens function today.

CHAPTER SIX: The canal-garden of the Jardins des Floralies and the Ville fleurie program

Although much of the discourse around the Floralies pertained to the city as a whole, the site of the exhibition itself had a central significance. It was described by one reporter attending a press conference in advance of its opening, as

...une source d'émerveillement... l'immense parc de 300 acres dont on compléte l'aménagement sur l'Île Notre-Dame, va être plus beau que tout ce que l'on peut s'imaginer. Il a en outre annoncé que l'animation théâtrale, la musique et les spectacles vont ajouter un aspect culturel à la féerie créée par des millions de fleurs et de plantes de toutes sortes.¹

Indeed, the city had managed to take Île Notre-Dame, which had been closed to the public since 1972 (due to hazards posed by deteriorating Expo infrastructure), and transform it into a functioning exhibition site containing forty hectares of gardens in just over one year. Especially considering that the island itself had been a project of municipal engineering—to a large degree constructed using fill excavated during the building of the metro leading up to Expo 67—the new floral park stood as a spectacular sign of the city's potential for intentional transformation. As such, it was important that it become permanent. As Mayor Drapeau put it in his “Message” contained in one of the tourist albums produced as souvenirs: “...for one season, Les Floralies are in Montreal. But the season is to be perennial since a vast permanent floral park will remain as a souvenir of

¹ “...a source of wonder... the huge 300-acre park of which we have completed the development on Île Notre-Dame, will be more beautiful than anything you can imagine. He also announced that theatrical animation, music, and entertainment would add a cultural aspect to the magic created by the millions of flowers and plants of all kinds.Paul Pouliot, "L'horticulture rencontrera la culture sur l'Île Notre-Dame," *La Presse*, May 27, 1980.

today. Here is a confirmation of the wishes of my fellow citizens to leave their descendants a legacy of happiness they may enjoy forever sans partage.”²

Contained within the larger Parc Jean-Drapeau (formerly the Parc des Îles, which includes both Île Notre-Dame and Île Sainte-Hélène), the ten hectare floral park (also known as the Jardins des Floralies) is now much smaller than it was in 1980.³ Nonetheless, it was, during the period that the gardener was visiting, one of the most verdant as well as visually and aurally diverse places in the central city.⁴ The majority of the remaining twelve gardens are concentrated around the southern portion of the canal system, to the west of the Casino de Montréal.⁵ Crossed by several bridges, traversed by a bike route (comprising a section of both the Route vert and Trans Canada Trail), and including two rental facilities as well as a concession stand, the gardens are thoroughly integrated with a variety of recreational and commercial activities in the park, even as they constitute a somewhat more peaceful sector in comparison with the nearby beach. According to the gardener, most people see the gardens on their way through to somewhere else—usually by bike or rollerblade. But it was also not uncommon for her to see people picnicking in the gardens, or employees from the Casino eating their lunch there.

²Jean Drapeau, "Message de la Maire de Montréal," in *Les Floralies internationales de Montréal de 1980*, ed. Pierre Bourque and François Linteau (Montreal, Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation, 1982) 4.

³ According to Theokas, who has studied floral exhibitions held around the world since the 1950s, this is the “smallest site legacy of any garden festival.” Theokas, *Grounds for Review*.

⁴ She visited for the first time in 2008, and then went regularly during the spring, summer and fall of 2009. She was there once in 2010, and again in 2011.

⁵ The Jardin du Québec is located at a slight remove, to the south of the Casino; while the bog and the former Jardin de Laval are located further to the south of the central sector.

In the gardens lining the pathway that cuts through the centre of the floral park, directly west of the Casino, park staff plant thousands of annual flowers each spring. This makes the floral park quite colourful along its central axis. According to the gardener however, it is the quantity and diversity of mature trees, along with a relatively recent planting of perennial vegetation on the banks of the canals, that makes it an unusually beautiful public space. The banks of the canal were renovated and ‘naturalized’ in 2000, creating a rather fantastically dense corridor of vegetation above the water, especially on the west and south sides. The gardener’s notes and photographs contain multiple references to the canals, which create a horizon for the gardens that, when the light is right and the foliage turns, can be almost shockingly beautiful. Such a diversity of ornamental plants, growing so exuberantly, is very rare in the city. It is possible, she thinks, that this research may have caught the canals at their most beautiful—just as the plants were reaching an unrestrained expression of their potential, but before any one species took over or, which is much worse from her perspective, someone decided to ‘clean things up.’

Given that the beauty of this sector of the park owes so much to renovations that were explicitly intended to implement a more ecologically beneficial means of maintaining the canals, it is a good place for contemplating the promises made by Drapeau. More than once the gardener found herself sitting on a bench beside the canal, with flowering shrubs and vines cascading down around her, watching not only birds and small animals flit by, but also people picnicking on the other side of the canal. Drinking wine and laughing, their bikes leaned against trees, rocks and large contemporary sculptures, they convinced her that a life in Montreal *is* a good life; that in the Jardins des Floraliés at least, it offers the best of all (human and non-human) worlds.

In this sense, the floral park is also the legacy of a period of intensive but—as Pierre Bourque would have said—‘soft’ environmental intervention on behalf of the municipal administration, which (as noted above) saw the Floralies as an opportunity to advance a larger program of urban revitalization that was conceived in terms of enhancing ‘quality of life’ via environmental improvements.⁶ Many of these improvements were sought through the intensification or extension of familiar horticultural means—for example, the planting of trees and installation of sidewalk planters and hanging baskets in commercial areas. But other horticultural initiatives also developed communicative uses of flowers and gardens that I contend were—if not new, then newly explicit. The campaign entitled “Opération un million de fleurs” is particularly instructive in this regard, and is therefore considered in depth below. Within the context of the larger ville fleurie program, it served as a mechanism for translating the ‘message’ of the Floralies into what was seen as a social movement that both legitimized a large public expenditure during difficult economic times, and helped to mobilize a change in the aesthetic values associated with life in the city. It featured a uniquely *programmatic* use of gardens; thirty years later, the floral park, and especially the renovated banks of the canals, which have been turned into a demonstration site for ecological management of riverbanks, bear the traces of its incorporation in municipal politics. Compared to other uses or functions of garden discussed so far, this seems to have involved a more thorough and intensive work of articulation—that is, a more concerted, even ambitious, imposition

⁶ Bourque often referred to these interventions as examples of a “technologie douce.” For example, see “Les Floralies vont transformer Montréal,” *La Presse*, March 19, 1980.

of specific order which, perhaps as a result, has often been accompanied by unintended effects and problems of control.

My analysis in this chapter moves continuously back and forth between consideration of a particular garden within the floral park, and different aspects of the ville fleurie program (of which the *Floralies internationales* was an important component). Part of the challenge this approach addresses, is to understand the circumstances of what I characterize as a discursive and practical *overreaching*, and the significance of the effects and problems it can be seen to have produced. I contend that they are in fact internal to a programmatic use of gardens, as well as potentially productive of something else. In this context, the canals of the floral park provide an instructive conundrum: while the gardener took great pleasure in visiting them, she also experienced feelings not normally associated with gardens: those of confusion and uncertainty.

Introducing the canal-garden of the Jardin des Floralies

The Jardins des Floralies have been preserved in a state that is—from historical, horticultural and architectural perspectives—confusing. As the gardener reports, many of the gardens have been replaced with lawns or substantially renovated, and those that remain exhibit a varied state of upkeep, with many elements—such as sculptures, water features and paths—now existing in a different relationship to one another and the surrounding landscape. Many of the gardens contain areas overrun with weeds and invasive species, or ravaged at different times of the year by pests and drought. Further, though the area in which the gardens are found is identified on maps, the provision of interpretative information contextualizing the gardens is uneven at best, being present in

some gardens and not others, and often including references that are no longer accurate (owing to renovations and missing plant material).⁷ The replacement of plants over the years has not been consistently faithful to the original designs intentions—even in a thematic sense—frustrating to a large degree any attempts at interpretation that visitors might make.⁸ The addition in recent years of dozens of new flowerbeds in the gardens located along the floral park’s central pathway, has added substantially to such potential for confusion. Finally, the few labels that remain to identify particular species of plants within the gardens are frequently incorrect. As such, while the remaining interpretative panels give hints of a significance associated with the site, it is a landscape inscribed in a manner that conveys a historical significance, but only vaguely so.

At the same time, documentation of the floral park’s evolution over time has been extremely difficult to obtain; it is not clear whether this is a question of the documentation itself, or access to it. As I discuss in some detail below, my efforts have been repeatedly frustrated—both by the frequency of changes over the years in the arrangements governing management of Île Notre-Dame, and by the administrative and archival staff at the Société du Parc Jean-Drapeau (SPJD), who refused me access to the park’s archives and, for unknown reasons, created a variety of obstructions to my attempts to acquire documents through other means.⁹ The Société is the non-profit organization responsible

⁷ There is for example, no sign at any of the entrances to the Floralies sector, indicating that one is entering the old exhibition site, or explaining the context in which the gardens were created.

⁸ Thus, for example, the ‘grasslands’ section of the garden of Alberta contains mainly daylilies and sedum.

⁹ As a starting point, it took three months of email correspondance to establish that I would not be permitted access to the archives. The official reason given at that time was that the SPJD lacked the staff to enable this access, though the hostility accorded my subsequent request for an informal interview as an alternative means of information-gathering suggests that there was more to it than that. Unfortunately, the provision of documents through other means—which the Société was eventually required to do by law—

for managing the park, and operates at an arm's length from the city, but is dependent on it for a large proportion of its operating budget. In its annual budgets, the Société has complained for several years of being underfunded, and blames the city for failing to provide adequate resources to maintain the site in safe operating conditions. As such, though it remains the site of considerable cultural programming (despite recent cancellations and reductions in the length of certain programs), and hosts a substantial proportion of the city's mainstream sporting events and music festivals, there are many areas of the park where infrastructure is in serious disrepair. Perhaps it is not surprising, in light of what appears to be an ongoing blame game waged between the Société and the city, that my research into one of the more neglected areas of the park should be viewed as threatening.¹⁰ As such, my questions about the circumstances under which the gardens have been permitted to deteriorate to the extent that they have, remain only partially answered.

All in all the gardener experienced the floral park as a site of many questions but also much activity—some of it human-initiated and some of it owing more to the progress of time and groundhogs. Especially in areas such as the canals, where the gardener

seems to have involved a much greater expenditure of time for everyone involved. This was in part because my efforts to communicate with the personnel involved have yielded such a bewildering variety of problematic responses (from contradictory information, to complete silence, to misinterpretations so profound they bordered on the absurd); but it was also because the access-to-information process requires a good deal of detective work just to establish what documents exist, and requires additional documentation (and the use of registered mail!) at every step. In the final stages of my research, the SPJD failed to comply with access to information procedures, and succeeded in preventing my access to certain documents simply by delaying long enough. As of this writing, I am stuck in a mediation process overseen by the Commission d'accès à l'information du Québec, which is permitted to last for a full year.

¹⁰ Thus for example, while many of the above observations about the state of the floral park are confirmed in a review of the gardens, produced in 2007, the complete text of this review was only obtained in the late stages of the research process, via an access-to-information request. Staff of the SPJD had previously provided the report with those pages pertaining to maintenance expenditures and practices omitted, suggesting that close attention to the gardens and their care is not in fact welcome. See *Bilan et recommandations pour la mise en valeur des jardins*, 2007, Archives of the Société du parc Jean-Drapeau, Montreal.

worried that too much growth at the wrong time would be viewed as a problem, there was both a volatility and a fragility to the pace of change. If the banks of the canals seemed unusually beautiful, she suspected that it was in part because the resources for maintaining them more intensively was not available. Below I attempt to put the specific dynamism of the Jardins des Floralies into historical context, and to understand the significance of the somewhat paradoxical combination of effects observed there by the gardener. Can a garden both fulfill a promise and inspire doubt? I begin with discussion of a particular visit she made to the canals, and the specific character of the experience it produced.

Visiting the canal-garden

The majority of the Floralies gardens are concentrated within and around the network of canals constructed for Expo 67. The banks of the canals may not themselves seem to qualify as a garden. But they are planted in many sections as if they were gardens, and for the gardener, the stretch along the west and south sides functioned essentially (i.e., according to the criteria of enclosure), as a garden. She visited it repeatedly, often going there to eat her lunch or take notes—in part because she enjoyed the sense of privacy, as well as the views of other gardens she found there.

The canals were constructed, along with the island itself, for Expo 67. Though from aerial photographs of the island it is clear they follow the curve of its shore, from the ground they appear linear, making a paddle-boating circuit of right angles around the centre of the island and containing the central section of the Jardins des Floralies. On the west and southwest sides, the banks rise in two sections, one below the walking path, and one above—both planted with a dense variety of trees, shrubs, grasses and perennials,

and including aquatic and riparian species in the lower section. The canals themselves provide watery boundaries to the other gardens, adding both an interesting prospect and in some cases, especially since their ‘naturalization’, an exaggerated sense of enclosure.¹¹ The canal system as a whole substantially enhances the rustic qualities of the floral park. As the gardener put it, they seem to express a certain *generosity*; in the density and variety of their planting, they are suggestive of a much larger landscape.

Though the impetus for the renovations in 2000 was in part infrastructural—the banks were eroding and starting to collapse in some places—the project also represented an opportunity to augment the role of the canals within the landscape of the floral park. The aesthetic, recreational and environmental benefits of ‘water’ had been designated as a major theme within the larger park’s master plan, as adopted in 1993 (and discussed at length below). The canals were a specific target of activities designed to develop an identity for the park aligned with principles of sustainable development. The master plan also specified that the park’s landscape should be natural in character, and called for an overall increase in biomass and the ‘generous’ plantings of trees and shrubs.¹² Consequently, the approach taken to stabilizing the banks involved, in almost every section, the extensive use of plant material. A dense planting of shrubs, trees and perennials was intended to hold the soil of the banks in place, while riparian plants would increase the amount of oxygen in the water and help to cool it. At the same time, it was asserted that the use of shrubs and trees in this context would require less maintenance.¹³

¹¹ Due to the shrubs and tall grasses planted along their banks.

¹² *Plan directeur de mise en valeur et de développement du Parc des Îles*, 1994, Bibliothèque du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal, call number 0900.3537 M6.1, 44.

¹³ *Restauration des canaux, Île Notre-Dame: Étude préliminaire*, 1999, 74400, S1, 5216, Archives of the

Thus, an engineering problem (i.e., that posed by the movement of water over time), generated a landscape that was not only ecologically beneficial but also—given promises of low maintenance combined with the substantial increase in biomass—*inherently expansive*.

As the gardener described it, after a visit in which she had attempted to follow the largely overgrown walking paths along the canals, the plants growing there—which constitute a mixture of the horticulturally valuable and the weedy and well-traveled—were thriving and spreading so freely that they didn’t so much attract her attention as *confront* her when she walked below and beside them. In many places she could not see what lay beneath, or guess who arrived first. The weedy and the ornamental, the person-planted and the bird-planted, the fragrant and the thorny—they interwove so exuberantly that, as she put it, “all the usual relations were upset.” She saw no clear invasion, but also no clear intentions. In a writing exercise composed after the fact, she wrote,

Despite being an activity anticipated in their design, walking the paths along the canals of the Jardins des floralies requires a certain amount of courage... The beds planted along the steep side of the path are in the process of overgrowing, their vines sprawling, trees and shrubs billowing down the slope, unrestrained and tangled. The grass on the path is long and the reeds and daylilies growing beside the water rise high, making it difficult to see much of the canal or the gardens on the other side. Where it is visible, the water is a cloudy green. The rocks of the former canal wall lie in the slope they formed when they were released from their wire cages and the banks re-planted. Strange towers of algae, and algae-covered rocks rise from the canal bottom like a ghostly city.

A red-winged blackbird follows me some distance, flying around my head squawking harried warnings, but leaves me as I pass under the bridge. I find a small mattress there, unaccompanied and unmarked, surprisingly mute. I emerge again into the sunlight. There is a woman sitting alone on the other side. She does not appear to notice me, but I imagine nonetheless that she finds me suspicious. I attempt to push further along the disappearing path—past a smokebush, its tiny flowers blown into a mountain of gauzy pink clouds, and through the

Parthenocissus, which lies lightly across the grass, slowing my progress even as it promises a brilliant autumn carpet. To the left, the embankment is thick with black raspberries and *Geranium macrorrhizum*, the strong citrus scent rising as I trample over it, trying to pick the ripe berries just out of my reach. Further on, the daylilies and hostas and blooming sedum cascade down the steep slope beside me, at home with the burdock and thistles and sumacs, covering the rocks that hold up the slope, going wild. I come under another bridge and smell fish, see two holes above me among the dirt and rocks. The sound of my footsteps echoes and it is cool. I wonder if this is where the fox lives.¹⁴

As a garden, the canal-garden was problematic; it produced a great deal of beauty (especially from a distance, in the spring and fall), but also problems: mainly, what to do? The paths could not be walked, and there was (aside from a bench near one of the entrances) no place to sit. As such, it didn't provide the kind of affirmation that a garden normally delivers. Which is to say, that in its frustration of the usual garden activities, the garden did not address the gardener (as visitor) in a coherent way. It was no longer clear that the plants were arranged there for her personal enjoyment and edification. Instead, everything and nothing in particular seemed to be put into play at once, requiring of the gardener not only courage but also a certain inventiveness, since it was not clear where she could go or what she should do (the paths being overgrown, leading nowhere, etc.). "I felt as if I didn't belong there," she said. She characterized her feelings during the visit as being a mixture of pleasure, apprehension and doubt—should she go further? Was something bad, or interesting, about to happen? What was she doing there, and why?

She had intended, in following the walking path as far as she could, to look for traces of the renovations completed in 2000. She wanted a more concrete sense of the history narrated in an interpretative display at one of the entrances, which for some

¹⁴ This was an exercise that focused in a fairly conventional way on writing an adequately detailed description (which had proved surprisingly difficult up to this point). It takes an excerpt from the gardener's notes and expands on it as an attempt to make a short description evoke the tenor of the visit as a whole.

reason she did not trust.¹⁵ The display, which turns the canals into an environmental demonstration site, was installed as part of a 2003 project called Trilogie. Through a tour and interpretative displays, Trilogie celebrates the collection of wetlands and waterways in Parc Jean-Drapeau. Marked by the placement of signs emblazoned with a special logo, it connects the canals not only to two filtration systems found elsewhere in the park, but also to the transplanted bog on the southwest corner of the island. As a whole, it can be read as a kind of environmental history, since it attempts to demonstrate, not only ecologically beneficial practices of waterway management, but also, through narrative and symbolic means, a longstanding commitment (on behalf of several para-municipal organizations, including the SPJD), to environmental innovation.

The text of the display characterizes the renovation as a process of “ecological restoration” (which, given the manmade origins of the canals, the gardener found disingenuous). Under the heading “Presenting a better habitat and charming the eye,” certain aspects of the “natural preservation work” are described, including the use of environmentally-friendly materials to rebuild the banks, and the planting of 50,000 plants: “some 60 varieties of perennials, grasses and indigenous aquatic plants, not to mention trees and shrubs” which now provide refuge for “several species of birds, ducks, butterflies and insects...”¹⁶

It wasn’t that the gardener was not convinced that the naturalization of the canals was environmentally beneficial. In fact, it seemed to her that it was *more* beneficial than

¹⁵ Maybe it was the way the ‘before’ picture appeared to have been taken in late fall or early spring (the colours were brown and the trees bare) while the ‘after’ picture was taken when everything was green and full. This made the differences between the two landscapes much more striking, which, given the current state of affairs, was hardly necessary.

¹⁶ *Trilogie: Rapport finale des activités*, 2003, Archives of the Société du parc Jean-Drapeau, Montreal.

the interpretative display described. It's just that she wasn't sure about the status of the 'more'. Reflecting again on the visit described above, she wrote,

Upon setting out along the walking path beside the canal, you have a sense of the landscape based on the visual contributions it makes, and the ideals they suggest—of a more natural or more beneficial beauty. But when you are in the garden, feeling apprehensive, or even fearful (as I did on another visit, on a rainy day, when the park was mostly deserted), there is all of a sudden another dimension, one which is hard to characterize as either good or bad. It enlivens things, and makes you feel as if your actions might actually have consequences. This is where the doubt comes in. You have decided to explore a garden, but once you begin, it feels like you have taken on something much more daunting and uncertain. And even though you can see people on the other side, even though you can mostly see where the 'path' is leading, you still feel as if you don't know where you are going. The naturalistic qualities you admired so much from above seem suggestive of a wilderness more profound than the one you intended to explore. A twisted ankle, a biting rat—all of a sudden it seems as if, not only unnerving, but actually bad things, could happen. It is easy enough to reassure yourself but you still turn around earlier than you really need to, and you still feel afterwards as if you have been to some other realm—as if the space of the park was not as well defined as it seemed, or not uniform in its density. You have discovered a hidden pocket, a space within which the number of things, qualities, sensations and events is greater than elsewhere. The dense vegetation acts like a magnet, pulling energy inward and multiplying effects in its vicinity.

What is the significance of an 'ecological restoration' that elicits, not only visual pleasure, but also discomfort and doubt? There was for the gardener, a disjunction between the intentionality of the interpretative display, and the fact that the chaotic beauty it claimed as its accomplishment—while undeniably ecologically vibrant in character—was not itself intended, and, she suspected, likely viewed as problematic by the park administration. Indeed, this suspicion was confirmed to a certain degree when, in 2010, the southern-most section of the canals was filled in and turned into lawn—apparently as an attempt to recover a sector of the floral park "...qui était délaissé en raison de l'eau stagnante dans les lagunes et des odeurs infectes qui s'en dégageaient."¹⁷

17 "...which was abandoned due to bad odours emanating from the stagnant lagoons." Service à la

As the gardener had noted, in the heat of summer, the algae reaches the surface in some places and spreads across it, making an excessive proliferation visible from above. (She did not however, notice an unpleasant odour as she navigated this section of the canals, and in fact, sat for a considerable length of time beside the lagoon enjoying the view).¹⁸

The celebration of the naturalized canal banks and the ecological benefits of urban waterways via Trilogie must therefore be qualified by the recognition that within the model of sustainable development pursued as an ‘identity’ for the park, it is possible for recreational infrastructures to be *too* natural, or unsuccessfully so. In fact, the canal system as a whole (which is fed by water from the plant-purified Lac des Regattes), cannot ultimately be considered environmentally sustainable, since, according to the 2007 review of the gardens referred to above, the proliferation of algae was due to the fact that the use of algicides had to be discontinued, since it is no longer permitted by law.¹⁹

If the canal-garden was, like the floral park, meant to serve as a kind of legacy—contributing future ecological benefits while also marking the event of intervention—the character of its phenomenological effects (both pleasing and doubt-producing), combined with the contradictions between its framing and its functioning, suggest that such a

clientèle, Société du Parc Jean-Drapeau, email response to online query, July 13, 2010. This suspicion was also confirmed, even more conclusively, by the 2007 review of the gardens to which I refer above. It recommends, with respect to the canals: “La dernière remise en état des berges a été effectuée en 2000. Afin de les mettre en valeur et d’éliminer la végétation envahissante qui a proliféré depuis, il serait nécessaire de les nettoyer et de les tailler...” *Bilan et recommandations pour la mise en valeur des jardins*, 2007, Archives of the Société du parc Jean-Drapeau, Montreal, 9.

¹⁸ Finding the response to my online query unsatisfactory, I made an access-to-information request, which is still pending (after five months and an application for review to the Commission de l'accès à l'information). In the course of correspondence over this request I have been told that while I will be provided with access to a copy of the minutes for the meeting during which the decision to fill the canals was made, the text concerning it will be entirely redacted (since legally the Société is not required to provide me with access to this kind of document until fifteen years after the decision was rendered).

¹⁹ Ibid, 9.

communicative use of gardens, is somewhat fraught, producing unintended effects. At the same time, might there be something productive in the challenge it poses, both to control, and to understanding? Though she was powerfully affected, the gardener seemed at something of a loss to specify what exactly had happened. The analysis which follows will attempt to draw out more fully the significance of both the garden's conflicted phenomenology and its demonstrational qualities. I begin by tracing a history of the programmatic use of gardens in Montreal of the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the excesses specific to it.

The ville fleurie program

From the 1950s through the 1970s, the population density of Montreal declined as more and more families moved to the suburbs. In the suburbs it was possible to buy a new house for less money, and you could raise a family in what was increasingly seen as a safer, more family-friendly environment. In contrast to deteriorating conditions within the city, the suburbs provided a setting unmarked by the signs of poverty and crime. It was quieter, and everyone had their own backyard (where you could take up the increasingly popular hobby of gardening).

Having contributed in a variety of ways to the suburban exodus, and also having allowed conditions within the city to deteriorate over the same period, the Drapeau administration nonetheless realized by the late 1970s, that something needed to be done in order to regain tax revenues and encourage investment in Montreal's stagnating economy.²⁰ Beginning in 1978, the strategy undertaken was largely focused around the

²⁰ Jean Drapeau was mayor of Montreal from 1954-57, and then from 1960-1986. During this

idea of improving ‘quality of life’ within the city. As one article put it, “Afin de ramener à l’intérieur de son territoire les citoyens agés 25 à 45 ans, qui ont déjà déserté la ville au profit des banlieus, l’administration Drapeau-Lamarre a décidé de se lancer dans un vaste programme d’amélioration de la qualité de vie des Montréalais.”²¹ As a widely employed but ill-defined measure of collective well-being, the use of ‘quality of life’ in this context implied that a healthy (i.e., functional, verdant and attractive) physical environment would lead to greater happiness and prosperity for city residents. Thus the administration proposed not only to beautify the city by planting more trees, landscaping parking lots, installing more hanging baskets and planters (particularly along commercial arteries), and cleaning up vacant lots, but also to control noise, improve lighting and make repairs to streets and sidewalks in previously neglected neighbourhoods. “Autrement dit, l’administration veut à tout prix refaire une beauté à ses multiples quartiers afin de les rendre plus attrayants au niveau de l’environnement.”²²

Such interventions were also sometimes described as “humanizing” urban environments, which implied not only that they would be made more welcoming and

time, numerous highways, bridges and parking lots were built to accommodate commuters from the suburbs. These constructions frequently required demolition of housing, which was not replaced. As Linteau charges, Drapeau failed not only to provide adequate housing for Montrealers, but also to recognize and address the impact of rising poverty in the face of economic stagnation. Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal*.

²¹ “The Drapeau-Lamarre administration decided to launch a comprehensive program aimed at improving the quality of life of Montrealers, in order to bring back those citizens between the ages of 25 and 45 years old who have deserted the city to the profit of the suburbs.” “Montréal met l’accent sur la qualité de la vie,” *La Presse*, August 11, 1979. Lamarre was the president of the city’s executive committee, and according to Linteau, the author of much of the programming designed to revitalize the city during this time. There were also more conventionally economic initiatives launched during this time (such as the formation of a Commission d’initiative et de développement économiques), but these will not be discussed here. Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal*.

²² “In other words, the administration is desperate to freshen its many neighbourhoods to make them more environmentally attractive.” “Montréal met l’accent sur la qualité de la vie,” *La Presse*, August 11, 1979.

more sensorially pleasant to occupy, but also that, an increased use of such spaces would enhance opportunities for unplanned social interaction (which was precisely what was lacking in the suburbs).²³ Particularly in initiatives such as the creation of community gardens, the conversion of streets into pedestrian walkways, and the Place au Soleil program (which demolished unused and dilapidated back-alley buildings²⁴ in order to create space for new gardens), the revitalization program can be read as a means of enhancing those social and cultural spaces that were unique to the city.

The administration's statements about revitalization tended to pair 'quality of life' with concern for the environment. In addition to making physical improvements, the administration wanted to incite a sense of collective responsibility for the health of the urban environment. As Drapeau is quoted as saying in relation to the administration's plans for city-wide beautification leading up to the Floralies, "Pour nous, il s'agit d'une étape importante dans l'amélioration de la qualité de la vie dans les quartiers et dans la sensibilisation des citoyens à l'environnement."²⁵ This was a cost-effective strategy for urban renewal, since environmentally engaged citizens could be counted upon to clean-up trash, care for new trees, and garden vacant lots. At the same time, a horticulturally-oriented strategy couched in environmental language also contributed to a 'green' image

²³ For example, among the 'soft technologies' that Bourque promised would result from the hosting of the Floralies, was "...l'établissement d'un réseau de rues piétonnées créant un environnement humain et favorisant les rencontres et les échanges." "Les Floralies vont transformer Montréal," *La Presse*, March 19, 1980.

²⁴ These were buildings formerly used for storing firewood and coal and which, though they often rose as high as the house, were separate from it in case of fire. Of course, in a modern context, they were considered fire hazards in themselves.

²⁵ "For us, it is an important step in improving the quality of life in neighbourhoods and in raising public awareness about the environment." "Des quartiers fleuris pour les Floralies," *Nouvelles de l'Est*, January 22, 1980. See also, "Les Floralies vont transformer Montréal," *La Presse*, March 19, 1980.

of the city—an identity that became increasingly important to the administration as the Floralies approached, and which was further elaborated in the years following. As such, and given the objective of encouraging investment and increased tax revenue, this was a context in which the environmental (or, more precisely, the horticultural) went hand-in-hand with the economic.²⁶ What was wanted, ultimately, was to inspire a new volunteerism among Montrealers—one that was environmentally oriented (though in a largely aesthetic and social sense), but also economically beneficial. In this context, and through discursive and visual means that were also emotionally inflected in a characteristic way, flowers and gardens were ultimately made to communicate in a new way, as well as to make space for the expression of specifically urban environmental values.

Opération un million de fleurs

Though developed within the context of the larger urban revitalization program discussed above, the initiatives explicitly associated with the ‘Montréal, ville fleurie’ concept, were designed to amplify the social and cultural impact of the Floralies internationales and to integrate it with that larger program. As a planning document entitled, “Montréal, ville fleurie: Programme d’embellissement et de sensibilisation des citoyens - été 1980”²⁷ states,

²⁶ Of course it is worth noting that there was not anything dramatically new about this conjunction—the City Beautiful movement, whose influence on the rhetoric of the early beautification campaigns is discussed in Chapter One, was also premised on the belief that environmental change (in a broad sense) would lead to economic prosperity as well as social harmony.

²⁷ "Montreal, City of Flowers: Beautification and Awareness-Raising Program - Summer 1980"

La Ville est engagée depuis quelque années dans un vaste programme de revitalization de l'habitat urbain et d'amélioration de la qualité de vie au niveau de ses quartiers... Les Floralies internationales de Montréal, par son impact sur la population, présentent une occasion unique de faire progresser les objectifs de l'administration.²⁸

Three central components are set out in this document: the consolidation of an existing beautification program which focused on the main arteries and commercial areas of the city, a new initiative named “Opération un million de fleurs,” and a “campagne de sensibilisation”²⁹ entitled “Montréal, ville fleurie.”

While the beautification of streets and commercial areas in Montréal had been undertaken before,³⁰ the million fleurs initiative was something new, and represented the centre-piece of the ville fleurie program. It entailed, quite simply, the distribution of free annual flowers and soil to those city residents and businesses that proposed to undertake a new beautification project on their property, provided it would be visible from the street. Participants submitted a request via local “comités d’embellissement,”³¹ specifying the kind of project to be undertaken. Allowances were made for new flowerbeds, window

²⁸ “The City has for some years been engaged in a comprehensive revitalization program aimed at improving urban housing and the quality of life in these neighbourhoods... Measured by its impact on the population, the Floralies internationales of Montreal presents a unique opportunity to advance the goals of the administration.” From the fonds Pierre Bourque. "Montréal, ville fleurie: Programme d'embellissement et de sensibilisation des citoyens, été 1980," 1980, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #9, Montréal, ville fleurie: janvier 1980 à février 1981, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal, 1. The document has no author, and is undated, but based on its placement in the file, was produced between January 1, 1980 and March 7, 1980.

²⁹ ...“awareness-raising campaign.”

³⁰ For example, as discussed in Chapter One, the 1960s saw an intensification of these activities leading up to Expo 67. The beautification of commercial areas was begun anew in 1978. In 1980, it was proposed to add another 1000 planters—500 to be planted with trees, 500 for flowers—and 200 hanging baskets. Given that the manpower and plants would be provided by the Botanical Garden, the cost for these additions was low: only \$100,000. Ibid. In a presentation to volunteers a bit later in the spring of 1980 however, Lamarre cited a much greater number of planters and baskets purchased that year: 2530 planters, 2800 hanging baskets and 1800 window boxes for businesses. "Les Floralies de quartier: Allocution de Monsieur Yvon Lamarre," April 15, 1980, D24000, Reel 549, 1.349, Archives de Montréal, Montreal.

³¹ ...“beautification committees.”

boxes and hanging baskets (multiples of the latter two were permitted), and employees from the Botanical Garden delivered the required quantity of flowers and soil to each address.³² The program had originally been scheduled to unfold between June 1st and 30th of 1980, but the difficulties associated with distribution, combined with a higher number of requests than anticipated, meant that it didn't conclude until mid July. So for almost six weeks, employees of the Botanical Garden and the city's Service des loisirs worked overtime, alongside volunteers, to process requests and deliver flowers to residents.

In keeping with the fiscal restraint which the administration was attempting to demonstrate during this time, Opération un million de fleurs had a very small budget (\$100,000), and relied on the participation of city employees (principally those of the Botanical Garden) as well as fifty-four teams of volunteers (one for each electoral district). The “comités d’embellissement” collected and reviewed requests for flowers and soil, and promoted the program to residents in their neighbourhoods.³³ The reliance on volunteers was viewed within the context of the initiative as an important aspect of its long term impact: not only did they help to reduce the costs of what turned out to be quite a large

³² I find it hard to believe that these deliveries were actually made door-to-door, but this seems to have been the case, despite original plans to centralize distribution in three different sectors of the city. Cf. "Montréal, ville fleurie: Programme d'embellissement et de sensibilisation des citoyens, été 1980," 1980, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #9, Montréal, ville fleurie: janvier 1980 à février 1981, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal; and Pierre Bourque, "La ville de Montréal a distribué 1,200,000 fleurs dans 30,000 foyers," letter to the editor, *La Presse*, August 4, 1980. Indeed, in a report prepared soon after the 1980 program was complete, Bourque comments that distribution was "presque notre Waterloo." Pierre Bourque, "Memo to Richard Vanier, re: Opération '1 million de fleurs,'" July 21, 1980, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #9, Montréal, ville fleurie: janvier 1980 à février 1981, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal. In 1981 and 1982, when the program was remounted, the distribution took place in arenas, with horticulturalists on site to provide information to participants.

³³ They were also supposed to plant trees and research problem areas in order to propose additional beautification projects to the city. Aside from the orientation documents provided to volunteers however (e.g., "Les Florales de quartier: Allocution de Monsieur Yvon Lamarre," April 15, 1980, D24000, Reel 549, 1.349, Archives de Montréal, Montreal), I did not find further reference to such activities.

and complicated undertaking, they were seen as leaders of a new movement of citizen-led horticultural beautification.³⁴ As Bourque claimed after the distribution was complete, “cette opération a permis la création d'un nouveau type de bénévolat voué à l'amélioration de la qualité de vie au niveau des quartiers...”³⁵ Indeed, the main objective of the initiative had been, not to beautify the city for the sake of impressing tourists in town for the Floralies (as had been the case in the years leading up to Expo), but as a means of inciting citizens to participate actively in the beautification of their neighbourhoods over the long term. It was hoped that volunteers and beneficiaries of the program alike would gain ‘a taste’, not only for gardening, but also for improving their surroundings in a more general sense. As the original proposal outlining the ville fleurie program put it,

...cette opération coûte relativement peu chère et entraînera de la part des citoyens des investissements à moyen et à long terme importants. Les citoyens après avoir installé des boîtes à fleurs ou préparé des plates-bandes continueront à les fleurir au cours des années subséquentes. Cette opération agira comme stimulant à la participation des citoyens à l'embellissement de son quartier.³⁶

A press release produced later that fall confidently reported that the president of the city’s executive committee was convinced that,

³⁴ Though of course, as was reflected in their composition—according to electoral district, and with a city councillor acting as spokesperson—the movement was to be overseen in various important ways by the administration.

³⁵ ...“this operation led to the creation of a new type of volunteer dedicated to improving the quality of life at the neighbourhood level...”Pierre Bourque, “La ville de Montréal a distribué 1,200,000 fleurs dans 30,000 foyers,” letter to the editor, *La Presse*, August 4, 1980.

³⁶ "...this operation is relatively inexpensive and will draw important medium and long-term investments from its citizens. After setting up flower boxes, or having prepared flowerbeds, citizens will continue to replenish them year after year. This operation is intended to stimulate citizens' participation in the beautification of their neighbourhood." "Montréal, ville fleurie: Programme d'embellissement et de sensibilisation des citoyens, été 1980," 1980, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #9, Montréal, ville fleurie: janvier 1980 à février 1981, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal, 3.

“Operation One-Million Flowers” would bear fruit on a long term basis: having acquired the habit of living in an environment made attractive through the presence of flowers, Montrealers will want to continue to do their part and will plant flower beds or put up flower baskets in the future.

“Operation One-Million Flowers” has also done much to extend the role of the citizen who, Mr. Lamarre pointed out, no longer remains as a passive bystander but actually takes a direct and active part in the life of his community. As such, it will have helped to create a civic conscience at many levels.³⁷

In many ways this initiative can be seen to have made explicit what was previously an implicitly communicative role of flowers and gardens in the beautification campaigns. Not only were window boxes and flower beds seen to signify certain civic and environmental values, but gardeners were encouraged to take satisfaction in expressing those values, and helping to create a new city in their image.

As such, Opération un million de fleurs was designed to capture the imagination: a *million* flowers sounds like a lot.³⁸ It brings to mind an image of the city with flowers everywhere you look. As the original proposal acknowledged, the actual number of flowers distributed did not matter, nor did their quality—the point was to give people a taste for gardening. However, it seems to me that the *idea* of there being a million additional flowers in the city was important to inspiring interest in the first place.³⁹ Given

³⁷ The press release was issued on the occasion of an awards ceremony recognizing individual contributions to the program. "A flower happening for Montrealers," November 12, 1980, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #9, Montréal, ville fleurie: janvier 1980 à février 1981, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal, 3.

³⁸ Interestingly, this number roughly matched the city's population at the time (which was just under one million in 1981), meaning that there would have been one free flower for every Montrealer (and then some). Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal*.

³⁹ “L’opération 1 million ne comportera pas le don de 1 million de fleurs mais personne n’ira les compter. Les fleurs seront de qualité courante et non équivalente à celles produites au Jardin. Il s’agit surtout de donner le goût aux gens.” "Montréal, ville fleurie: Programme d'embellissement et de sensibilisation des citoyens, été 1980," 1980, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #9, Montréal, ville fleurie: janvier 1980 à février 1981, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal, 3. Of course, the organizers themselves counted, and when the number exceeded 1,000,000 (by 200,000), it was widely reported. For example, see Alain Duhamel, "Montréal veut voir les quartiers aussi fleuris que l'Île Notre-Dame," (missing publication), 1980; and a letter to the editor from Bourque himself: Pierre Bourque, "La ville de Montréal a

a lack of preserved pictorial evidence, it is hard to say how much of a visual impact one million flowers, spread across the city, would have had, or how many requests really did represent new projects as opposed to attempts by existing gardeners to benefit from the city's generosity (which would have reduced the extent to which the program resulted in new plantings). Even if we were to attempt an estimation based on the area covered, we wouldn't get a very accurate picture, since the records indicate that the flowers were very unevenly distributed between different districts.⁴⁰

It is interesting in this context to consider the flowers that were used. Although it is not possible to confirm precisely the species (since the flowers were purchased on a rolling basis from a variety of growers),⁴¹ the following species are discussed in a text prepared for the sake of providing basic cultivation information to new gardeners: petunias, marigolds, impatiens, begonias and coleus.⁴² These are plants that would have been widely available from growers and already in heavy use around the city, being relatively undemanding in their requirements and therefore well suited to cultivation in

distribué 1,200,000 fleurs dans 30,000 foyers," letter to the editor, *La Presse*, August 4, 1980.

⁴⁰ In some districts, such as the one including Saint-Henri, over 80,000 flowers were distributed, while in others, such as the one encompassing Parc-Extension, fewer than 2,000 were delivered. Pierre Bourque, "Memo to Richard Vanier, re: Opération '1 million de fleurs,'" July 21, 1980, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #9, Montréal, ville fleurie: janvier 1980 à fevrier 1981, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal I am hesitant to speculate as to the reasons for such variation, though differences in the promotional efforts of the local comités d'embellissement probably had a substantial impact.

⁴¹ In the following two years, the flowers were grown on contract, according to a set of number of different species, but this was not possible in the first year since the program was approved too late in the growing season.

⁴² "Un été tout fleuri," 1980, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #9, Montréal, ville fleurie: janvier 1980 à fevrier 1981, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal. Based on its location in the file, this document was produced between March 7 and 9, 1980. It also contained instructions on how to plant and care for annual flowers.

the city, especially in containers.⁴³ They would have been perfect for first-time gardeners. Especially given that the same species (plus lobelia) are listed in a planning document for the 1981 program, it seems reasonable to assume that this was the selection of plants provided to residents, depending on their situation (sunny or shaded).⁴⁴

Also in the planning document for 1981, it is indicated that 50% of the plants grown were to be petunias, 25% marigolds and the remaining 25% to be made up from the other species. Although I again can't say for sure that this was precisely the situation in 1980, it seems likely the proportions were similar, since they are consistent with past planting priorities.⁴⁵ As Henry Teuscher wrote of the petunia in particular in his *Window-Box Gardening*: “[t]op-ranking window-box plant because of its large, brilliant and profusely produced flowers, which appear over a very long time.”⁴⁶ These flowers would have been particularly well-suited to the conditions characterizing most locations that fulfilled the requirement of visibility (i.e., front yards and on the side of buildings). Nonetheless, as the gardener points out, this suggests there were over half a million

⁴³ All these plants feature heavily in planning documents pertaining to plantings in the 1960s (discussed in Chapter Four). See Claude Lefebvre, "Memo to Fernand Laporte, Contremaitre des Serres," November 15, 1960, S2, SS2, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal; and Claude Lefebvre, "Liste des plantes annuelles à cultiver pour plantation dans les parcs printemps 1964," July 2, 1962, S2, SS2, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal.

⁴⁴"Première réunion du comité de coordination: Montréal ville fleurie - programme 1981," December 11, 1980, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #9, Montréal, ville fleurie: janvier 1980 à fevrier 1981, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal.

⁴⁵ In the documents pertaining to plantings in the 1960s, it is clear that petunias were planted in numbers exceeding any other species by over 100%. See Claude Lefebvre, "Memo to Fernand Laporte, Contremaitre des Serres," November 15, 1960, S2, SS2, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal; and Claude Lefebvre, "Liste des plantes annuelles à cultiver pour plantation dans les parcs printemps 1964," July 2, 1962, S2, SS2, Horticulture extérieure 1961-62, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal.

⁴⁶ Henry Teuscher, *Window Box Gardening: An Illustrated Guide for the Outdoor Culture of Plants in Boxes, Tubs and Hanging Baskets* (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1956), 132.

petunias planted in Montreal that summer, *in addition* to those already planted by the city in its ongoing beautification efforts, and by gardeners who did not participate in the program. That is a lot of petunias.

An emotional and socio-economic semiotics of the petunia

The gardener had a very strong reaction to information about the species of flowers distributed through Opération un million de fleurs. When I asked her what she had against petunias, she wrote an extended response:

The petunia was a popular Victorian bedding plant. If that is what you see in it, it can be quite charming. Cheerful and decidedly unpretentious. There was an old brick farmhouse near to where I grew up, with petunias planted in two straight rows along the short walk that led from the road to the house. They were white, dark purple and magenta, and perfectly maintained. That is where petunias are at their best—in neat and tidy flowerbeds in front of farmhouses, where the landscape is otherwise economically disposed.

But they are of course found in many other settings, where they are, for me, the marker of cheap and easy, bright and bountiful. You often find them in tree pit gardens for example, and in plastic window boxes, or in flowerbeds alongside tacky ornaments and superfluous edging materials. Not that they can't have a certain charm there too, but their ubiquity tends to incite irritation (in me, at least). I was both amused and unsurprised to discover that in the popular symbolism of flowers, petunias are seen to signify anger and resentment. Or, 'your presence reassures me'.⁴⁷ I have had both reactions myself.

In the year or so that I worked at a large garden centre, I spent a good deal of time sorting petunias. I can say without a doubt that of all the annual flowers we sold, the petunias were stocked in the greatest variety. I wouldn't have been surprised if there were fifty different kinds. They came in different colours, different sizes of blossom, different forms (trailing, upright, carpet), and they even

⁴⁷ During the nineteenth century, there were a host of what Beverly Seaton calls "sentimental flower books" published in France, Britain and the US. They described a "language of flowers" which assigned specific meanings to different species of flowers. It was always implied that the 'language' was universal but in fact, as Seaton demonstrates, it was culturally specific. Seaton, *Language of flowers*. Today, there are many websites, and promotional materials for florists, which publish similar lists, often drawing on these earlier texts, as well as other sources. As a flower which was only hybridized for garden use towards the end of the nineteenth century, the petunia does not appear in the Victorian flower books, but is included in many contemporary sources, such as those provided by florists. For example, see "Meanings of most flowers," *Phillip's 1-800-Florals*, <http://www.800florals.com/care/meaning.asp> (accessed Dec. 15, 2012).

had different trademarked names (e.g., “supertunias,” “wave” petunias, “surfinias”). Double blooms, striped blooms, veined blooms, ruffled blooms. And they had names to suit the inanity of this endless, yet mostly inconsequential, diversity. For example, take the “Madness” series—“the best medium-flowered petunia for the landscape.” Among those with pink-coloured blossoms alone you have (and this is just a selection): ‘rose madness’, ‘pink madness’, ‘magenta madness’, ‘spring madness’, ‘summer madness’, ‘sheer madness’, ‘sugar madness’, and of course, ‘simply madness’. If you think there is little in these names that could possibly distinguish one flower from another, you are right. Imagine being forced to have conversations with people about them: “Have you got any more ‘summer madness?’” “No, but I’ve got ‘spring madness.’” “Oh no, that won’t do.” “Maybe sugar madness?” “Oh! Well I haven’t seen *that* one before.”

People would rifle through the trays of plants, picking them up and moving them around as they tried to decide which of these hybridized wonders they most required—perhaps even abandoning the process altogether out of sheer anxiety over the decision. Then it was my job (and that of my fellow employees) to go through and put them back into order. It went on forever. I am not sure I ever had a job that made me feel more as if I were getting dumber while I did it. Maybe the time that one of my gardening clients tried to make me to trim all the edges in her yard using scissors. But that’s another story.

In any case, petunias will always, aside from their proper farmhouse setting, appear to me as low class, even stupid flowers. When I imagine over half a million of them distributed cheerfully around Montreal, I wonder at people’s idea of beauty, or horticulture. And though it’s true that my opinion of them has been formed in response to a proliferation of types that is more recent than the million fleurs program, the problem in part is how timeless they remain in their stupidity. There could not be a more potent symbol of the modern horticultural industry, since they are produced in such massive numbers and have been the subject of such extensive breeding. But no matter how new the variety, petunias always look pretty much the way they have always looked. Which is, cheerful but utterly obvious.

Though she is, as usual, somewhat reactive in her assessment, the gardener is right about the petunia’s close association with the modern horticultural industry. Their rise to popularity coincides perfectly with the shift from sale of seeds to bedding plants (which made gardening more expensive, but also much easier). According to the (American) National Garden Bureau, the seeds of the early petunia hybrids were expensive and difficult to germinate successfully.⁴⁸ Once hybrids were produced that showed “increased

⁴⁸ “1997: Year of the Petunia,” *National Garden Bureau*,

vigor and performance,” petunias became the perfect candidate for growers to sell as seedlings, and ultimately were “the prime movers for today’s bedding plant industry.”⁴⁹ They have been a bestseller for North American growers since the 1950s, when garden centres began to replace seed catalogues as a source of plants for home gardeners. From this perspective, the planting of an additional half million petunias represents, not a substantive difference in the urban environment so much as an intensification of the status quo. Which is not to say it would have gone unnoticed—it’s just a question of what exactly such an intensification would have communicated.

A programmatic use of gardens

In the proposal for the ville fleurie program which identified Opération un million de fleurs as its centerpiece (but also included the consolidation of ongoing beautification activities), \$50,000 of a total \$300,000 was earmarked for publicity: specifically, 100,000 brochures, 10,000 stickers and 10,000 bumper stickers were to be printed, all promoting “Montréal, ville fleurie.” Proportionally, this strikes me as quite a lot of money, given that the cost of the physical interventions was low (at \$200,000 in total, plus \$50,000 in overtime for city employees).⁵⁰ It underscores the extent to which the ville fleurie program was not about beautification as such, but rather, communication. It is no accident that

http://www.ngb.org/year_of/index.cfm?YOID=4 (accessed Oct. 8, 2012).

⁴⁹ “The increased vigor made it easier for growers to get better seed germination and manage their crops... The event also ushered in highly specialized technology for hybrid variety development and production.” Lowell C. Ewart, “Breeding and plant selection,” *Greenhouse Grower Magazine*, Fall 1999, 11-2.

⁵⁰ Though it is worth noting that \$25,000 was later added to the total in order to procure required materials and cover additional overtime. “Montréal, ville fleurie,” July 7, 1980, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #9, Montréal, ville fleurie: janvier 1980 à février 1981, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal.

Opération un million de fleurs was characterized in another planning document as a “[c]ampagne à caractère publicitaire,”⁵¹ and within a draft text for the brochures, as “une vaste campagne de promotion en matière d’embellissement.”⁵² While the annual beautification campaigns had for a long time been used as a means of promoting the extent and value of city services (as I observed in Chapter Four), the ville fleurie program, and in particular, the million fleurs campaign, were promotional in a new, more integrated and also more explicit sense. This involved, among other strategies, a programmatic use of gardens, which is to say, a coordinated, explicitly communicative use, in this case intended to be simultaneously promotional (of the administration’s beautification ‘program’) and inspirational (of widespread participation). I turn now to consideration of some of the discursive strategies that helped to frame and elevate the significance of flowers and gardens to a degree that would enable them to operate in this manner.

Although I was not able to locate final versions of the promotional materials for “Montreal, ville fleurie,” a draft text for the brochure gives a sense of its communicative priorities, and the degree to which these were promotional of the administration. Though it encourages citizens to participate in the city’s beautification initiatives on the occasion of the Floraliés, the focus of this text is to portray those initiatives as part of a larger ensemble of interventions undertaken by an administration both forward-thinking and

⁵¹ ...“advertising campaign.”

⁵² ...“a comprehensive beautification campaign.” Respectively, “Floraliés Montréal 80,” January 17, 1980, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #9, Montréal, ville fleurie: janvier 1980 à fevrier 1981, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal; “Montréal, ville fleurie,” March 7, 1980, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #9, Montréal, ville fleurie: janvier 1980 à fevrier 1981, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal, 7.

benevolent in its aspirations.⁵³ As far as demonstrating the ‘recent’ efforts of the Drapeau administration, much seems to have depended on the million fleurs campaign, (as well as the Floralies, to which I return shortly).⁵⁴ In fact, the whole brochure can be seen not only as promotional of the administration’s beautification efforts, but also as a way of setting up Opération un million de fleurs so that it would be received in a particular way. That is, not simply as a promotional give-away by an administration whose popularity was on the decline, or as an attempt to put pretty window-dressing on a sad economic situation, but rather, as one part of a comprehensive and innovative program of urban revitalization.

Indeed, in press coverage the million fleurs campaign was always identified as being part of the “Montreal, ville fleurie” program, and was usually discussed in connection with other initiatives, and/or the Floralies internationales. For example, one article informs readers that, “À cette opération, qui affecte directement chaque Montréalais, s’ajoutent d’autres initiatives municipales destinées à donner à Montréal splendeur et beauté durant l’été,” and then goes on to detail the other forms of beautification the city was undertaking, including the creation of new flower markets.⁵⁵

⁵³ In the description of initiatives the emphasis is on the role of the administration, which was “sensible aux requêtes des associations de commerçants,” and “à l’écoute des aspiration de ses citoyens,” and therefore at the forefront of urban development on numerous fronts. *Ibid*, 3-4. Aside from graciously receiving those flowers provided by the City, or perhaps taking on a community garden plot, one might wonder what was actually left for citizens to do, so thorough and generous and innovative was the City in its efforts. Among the initiatives listed were, ‘green spaces’ (which included parks and street plantings); ‘commercial arteries’ (the horticultural beautification of which had begun in 1978); community gardens (a program launched in 1975); ‘parking lots’ (the city had only landscaped two so far but promised that more would follow); les Floralies internationales; the million fleurs campaign; the Botanical Garden; pedestrian malls and walkways (of which there was only one so far but others were being studied); and “l’Office d’embellissement.”

⁵⁴ Since many of the initiatives described were of longer-standing projects or institutions, while others were barely begun.

⁵⁵ “To this operation, which affects all Montrealers, other municipal initiatives intended to give

Similarly, in a letter to the editor which sought to defend the program against charges that it had failed to deliver in certain neighbourhoods, Bourque took the opportunity to fully contextualize the initiative as part of a larger, ongoing program of interventions: “Forts de son expérience passée et de ses ressources humaines et physiques, l’administration municipale décidait en mars dernier d’une multitude d’interventions favorisant l’embellissement des quartiers de Montréal, la plus spectaculaire et la plus risquée aussi étant l’Opératon un million de fleurs...”⁵⁶ He then went on to list some of those interventions as well as explaining what was unique about Opération un million de fleurs (i.e., citizen participation). Thus, the administration, and Bourque in particular, sought both to portray the initiative as specifically meaningful, and situate it discursively in close proximity to other measures, as well as to the Floralies. This enhanced the significance of Opération un million de fleurs, and the visibility of the other initiatives—some of which were ongoing and perhaps would not otherwise have been recognized by citizens as part of the administration’s revitalization efforts.

In addition to identifying individual initiatives with a coherent program of intervention, newspaper coverage also tended to associate those initiatives with the festive, almost euphoric discourse of the Floralies. At the same time, the exhibition itself was

Montreal splendour and beauty during the summer are added.” Alain Duhamel, "Montréal veut voir les quartiers aussi fleuris que l’Île Notre-Dame," (missing publication), 1980.

⁵⁶ "One of the first goals of the Floralies, which the municipal administration understands very well, is to get citizens actively involved in beautification projects, as modest as they may be. Based on the strength of its past experience, and its human and physical resources, the municipal administration decided last March in favour of a multitude of beautification initiatives in Montreal neighbourhoods; the most spectacular and the most risky also being the Million Flower Operation (Opération un million de fleurs). While other operations were realized by planting thousands of trees in popular neighbourhoods, the development of mini-parks, and the beautification of large intersections and shopping streets, Operation a Million Flowers gave rise to the creation of 54 local beautification committees corresponding to 54 districts in Montreal ...”Pierre Bourque, "La ville de Montréal a distribué 1,200,000 fleurs dans 30,000 foyers," letter to the editor, *La Presse*, August 4, 1980.

characterized, on the one hand, as the culmination of a larger program of beautification (of which the ville fleurie initiatives were also a part), and on the other, as the event that would inspire future progress on beautification (both citizen and city-led).⁵⁷ One way or the other, a close connection was generally drawn, serving to associate more mundane beautification initiatives with the very special, and spectacular, event of the Floralies.

In this, the administration was able to capitalize not only on an increased interest in horticulture (amplified by the Floralies), but also the perceived transformative potential of the exhibition: just as it would transform the previously abandoned Île Notre-Dame into a beautiful floral park, the administration's beautification initiatives would turn Montreal into a ville fleurie. In both cases, it was the dedication and ingenuity of the administration and city employees that were seen to make the transformation possible (even if, in the case of the latter, the participation of citizens was vital). The implied symmetry was particularly apparent in promises that the city's neighbourhoods would be "...aussi fleuris que l'île Notre-Dame."⁵⁸ For example, in one article, Drapeau was quoted as saying, "Nous voulons que les Floralies soient plus qu'une exposition et qu'elles vivent jusque dans les quartiers, sur les balcons, et dans les jardins..." Therefore, the article reported,

⁵⁷ For example, a press release issued on the occasion of an awards ceremony connected with Opération un million de fleurs (in the fall of 1980), stated that the campaign had been "initiated by the municipal administration in order to interest Montrealers in playing an active role in the improvement of the quality of life in their respective neighbourhood, [sic] a logical sequence in the urban habitat beautification campaign launched by the City somme [sic] years ago, which culminated in the holding of the 'Floralies '80' exhibition." "A flower happening for Montrealers," November 12, 1980, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #9, Montréal, ville fleurie: janvier 1980 à février 1981, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal, 2. In March of that year however, Bourque had made the connection somewhat differently, promising that, "Les Floralies donneront naissance à de multiples interventions qui font appel à une technologie douce..." "Les Floralies vont transformer Montréal," *La Presse*, March 19, 1980.

⁵⁸ "...as flower-filled as the Île Notre-Dame." Alain Duhamel, "Montréal veut voir les quartiers aussi fleuris que l'Île Notre-Dame," (missing publication), 1980.

...la Ville entend décupler ses efforts en matière d'embellissement et on assistera, des les beaux jours, à la naissance de milliers de fleurs partout, dans les parcs, dans les aires de stationnement, sur les balcons, dans les jardins, sur les trottoirs, etc.: on parle même de distribuer directement à la population un million de fleurs pour mettre tout le monde "à l'heure des Floralies."⁵⁹

Similarly, a press release advertising a photo competition organized by the Service des activités culturelles that year proclaimed, "Les Floralies sont partout dans Montréal!"⁶⁰ The competition had two categories—les Floralies internationales and "Montréal en tant que ville fleurie"⁶¹—and suggested that "En plus d'admirer les Floralies internationales, le public pourra, à travers ce concours, prendre conscience des efforts déployés, depuis de nombreuses années, par les différentes services de la Ville de Montréal pour améliorer la qualité de l'environnement des citoyens."⁶² Such associations were further consolidated in frequent references, during the spring and summer of 1980, to the "Floralies de quartiers", "Floralies locales" or "Floralies maison."⁶³ These references enhanced the excitement surrounding beautification initiatives, giving to them a more festive sensibility.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ "... the City will multiply its efforts to beautify and--from the first sunny days—see to the birth of thousands of flowers everywhere, in parks, in parking lots, on balconies, in gardens, on sidewalks, etc.: there is even talk of distributing a million flowers to the public in order to get everyone ready for the Floralies." "Les Floralies au coeur de chez nous: Des quartiers fleuris pour les Floralies," *Nouvelles de l'Est*, January 22, 1980.

⁶⁰ "The Floralies are everywhere in Montreal!" "Communiqué: Un concours de photos - \$14 000 en prix," 1980, D24000, Reel 549, 3.151, Archives de Montreal, Montreal.

⁶¹ "Montreal, as a city in bloom"

⁶² "In addition to admiring the Floralies internationales, with this contest, the public will become aware of the efforts deployed over many years, and by different services of the City of Montreal, to create a better environment for its citizens" Ibid.

⁶³ "Neighbourhood Floralies... Local Floralies... Floralies at Home." For example, see "Prenez votre part du Montréal, ville fleurie," *Flambeau de l'Est*, May 6, 1980; André Beauvais, "Millions de fleurs à Montréal: Les citoyens débordent d'enthousiasme," *Journal de Montréal*, May 15, 1980; Alain Duhamel, "Montréal veut voir les quartiers aussi fleuris que l'Île Notre-Dame," (missing publication), 1980.

⁶⁴ Continued references to the Floralies in newspaper coverage of Opération un million de fleurs in

Ultimately, in the discourse that surrounded the Floralies and connected it with other initiatives, the administration was drawing on an existing significance of horticultural interventions and attempting to amplify their effects—seeking not only the production of a meaningful and more conspicuously *tended* environment, but also to inspire residents to participate actively in shaping it. While the beautification campaigns had always sought a broad-based participation in similar activities, the ville fleurie program was unique in its inspirational, as opposed to moral or rhetorical character. Citizens were encouraged to participate not through exhortations about what they should (or should not) do, but through the provision of positive experiences (intended to give residents a ‘taste’ for gardening), and the evocation of positive emotions in relation to gardens. The hosting of an international horticultural exhibition was, among other things, an opportunity to make all kinds of positive assertions about flowers and gardening, and to associate them with increasingly popular environmental values. Never in all the newspaper coverage around the beautification campaigns, had there been such prolific and emotional discourse around the value of flowers and gardens in themselves.⁶⁵

1981 and 1982, gives an indication of how important the association between the two was. For example, in one 1982 article, it is asserted that, “La tenue des Floralies internationales à Montréal a sans doute été un moment marquant dans cette prise de conscience chez les citoyens. Du côté de l’administration municipale, on a également cru important que cet événement ne soit pas confiné aux deux sites d’exposition, mais qu’il s’étende à tous les quartiers de Montréal.” “Embellir Montréal: Un objectif auquel la ville veut s’associer les citoyens,” *L’Artisan*, April 12, 1983. See also, Pierre Leroux, “2 millions de fleurs pour les Montréalais: Le Métropole reconquiert ses lauriers,” *Dimanche Matin*, May 17, 1981; “Quand les gens pensent à soigner les fleurs, ils ne pensent pas au vandalisme,” *La Voix Populaire*, January 19, 1982. In 1981, organizers tried to re-create a festive atmosphere by making a social event of the distribution, calling it “la fête des fleurs” and, at some distribution centres, presenting folk music and dance performances. For example, see “Une fête champêtre le lancement de l’Opération 1,000,000 de fleurs,” *La Voix Populaire*, May 12, 1981.

⁶⁵ See Chapter Five. A good example of the kind of statements found throughout the newspaper coverage of the Floralies, comes from a city councilor, who attended a special Floralies mass asserting that, “...l’extraordinaire beauté des plantes ne pouvait que mettre de la gaîté dans nos coeurs.” Yves Lachance, “Un heureux mélange de beauté et de fraternité,” *La Voix Populaire*, May 27, 1980.

At the same time, the very hosting of the exhibition, and all that entailed in terms of the expenditure of economic and material resources, lent an importance to horticulture that it had not had before. Those Montrealers who actually visited the site would also likely have been powerfully affected: not only was the exhibition site more verdant and more colourful than any city park, and more extensive than most gardens, it was also animated by musical and theatrical performances as well as educational programming. As one article reporting on “les remarques d’émerveillement” by visitors put it, “C’est splendide, c’est enrichissant, une délice pou l’oeil ...”⁶⁶ Although I think it is overstating things to claim, as many authors do, that the Floralies created an interest in gardening among Quebecers (as opposed to heightening a pre-existing one),⁶⁷ I do think that it was productive of a new, more emotional discourse around gardening. This discourse ultimately served, along with the ville fleurie program, to concentrate a variety of positive meanings and emotions in flowers and gardens, and thereby, to invest them with a capacity for visual communication that was emotionally inflected and, I contend, *emphatic* in character.

⁶⁶ “remarks on the wonder [of the exhibition]... It’s splendid, enriching, a delight for the eye...” The quote continues, “...mais ça manqué d’information et... j’ai mal aux pieds.” Apparently, the labels for many of the plants were missing, or provided only in French. Guy Pinard, “Satisfaction face aux floralies,” *La Presse*, August 18, 1980.

⁶⁷ See for example, Gaétan Deschênes, “L’engouement pour l’horticulture,” *Quatre Temps* no. 1 (2001): 32-3; *Bilan et recommandations pour la mise en valeur des jardins*, 2007, Archives of the Société du parc Jean-Drapeau, Montreal.



Figure 15. View of the Pavilion de Quebec and the Pavilion de la France from within the Jardin du Québec, during the Floralies extérieures (1980). Photograph by Romeo Meloche. Courtesy of the Montreal Botanical Garden.

Visual and extra-visual communications of the ville fleurie program

In general, the physical interventions of the ville fleurie program can be seen to have given visible form to the discursive themes that characterized the program and the benefits of gardening more generally, and to have legitimized many of the claims made by the administration. This is most neatly demonstrated by the creation of seven new flower markets (announced in 1979 and opened in 1980). The markets were an important component of the ville fleurie program, and were frequently discussed as such in the newspaper coverage. Practically speaking, they were to provide an avenue for citizens

inspired by the Floralies to more easily purchase plants for their gardening projects.⁶⁸ As such, they were sites where the exhibition's promised economic benefits might begin to be realized (as demand for garden plants increased). At the same time, they were intended to serve as a beautification in themselves. Each site was landscaped by city architects and featured a small, brightly painted kiosk. In one site plan, we see not only a kiosk and an open area reserved for the display of plants, but also several benches, a lawn and trees—making the market into a kind of miniature park.⁶⁹ The display of plants outside ensured a colourful display of flowers for passersby, or for those stopping to take a break on one of the benches. As one reporter described them, the markets included "...de[s] kiosques attrayants qui laissent déborder le trop plein de leur délicate marchandise pour le plus grand plaisir des passants." As such, "...les flaneurs peuvent prospecter à leur guise et emporter chez eux la merveille qui leur fait de l'oeil."⁷⁰

Though they were commercial entities—being rented by the city to plant and flower vendors—this was actively downplayed by creating a visual homogeneity between the different markets, and by limiting what kinds of signs vendors could display. In particular, no advertising of any kind was permitted.⁷¹ This enabled them to serve, at

⁶⁸ As one article put it, "Les citoyens pourront plus facilement fleurir leurs balcons et leurs parterres." "Montréal doit être une ville fleurie," *La Presse*, May 22, 1980.

⁶⁹ This plan is undated, and is titled "Edifice Saint-Jacques, Marché aux fleurs" suggesting that it was located outside what is now the Marché Saint-Jacques (opened in 1982). "(Plan) Edifice Saint-Jacques, Marché aux fleurs," Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #2, Dossier # 14, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal , Montreal.

⁷⁰ "...attractive kiosks overflowing their delicate merchandise to the delight of passersby." As such, "the 'flaneurs' can explore at their leisure and take home the wonders that pique their fancy." "Les marchés aux fleurs: ils embellissent la ville et sont à la porté de tous," *La Presse*, June 3, 1980.

⁷¹ This fact was reported in numerous articles announcing the administration's intentions. For example, see "Huit marchés à fleurs en tout à Montréal," *Progrès de Villeray*, August 28, 1979; "Montréal met l'accent sur la qualité de la vie," *La Presse*, August 11, 1979.

least in 1980, as symbolic satellites of the exhibition, reminding residents that the whole city was in the process of coming into bloom. In conjunction with the million fleurs campaign, they echoed the utopic dream of the Floralies, suggesting that, in the newly transformed Montreal, floral beauty was a bounty to be freely shared by all. As such, though their benefits from practical and beautification standpoints were detailed in newspaper coverage, I contend that the more important function of the flower markets was promotional and inspirational. Not only did they provide a concrete and enduring sign of the city's commitment to a progressive flowering of urban environments, they also embodied a sense of festivity and provided a venue for a pleasurable form of participation in the larger economic revitalization of which that flowering was meant to be a part.

Such extra-visual communications were an important aspect of the ville fleurie program, though they are more difficult to bring to light from the textual evidence. While all the horticultural interventions undertaken by the administration contributed to the program in this way—most importantly because they incorporated *living* materials, which are very convincing with respect to claims about environmental change—Opération un million de fleurs likely had a particularly strong impact. Composed of a limited variety of flowers, and required to be visible from the street, the new gardens to which it gave rise marked the fact of the administration's intervention by virtue of being recognizable as such. But they also did something else, which I think was predominantly emotional in character. Though it is hard, over thirty years later, to say precisely what that was, I do think that the prominence of petunias is an important clue.

The petunia is the flower that perfectly embodies the idea that all that is needed to brighten one's day, is a little colour—“...une réserve de soleil pour les jours gris.”⁷² Bright, long-lasting colour is the main quality it has to offer. Being, in addition, easy to grow and readily available, it is the quintessential flower of the everyday; the sign of a good ‘quality of life’, available to all.⁷³ When the gardener characterized the petunia as cheerful and unpretentious, she was not being entirely anthropomorphic. It comes to us relatively unburdened, with a cultural significance so recently acquired it is hard to see. It has little to say, but says it loudly. In fact, perhaps we could say that it says only what it does: in this case, drawing attention to the gesture of brightening and warming.

The distribution of over 500,000 free petunias (along with other brightly coloured annual flowers), constituted one particularly powerful tactic within a larger programmatic use of gardens—one which is predominantly *emphatic* in its effects. This is in contrast to what Trevor Boddy has called an “emblematic” function of architectural elements such as jersey barriers, which, during times of heightened security, act as “visual symbols anchoring deep emotions, like flags in wartime.”⁷⁴ Rather than ‘anchoring’ emotion,

⁷² “...a reserve of sunlight for grey days.” The full quote, which is taken from the short text introducing a photo essay entitled “Floralies maison” reads, “Voici des fleurs à profusion, une réserve de soleil pour les jours gris. Elles réchauffent l’été de leurs couleurs vibrantes et leurs parfums embaument l’air. La campagne est toute proche, au bord de la fenêtre, accrochée au balcon, réfugiée dans les pots, des boîtes, des jardinières.” “Floralies maison,” *Perspectives*, May 10, 1980.

⁷³ Thus one of the photographs from the above essay features overflowing baskets of petunias, hanging from a balcony that also anchors a clothesline. The caption reads, “Une corde à linge parmi les fleurs, un peu de poésie dans la vie quotidienne.” Ibid.

⁷⁴ Trevor Boddy, “Architecture emblematic: Hardened sites and softened symbols,” in *Indefensible space: The architecture of the national insecurity state* (New York, Routledge, 2008) 278. A jersey barrier is a modular, reinforced concrete barrier designed for use during highway construction to direct traffic and prevent collisions, but which has also more recently been used in response to acts of terrorism. For example, following the attacks of September 11, 2001, barriers were placed in front of the approach to buildings considered potential targets in New York and Washington DC. As Boddy points out, given that the only form of terrorism this prevented was that involving vehicles with car bombs, their use at that time must be understood as a largely symbolic gesture—and one which can be seen to have heightened rather than

petunias can be seen as a means of amplifying it. As flowers without much of a history, they take on new associations easily. At the same time, their perpetual brightness, and their ubiquity serve to translate the social and cultural significances inscribed in the fact of their planting into a content that can be *felt*.⁷⁵

As I stated above, the ville fleurie program was not a question simply of making city spaces more beautiful, but also of making them speak about the significance of that beauty (with respect to urban revitalization). An emphatic architecture of landscape was precisely what the Drapeau administration required: that is, it was a way of changing the urban environment that was *sensible* as such. In conjunction with a comprehensive, coordinated and emotionally inflected discourse about the Floralies, the ville fleurie program, and the cultural significance of flowers and gardens more generally, it gave form to a new *sociability* of gardens—one in which a heightened vegetative sensibility made the transactions of everyday life (walking down the street, shopping, hanging laundry) more pleasurable, at least for gardeners.

The emphatic landscape of the million fleurs campaign may have produced some reverberations that gained a life of their own in the years since the campaigns were concluded. While the ville fleurie program ultimately failed to adequately bolster Drapeau's declining popularity (leading to his decision not to run in the 1986 election), and plans for the floral park—which was to be the central legacy of the Floralies—had to be scaled back as early as 1981, a distinctive enthusiasm for civic-minded gardening has

appeased fears of an attack.

⁷⁵ And this, I think, also puts my use of ‘emphatic’ in contrast to that of van Wyck, who identifies an “emphatic geography” that, rather than making a given meaning easier to read (or register), both promises and thwarts an immediate understanding. Peter van Wyck, “An emphatic geography: Notes on the ethical itinerary of landscape,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 33, no. 2 (2008): 171-91.

survived and even re-blossomed in recent years. As evidence of the role which an emphatic landscape may have played in that evolution, it is worth considering the tree pit garden, whose enthusiastic but non-specific communications (discussed above) can be seen to echo those of the million fleurs program. As I noted in Chapter One, the tree pit garden may owe its popularity if not its invention, to the ingenuity of land-less participants in the million fleurs campaign who found a new use for free flowers by making gardens in the soil surrounding street trees. The recent re-introduction of flower and soil giveaways to Montreal residents willing to care for tree pit gardens can, in this light, be seen as a sort of extra-programmatic return, in which some of the forces and relations mobilized by the original program re-assert themselves within a modified configuration. In fact, this history may go some distance toward explaining why such gardens have a prominent role in modern-day beautification initiatives despite the fact that, as the gardener points out, they are often less than beautiful.

I return now to the canal-garden and a discussion of the Trilogie tour and consider the possibility that the tour and the garden together may constitute a similarly programmatic interpretation of landscape more generally.

Trilogie and the programming of the canal-garden

In the 1993 *Plan directeur* for the (then) parc des Îles, one of the five main principles guiding the park's development was to "...aménager et gérer le site grâce à une approche environnementale."⁷⁶ Included in this was a commitment to offer interpretative activities

⁷⁶ "...develop and manage the site through an environmental approach."

that would make of the park an educational model of sustainable development.⁷⁷ Within this context, a special emphasis was put on those issues pertaining to water. Thus, it was stated, “On réalisera des projets de démonstration, d’interprétation et d’éducation touchant l’eau comme ressource globale, et le fleuve.”⁷⁸ The Trilogie tour, whose objective was to “...développer, valoriser et intégrer trois milieux humides en milieu urbain comme exemple de développement durable,” can be seen to contribute to this aspect of the park’s mandate.⁷⁹ The canals were not actually included as one of the “trois milieux humides” and as such were not the subject of physical improvements. However, they were seen to have considerable educational potential and so, in addition to a large sign and small flowerbed signaling their inclusion on the tour, two interpretative panels (discussed above) were installed at one of the entrances to the path that runs along the canals on the west side of the floral park.

As the final report for the project makes clear, the design, fabrication and placement of the signs marking each of the tour stops—which were given a distinctive shape and colouring, and featured a tour logo—were an important component of the project overall.⁸⁰ Over seven feet tall, the signs are each situated in the midst of a specially

⁷⁷ The plan directeur’s interpretation of ‘sustainable development’ was as follows, “Une approche en matière de développement durable suppose que chacun se soucie de choisir, de promouvoir et de modifier les modes de production et les interventions qu’il pose sur l’environnement, en vue de réconcilier environnement et économie. Ceci afin de pouvoir assurer les besoins des générations actuelles sans compromettre l’avenir des générations futures.” As an island park that was also host to a variety of cultural and sporting events, the park was seen to be particularly well-suited to “...l’application du concept de développement durable, à la fois pour ce qui est de la stratégie de gestion des ressources et de sensibilisation du public à la nature et au fonctionnement d’un écosystème.” *Plan directeur*, 42.

⁷⁸ “We will conduct demonstration projects, as well as interpretation and education projects, related to water as a global resource, and the river.”

⁷⁹ “... develop, enhance, and integrate three wetlands in urban areas as an example of sustainable development.” *Trilogie*, 6.

⁸⁰ Their importance is conveyed mainly through the care taken in the report to present all the

landscaped plot that includes either a flowerbed or a container garden, and sometimes benches. They are the primary means through which the different sites can be identified as being part of a tour, but they also enable the landscapes they demarcate to operate in a programmatic manner (though somewhat differently than in the sense discussed above).

Given that, as a tour, *Trilogie* is somewhat limited (with only four main stops, one of which is only tangentially connected to the rest), its composition as a tour (rather than a collection of stand-alone interpretative displays), helps to portray the different interventions as instances in a coherent program.⁸¹ In particular, visitors are invited to view different features of the landscape (such as the canals) in terms, not only of their highlighted ecological values, but also as evidence of the commitment of the park's administration to environmental management and education. This can in turn be seen to contribute to an environmentally-friendly "image" which the *Plan directeur* identified as a central objective. Interpretative activities were supposed, not only to educate but "…d'associer l'image des Îles au concept de développement durable."⁸²

As a park with significant ecological and landscape values that is also the site of a large variety of installations, and host to major sporting and cultural events, it has long been seen to lack a coherent identity or sense of unity among different spaces. Indeed, the formation in 1995 of the Société du parc des Îles (now the SPJD), was intended in large

elements of their design (e.g., shape, colour, logo and text), as well as detailed plans for their placement (different for each stop on the tour). *Ibid*, Annexe 1.

⁸¹ As the final report acknowledges, "Le concept de *Trilogie* englobe la tourbière, bien que celle-ci ne possède pas de système d'épuration spécifique, elle constitue également un milieu humide très particulier puisqu'il s'agit d'un écosystème nordique importé intégralement de la Baie James et qui a évolué dans un environnement totalement différent. Sa présence suscite un intérêt certain que les initiateurs du projet *Trilogie* ont voulu exploiter." *Trilogie*, 1.

⁸² "...to associate the image of the Islands [the Parc des Îles] with the concept of sustainable development." *Plan directeur*, 23.

part to ensure an integrated management of the park as a whole. As a recent report intended to bring the *Plan directeur* ‘up to date’ puts it, “La Société a été mise en place par l’administration municipale en 1995 dans la foulée de l’adoption du Plan directeur, afin de répondre à l’un des objectifs stratégiques, soit le développement d’une image intégrée des îles et d’une gestion cohérente de sa mise en valeur.”⁸³ However, as the same report acknowledges, “...le site apparaît toujours comme un lieu multiforme sans véritable ossature.”⁸⁴ Much of what the *Plan directeur* sought to do was to identify those qualities and potentials of the park that could give it a coherent and recognizable vocation. Management of the park—in all its varied activities—according to principles of sustainable development was seen to be particularly promising in this regard.⁸⁵

The disposition of the landscape was also considered important to more firmly establishing the park’s identity, and to creating a sense of unity within the site. What the *Plan directeur* proposed was the containment of well-delimited “pôles d’activité”⁸⁶ within a “...grand espace vert et bleu à la fois naturel, animé et de qualité exceptionnelle sur l’ensemble des deux îles.”⁸⁷ More specifically, a rustic landscape, “...généreusement

⁸³ "The Society was set up by the municipal government in 1995 in the wake of the adoption of the master plan, in order to meet one of the strategic objectives, that of developing an integrated image of the islands, and a coherent management of its development and value." *Actualisation du plan directeur de mise en valeur et de développement du parc Jean-Drapeau: Recommandations de la Société du parc Jean-Drapeau*, 2007, 13110, S1, N170, Archives of the Société du parc Jean-Drapeau, Montreal2.4.

⁸⁴ "The site continues to appear as a multifaceted place with no real frame." Ibid, 4.2.

⁸⁵ "L’innovation de cette approche consolidera l’image des Îles en tant que modèle d’application du développement durable..." *Plan directeur*, 42.

⁸⁶ ...“areas of activity.”

⁸⁷ "...large green and blue spaces, at once natural and lively, and of exceptional quality across the two islands."

planté d’arbres, arbustes, de plantes aquatiques et de fleurs,”⁸⁸ was envisioned. Plants were seen to have a significant role to play in realizing the park’s potential, both ecologically and in terms of its image: “Même s’il s’agit d’un parc urbain au coeur de la ville, le choix des végétaux et des matériaux de même que leur agencement créeront un aspect champêtre, mettront en valeur les vues et les paysages et assureront la multiplication des habitats fauniques.”⁸⁹ Not only were trees and shrubs expected to contribute to the site’s spatial organization, and augment biomass and biodiversity, they would reinforce its “caractère naturel.”⁹⁰

In the context of the *Plan directeur*, where water was identified as a potential “élément intégrateur” and “image promotionnelle”⁹¹ for the park, the repair and re-planting of the canal banks can be seen as responding not only to the park’s mandate for environmental management and education, but also to the imperative of consolidating its identity.⁹² It enhanced both the beauty and rusticity of the landscape, and the park’s identity as a model of sustainable development pertaining to water.⁹³ In this sense, the canal-garden represents a landscape that is, both explicitly (via its inclusion in the tour) and implicitly (in its contribution to the larger landscape) promotional. At the same time,

⁸⁸ “...generously planted with trees, shrubs, aquatic plants and flowers”

⁸⁹ “Even though this is an urban park in the heart of the city, the choice of plants and materials, as well as their arrangement, will create a rustic look, all the while highlighting the views and scenery and ensuring the multiplication of wildlife habitats.”

⁹⁰ Ibid, 44-5.

⁹¹ ...“integrative element” and “promotional image.”

⁹² Ibid, 21.

⁹³ This is not to disregard the educational potential of the Trilogie project or the site as a whole, but rather to emphasize the contribution that efforts to educate may also make towards promotion of the park in a more general sense. Educational and promotional imperatives are not in any way contradictory in this context, since the vision for the park was that it become *known* as a model or demonstration site for innovative management practices.

similar to the gardens and interventions of the ville fleurie program, its promotional qualities are complimented by a strategy for inspiring visitors, though this is approached quite differently than it was in 1980.

The *Plan directeur* defines sustainable development in a manner which presumes that social and cultural change are necessary to environmental amelioration, but that such change is generated through the actions of individuals. That is, “...chacun se soucie de choisir, de promouvoir et de modifier les modes de production et les interventions qu'il pose sur l'environnement, en vue de réconcilier environnement et économie...”⁹⁴

Therefore, taking an approach to development based on the concept of sustainability “...sous-entend un effort de sensibilisation vers un action commune et concertée...”⁹⁵ As a model of sustainable development, the park would not only educate, but serve as “une source d'inspiration pour l'île de Montréal.”⁹⁶ While, the ville fleurie program inspired Montrealers to take up gardening in large part by associating gardens with positive emotions and the festive spirit surrounding the Floralis, the park's *Plan directeur* suggests a more rational form of inspiration that is nonetheless similarly concerned with influencing action. That is, in demonstrating how ecologically beneficial forms of waterway and

⁹⁴ "...everyone takes care in choosing, promoting, and modifying their modes of production, as well as assessing the interventions they pose on the environment, with a view to reconciling environment and economy..."

⁹⁵ "...implies an effort to raise awareness toward communal and concerted action." Ibid, 42, See note 77 for full definition.

⁹⁶ "...a source of inspiration for the island of Montreal" Ibid, 23; and see also 42. I am not sure exactly what is intended by the 'island of Montreal'—whether this refers to the people of Montreal, the municipal administration, or to the actual land to be developed. This ambiguity perhaps points to a fundamental tension within such conceptions of environmental education: that is, without entering into explicitly political discussions about those actors who actually have the power to protect wetlands and access to clean water (i.e., corporations and governments), interpretative activities are limited to 'raising awareness' or advocating changes in behavior that are, at best, effective in a cumulative sense. As the plan itself puts it, it is an approach "...dont les résultats ne seront pas perceptibles qu'après un certain nombre d'années." Ibid, 42.

wetland management work (and look), people are, in theory, encouraged to undertake similar projects themselves, or at least to support their undertaking by others.

All this said, as the gardener's reflections demonstrate, the canal-garden also produced effects that seemed to exceed those of a programmatic use of gardens. These were more open-ended and even troubling, generating unexpected emotions as well as a sense of instability and uncertainty that she was at pains to explain or fully describe. In attempting to determine what parts of the gardener's experience have the potential to illuminate a fuller sense of the garden's functioning, both she and I have struggled to make sense out of observations and reflections that, over and over again, seemed to use many words to say very little. For the first time in this research, which has relied so heavily on writing to generate both questions and answers, writing failed to excavate a sense of what exactly had happened during the gardener's visit. At first I thought we weren't *thinking* clearly about it, and so not writing clearly either. But the more I asked the gardener to dig, the more she found new ways of saying the same thing, which was, basically, that she didn't know what to say. It was as if the event she was there to experience, didn't quite happen. Finally I had to admit that we were dealing less with an event (in the discrete sense), and more with a state of eventfulness—which certainly does pose a problem for writing, because what is interesting about the situation is precisely what can't be known about it. And it is hard to make writing about what you don't know yield insight.

In the face of such a problem, I have tried to find a way of seeing the garden as more than simply overgrown, or a failed attempt at ecological management. This is important because, to view it strictly in terms of neglect or failure is to grant primacy to the intentions of its makers. In contrast, taking the garden's overgrowing, its various

tensions and contradictions, and in particular, the difficulties it poses to writing, as part of its functioning, promises to widen our view of what gardens can do. In addition, I wanted a way of connecting this problematic garden to the historical events and circumstances that preceded its renovation so that it might also illuminate that history. Thus while the canal-garden appears in many ways the *shadow* of a programmatic use of gardens—a demonstration not so much of sustainable development, but rather, the limits to the application of that model in a municipal setting—I wanted a different way of understanding the relationship, one that would complicate the functioning of gardens in both eras. Identifying a given use of gardens is, after all, meant to account for more than the political ambitions and communicative strategies of the human actors involved in their creation and promotion.

I began by attempting to specify as much as possible the character and quality of the uncertainty that informed the gardener's perspective, and what it implied about the programmatic deployment of gardens in general. In her descriptions and reflections, she seemed to be particularly preoccupied with feelings of disorientation and the sense that she 'didn't belong' in the canal-garden. But what is implied by these feelings? I think that one thing the gardener's experience does is reveal the (otherwise) socially affirmative character of public gardens. In Chapter Three, I attempted to demonstrate how gardens encourage certain ways of moving, looking and being, and how they direct attention to particular qualities and effects of plants and landscape. What the gardener's discomfort in the canal-garden suggests, is that these relatively special ways of moving, seeing and being in gardens, nonetheless contribute to a more general sense of orientation in the world—one which is historically specific, but which we take to be universal and don't normally perceive as such. This orientation depends on a larger configuration of practices and

relations in which gardens can be seen to take an active part. When the relations within a garden—among plants, as well as between plants and people—are upset, it can be profoundly disturbing, but this disruption also opens a view on the configuration within which the garden is situated. Thus, the disruption created by the canal-garden's programmatic excess, points to a more broadly social function of gardens: for example, if the ville fleurie program changed the role and perceived significance of gardens in the city, it also positioned city residents in a new relation to both the urban environment and the administration.

Perhaps even more importantly, in a relatively disordered state (or rather, in the process of re-ordering), a garden registers other relational possibilities which can't, at the time, be specified through linguistic or symbolic or even practical means. In the case of the canal-garden, this is a result not only of its excesses (its overgrowing, its production of algae) but something immanent to the configuration of relations that animate it as a whole, which includes the ways in which it is framed and inscribed by larger projects of identification and articulation (primarily through Trilogie), as well as the processes of growth and decay that complicate the effects of those projects. There is a *futurity* of the canal-garden that is, nonetheless, tied to a history of its functioning within the floral park as well as that of other horticultural interventions, such as the Floralies and Opération un million de fleurs. I turn now to consideration of a particular theme operating across these histories which I hope will help to further draw out the relationship between them: that is, the tendency of those involved to overreach in various ways, and the instability this can be seen to have introduced into the past and present functioning of gardens and horticultural beautification initiatives alike.

Overreaching and underfunding

The 2000 renovations of the canal banks sought to create a lush, vegetatively dense landscape that would require little maintenance. As the gardener pointed out, to the extent that the landscape was also supposed to remain navigable by visitors, that was entirely unrealistic. As such, for her the canal-garden represents an impossible dream, which is perhaps part of what makes it so beautiful. There is a sense of tenuousness that pervades it, a sense in which its beauty is threatened by the very conditions that sustain it. This can be seen in part as a legacy of the circumstances and politics that made the floral park possible in the first place, and in particular, of promises that were either impossible to fulfill completely, or which generated disappointment alongside their satisfaction. Both the Floralies and the larger ville fleurie program (but especially the million fleurs campaign) involved a certain amount of overreaching—in logistical, organizational and communicative terms. Both were organized on drastically shortened timelines and relatively small budgets, and this seems to have generated a variety of logistical and communication problems. Some of those connected with the Floralies were discussed in Chapter Five.⁹⁷

There were also many complaints regarding the execution of the million fleurs campaign. Most significantly, it was plagued—somewhat ironically, given its status as a ‘campagne publicitaire’—by problems arising from a lack of information, particularly

⁹⁷ The somewhat mixed evaluations of economic benefits associated with the Floralies internationales, as well as the struggle with ground hogs and excessive weeds are discussed above. People also complained about inadequate signage (especially in English), poor communication of rules and regulations and problems with parking. For example, see Louise Blanchard, "Un touriste qui n'a pas de fleurs à lancer aux Floralies," *Journal de Montréal*, July 18, 1980; Guy Pinard, "Satisfaction face aux floralies," *La Presse*, August 18, 1980. Vendors also complained early in the exhibition of poor business due to inadequate signage or promotion. For example, see Paul Pouliot, "Des exposants commerciaux du Pavillon de la Flore sont au bord de la faillite," *La Presse*, July 8, 1980.

with respect to the registration and distribution process. It also took 50% longer than anticipated to be completed, which, on Bourque's admission, led to the neglect of maintenance in parks and work associated with other initiatives (specifically, the beautification of commercial arteries).⁹⁸ After the fact, Pierre Bourque defended the initiative in the form of a letter to the editor responding to a letter written by a volunteer who claimed that some residents had not received the soil and flowers they requested. Characterizing the campaign as "...la plus spectaculaire et la plus risquée aussi" among the ville fleurire initiatives, he wrote, "Tous les citoyens n'ont pu évidemment être desservis en même temps; de plus, *nous ne promettions pas le paradis* mais un geste d'appréciation pour l'effort fourni..."⁹⁹ However, his defense in these terms suggests that this was in fact exactly what he and others had done.¹⁰⁰ The word 'paradise' may not have been used, but repeated evocations of the 'ville fleurie', and the promotion of the Floralies in terms both sentimental and grandiose, painted a utopic vision of the city transformed by gardens and green spaces. Even within the text of his letter, Bourque characterizes the initiative as 'risky' and 'spectacular', suggesting a level of impact he then denies.

⁹⁸ Pierre Bourque, "Memo to Richard Vanier, re: Opération '1 million de fleurs,'" July 21, 1980, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #9, Montréal, ville fleurie: janvier 1980 à février 1981, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal. See also, André Beauvais, "Les millions de fleurs à Montréal: Les citoyens débordent d'enthousiasme," *Journal de Montréal*, May 15, 1980; "Une petite fleur m'a dit;" *Progrès de Villeray*, July 8, 1980.

⁹⁹ "...the most spectacular and also the most risky... Not all citizens could be served at the same time of course; also, we promised not paradise but rather a gesture of appreciation for the effort ..."Pierre Bourque, "La ville de Montréal a distribué 1,200,000 fleurs dans 30,000 foyers," letter to the editor, *La Presse*, August 4, 1980; emphasis added.

¹⁰⁰ It is also suggested in the headline given to the letter in question: "Illusoire terre promise." "Illusoire terre promise," letter to the editor, *La Presse*, July 17, 1980.

More significant than the specific problems—many of which were perhaps to be expected given the scale of the undertakings—was the bitternesss with which disappointed visitors and residents complained. While the exhibition and the million fleurs campaign were both widely celebrated as triumphs of municipal programming (by politicians and journalists alike), some residents seem to have had their hopes raised too high. They had come to believe in the dream of the ‘ville fleurie’ and when their efforts to participate were frustrated, they felt betrayed.¹⁰¹ This was especially apparent in letters to the editor from disgruntled visitors to the Floralies. While some people described the exhibition site as a kind of paradise, others seemed quite bitterly disappointed when it turned out to have much in common with other city spaces.¹⁰²

The difficulty of making the exhibition site and initiatives of the ville fleurie program live up to expectations was small however, in comparison with those associated with turning it into a permanent floral park—an explicit promise made several times by

¹⁰¹ For example, taxi drivers whose participation in the million fleurs campaign had been solicited by a municipal councilor but then refused (because the car they wanted to turn into a giant window box required too much soil), staged a protest outside city hall. A photograph in *La Presse* shows the side of the car emblazoned with the words “Bienvenue aux Floralies internationales de Montréal 1980,” while a large sign on top reads, “Certains conseillers tiennent pas leurs promesses.” “Pas assez de terre pour ce bac à fleurs,” *La Presse*, July 18, 1980. That said, the campaign was widely reported as a success when it was mounted again in 1981 and in 1982, when 2,400,000 and 3,000,000 flowers (respectively), were distributed. For example, see Pierre Leroux, “2 millions de fleurs pour les Montréalais: Le Métropole reconquiert ses lauriers,” *Dimanche Matin*, May 17, 1981; “Quand les gens pensent à soigner les fleurs, ils ne pensent pas au vandalisme,” *La Voix Populaire*, January 19, 1982.

¹⁰² For example, while in one letter to the editor, the exhibition was characterized as “un avant-goût de paradis.” (Robert Bélineau, “Les Floralies, un avant-goût du paradis?” letter to the editor, June 7, 1980), in others, visitors complained that noise pollution, litter, crowds of school children and logistical difficulties had ruined their experience. As one visitor wrote, “After listening to and reading about this wonderful display... I conjured up a utopia in my mind of beautiful flowers, well-kept gardens, friendly guides and all the trimmings that accompany an effort of this magnitude...” But her “dream visit turned into a nightmare” upon encountering litter, weeds, expensive parking and poorly communicated entrance and exit policies. Elizabeth Doucette, “Les Floralies was disappointing and messy,” letter to the editor, *The Gazette*, July 29, 1980. Also see,Alice Lachance, “Je suis dégoûtée de cette profanation,” letter to the editor, *Journal de Montréal*, June 26, 1980; Slyvie Dubois, “C'est beau les Floralies mais...,” letter to the editor, *La Presse*, July 17, 1980.

Drapeau in the lead-up to the Floralisies. Despite the fact that part of the rationale for locating the exhibition on Île Notre-Dame was for the sake of finding a new vocation for the island (which had been mostly closed to the public since 1972), plans for its development changed course several times in the years following the Floralisies. While the exhibition was mounted a second time in 1981, it seems that it was not feasible to maintain it as an exhibition indefinitely (as Drapeau had promised). Beginning in 1982, the admission fee was dropped, and (it seems) maintenance of the gardens was scaled back in order to reduce costs. As an article by a gardening columnist at the Gazette explained, “This year the organizing body, AMARC, realized that Terre des Hommes* had to stop losing money, and some difficult decisions had to be made. It was decided that the islands would be a place where people could walk or ride around, picnic and be entertained with a variety of live shows... But the most alive shows of all, the gardens, seem to have been neglected in the haste to attract people.¹⁰³ Robertson criticized the

¹⁰³ Robertson identifies the Association Montréalaise d'action récréative et culturelle (AMARC) as the organization responsible for the floral park, but I think this is a misconception and that AMARC was at the time primarily responsible for Île Ste-Hélène (though it is true that the fortunes of the two islands—referred to collectively as Terre des Hommes—did at the time seem to be tied together). However, the question of who was responsible for the gardens during this time and after, is surprisingly difficult to answer. Between the Floralisies, and the creation of the Société du parc des Îles in 1995 (now the SPJD), responsibility for different activities on île Notre-Dame was shared between several paramunicipal bodies (including AMARC and others, such as la Société de gestion des activités communautaires de l’île Notre-Dame), but the care of the floral park was originally carried out by employees of the Botanical Garden—up until at least 1987, according to documents from the fonds Pierre Bourque. See Émile Jacqmain, "Letter to Guy Gautier," August 20, 1986, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #4, Terre des Hommes-- Île Notre-Dame: août 1986, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal. Jacqmain was superintendent of the "Production et Recherche" division of the Module Parcs-Jardin botanique (Travaux Publics), and in this letter he requests more budgetary credits for maintenance of the floral park in 1987. It is unclear however, for how long after this the Botanical Garden remained responsible for the gardens. As an institution that has come under the care of several different municipal departments over the years (three between 1980 and 1995), its administrative records have not been preserved in a unified fashion, making both location and comparison of documents monumentally difficult. At the same time, none of the paramunicipal bodies associated with the island (other than the SPJD) have substantial archival records, and the SPJD claims to have nothing pertaining to Île Notre-Dame before 1995 (though this claim cannot unfortunately be taken entirely at face value, for reasons discussed below). Even after reading the history of the islands' administration as provided in the *Actualisation du plan directeur de mise en valeur et de développement du Parc Jean-Drapeau* discussed below, and talking with a former manager of horticultural staff for the floral park, it is not

decision to build a railroad traversing the floral park, and the presentation of live music (“live jazz bands driving around in open cars”), which he judged to be at the expense of basic maintenance in the gardens. Detailing neglect he observed across the floral park, he wrote, “I am shocked at the condition of some of the gardens, and mystified by the apparent lack of care and attention,” and “[e]ven a minor amount of maintenance would have avoided what one person called the ‘Man and his Weeds’ appearance.” Robertson followed the evolution of the gardens, writing about them again in 1983 and 1985, when he had more positive remarks, though his assessment overall was still mixed, giving certain gardens high praise while noting that others remained neglected.¹⁰⁴

The installations left over from Expo 67 on Île Ste-Hélène also declined substantially during this period as the annual exhibition (*Terre des Hommes*) generated an increasing deficit.¹⁰⁵ In 1985, the city signed an agreement with the province to build a museum of science and technology on Île Ste-Hélène, and to turn Île Notre-Dame into a “parc agro-alimentaire”¹⁰⁶ that would include, in addition to the Jardins des Floralies, a demonstration farm, a public market, and a large exhibition space for agricultural events.¹⁰⁷ However, when the Parti Quebecois was defeated in 1986, this agreement was cancelled, and more modest (though still relatively extensive) renovations were

possible to say conclusively how its care was administered between 1987 and 1995.

¹⁰⁴ See "Hurry on down and enjoy Floral Park--on Montreal's own 'fantasy island,'" *Montreal Gazette*, July 28, 1983; Stuart Robertson, "Make a visit to Ile Notre Dame's Floralies while roses are in bloom," *Montreal Gazette*, July 11, 1985.

¹⁰⁵ Mark London, "D'Expo 67 au parc des Îles," July, 1992, DOCS1, 80387, Direction des grands parcs et du verdissement, Montreal.

¹⁰⁶ ...“an agrifood/agrobusiness park.”

¹⁰⁷ Jean Garon, "Mémoire au conseil des ministres: La 'Centre de la Nature de l'île Notre-Dame'," March, 1984, DOCS1, Direction des grands parcs et du verdissement, Montreal.

undertaken. On Île Notre-Dame this included the demolition of certain pavilions, repairs to infrastructure, construction of new recreational amenities (such as boat rentals, picnic shelters, restrooms, etc.), improved access to the island (including bike paths), and alterations to the landscape which sought to “simplify” it and make it conducive to a variety of recreational activities while preserving the Jardins des Floralies.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, given the prominence of environmental and aesthetic values, and the identification of the park as ‘un lieu de détente’ in the 1993 *Plan directeur*, this vision for the island heavily favoured increasing opportunities for active recreation (such as sailing, swimming, fishing, boating and so on), and especially those activities that were potentially self-financing.

The 1986 renovations notwithstanding, “À la fin des années 1980, les Îles se présentaient tel un casse-tête dont les éléments, disparates n’entretenaient aucune relation entre eux...”¹⁰⁹ Thus, beginning in 1988, the new administration (of Jean Doré) undertook an extensive consultation process to determine a common vision for future development, which eventually culminated in the *Plan directeur* discussed above. Several major projects were also undertaken during the period of consultation, including the creation of a public beach on the southeastern end of Île Notre-Dame, the transformation

¹⁰⁸ The rationale for these activities is described in a planning document that also includes details for developments not executed at the time—for example, those pertaining to the creation of a beach on the Lac des Regattes, which was undertaken three years later. "Plan directeur de l'île Notre-Dame (version one)," June, 1986, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #4, Terre des Hommes--Île Notre-Dame: juin 1986, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal. Interestingly however, an earlier version of the "Plan directeur de l'île Notre-Dame" failed to mention the gardens in its description of that sector of the park, making it sound as if they would be turned into a large, open picnic area. Cf. "Plan directeur de l'île Notre-Dame (version one)," June, 1986, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #4, Terre des Hommes--Île Notre-Dame: juin 1986, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal; and "Plan directeur de l'île Notre-Dame (version two)," June 20, 1986, Fonds Pierre Bourque, Box #4, Terre des Hommes--Île Notre-Dame: juin 1986, Archives du Jardin botanique de Montréal, Montreal.

¹⁰⁹ "In the late 1980s, the islands presented themselves as a puzzle, whose disparate elements showed no relations between the pieces ... "Mark London, "D'Expo 67 au parc des Îles," July, 1992, DOCS1, 80387, Direction des grands parcs et du verdissement, Montreal.

of the old France pavilion into a casino, redevelopment of the southwestern end of Île Ste-Hélène, and restoration of the Biosphère (which had been partially destroyed by a fire in 1976).¹¹⁰ Many more projects were specified in the *Plan directeur*, but relatively few of these have been implemented to date. According to the SPJD, this is largely due to the fact that the city has failed to provide funding that would make further development possible.¹¹¹ Worse, they claim that funding for the park is currently inadequate to maintain its amenities in safe, working condition.¹¹² It has however been difficult for me to gain further information about this state of affairs, or the extent to which it has influenced decisions about maintenance in the floral park (more on this below).

That said, from a report prepared by the Conseil régional de l'environnement de Montréal (CREM)¹¹³ in 2004, it is clear that the deterioration and unevenness of care that the gardener observed in the floral park, is consistent with conditions elsewhere. As that report observes,

...il apparaît que plusieurs secteurs et aspects ont été négligés depuis [l'adoption de Plan directeur] en 1993. Ce qui frappe quand on fait le tour des îles c'est à la fois la beauté exceptionnelle de certains lieux et de points de vue, ainsi que le potentiel de développement de projets à caractère écologique et éducatif, et en

¹¹⁰ *Plan directeur*, 74.

¹¹¹ According to the *Actualisation du plan directeur de mise en valeur et de développement du Parc Jean-Drapeau*, since the first phase of implementation (1989-1994), and aside from the restoration of the aquatic complex on Île Ste-Hélène, "...aucun nouvel investissement public substantial n'ayant été consenti au parc..." *Actualisation*.

¹¹² The 2010 budget warns: "Compte tenu de l'étendue de son mandat et de ses ressources limitées, la Société ne dispose pas des sommes nécessaires à l'entretien préventif requis afin de prémunir convenablement contre les risques opérationnels. Or, l'accès à certains sites, telle la Place des Nations, devra être interdit au public par mesure de sécurité." *Budget 2010*, 2009, Archives of the Société du parc Jean-Drapeau, Montreal, 7.

¹¹³ "Le Conseil régional de l'environnement de Montréal est un organisme à but non lucratif indépendant, consacré à la protection de l'environnement et à la promotion du développement durable sur l'île de Montréal." "Qui sommes-nous?" *Conseil régional de l'environnement de Montréal*, <http://www.cremlt.qc.ca/index.php?id=1> (accessed Feb. 19, 2013).

même temps la disparité flagrante de l'entretien des infrastructures et des aménagements qui se côtoient.¹¹⁴

The report details the park's geological and ecological importance, and the opportunities it provides for open-air recreation and landscape appreciation, characterizing it as “un joyau inestimable montréalais”¹¹⁵ that is nonetheless under substantial pressure from usages that compromise public access to its amenities and threaten to permanently diminish its cultural as well as environmental value. As the authors point out, events such as the Grand Prix and NASCAR races, major open-air concerts, and the day to day operations of the Casino, currently have a determining role within the park despite the fact that it is clearly stated in the *Plan directeur* that, “L'objectif prioritaire n'est pas d'attirer les gens par de nouveaux équipements ou des événements ponctuels, mais plutôt par la qualité générale du lieu et de l'environnement.”¹¹⁶ While the impact of these usages are discussed in detail, the report does not itself attempt to assess the ecological health of the park, aside from the extent to which its educational potential is currently compromised.¹¹⁷ A study that included an assessment of the state of the natural environment in Parc Jean-

¹¹⁴ "...it appears that several sectors and aspects have been neglected since [the adoption of the master plan] in 1993. What is striking when touring the islands is the clash between the exceptional beauty of some places and viewpoints, as well as the potential for developing ecological and educational projects, at the same time as the gross disparity with regard to the maintenance of the co-existing infrastructure and facilities." *Les Espaces Verts et Bleus du Parc Jean-Drapeau: Un Patrimoine Montréalais à Protéger* (Montreal, Conseil régional de l'environnement de Montréal, 2004), <http://www.cremlt.qc.ca/index.php?id=34> (Feb. 17, 2013), 23.

¹¹⁵ ..."a precious Montreal jewel."

¹¹⁶ "The primary objective is not to attract people with new equipment or specific events, but rather with the overall quality of the place and the environment." *Ibid*, 24.

¹¹⁷ Foremost among negative impacts described in the report, is the hosting of the Grand Prix (and, formerly, the Molson Indy and NASCAR races) which, in addition to producing substantial noise and air pollution, necessitate the erection of fences, barriers and stadium seating which damages vegetation and restricts access to much of Île Notre-Dame for an extended period during the spring and summer months. The Casino and the hosting of large concerts on Île Ste-Hélène, are also identified as generating substantial negative environmental impacts—perhaps the worst of which is the increased car traffic and the building of additional parking lots. *Ibid*.

Drapeau was conducted as part of the process to update the *Plan directeur*, but the *Actualisation du plan directeur* does not provide any indication of the results of that assessment, and my attempt to acquire it through an access to information request has so far been unsuccessful (despite the fact that the report itself states that all studies are available on request).¹¹⁸

The *Actualisation* does include some suggestions for renovations and changes in park operations as a response to these criticisms—and the report of the CREM is included in an appendix—but it also asserts the continuing importance of large events and amenities such as the Casino, which are interpreted as being centrally important to the park’s identity, and which provide revenues crucial to the park’s operations.¹¹⁹ At the same time, environmental concerns are addressed in somewhat different terms than in the original *Plan directeur* (which was based on a definition of ‘sustainable development’ that emphasized environmental responsibility, and which called for substantial augmentation of the existing landscape, as well as enhancement of various ecological values (such as biodiversity and habitat provision). For example, while the seventh “axe prioritaire”¹²⁰ specified in the *Actualisation* is to “[g]érer le parc conformément aux objectifs du Plan directeur révisé, approuvé par la Ville de Montréal, dans une perspective de

¹¹⁸ The study was also supposed to assess “le cadre administratif dans lequel peut s’effectuer la gestion du milieu naturel,” but these results are also not described in the summary. *Actualisation*, 5.1. As of this writing, I have been promised access to this document, for a fee. However, due to the stalled mediation process, I have not yet received it.

¹¹⁹ Several of the objectives and orientations proposed in the *Rapport*, seek to protect the interests of the park’s partners. Perhaps one of the more telling suggestions in this regard, under the heading of sustainable development (the seventh “axe prioritaire”), is to “Nommer au sein du conseil d’administration un représentant des usagers choisi parmi les organismes partenaires du parc.” *Ibid*, 6.17. Other park ‘users’ would not have such a representative.

¹²⁰ ...“priority area.”

développement durable,” the two objectives which are listed are economic and organizational in nature.¹²¹ Environmental considerations are treated under the heading of “Conserver et mettre en valeur le patrimoine naturel.”¹²² Perhaps even more telling, the park’s sustainable development policy (created in 2009) states as its first orientation (among seven): “Encourage the creation of wealth by respecting sustainable development principles.” Under this heading, the park’s role as a demonstration site is reformulated: rather than serving to inspire social and cultural change, the park aims to support the “development of environmental technologies in Quebec.”¹²³

Such developments are contextualized to a certain extent by assertions made within the *Actualisation* regarding the insufficiency of financing for the SPJD. For example, one of seven “constats” characterizing the current situation in the park in relation to the plan directeur is entitled: “Une Société aux prises avec un financement insuffisant.”¹²⁴ Not only do many projects of the *Plan directeur* remain unrealized, but the SPJD claims

¹²¹ ...“manage the park in accordance with the objectives of the revised master plan, approved by the City of Montreal, from a sustainable development perspective.” The two associated objectives are “[d]éterminer un cadre de gestion adapté afin de permettre à la Société de gérer le parc conformément aux objectives du Plan directeur révisé” and “[d]oter la Société des ressources humaines et financières appropriées pour la mise en œuvre du Plan directeur.” Ibid.

¹²² “Conserve and enhance the natural heritage.” The language in which both the objectives and “pistes de solution” are formulated is altogether too vague to assess here, aside from noting that the suggested initiatives seem concerned with conserving and protecting as opposed to augmenting or ameliorating the natural environment, and that several of them involve substantial investments in the form of major events (e.g., “un événement d’envergure à caractère environnemental”), or institutions (e.g., “université verte ou centre de recherche sur l’écologie”), that would (presumably) either generate revenue or be capable of self-financing. Ibid, 6.7-6.8.

¹²³ “Choosing for the Future: A Sustainable Development Policy,” *Website of the Société Parc Jean-Drapeau*, http://www.parcjeandrapeau.com/sustainable_development.html (accessed Jan. 30, 2013).

¹²⁴ “A Society struggling with insufficient funding.”

that the city's contribution to the park's operating budget has also declined proportional to the total cost of operations.¹²⁵

Cette situation a aussi forcé la Société à privilégier une programmation susceptible d'augmenter ses fonds autogénérés et ce, dans le but d'assurer la survie d'un minimum d'animations destinées au grand public. Néanmoins, certaines, moins rentables, comme les activités de découverte et d'interprétation et les services aux visiteurs, ont progressivement été abandonnées, faute d'un financement qui soutienne efficacement la mission de l'organisation.¹²⁶

As a result the SPJD claims to no longer have the means to fulfill its mission. In fact, according to the minutes from meetings of the SPJD's administrative council, which are preserved in the city archives, the SPJD experienced a budgetary crisis in 2006, one of the outcomes of which was the temporary suspension of activities related to the process of updating the *Plan directeur*. Though this process was supposed to have resulted in a revised plan directeur, the *Actualisation* cited appears to represent a premature end to that process.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ I have not been able to confirm this for myself, since the numbers provided in the 2010 budget as evidence of the city's decreasing contribution do not agree with those presented in past budgets, and my request to see the 2008 and 2009 budgets has not yet been fulfilled (due to the stalled mediation process). While such discrepancies could be explained by changes in accounting practices (the budgets I looked at include several such changes), no such explanation is provided in the budgets themselves, and I unfortunately lack the expertise required to assess their significance. Cf. *Budget 2002*, 2001, Archives of the Société du parc Jean-Drapeau, Montreal; *Budget 2005*, 2004, Archives of the Société du parc Jean-Drapeau, Montreal; *Budget 2010*, 2009, Archives of the Société du parc Jean-Drapeau, Montreal.

¹²⁶ "This situation has also forced the Society to privilege programming that is conducive to increasing self-financing in order to ensure the survival of a minimum number of activities available to the public. However, some less profitable ventures, such as discovery and interpretation activities or visitor services, were gradually abandoned due to a lack of funding that would have effectively supported the mission of the organization." *Actualisation*, 4.4.

¹²⁷ An introductory section at the beginning of the *Actualisation* (entitled "Mandat"), states that while the SPJD had originally been mandated to produce a plan directeur revisé (to be ratified by the city), this arrangement was amended in 2006, such that the Société would provide recommendations only, while the city would prepare the final plan. Though recent annual reports of the SPJD, as well as its Sustainable Development Policy, make reference to a "plan directeur revisé," I have been informed, through an access to information request, that this document does not exist (no further explanation was provided). Though I can't be entirely convinced of the accuracy of this 'information'—since it issues from a process for obtaining documents that has obfuscated almost as much as it has revealed—I also note that there is a reference within the *Actualisation* to a "Plan directeur révisé", which suggests that these references may have been to a

In the absence of an up-to-date plan directeur, and in response to a further decrease in funding from the city beginning in 2012, the SPJD appears of late to have abandoned everything but the pretense of being oriented by a guiding vision for the park. In its annual reports, it refers to a “Plan directeur révisé”, even though this document does not (apparently) exist as such.¹²⁸ At the same time, in the 2011 budget (before the decrease in funding), we find the following warning:

En effet, lorsque la Société réalise un mandat à caractère social dont la contribution est insuffisante et qui nécessite de surcroît que la Société assume les risques d'affaires et les frais de gestion, il y a lieu de considérer l'intérêt réel de poursuivre ce mandat. En acceptant ce mandat, la Société renonce à des revenus supplémentaires liés à l'accueil d'événements économiquement viables.¹²⁹

Later in the same budget, it is stated that, “Malgré l'optimisation des ressources et une gestion rigoureuse des dépenses, la Société du parc Jean-Drapeau doit diriger ses actions

future document which had not yet materialized. Further, a note on the website of the CREM reads: “En janvier 2009, le nouveau plan directeur n'a toujours pas été adopté et aucune consultation publique n'a été réalisée à cet égard.” "Dossiers actifs de CRE: Le parc des îles," *Website of the Conseil régional de l'environnement*, <http://www.cremlt.qc.ca/index.php?id=34> (accessed Nov. 12, 2012).

¹²⁸ Though in 2010, it refers to a “Plan directeur *de la Société* révisé” (emphasis added). A plan directeur of the société would of course be a very different thing, implying development not of the park, but of the SPJD as an organization. I have been unsure of what to make of this imprecision. Given that the references in 2011 and 2012 are once again simply to a “Plan directeur révisé”, I am tempted to see it as a (perhaps telling) inaccuracy in the preparation of the 2010 report. But the mission presented on the website also now refers to a “Plan directeur de la Société révisé.” It seems that, either 1) the SPJD has appropriated the “axes prioritaires” from the *Actualisation* for use in a new document—a plan directeur for the Société (of which I know nothing); 2) there is a conflation within the SPJD of park and organization (such that the SPJD is more concerned with the development of the organization than development of the park); or 3) documents such as the annual reports, and the annual budgets (which have presented the mission of the Société in different terms each of the years between 2010 and 2013), are entirely unconcerned with portraying the situation in a coherent manner. One way or the other, it seems that the *Actualisation* is being treated in certain contexts as a plan directeur.

¹²⁹ “Indeed, when the Society fulfills a social mandate for which the contribution is insufficient and which requires the Society to bear financial risks and management fees, it becomes necessary to consider the real interest in pursuing this mandate. By accepting this mandate, the Company waives additional revenues generated by other potentially economically viable events.” *Budget 2011* (Montreal, Société du parc Jean-Drapeau, 2010), http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/COMMISSIONS_PERM_V2_FR/MEDIA/DOCUMENTS/CAHIER_SPJD_20101208.PDF (Dec. 15, 2012). It should be noted that the SPJD prepares its budgets in the fall of the preceding year.

vers les activités commerciales, telles que l'accueil d'événements majeurs et la location de ses sites et salles.”¹³⁰ The budgets of 2012 and 2013 are even more explicit about the prioritization of profitability. For example, in the 2012 budget, it reads that, in order to balance its budget,

...la Société adopte les orientations stratégiques suivantes:

- Accroître l'offre de services commerciaux et les tarifs
- Offrir une programmation en respectant le critère de rentabilité
- Orienter ses ressources vers les activités à fort potentiel de croissance
- Offrir un site accueillant et sécuritaire.¹³¹

Fortunately for the SPJD, the decrease in operational funding from the city has coincided with a major injection of short-term funds which, under the heading “Horizon 2017”, will enable the restoration of existing installations and the development of new ones, just in time for the fiftieth anniversary of Expo 67.¹³² As the description of the project contained in the 2012 annual report underscores, this development is to be guided by the orientations identified in its recent budgets, rather than those associated with the original *Plan directeur*, or even those developed in the preparation of the *Actualisation* (which now seems to stand in as the *Plan directeur*):

¹³⁰ "Despite the optimization of resources and the careful management of expenses, the Société du parc Jean-Drapeau must direct its actions towards commercial activities such as hosting major events and the rental of its sites and facilities." Ibid, 7.

¹³¹ ...the Society adopts the following strategic directions:

- Increase commercial services and fees
- Provide programming while respecting the criterion of profitability
- Align resources to activities with high growth potential
- Provide a safe and welcoming site

Budget 2012 (Montreal, Société du Parc Jean-Drapeau, 2011), http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/COMMISSIONS_PERM_V2_FR/MEDIA/DOCUMENTS/CAHIER_PARC-JEAN-DRAPEAU_20111207.PDF (Dec. 15, 2012), 4.

¹³² So far, these funds amount to \$140 million between 2012 and 2015. *Budget 2013* (Montreal, Société du parc Jean-Drapeau, 2012) ,http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/COMMISSIONS_PERM_V2_FR/MEDIA/DOCUMENTS/CAHIER_SPJD_20121107_2.PDF (Dec. 16, 2012).

Le projet Horizon 2017 permettra, au cours des cinq prochaines années, de bonifier l’expérience du visiteur, notamment par l’amélioration des aires de services et de restauration. Il contribuera également à accroître l’autonomie financière de la Société afin de minimiser la contribution de son actionnaire, dans une contexte de gestion efficace et imputable.¹³³

It is tempting to take the claims of underfunding, as an explanation for the gardener’s observations regarding the state of the floral park. The 2007 review of the gardens acknowledges that the amount attributed to maintenance of gardens and green spaces in the park had fallen from \$1 million in 2003, to \$609,000 in 2007. The staff attributed to these activities went from thirty-six in 2003, to twenty-five in 2007.¹³⁴ It seems likely that the gardens would look different today if funding was not an issue, but it is impossible to say how exactly, in the absence of a revised Plan directeur.¹³⁵ As the report by the CREM points out, the park has, at least since Expo, been inhabited by an unresolvable tension: that of a contradiction between its history and mandate as a naturalistic public park dedicated to open recreation, and its use as a site for large, commercialized cultural and sporting events—most problematically (according to the CREM), car racing. Thus, while chronic underfunding and the associated need to increase revenue helps to contextualize the unevenness of recent investments within the

¹³³ Over the course of the next five years, the project Horizon 2017 will enhance the visitor experience through improved services and catering. It will also increase the financial autonomy of the Society in order to minimize the contribution of its shareholder [the City of Montreal], in a context of efficient and accountable management. *Parc Jean-Drapeau: Rapport annuel d’activités* (Montreal, Société du parc Jean-Drapeau, 2012) <http://www.parcjeandrapeau.com/societe-parc-jean-drapeau/> (Dec. 15, 2012), 20.

¹³⁴ *Bilan et recommandations pour la mise en valeur des jardins*, 2007, Archives of the Société du parc Jean-Drapeau, Montreal. The 2011 budget indicates that \$593,400 was allocated to “entretien horticole” in 2011. *Budget 2011*. Given the decrease in operational funding in 2012, and the SPJD’s stated commitment to cutting its costs, this number has likely decreased further since then, though the 2012 and 2013 budgets do not provide this information.

¹³⁵ At the same time, it seems likely the situation will change to some degree as Horizon 2017 is implemented, though it is unclear how the floral park will be implicated (if at all). I requested information about developments planned for the floral park through an access-to-information request in July of 2012, but was informed that plans had not been finalized at that time.

floral park, it doesn't follow that adequate financing would result in enhanced ecological values. At the same time, it is important to recognize that what the SPJD says about its actions and intentions with respect to the park cannot be mapped in a reliable or specifiable way to what has been and is happening there, particularly in the floral park.

There are two reasons for this. The first is relatively straightforward: the Société does not view the provision of information about its operations as part of its mandate. It may 'communicate' with the public in a variety of ways (that is, primarily as a means of promoting the park, its events and services), but it does not provide access to those documents which would enable even a practical understanding of its activities, except when it is obligated to by law (and even then, it does not always comply). In the case of the research for this thesis, and as alluded to above, different personnel of the SPJD obstructed my access to documents at several points in the research process.¹³⁶ While this raises rather surprising questions about what the organization may be attempting to hide, and why (which unfortunately cannot be further addressed here), more importantly, it dramatizes the complexity and instability of the relation between events and circumstances within the floral park, and statements about it (particularly those made by the park administration).

¹³⁶ Interestingly, they did so through both deployment and contravention of the law governing access to information in Quebec. For example, I was informed early on in my attempts to gain access to the archives (by a receptionist), that the Société used the access-to-information process as a means of limiting the number of requests to which it would have to respond. In other words, when faced with the considerable time and effort that the process requires, not to mention the delay that it represents to research (of at least twenty days, for each request), many will abandon their request. Later in the process, my requests were frequently refused because, having extremely limited access to information about what documents the archives contained, I was not able to provide titles or precise dates. The last two requests I made went unanswered until I submitted a request for review with the Commission d'accès à l'information du Québec, which has in effect facilitated the SPJD's obstruction of my research, since a full year must elapse before the case can have a hearing (and within which time, the organization in question is not under any particular obligation to take steps towards resolution in a timely fashion).

Second, and more importantly, to use the SPJD's statements as a means of explaining specific aspects of the floral park, would be to presume a particular model of causation—one in which the park administration, together with politicians and perhaps landscape architects, would be seen as the authors of its effects. In contrast, I contend that part of what the gardens of the floral park do, is make apparent the effective agency of relations and forces other than those identified through statements of actors such as the SPJD, but at the same time operating through them. As noted above, the gardener responded not only to the fact that the canal-garden was becoming overgrown, but to the specific qualities engendered (in part) by the discursive context in which that over-growing was taking place. As she put it, the canal-garden seemed to express a certain generosity, while at the same time being palpably on the edge of becoming a problem for the park administration. Thus, underlying, or perhaps infiltrating, the specific intersection (however tangled, and murky) of aesthetic qualities and material constraints that give the site a sense of tenuousness, are processes of a fundamentally different character than those inscribed in the original project of the renovations. This is ultimately what I mean when I say that the canal-garden is characterized by a sense of futurity.

I think what the canal-garden demonstrates, is that the programmatic use of gardens can also make certain *diagrammatic* qualities appear. In other words, the more gardens are put to explicitly social ends—or perhaps, the more they articulate practices of cultivation and consumption with specific discourses (e.g., of ‘quality of life’ or ‘sustainability’)—the more they can be seen to diagram a configuration of relations and forces implicated in their functioning.¹³⁷ This implies first, that the ‘function’ of such

¹³⁷ My use of ‘diagrammatic’ draws on Rajchman’s: “We might call ‘diagrammatic’ those images

gardens needs to be understood in broader, more concretely social terms; and second, that the specific mechanisms sustaining particular relations within those functions may, over time, generalize, migrate or mutate in an unexpected way, causing what appears as a distortion or failure of the program, but which rather reveals its true function. There is thus a way of diagramming gardens deployed programmatically, that is enabled in part by a diagrammatic *action* of gardens, which registers a process of change not otherwise perceptible or conceivable.¹³⁸

To say that ‘function’ needs to be understood more broadly is, here, another way of saying that the whole undertaking—of for example, the ville fleurie program, or the renovation of the canal banks—is animated, or moved, not only by a variety of intersecting human interests and projects, as well as non-human processes of growth and decay, but also by other, uncategorized forces operating across contexts.¹³⁹ I turn now to consideration of an event that took place at the Botanical garden in 1981, which demonstrates the manner in which the diagrammatic action of gardens can bring the functioning of the larger diagram underlying their programmatic deployment to visibility.

or spaces that introduce other ‘possible movements’ not predetermined by an overall program...” Rajchman, “A new pragmatism,” 216. There are two ways of understanding the diagram at work in Rajchman’s application (to architecture): that of Foucault’s, which is based on a historical mapping of relations in terms of a particular function (Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Second Vintage Books ed., trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, Vintage Books, 1995)); and that of Deleuze’s, which extends Foucault’s by treating the diagram as an agency (an abstract machine), as opposed simply to a tool of analysis (Gilles Deleuze, “A New Cartographer,” in *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1988)).

¹³⁸ While Rajchman is concerned with a design process, my use of ‘diagrammatic’ is more analytic, in two senses: first, as a means of mapping the more general configurations within which gardens and horticultural interventions can be seen to operate; and second, as a way of seeing something of those movements that (I contend) inscribe gardens deployed programmatically in the present, but which, belonging to the future, are not otherwise legible.

¹³⁹ None of the usual qualifiers—human, non-human, more-than-human—seem adequate here. It’s not just a meeting of plants, people and weather, but also of effects produced between and across such boundaries.

A love of flowers gone bad?

On Thanksgiving Monday, 1981, a couple hours before closing, hundreds of visitors to the Botanical Garden were reported to have walked away with plants they had cut or pulled out of the gardens. As one article described the scene which police officers found upon arrival:

...près de 500 personnes se trouvaient sur place. La confusion la plus totale y régnait. Au vu et au su de tous, mais à la grande stupéfaction des habitués, dont certains ne se gênaient pas pour faire voir leur colère, la plupart des gens quittaient le parc avec des bouquets de fleurs ou des petits arbres qu'ils avaient déracinées ça et là sur les grands espaces du Jardin botanique.¹⁴⁰

The “vent de folie” was reported to have been set off by a rumour that spread among visitors, to the effect that “people were free to help themselves because the season was over.”¹⁴¹ This rumour was, of course, baseless—as one article assured readers, “...le jardin...n'a jamais donné une seule plante.”¹⁴² Damages were estimated between \$10,000 and \$15,000.

Characterized as a mass act of vandalism, “un saccage” and “un grand razzia,” the incident, though somewhat shocking, was clearly seen as isolated, and explanations tended to go no further than to ascertain the source of the rumour (a false news item on a local radio show).¹⁴³ The comments of one journalist however, who had also written

¹⁴⁰ “...close to 500 people were there. Total confusion reigned. Openly and publicly, but to the bafflement of regulars, some of whom did not hesitate to show their anger, most people left the park with flowers or small trees, uprooted then and there, in the wide open spaces of the Botanical Garden.” André Cedilot, “Vent de folie au Jardin botanique,” *La Presse*, March 13, 1981.

¹⁴¹ “Flower vandals cause \$10,000 damage,” *The Gazette*, October 19, 1980.

¹⁴² “...the garden... never gave away a single plant.” Paul Pouliot, “La grande razzia a surtout touché les plants de légumes et les vivaces herbacées,” *La Presse*, October 14, 1981.

¹⁴³ Though I think the framing of the event in terms such as “un vent de folie,” and its participants as “a mob of wild barbarians,” can be seen to constitute a discursive suturing that served to limit the event’s significance. André Cedilot, “Vent de folie au Jardin botanique,” *La Presse*, March 13, 1981; Robert F.

extensively about the Floralies, point towards an interesting tension. In an ‘inside look’ at the incident, discussing the number and type of plants stolen or destroyed, Paul Pouliot wrote, “Il est étonnant que ‘l’amour des fleurs’ et un certain penchant pour la bonne table puissent conduire des gens à ainsi semer la destruction.”¹⁴⁴ Given the historical context—Opération un million de fleurs had run a second time that year, and the ville fleurie program was still prominent among the initiatives to revitalize Montréal—the suggestion that a love of plants could lead to anti-social, even modestly violent activities, implied that horticultural ‘sensibilisation’ could go too far, or perhaps, as a means of socialization, not far enough.¹⁴⁵ As a horticulturalist, and enthusiastic supporter of the Floralies and all it represented for Montrealers, I don’t think this was exactly what Pouliot intended, but the comment does, I think, identify a zone of instability or excess within the the ville fleurie program. Indeed, reading the newspaper coverage of the program from 1978 to 1983 from this perspective causes a new zone of socio-cultural fertility to appear: in a proliferation of statements regarding the growth of interest in plants and gardens;¹⁴⁶ in

Lambert, "Botanical Gardens hit by barbarians!" letter to the editor, *The Gazette*, October 27, 1980.

¹⁴⁴ “It’s amazing that the ‘love of flowers’ and a penchant for good food can lead people to destruction.” Paul Pouliot, “La grande razzia a surtout touché les plants de légumes et les vivaces herbacées,” *La Presse*, October 14, 1981.

¹⁴⁵ In an article about thefts during the hosting of the Floralies, he had written, similarly, “Qui sait, il s’agit peut être d’un amour incontrôlé du jardinage et des plantes...” Paul Pouliot, “Vandalisme et vols de plantes au Jardin botanique et sur l’île N.-Dame,” *La Presse*, July 2, 1980.

¹⁴⁶ In 1978 and 79, these statements pertained to the growing popularity of gardening as a recreational pastime, and the associated increase in plant sales. For example, Michel Hotte, “La fièvre verte s’empare des citadins: Les Montréalais jardinent,” *La Presse*, June 5, 1978; Pierre Vincent, “Une industrie... florissante, et un bon sujet de conversation,” *La Presse*, June 12, 1979. Following the Floralies, it was often claimed that more people had developed ‘a taste’ for gardening, and that gardeners had become more informed in their plants purchases. For example, André Beauvais, “Montréal a fait un bond en avant,” *Journal de Montréal*, December 31, 1980; Paul Pouliot, “Les Floralies ont contribué à l’essor de l’horticulture,” *La Presse*, October 15, 1980. By 1982 and 83, the growth of interest in gardening and participation in beautification activities were characterized as “toujours croissante,” “plus en plus grande,” and “sans cesse grandissante.” “Quand les gens pensent à soigner les fleurs, ils ne pensent pas au vandalisme,” *La Voix Populaire*, January 19, 1982; Jean-Guy Martin, “Vertige: Un magazine consacré à l’horticulutre,” *Le Journal*

photographs documenting floral abundance in a variety of settings (such as flower markets and flower give-aways);¹⁴⁷ and in the highly enthusiastic response to Opération un million de fleurs in 1981 and 1982, whose numbers increased steadily each year.¹⁴⁸

Pouliot's comments highlight (if unintentionally) the extent to which these developments reflected a confluence of events and relations that had gained a force of its own, capable of generalization. Which is to say, if a love of plants could be associated with collective theft and destruction, that was not an aberration, but an extension of the program which the Drapeau administration had been pursuing (and in the development and promotion of which both Bourque and the institution of the Botanical Garden had played a prominent role). The question we should ask is not, 'why would people do such a thing,' but, 'how is a mass theft different from a mass giveaway?' The players were basically the same, and if we consider the situation diagrammatically—that is, in terms of the relations and the functions that constitute it—there is little to distinguish the two events aside from the content of statements regarding the intentions of those involved. That is, in both scenarios, the Botanical Garden was the source (in one way or another) of a gift to the people of Montreal. In the case of the theft, the giving of the gift was attributed to someone external to the Botanical Garden, and in the case of the giveaway,

de Montréal, April 21, 1983; "Embellir Montréal: Un objectif auquel la ville veut s'associer les citoyens," *L'Artisan*, April 12, 1983.

¹⁴⁷ Although the context changed, the photographs are very similar, with flowers nearly filling the frame, or surrounding happy shoppers/gardeners/residents. For example, see the photographs which accompanied Pierre Vincent, "Une industrie... florissante, et un bon sujet de conversation," *La Presse*, June 12, 1979. Also, those that accompany "Playoff crowd hits Confederation arena for flower giveaway," *The Monitor*, May 20, 1981.

¹⁴⁸ In 1980, 1,200,000 flowers were given to 30,000 Montrealers. In 1981, there were 40,000 participants and 2,500,000 flowers. In 1982, 3,000,000 flowers were given away, but the number of participants was not reported.

it was municipal politicians taking credit for an initiative that was conceived and largely undertaken by administrators and employees of the Botanical Garden. But as far as those involved were concerned, things were basically the same: an institution they supported with their taxes, and which was promoted as having a “social vocation” focused on beautifying the city, was spreading a botanical bounty for all to enjoy.¹⁴⁹ It is worth noting that Opération un million de fleurs had that year seen hundreds of people line up at certain distribution centres before they opened, despite the fact that every person who had registered was assured the same number of plants.¹⁵⁰ In both cases, people went ‘crazy’ for something that seemed to be, but was not actually, free.

From this perspective, the mass theft can be seen as an event which *included* the rumour seen to have precipitated it—both being productions of a specific effectivity immanent to a configuration of relations active in a variety of settings at that time. This reveals, in turn, the true function of the ville-fleurie machine-dream: not only sensibilisation with respect to the benefits of beautification through horticulture (which can be considered, in Deleuze’s terms, its “formalized function”), but also, more fundamentally, the production of gardeners—that is, residents capable of recognizing and appreciating horticultural interventions, and willing to ‘tend’ the city in various ways. Visitors to the Botanical Garden that Thanksgiving Monday merely extended this function by harvesting and ‘cleaning up’ the Garden (as opposed to their own gardens) at

¹⁴⁹ In fact, the hosting of the Floraliés, and the creation of flower markets around the city, were also initiatives operating on the basis of similar relations. In the case of the Floraliés, the gift of the floral park was nonetheless paid for with admission fees (as well as taxes, at the provincial if not the municipal level); in the case of the markets, residents paid for the shared benefit of beautified public spaces when they purchased their plants there (and through their taxes).

¹⁵⁰ For example, see "Playoff crowd hits Confederation arena for flower giveaway," *The Monitor*, May 20, 1981.

the end of the season.¹⁵¹ Residents who began gardening the small patches of soil at the foot of street trees during this time were doing something similar.¹⁵² Unlike the mass theft however, which was a one-time occurrence producing little in the way of (obvious) lasting effects, the tree pit garden continues to function in a manner that is heterogeneous to the history of garden forms. This is not only because it lacks any kind of design process (with all that entails with regard to training and tradition); it is also because, at least in Montreal, it seems to have been born (in the sense of becoming culturally recognizable) as a side-effect of an explicitly social deployment of horticultural technologies.¹⁵³

Ultimately, the diagram that infiltrated and animated all these initiatives—in part through the mechanism of the horticultural gift and the relations it solicited and sustained—had the effect of re-making the city. Not only in a physical sense (predominantly by creating new kinds of ‘green’ space), but also in a more subtle cultural sense, by enhancing the value and visibility of particular aesthetic effects (especially those

¹⁵¹ It is worth noting that according to Pouliot’s report, while there were also some perennial plants removed by the roots, most of what was taken was in the form of vegetables and cut flowers. As the gardener points out, the cutting back of plants, and the harvesting of vegetables are in fact the quintessential fall gardening tasks. As such, perhaps these gardener-vandals can be considered to have provided a momentary flash of the glory reserved for the gardeners to come (as imagined in Chapter Three).

¹⁵² As Deleuze asserts, “...the diagram is highly unstable or fluid, continually churning up matter and functions in a way likely to create change.” Deleuze, “A New Cartographer,” 35. What these examples suggest I think, is that one of the ways this continual evolution of the diagram becomes visible is through movements which *generalize* a given mechanism or function, or transplant it to a new context, and in so doing, change its mode of operation or effects to a certain degree.

¹⁵³ That said, it remains to be seen whether efforts to *program* these gardens—through official ‘adopter-un-carré-d’arbre’ initiatives—will change their functioning in the urban landscape, or whether the gardens will change how these programs function. It is worth noting in this context that a similar initiative was undertaken by the city in 1991, but for different reasons. According to an unpublished text on Montréal’s ‘green’ initiatives over the years, co-authored by Pierre Bourque, the city distributed flowers to residents when they planted new street trees, knowing that when people watered the flowers, they would also water the trees, which would then be more likely to survive. Interestingly, this text does not acknowledge the earlier appearance of tree-pit gardens. Pierre Bourque, Johanne Landry, and Annick Poussart, “Montréal: Le pari de la douceur,” DOCS1, 26267, Direction des grands parcs et du verdissement, Montreal. Although the document is undated, based on references within, it seems to have been produced in 1992.

produced by flowers), and connecting them with discourses about ‘the environment’ and ‘quality of life’.¹⁵⁴ In this context, another word for diagram is ‘urbanism’—in John May’s sense, of “...a massive and intricate device of morality-extension, deploying entire ways of life across space.”¹⁵⁵ In Montreal of the late 1970s and early 1980s, a distinctly horticultural urbanism redistributed responsibilities and sensibilities associated with life in the city, opening a space for a new volunteerism among residents, as well as a ‘taste’ for the horticultural. By 1983, the efforts of the administration were seen by the American Association of Nurserymen to merit the title of “Green Survival City,”—an award intended to acknowledge the municipal use of plants as a means of improving urban environments. The ville fleurie had become “une ville verte *et* fleurie.” In the process, residents had become gardeners (in discourse if not always in practice), and the city a terrain that could be cultivated, tended and aesthetically appreciated.

The canal-garden in movement

The canal-garden presents a challenge to understanding that is similar to that of the tree pit, being inscribed in a manner whose significance is not legible, or even fully perceptible, but palpable nonetheless. It functions (phenomenologically and practically) in a manner that is potently vague. This is due, I think, to a combination of its explicit social and political significance (apparent to a large extent through its framing by the Trilogie

¹⁵⁴ As Bourque himself admitted with respect to Opération un million de fleurs, the horticultural gift was not itself supposed to be the source of beauty or change, its role was to produce a ‘taste’ for flowers and the activities of gardening, which were in turn articulated with a collective, vaguely environmental good.

¹⁵⁵John May, "Bringing back a fresh kill: Notes on a dream of territorial resuscitation," in *Verb: Crisis*, ed. Irene Hwang and Mario Ballesteros (Barcelona, Actar, 2008) 91.

display), and a certain deficit of intentionality. It is the product of a design process, and it serves a historically specific program of landscape intervention, but it is also inhabited, and moved, by other forces. If the tree pit can be seen as an unintended offspring of a programmatic use of gardens, then the canal-garden exhibits a tension that suggests the potential for a similar mutation of form or function. As an overgrown garden, it can still be contained within a typology of forms, and as long as we restrict ourselves to the explanations provided by different actors, it also remains within the grasp of history, its trajectory—toward some form of ‘clean-up’ or renovation, sooner or later—relatively assured, in part because alternative outcomes are inconceivable.

However, if we take the gardener at her word, and see the canal-garden as *more* than a maintenance problem or administrative oversight, then we must also acknowledge that, without the clarity that a distance in time provides, its functioning cannot be mapped in a comprehensive manner. That said, the history of certain relations can help to elucidate diagrammatic outlines, or at least, those zones of uncertainty that animate the whole in a characteristic (if unnamable) manner. In particular, consideration of the specific incongruities, gaps and repetitions that appear in both the garden’s contemporary functioning and the narrative of its development, help to reveal something of its larger social and political function.

Considering this pattern alongside my analysis of the ville fleurie program—which I contend should be seen in terms of a machine whose function was to make gardeners, and in so doing, to re-make the city as a collectively-tended aesthetic good—suggests that the canal-garden may be similarly implicated in a broader environmental re-construction. But in this case, given the articulation with the discourse of sustainable development, it is likely concerned in some way with ‘nature’ or ‘natural’ processes, rather than the city. In

particular, the specific incongruities and apparent failures of the canal-garden, as observed by the gardener, suggest that it is involved in a re-making of nature, or more precisely, a reconstituting of the relational possibilities specified through the articulation of discourses of nature with phenomena seen as natural (such as landscapes). In some ways, this is what naturalistic gardens have always done: that is, create a particular style or organization of nature as a means of asserting the unassailable correctness of particular social and economic relations. In the case of the canal-garden, the work has to do with producing nature as a good compatible with the time and physical constraints of development, or (which I think is related), producing land as a resource continually improved through design and direct interventions that make it, not only more ecologically vibrant, but also, more beautiful, more useful and more profitable.¹⁵⁶ In this context, the articulation of a garden or landscape with the discourse of ‘sustainable development’ enables the incorporation of economic interests within the landscape itself, so that it can sustain not only certain key ecological values, but also (though perhaps less directly) the production of wealth.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ That is, tending to require change that is quick and total, and control which is all-encompassing.

¹⁵⁷ One way this becomes apparent within the floral park, is in recognition of the fact that one of the park’s avenues for self-financing is through its three rental facilities, two of which are located in the floral park and one of which overlooks the canals. Indeed, according to the 2012 Budget, rental fees make up 21% of the park’s revenues. *Budget 2012*. The gardens are a large component of what makes these facilities uniquely attractive for large events such as weddings; if they are overgrown, or if the water in the canals is visibly stagnant, then they become less so. This is to say nothing of the casino, which overlooks the floral park and which may or may not exert pressure on development decisions there, for similar reasons. My research on the SPJD did not uncover any direct evidence of such influence, but given the constraints imposed by the necessity of going through an access-to-information process every time I needed documents, I was somewhat more focused than I might ideally have been on activities within the floral park itself. Certainly the SPJD considers the Casino an important partner in the park’s development. In the *Actualisation du plan directeur*, it identifies the Casino’s (at that time) upcoming expansion as providing important context for the updating process, stating that “...quelle que soit la solution retenue pour les années futures, son avenir aura une incidence majeure sur l’évolution du parc.” *Actualisation*, 2.4.

The rather drastic and hastily implemented solution to the problem of algae in the canals, combined with the lack of maintenance along the canal banks, suggests that as a whole the landscape is pulled between two competing approaches to its management (total control of growth versus total submission to growth), both of which have their economic dimensions (i.e., avoiding a loss of revenue, versus avoiding expenditures). This oscillation roughly reproduces the pattern characterizing development of the park as a whole, wherein substantial alterations of the landscape are followed by a period of neglect when it turns out that the costs exceed revenues or available funding in the long run.¹⁵⁸ Especially when considered in light of the Trilogie display, which characterizes the 2000 renovations as “natural preservation work,” such oscillations suggest a process of continual re-adjustment in search of a ‘natural’ landscape that can meet all requirements.

To suggest that the canal-garden is caught up in a larger re-making of nature also helps to contextualize the inconsistencies between statements (primarily of the city, the SPJD and other associated paramunicipal organizations) and events, actions or circumstances within the floral park. The juxtaposition of commercial activities with a landscape otherwise intended for aesthetic appreciation and passive forms of recreation, requires that the landscape enter into previously unknown relations. Much of the work establishing and interpreting these relations—as natural, for example—is discursive. In this context, the accuracy of statements about the canal-garden are less important than positively establishing its status as natural or ecologically healthy.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ The recent decrease in operational funding provided by the city for the park, combined with its injection of funds for large-scale development projects under the auspices of Horizon 2017, suggests that this pattern will continue.

¹⁵⁹ Which in this case, I think, is the same thing. In other words, part of the work being done here, is to establish that ‘nature’ is something that can be made (through innovation and sound management),



Figure 16. View of the canal-garden on the west side of the floral park, looking north (2009). Photograph by Erin Despard.

The secrecy of the SPJD is also somewhat more comprehensible in this context, for it is only through extensive articulatory work that a thing which has been made can become natural. Attention to the circumstances of the gardens' making and maintenance threatens to expose or distort the processes of articulation, and to introduce other, unintended connections. For example, as the grass has filled in on the new lawns created in the space of the filled canals, some visitors may not realize that this landscape is anything other than what was originally intended. My questions about the rationale of the decision threaten this progress of history (or forgetting, depending on your point of view). Thus, rather than being concerned with the protection of specific information, the actions of the SPJD should be seen more as an attempt to frustrate the direction of any attention

and that ecological health is what proves success in doing so.

at all to a landscape the shape and the meaning of which they consider it their mandate to control.

If the renovations of the canal banks had succeeded as planned, this ‘natural’ landscape would not only enhance the floral park aesthetically and ecologically, it would help to purify the water, solve an engineering problem, and be inexpensive to maintain (not to mention its contribution to the park’s identity). As it is, the partial in-filling of the canals only confirms that the nature (the natural landscape) which is desired does not yet exist; its making must proceed via missteps and failures as well as demonstration projects, and does not have a specified end point. This uncertainty with regard to outcomes is perhaps the source of the canal-garden’s “potent vagueness”—that persistent sense, on behalf of the gardener, that *something* was about to happen. It can be seen as the source too, of the instability characterizing many of the aesthetic effects of the gardens within the floral park more generally. It registers the sway more generally of those forces which belong to the future.

As Rajchman asserts (via Deleuze), to diagram the future is not to predict but to diagnose; “it supposes another art of seeing and acting,” a treatment of the garden (in this case) as experiment.¹⁶⁰ While the gardener experimented with the canal-garden (as with other gardens), trying to find other ways of being a visitor, so the garden too can be seen to experiment—to diagram those forces that animate it from both within and without. It is, literally, a “jardin en mouvement.” That is, it is a garden where a diversity of species has given way to a diversity of configurations and which, therefore, exists in a time

¹⁶⁰John Rajchman, "Diagram and Diagnosis," in *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory, and Futures*, ed. Elizabeth Grosz (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1999) 43.

different from other gardens: one where change is not only cyclic, but also progressive, though in a non-linear fashion.¹⁶¹ To perceive this progress of change, one would have to be there to observe the way the growth of certain spreading and climbing plants above the walking path, combined with that of shrubs both above and below, contributes to a re-sculpting of the garden's overall shape, as well as of the spaces within it. This is a work begun in a very preliminary way by the gardener. The nature and scope of its potential results remain to be determined by a sustained engagement with it as a social, as well as natural space. Here I can do no more than imaginatively project the direction in which further experimentation might travel.

As the garden increases in size and density, possibilities for tunneling and burrowing into the vegetation may open up, enabling different forms of occupation. This possibility is suggestive not only of activities other than those normally undertaken in gardens (such as walking and sitting), but also, different visitors—i.e., those who enjoy burrowing and tunneling, or who value the security and shelter which dense vegetation provides. The re-sculpting of the garden's form will direct the eyes in different ways and alter the distances contained within the garden: rather than privileging a sustained gaze over the water, to the gardens on the other side (the view of which was already occluded by tall grasses and expanding shrubs when the gardener visited), it may solicit a more

¹⁶¹ The concept of the Jardin en mouvement (certain strategies of which were discussed in Chapter Three), belongs to Gilles Clément, a self-described gardener who designs landscapes for evolving—through a series of ecological successions, but also through a changing variety of aesthetic and phenomenological effects. Eschewing concerns with ‘invasive species’ or conventional horticultural values, he prioritizes effects associated with change, in particular those that create experiences of surprise and learning. He therefore works with plants capable of growing quickly, self-propagating, or producing dramatic spatial effects. Of course these are plants that, under normal circumstances, tend to arrive uninvited to the garden or to get out of control within it. Nonetheless, Clément writes, “Je ne juge pas mais je prends parti en faveur des énergies susceptibles d’inventer les situations nouvelles. Au detriment probable du nombre. Diversité de configurations contre diversity des êtres...” Gilles Clément, *Éloge des vagabondes: Herbes, arbres et fleurs à la conquête du monde* (Paris, NIL Éditions, 2002), 11.

investigative peering into darkened spaces, a searching for plants growing beneath or behind others, and perhaps a nervous glance over the shoulder when there is an unexpected tap on the shoulder from an overhead vine. Everything will become closer over time, which could change the relative importance of different elements. For example, texture and scent might become more prominent as sound is dampened, and vision restricted. What will this enable of plants? To become more assertive, to create stronger impressions? Perhaps the lack of distance will inspire a wariness or watchfulness in visitors, a more vigilant attention.

What do such possibilities imply exactly, in terms of a broader social and cultural significance? This is impossible to say ahead of time. It seems to me a question of how the role of ‘visitor’ might become a more active one in the as-yet incomplete re-making of nature—a matter of asking, not only, as the gardener did, what to *do* in the garden while you’re in it, but also, what else (what other relationships or practices or effects) can be made *with* it?

CONCLUSION

It is important to acknowledge that many of the circumstances and developments described above—the impact of which it is difficult to ascertain with only thirty years' distance—are not entirely unique to Montreal. The tendency, on behalf of the municipal administration, to see in the urban environment a means of shaping social relations, reflects in many ways much broader shifts in thinking and practice with regard to the city.¹ For example, though the fact that newspaper clippings spanning 75 years of beautification campaigns have been preserved in the city's archives suggests that they had a special importance in Montreal, they were not in themselves unique occurrences. As von Baeyer shows of the period during which they first appeared, they reflect broader trends and preoccupations of Canadian cities and city dwellers and should be seen in the context of several horticulturally-oriented reform movements of the early twentieth century.² The concept of the ville fleurie is also not entirely unique to Montreal; its popularity among politicians in the 1960s was likely influenced by knowledge of a national competition launched in France, in 1959, to encourage towns and cities to use gardens as a means of attracting tourists, and which gave to those entries that met a minimum standard, the designation “ville fleurie.”³ Further, much of what Drapeau,

¹ It is also continuous with the thinking of earlier periods. As Dagenais states, the period which she studies (from 1880 to 1940), was one in which “Tant les problèmes sociaux que leurs solutions et les besoins de la population tendent ainsi à être spatialisés.” Dagenais, *Faire et fuir*, 52.

² Including not only similar campaigns in other towns and cities, but also movements for vacant lot gardening, school gardens and victory gardens. von Baeyer, *Rhetoric and Roses*.

³ "Un peu d'histoire," *Website of Villes et villages fleuris*, http://www.villes-et-villages-fleuris.com/un_peu_d_histoire-53.html (accessed Jan. 4, 2012).

Lamarre and Bourque later pursued in the interest of improving ‘quality of life’ in the city, can be seen as continuous with efforts on behalf of planners, architects and municipal politicians elsewhere in North America, to address the myriad of social, environmental and economic problems associated with urban sprawl.⁴

What I think is unique to Montreal however, is the enduring, sometimes utopic, social importance attributed to gardens—both in the content of municipal programming, and in civic discourses of beautification and environmentalism. Although it has not been my intention to provide a comprehensive explanation of this importance, I do think it had something to do with the city’s investment in its Botanical Garden, and the degree to which the Garden depended—during the years under consideration here—on a widespread recognition of the social importance of its activities for continued funding. I see the garden’s activities beyond its borders—from the creation of floats for the parades des fleurs, to the planting and care of trees, hanging baskets and streetside containers, to the distribution of free flowers and the hosting of an international horticultural exhibition—as a remarkable and sustained effort to create a visibility for itself, not just as a garden to visit on the weekend, but as an institution of substantial social, environmental and economic value. It was so successful in doing so, that Pierre Bourque—its chief horticulturalist through the 1970s, and director from 1980 to 1994—went on to serve two terms as the mayor of Montreal (between 1994 and 2001). Although Bourque’s political success must be seen as at least in part due to his considerable charisma, I’m not sure that

⁴ These efforts coalesced in the 1990s in new approaches to urban planning (e.g., new urbanism and smart growth) that draw on ideas and motivations similar to those espoused by Bourque in particular. What I am calling a distinctly horticultural urbanism, could also be seen as a precursor to the more recent ‘landscape urbanism’, which emphasizes the potential for well-designed landscapes to shape the order and quality of life in the city more effectively and pervasively than buildings.

a more clear indication of a public garden's social (and political!) importance could be given.

Seen through the lens of the history of beautification, I see in the Montreal Botanical Garden and its myriad interventions in the city over the years, not only a scientific and educational institution with a self-consciously social vocation, but also a major force in the development of the public garden as a tool of communication and socio-cultural engineering. Proponents of beautification, and members of the municipal administration may have initiated, funded or directed many of the initiatives that facilitated this development, but they would not have been as successful without the participation of the Botanical Garden. What the 2001 guide to Garden claims is true (in a historical sense): the Garden has cultivated "...une relation privilégiée avec la population..."⁵

Whether that tool is still as relevant, or as effectively wielded today, is an open question. Much hangs, as far as I am concerned, on the results of investments leading up to the city's 375th anniversary. Will the millions to be invested in the Parc Jean-Drapeau via Horizon 2017 enable the preservation and/or revitalization of the Jardins des Floralies, or will it end up formalizing their role as the setting for the park's rental facilities? And does the new Espace pour la vie (which includes the Botanical Garden as well as the Biodome, Insectarium and Planetarium) really represent a "participatory movement," or is that just the extent of the hyperbole that is required to make what looks increasingly like tourism, seem more broadly valuable?⁶ It may be that in the twenty-first

⁵ "...a special relationship with the people." Lincourt, *Jardin botanique de Montréal*, 18.

⁶ The answer to the question, 'What is Space for Life?' is (in part): "Space for Life is a place that

century, the civic functions of public gardens must pass through the filters of tourism and commerce, such that only those that are profitable are at least “self-financing” will succeed.

But such speculations are somewhat disingenuous; it is not my intention to use history as a means of tracing a trajectory for public gardens in Montreal. As I stated at the outset, this history has served most importantly as a tool of perception, making it possible to see in two very different public gardens, effects and functions of the past that in turn help to bring into focus contemporary capacities that might otherwise conceal themselves. My approach has been largely descriptive, though I have also tried to identify and elaborate upon the conceptual tools which best bring the broader implications of specific effects to light. As it turns out, the two different frameworks for which the gardens in turn seemed to call, reflect two different ways of seeing gardens as both complicit with hegemonic forces, and disruptive of them. In the first (which presupposed the reciprocal coding of garden and habitus), the emphasis was on effects that were essentially reproductive of existing social relations, though I also attempted to show how the processes of reproduction might be turned toward more improvisational ends. In the second (which saw a diagrammatic action of gardens underlying the program of their use), the emphasis was on effects that suggested an impending or potential change in

brings together the Biodôme, Insectarium, Botanical Garden and Planetarium, but it is also much more. It's a participatory movement and a commitment to biodiversity. It is a vast project based on citizen participation and co-creation with visitors. Just like nature belongs to everyone, it is everyone's movement. It's a state of mind, a way of experiencing nature. It is a space we visit where we can exchange, collaborate and learn." "What is Space for Life?" *Website of Espace pour la vie*, <http://espacepourlavie.ca/en/what-space-life> (accessed Jan.4, 2012).

relations, but this was seen to be tied to the garden's participation in projects of cultural engineering.⁷

Although the two different capacities—broadly, to structure and to disassemble or reinterpret social relations—can be seen in certain ways as opposed, it is important to specify more precisely the relation that holds between them. It is not simply a question, for example, of diagrammatic forces breaking down what structure has made. This would give structure the priority, and I'm not sure that is what I want for the garden (even if it is to a certain extent where I started). I think the two tendencies reflect two different processes, and speeds of change, that operate—perhaps not independently of one another—but in response to different inputs and according to different imperatives. If the garden's code is *extra-personal*—operating at a level more general than the intentions of garden designers, administrators and users—then the diagrammatic is *pre-personal*, operating through forces that infiltrate and trouble those intentions, precisely by traveling through them.⁸ Thus it is entirely conceivable to observe both structural and diagrammatic qualities in a given garden—not because they represent two sides of the same coin, but because they arise out of processes that, while they differ from one another, are equally pervasive. A garden that is vaguely coded (and thus receptive to a variety of interpretations and uses), is not necessarily rich with diagrammatic potential. Think for example, of gardens whose design program and references are ‘confused’, but whose maintenance is rigid enough to constrain the garden’s eventfulness or

⁷ By which I mean, the renovation and dissemination of values—in this case associated predominantly with the appearance and composition of the urban landscape.

⁸ In the sense suggested by my observation that a programmatic use of gardens tends to solicit, or bring a diagrammatic action of gardens to light, in part because a certain amount of overreaching seems required to make the necessary arrangements work.

conduciveness to experimentation. And vice versa: there is no reason that a garden overflowing with divergent or tangential forces may not also be the focus of a comprehensive coding.⁹ Everything depends on context. Indeed, as I explore below, the tree pit garden presents a good example of a form caught in the throes of processes that animate both tendencies.

All this said, it is worth stressing that the differing emphases in my analysis answer the formal and material specificities of the gardens in question. In doing so, they illuminate a *sociality* of gardens specific to a particular time and place (that's the descriptive part), while also theorizing these different relationships to change on behalf of public gardens in general. I see the overarching capacities I've identified, as aspects of 'the garden' that move in and out of the foreground depending both on the circumstances of a particular garden's use, and the political strategies brought to criticism. In other words, whether you attempt to read a garden for its various codes, or to diagram the relations and forces caught up or in process there, depends not only on the specific garden (and its history), but on how you believe you will be most effective—that is, as an analyst (i.e., perhaps devising new codes, according to a different politics), or as an artist (i.e., experimenting with the relationships the garden enables or invents). In the end, I hope that I have nonetheless successfully demonstrated what I could only assert in the beginning: that what urban public gardens do, from a social and political perspective, is mediate processes of change (and reproduction) pertaining to ways of living together in

⁹ For example, gardens located in urban areas troubled by problems with crime, drug use and homelessness may be both intensively coded (for a limited range of uses), but nonetheless animated in divergent ways by the uses to which they are actually put.

the city. That they do this in conjunction with a variety of other media is also I hope, by now well-established.

Pragmatically speaking, I think that my analysis has so far enabled some preliminary explorations that may prove fruitful for future experiments with public gardens and practices of garden appreciation in general. The first, as laid out at the end of Chapter Three, identified aspects of the Perennial Garden's contents and organization that could be altered in order to produce a perceptual and horticultural training that would be more open-ended in its effects by virtue of being more inclusive. The second, as sketched in much more provisional terms (recognizing the artistic rather than analytical character of the questions involved), identified a future work of relational experimentation concerning the role of visitors and (overgrowing, migrating) plants in landscapes designed to be natural. While in both cases, the suggestions pertain to a specific garden, and answer to its specific constraints and resources, the method of analysis (i.e., using other media, broadly conceived, as a means of identifying the practical and perceptual implications of garden form), can surely be applied elsewhere to similar ends.

In the hopes of bringing one more pragmatic outcome of this research more fully to realization, I turn now to consideration of an aspect of the method employed here which has remained somewhat mysterious to me through much of this writing, but which I think might productively inform future works of garden criticism. This concerns the problem of theorizing the means through which gardens engage us—as visitors and critics, but also passersby. What is the nature of the garden's sociality, the social relations it engenders? If the foregoing analyses have helped to demonstrate the larger social and cultural processes in which gardens are involved, the question of how and what the garden *itself* contributes, has remained for the most part untheorized—though it is

implicit, I think, in the role that the gardener has had, and the way I have attempted to allow her preferences and preoccupations guide much of the fieldwork and analysis.

The gardener operated largely on the basis of feeling. She made her decisions about what to do and where to go in a given garden according to what was interesting to her, and what felt ‘right’ (which was as likely to be based on the frequency, depth or intensity of an emotion as on a hunch with respect to a particular question). In other words, I allowed her explorations and experimentation to be affected by the garden. This was ultimately a means of extending or exaggerating the garden’s effects, and thus bringing them to visibility. But it also, in the long run, crystallized a sense of the mechanism (for lack of a better word) of engagement between visitor and garden. In the space that remains, I attempt to theorize more precisely what I see now as a communication *of* public gardens rather than through them, and in so doing, to turn a methodological tool into a conceptual one.

The tree pit garden revisited

Perhaps the site where the mechanism of the public garden’s sociality becomes visible in itself, as opposed to through its impact on other things, is that of the tree pit garden. These gardens—to the extent that we accept them as gardens—present a conundrum that seemed to agitate the gardener. It was not simply that her aesthetic sensibilities were offended (which happens all the time), it was that in not understanding the circumstances of their making (why would someone put time and effort into making something so compromised in its visual and environmental effects?), she didn’t know how to respond to them, and this made her uncomfortable, which for her was an unusual way to feel about gardens.

As I noted in Chapter One, it is the existence of a code of garden types (or genres), which allows the tree pit to distinguish itself—as both similar to and different from other garden forms (such as that of the window box)—and which provides a history of meanings against which it situates itself. At the same time, it seems clear, after the analysis of Chapter Six, that it also reflects a diagrammatic activity of gardens—that is, it seems born of a generalization or migration that brings qualities and conventions of other garden types to a new setting, but in a way that changes the way those qualities and conventions operate.¹⁰ As a new and (I think) relatively unstable form, its effects are received and marshaled in a variety of competing ways, and it is not clear what it is in the process of becoming.

For example, as I noted above, the use of the form by different borough administrations as a means of soliciting and/or facilitating citizen participation in beautification activities suggest that it is in the process of becoming to a certain degree rationalized and standardized. Several of the éco-quartiers organizing adopter-un-carré-d'arbre programs, not only provided volunteers with soil and mulch, but also offered workshops and consultations with local experts to determine what plants would be appropriate for their site.¹² The plant suggestions contained in the article in *Quatre Temps*

¹⁰ See note 152 in Chapter Six. The fact that the tree pit garden reflects more than simply the translation of an existing form to a new location, is evidenced in at least two ways. First, the tree pit's simultaneous incorporation and distortion of stylistic conventions (such as the garden fence), which causes them to operate in a manner that makes their significance impossible to pin down; and second, in its recruitment of existing meanings without any follow-through: for example, drawing on the myth of beautification while flouting certain of the values at its core (e.g., the respect for property and the cultural sophistication that a well-tended and carefully arranged window box or flowerbed would convey).

¹² In fact, in Ville-Marie, the consultation was a required part of the process: as a description of the program read, “Une fois l’inscription effectuée, un représentant de l’éco-quartier rencontrera le participant et évaluera la faisabilité du projet, puis proposera les végétaux appropriés.” “Adopter un carré d’arbre à Montréal,” *novae: Le Média du Développement Durable au Québec*. In the Plateau-Mont-Royal, the whole program (which ran in 2011 but not, it seems, in 2012) was much more tightly orchestrated. The appropriate mix of

can also be seen in this light, though in a less regulatory sense. At the same time, the location of the tree pit in public space, makes it attractive to gardeners who see their activities as more radically political (e.g., as a form of ‘guerilla gardening’), and who may, therefore, wish to make certain experiments with the form, or draw attention to their efforts in ways that influence how the way it is perceived more generally.¹³

Despite the instability implied in the diversity of the tree pit’s contemporary applications, and despite the fact that they remain unclassifiable as gardens, they nonetheless communicate in a way that is distinctive. While the gardener finds them horticulturally bewildering, their lack of apparent artistry—or even, sometimes, good sense—seems to allow (or require?) them to subsist, in a social and communicative sense, on intention alone. As such, perhaps the characterization (from the *Quatre Temps* article), of a tree pit garden as “un *geste* simple qui a un impact majeur sur une communauté” actually comes close to the essence of how they operate.¹⁴ This use of ‘gesture’—in terms of “a move or course of action undertaken as an expression of feeling or as a formality...”—is somewhat paradoxical.¹⁵ How could a “an expression of feeling” have a major impact on a community?

plants (annuals versus perennial, and seed versus seedling) was decided ahead of time according to the ‘zone’ in which the tree pit was located, and then distributed to participants in the course of a workshop instructing them on how to plant and care for the gardens. "Adoptez un carré d'arbre."

¹³ For example, the planting of food or indigenous species, labeled as such—a practice the gardener has been known to undertake.

¹⁴ "...a simple gesture that has a major impact on a community." Lalut, "vous êtes le héros."; emphasis added.

¹⁵ The definition (which is one among several provided), continues, "...especially a demonstration of friendly feeling, usually with the purpose of eliciting a favourable response from another." "gesture, n.," in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd ed. (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2000).

In other contexts, the term ‘gesture’ designates an expressive movement of the hand or body—something which accompanies or replaces a verbal interaction, but which can’t necessarily be put into words itself. A movement, in other words, that is contextual in meaning. While a garden cannot in itself be considered a gesture in this sense, a tree pit garden certainly is contextual in meaning. The planting of flowers in the middle of the sidewalk, in cramped, generally inhospitable conditions, is so unlikely—at least in relation to what we otherwise expect of gardens—as to be remarkable (i.e., noticeable, as well as unusual or impressive) no matter what the degree of success. The survival of living beings known for their relative fragility, in the realm of foot traffic, bikes, garbage and dog excrement, appears both accidental (or misguided) and clearly intentional at the same time. Especially when they are not fully mature (as gardens) and less than perfectly maintained, the plants can seem almost misplaced, and yet from their bright colours, it is clear they are cultivated. The combination of intentionality with unlikely, even inhospitable circumstances, gives these gardens—whatever the state of their upkeep—a tension and vibrancy that is beside the fact of their relative beauty or tidiness. They stand apart not only from unintentional or non-human plantings, but also from other forms of horticultural intervention typically found in public places—that is, the stylistically homogeneous flowerbeds, planters and hanging baskets maintained by the city. They also distinguish themselves from residential gardens that are professionally maintained, bearing the marks of individual taste and effort, like a gift for which ‘it’s the thought that counts’—or a gesture from a stranger whose friendliness, if not motive, is apparent.

Taking the tree pit as emblematic, I contend that gardens—particularly those that are at least visible, if not actually located, in public—are constituted through a series of *horticultural gestures*. These are even more imprecise than gestures that accompany speech

however, for the context of their expression is not necessarily in every way shared. A horticultural gesture can only be understood to communicate something in particular to the extent that the person who encounters it shares an experience of the conditions which made its expression possible in the first place.¹⁶ It is always however, addressed to an audience of some sort, whether it is registered as such.¹⁷ Composed of a physical act (or series of acts) plus a trace, it is realized in the visible alteration of plants or the setting in which they are found. It is performative, in the sense that a noticeable difference is at the heart of its execution, but is extended in time beyond the initiating event (whether that is the planting of the garden, or its most recent cultivation). It also implicates other actors, since the activities of insects and animals, weather and the plants themselves cause the trace to mutate and, eventually, to disappear. Between the implied audience, and the active materials then, the horticultural gesture is not without intention, but it is not authored in the usual way either. It speaks, but in a manner which is characteristic rather than explicitly meaningful.

This is particularly apparent in the case of the tree pit, for in many cases, it consists almost exclusively in a legible intention. That legibility is based on two conditions. First is the fact that the gesture itself (which is discrete) responds to a change that is continuous (i.e., that of growing plants). The work of gardening is seasonal and cyclical; it follows changes in the seasons and in cycles of growth and reproduction and amplifies their effects (sometimes by the fact of being undone, or coming late); the

¹⁶ As when, for example, the gardener read in the inclusion of annual flowers in the Perennial Garden, the imperative (common in a public context) to provide a visual stimulation that is both evenly distributed and continuous over time.

¹⁷ It can also contribute to a larger communicative project in which the garden is involved, as is the case to some degree in all of the gardens I have considered here.

cleaning-up of plants grown beyond their boundaries, the planting of bright flowers to maintain a certain momentum or interest, the removal of those flowers, the cutting back of perennials for winter. It is always slightly out of step, always seeming to invest either more or less than is necessary, bringing about a secondary change that registers an intention (without specifying its nature). Second, and implied by the first condition, the horticultural gesture relies on a minimal cultural knowledge (literally, a knowledge of cultivation): that is, knowing what kinds of plants are planted and cultivated for aesthetic purposes and (roughly) how, makes it possible to perceive the traces of these activities after they are complete. Thus the more people garden, the more gardens become communicative in this way, and at the same time, the more people's perception of plants is shaped by particular ways of cultivating them—which appear simultaneously natural (in the sense of being self-evident) and socially significant. This is what gives the gesture its reproductive capacity.

The exposure that many people (serious gardeners and naturalists aside), have to plant life is of that which is planted and tended for human benefit.¹⁸ Even if people do not necessarily pay attention to plants, or understand the rationale or techniques involved in the pruning of trees and shrubs, the design of streetside planters or the maintenance of gardens, they become accustomed to an environment populated with plants in particular arrangements and forms, and this in turn influences their perceptual and aesthetic expectations, their ideas of what looks 'good' or 'right'.¹⁹ This goes beyond the tendency

¹⁸ Nature parks (as they are called in Montreal) and the countryside being special places where the (apparent) absence of human tending of plant life has its own meaning. When people do encounter unintended plant life outside these contexts, they tend to attribute to it negative social connotations. See Nassauer, "The aesthetics of horticulture: Neatness as a form of care."

¹⁹ According to Nassauer, people's preferences with regard to gardens and landscape tend to be

people may have of following horticultural trends in their own yards and gardens (i.e., buying and planting those plants they see planted elsewhere), to influencing, in a hundred tiny ways, how people prune their trees and shrubs, and care for their lawns and gardens. But this is also how the horticultural gesture gains a generative or disruptive capacity, for the translation of those movements or effects which constitute the gesture to other contexts, can produce variations, unexpected connections and unintended effects. In its two part composition (the act plus its trace), the gesture is not only frequently unconscious, but infiltrated by forces other to those of its origins—sometimes producing distortion, sometimes amplification. In fact, rather than a means of reproduction, it is more accurately a means of mobility: a mechanism of human-plant sociality that enables a non-linear and extra-intentional transmission and transformation of forms across contexts.

The gardener recounts an experience with a former client that may help to further illuminate the working of horticultural gesture. The client had asked her to prune a large shrub growing in his front yard, quite close to the street. It was a fast-growing shrub that was benefitting from Vancouver's extended growing season, and had not been pruned in a couple of years (which is to say that it had grown rather unwieldy in both size and shape). The client wanted its size reduced substantially. So the gardener set about pruning, employing a technique which, while time-consuming, enabled her to avoid leaving any bare branches sticking out on the face and retained the shrub's appearance of fullness and health, despite its reduction in size. When the gardener called her client out,

highly conventional, and are influenced to a large degree by aesthetic norms. Joan Nassauer, "Culture and changing landscape structure," *Landscape Ecology* 10, no. 4 (1995): 229-37.

several hours later, to survey the results, he was appreciative but unsatisfied—something didn't look quite right to him. After standing and contemplating the shrub for some time, he took the clippers from the gardener and approached the shrub, cutting randomly across its face so that the outside leaves were removed and bare branches stuck out. "There" he said, "don't you think that looks better?" The gardener did not; the shrub looked to her as if it had been attacked. Or, perhaps more importantly, it looked like it had been hastily sheared by a landscaping crew in a rush (as did many shrubs around the city in fall and early spring). The gardener tried to persuade her client of the softer, more natural aspect which the shrub as she had pruned it presented, but he was not moved, and she had to resign herself to hacking away at it until it looked sufficiently damaged.

At the time, the gardener attributed the incident to the eccentricities of her elderly client—a man who had done this work himself well into his seventies, and felt (perhaps justifiably) that he was the expert in his own yard. However, it also illuminates to a certain degree the workings of horticultural gesture. The shrub as carefully pruned by the gardener did not *look* as if it had been pruned—and while for the gardener that was something to be proud of, to her client, it was as if the pruning had never happened. For him, the visibly shorn branches mattered more to the question of pruning than the beauty of the results, the well-being of the shrub or even its diminishment in size. The act of pruning, or rather, the trace of that act, clearly had an additional, though unspoken, significance. Perhaps, it had something to do with exercising (or being seen to exercise) control over the shrub (which is a much more pressing concern in Vancouver than elsewhere in Canada), or more generally with taking care of one's domain, or being a good neighbour. It is hard to say precisely, it certainly did not seem to be a rational preference, and the gardener seemed to think her client wouldn't have felt the same about

a shrub on his property in the country. Pruning a shrub (along with other forms of horticultural gesture) has a social currency, if not a precise meaning, and this is what makes a given way of doing it more than simply a question of style or personal preference (though these may have their influence too). I don't think the gardener's client wanted to 'make a statement' with his shrub, it's more that what looked 'right' to him was from the beginning an implicitly social question. He wanted his shrub to look like others do, when they've been recently pruned.

Writing of the loss of physical gesture in human affairs and its recovery through cinema, Giorgio Agamben asserts that "*The gesture is the exhibition of a mediality: it is the process of making a means visible as such.*"²⁰ In other words, what the gesture communicates is not meaning, but "communicability"—the implication of our bodies and actions in a web of relations we can't help but continually engage.²¹ In the case of what I am characterizing as a horticultural gesture—the pruning of a shrub in a particular way or the planting of flowers—the plants are not appreciated in themselves, as if they had appeared there on their own; in the fact of their planting and care, they display a relationality, both among people and between people and plants in urban public spaces. For example, the planting of brightly coloured flowers in streetside planters, according to a recognizable theme, makes it clear that the flowers are *for* other people (not for the person who planted them, not for birds and insects). They speak (if vaguely) of a relation between city and resident—

²⁰ Giorgio Agamben, "Notes on gesture," in *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 49-62.

²¹ As Stephen Crocker points out, via Michel Serres, both 'media' and 'means' are etymologically related to 'milieu', referring in different contexts to the centrality of a third term: the noise or method which, like an environment, comes between an actor and his or her audience or object. According to Crocker, it is the foregrounding of this 'in-betweenness' that is for Agamben, of a profoundly ethical character. See Stephen Crocker, "Noises and exceptions: Pure mediality in Serres and Agamben," *CTheory* (2007), <http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=574> (accessed Feb. 17, 2013).

one which could be ‘read’ in different ways, depending on what different interlocutors bring to the situation, but which needn’t be for the planters to function as gesture. What is more important to the horticultural gesture’s functioning is the way it calls attention to the *shared* (which is also to say regulated and designed) nature of the urban environment, and the way that this is understood by those who encounter it, often without even noticing it. This is the specific *mediality* of horticultural interventions in the urban landscape.

The gesture that is registered through the tree pit, is both more vague (because relatively new, and only marginally conventional in its execution), and more straightforward. It is forceful in its appearance, thanks in large part to its context. The tree pit’s gesture consists in *making us look* at an otherwise invisible and denigrated territory. It marks the fact of someone else’s attention, and thus solicits ours. In noticing the tree pit garden, we experience, for a brief moment, a way of seeing that is both singular and shared: our noticing mirrors that of the person who planted the flowers, who envisioned and then made a garden there. While some gardeners may intend something specific in this moment of attention, the content of what is communicated matters less than the fact of noticing—that is, the registering of an intention that sees even the sidewalk as a shared space worth caring for.

The horticultural gesture as a tool of analysis

What the horticultural gesture names, is both a quality of experience characterizing garden appreciation (however conscious or unconscious) and a tool of analysis. Though it is only now that I am able to identify and describe it, its effects have been there throughout both the fieldwork and the analysis, precisely to the extent that the

gardener was guided by feelings (in both her physical and written explorations). It was there not only in her discomfort over the tree pit garden, whose form is so variable and convention-less that it frustrated her attempts to engage it as a gardener, but also in the Perennial Garden, where she experienced the garden's weedy areas as an openness addressed specifically to her, and in the way she experienced the canal-garden as both a gift and a threat. In short, it was the aspect that, once prioritized (if not named), made every garden seem to be *about* gardening.

There are surely other things that a garden can be about, but for my purposes, this was especially productive. An attention to horticultural gesture enables a way of reading gardens that is at once a bodily and emotional response. It is sensitive not only to the quality and intensity of the work of gardening (that is, to the gardener as well as the designer 'behind the garden'), but also to the energies and rhythms of the garden itself—those processes of growth and decay that give form to both the passing of time and its return (in the seasons). It is a way of seeing in a given garden, the specific balance struck there between processes of organization, and those of growth. This is not only a question of observing how carefully or intensively a given garden is maintained, but of understanding the implications of the differences, given the circumstances specific to the garden, and of being able to perceive, as a result, the realm of its potential. Take, for example, the difference between being a neglected garden and the site of an ecological restoration. While in the case of the canal-garden, an argument could be made for either, enabling an explanation of its qualities and its relationship to other gardens, this would at the same time entail a re-inscription of the relations implied in the two characterizations—the affirmation, for example, that a garden should be conducive to walking, and that plants should stay in place; or, conversely, that if nature is to be

beautiful in the city it must be designed. In contrast, the gardener's explorations of the canal-garden found a way of perceptually occupying the space between these characterizations, thus finding it to be uniquely vibrant, as well as tenuous in its claims. Ultimately an attention to horticultural gesture enables an experience of gardens that is capable of serving as the basis of a criticism concerned with change—a criticism that does not specify what a garden is so much as ask what it might become, whether through design, or through accident (because they both benefit from the same attentiveness). Further, if gesture is ultimately a mechanism of mobility, then becoming attuned to it is a way of perceiving relations between gardens across contexts—of time, space and style. This can be a means of perceiving, equally I think, the constraints imposed by convention across those contexts, and the garden as media and as process.

As an example, take the Perennial Garden and the canal-garden, which are in most ways quite different from one another. Most importantly, the one has a formal structure and is intensively (if not perfectly) maintained; the other is highly informal, and has been for the most part left to its own devices (which are in the process of increasing). In both gardens, the gardener encountered an analogous sense of generosity, an imperfect abundance that suggested an openness—on the one hand, to an attention (if not work) of care, and on the other, to unforeseen events, and unexpected relations. There may be a large difference in degree, but the identification between the two gardens, of a similar gesture of openness—one that would normally be seen in both cases as a lack, or a failure—provides an opportunity to think about the issues of neglect and underfunding in positive terms. It is a starting point for experimentation and thought: for example, what would it mean to make a garden, and then let it go—to design and plant it, and then to leave it to its interactions with the site, the weather, and whatever human and not-human

visitors may come its way? For how long would it remain a garden, and what would it become once it was past that? Such questioning in turn begins to suggest some of the shortcomings of an attitude toward the city which sees every problem in terms of a design solution. There may be something to be gained in *not* making gardens, or in understanding ‘making’ differently. Practically and socially speaking, an untended garden solicits and generates different activities and relations than one that is tended—most of which are normally considered problematic. But what if public parks and gardens became seen as sites for gardening? Then gardening too might begin to become something else.

A final reflection

While I have had a lot to say here about what the gardener (and her grasp of the horticultural gesture) has enabled, I want to conclude by acknowledging that my use of her also conceals certain things—not only from the reader, but perhaps more importantly, from myself. In particular, as a device that enables distance (a separation within my own thought of the emotional and the analytic), there is a certain artificiality to the perspectives that are produced. While I hope that naming the gardener (and giving her a fictional body) has helped to keep this artificiality in view, it also enables me to avoid coming to terms (here, on the page), with the degree to which my feelings are mixed.

I have a suspicion of the gardens interrogated here, but also a love for them. In my analysis, it is often the suspicion that dominates; if the gardener’s emotional reactions are treated as informative, it is precisely because of their naivety. I am always trying to interrogate those reactions, and to balance them with context or comparisons that make their more ‘serious’ implications appear. It is often, I fear, as if the gardens’ sensuous or

emotional effects are not important in themselves, as if they matter only because of what they imply or facilitate elsewhere. But in truth, or maybe even in my heart, I find both the gardens I discuss here, to be places of great personal meaning, and even at times joy.

When I visited the floral park and the Botanical Garden over the course of this fieldwork, I often felt as if I were, to some small degree, coming home. They both had within them, places I considered *my own*. When I visited the Botanical Garden for the last time (at least as far as the intensive fieldwork was concerned), I had feelings of both gratitude and sadness. Even now, I feel slightly embarrassed to admit that. Generally speaking, I consider the details of such experience to pertain to the realm of the ‘merely’ personal—the kind of things that, however true, needn’t be said out loud. This is why I needed the gardener; because she helped me to politicize them.

The other thing I think I should admit, is that, contrary to my stated interest in public gardens in whatever form or context they are found (i.e., however conventional or unremarkable), I could not have conducted the research I describe here in gardens I did not find both beautiful and interesting (though it happens that what I find beautiful and interesting is somewhat broader than most garden critics). A project that wanted to engage less vibrant and botanically diverse gardens, would likely require a slightly different (perhaps more daringly experimental?) approach. Is there a version of the approach I describe here that can make something of municipal flowerbeds for example? Or contemporary gardens that give a reduced role to plants? These are questions for future investigations. In the meantime, I return to my original characterization of the garden as a site of environmentally-oriented aesthetic potential. I still believe in this potential—less because my analysis accounts for it, and more because, over and over

again, I felt it. There is a vitality of gardens which ultimately I think is better exploited than theorized.

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APPENDIX ONE

Origins of my approach

If you visit a public garden, you are likely to see people engaging in a relatively limited range of activities: walking, looking at plants, taking photographs, reading (usually signs and interpretative displays but sometimes books), taking a tour, picnicking (in designated areas), or sitting on benches.¹ Of these, the activities I have observed to be the most common are, by far: walking, looking at plants, and taking photographs. In my experience, while pleasant, and conducive to a certain form of (unfocused) reflection, such activities provide a relatively limited means of engaging with gardens, which was compounded by the perceptual habits of the gardener-in-me. In developing a strategy for my fieldwork, I sought a means of opening my experience of gardens to a greater variety of perceptions and insights in order to improve upon the rather limited insights I was able to generate through documentation alone (i.e., note-taking and photographing).

Early on in my thinking about this, I had an opportunity to spend some time in some of the public gardens in Paris. Because I was on vacation, and also sick, my approach to these visits was quite different than any others I'd undertaken in the past: while I took some photographs and made notes, I also read books, napped and had picnics. My experience of these gardens, and the kinds of things I observed in them, was quite different than what I had known of gardens up to that point. While this was partly due to the gardens themselves—different in form and use than those in Montreal—it was

¹ Many gardens do not permit more active forms of recreation—such as cycling, rollerblading and other sports—though gardens located in parks, such as the Jardins des Floralies, often do. At the same time, gardens in different cultural contexts may have different traditions of use.

also a result of my disposition toward them, which was both more relaxed and less self-consciously disinterested.² While it may appear in some ways a mundane observation to say that what you are doing, and how you are doing it, influences what you perceive and experience of your surroundings—it turned out to be profoundly important to my research.

Putting this observation in pragmatic terms, I began asking myself, ‘what difference does activity x make to my experience of a garden?’ Each time I visited, I would choose an area, and undertake a different form of activity there. These activities gave me a minimal amount of focus: I knew what I was supposed to be doing, but I didn’t have to think too hard about it, and was still able to attend to what was before and around me. In fact, I found that having something to do freed my attention in a way that was surprisingly generative: I was often surprised by what I noticed and felt when I was not self-consciously looking for something to see or feel. I also found that it was important that I allow myself to be distracted. Sometimes my pursuit of a given task would change over the course of the visit. Other times, though it would seem that the task was not very productive, and that nothing new was happening for me, I would persist with it. Not only was the production of boredom an event worth taking into consideration, it was often not until later, when I sat down to write about the visit, that a more full spectrum of observations and impressions would surface and coalesce into something interesting.

² Public gardens in Paris provide a good example of a tradition of use that is different from those in North America: they tend to be used in a very open-ended, but culturally specific manner, providing space for planned and unplanned forms of social interaction, as well as different forms of relaxation. For example, sitting in the chairs around the gardens on the grounds of the Palais de Luxembourg, one finds a mix of ages and activities: groups of noisy teenagers, couples deep in conversation, individuals reading or napping. The gardens are, simultaneously, a place to meet, and a place to escape.

A typical visit

Over the course of my fieldwork (which lasted six months), I visited both the Botanical Garden and the Jardins des Floralies roughly two to three times a month, and conducted single visits to nine other sites around the city. At some point in advance of each visit, I would sit down to reflect on different aspects of my research process (previous visits, other sites, the progress of historical research), and devise an activity and area to focus on for the next visit.³ Though I discuss the evolution of these activities below, in general my activity selection followed directly either from observations I had made (or sometimes, failed to make) on previous visits, or from questions that arose during my historical reading.

My visits usually lasted around an hour and a half, because this was how long it took for me to get tired. At that point my mind would begin to wander, and I would start to have trouble paying attention in a manner I felt was productive. Sometimes I undertook activities that required more time, and on a couple of occasions I intentionally stayed beyond the point of fatigue in order to see what difference that would make. My visits to smaller garden sites around the city were often shorter. During the visit, I took brief notes to help me remember observations, ideas and questions that arose. I reviewed and added to these once I was done, before leaving the site. At home—sometimes the same day, sometimes the next—I reflected upon my experience and wrote about its potential relation to past visits, other gardens, the historical research, and so on. Finally, in response to the majority of these visits (though not all), I undertook a creative writing

³ This writing and reflecting (or ‘journaling’) was something I engaged in pretty much continuously throughout the research and writing process, though in preparation for a visit it was more focused.

exercise that attempted to more fully excavate, and potentially extend, the essence and significance of my experience. A selection of these exercises are provided in Appendix Two, along with the details of the garden visit they describe.

The devising of activities and their evolution

Though they were all experimental in one way or another, the activities I pursued in gardens and in relation to sites of other garden-like forms around the city, were varied in both genre and objective. Sometimes, they were experimental in a relatively straightforward fashion, and focused on generating a more fully embodied (as opposed to strictly visual) experience of the garden. For example, on an early visit to the floral park, I attempted to document its soundscape from a variety of locations. Forced to sit still and use a sense other than vision, I discovered a much more layered and memorable experience of the gardens than I'd had up to that point. Other times, the activities were designed to more explicitly challenge or pervert conventional or habitual ways of engaging with gardens, often by taking a common activity to its most full expression. For example, after having observed that visitors to the Botanical Garden often pause, but only momentarily, in front of interpretative displays, I undertook to stroll through a few of the more fully interpreted gardens and read exactly half of the text on each of the individual display panels.

Other activities I pursued were a direct response to the historical research or to more philosophical reading I was doing at the time. In the first case, the visit would often involve an attempt to find or see something in the gardens that was no longer there in an obvious sense. For example, in another visit to the floral park, I searched for some of the plants discussed in documentation of the rather overgrown Jardin d'États-Unis (otherwise

known as the “Green survival garden,”) all the while asking myself, what does it mean to ‘survive’ in this context? In the second, it involved an extended attempt to think *with* the garden: alternately wandering and sitting, following as much as possible the garden’s lead while I pondered certain theoretical questions—usually pertaining to conceptions of history and communication in relation to gardens.

As it happened, most of the ‘experiments’ I undertook, put the gardens into contact with garden-related media of one form or another (signs, plans, guides, photographs, historical documents and so on). This enabled me to explore the gardens in relation to these other media (i.e., as mediated sites), as opposed to *through* those media, which I think would have caused them, and in some ways the garden itself, to disappear as media. In other words, experimenting with the different ways in which the garden was framed, interpreted and represented helped me to see such effects as amplifications or refinements of those produced by the garden itself, rather than as something laid over top.

A list of activities undertaken in the Montreal Botanical Garden (MBG) and the Jardins des Floralies (JdF), and at other sites around the city, in chronological order:

- *Not* naming plants. MBG: Alpine Garden, First Nations Garden, Shade Garden.
- Documenting the park’s soundscape. JdF: USA Garden, Canals.
- Reading all the interpretative signs in the First Nations Garden, as history. MBG: First Nations Garden.
- Following the maps in the tourist album and attempting to locate the point of view from which photographs were taken. JdF as a whole, in two parts.

- Strolling and perusing; reading half of each interpretative panel encountered. MBG: Chinese Garden, Alpine Garden, Flowery Brook, Medicinal Plants Garden.
- Thinking about garden history. MBG: Leslie Hancock Garden.
- Looking for all the signs in the floral park (to confirm that I wasn't missing anything). JdeF as a whole.
- Making a list of plant names for use in a poem. MBG: Perennial Garden.
- 'Observing' the bog from the platform on its edge. (JdeF: Bog and Jardin de Laval).
- Relaxing and rejuvenating (sleeping). MBG: Ponds and Flowery Brook.
- Looking for survivors and trying to make sense of the "green survival" movement. JdeF: USA Garden.
- Continuous walking. MBG as a whole.
- Tree pit tour, identifying different "design traditions". Various sites around Mile End.
- Walking the paths along the canals. JdeF: Canals.
- "Garden" tour, with group. Maguire Meadow.
- Photographing "exceptional moments": MBG: Perennial Garden, Backyard Gardens, Garden of Innovations, Japanese Garden, Rose Garden.
- Locating and capturing beauty (in photographs). JdeF: Jardin de la France, Jardin de l'Italie, Jardin du Québec, Jardin de l'Alberta.
- 'Garden' photography (Maguire Meadow).
- Looking for connection between education and beautification. MBG: school gardens.
- Tour of the Plateau-Mont-Royal "Coups de coeur" (favorite front yard, school and tree pit gardens of borough councilors). Plateau-Mont-Royal.

- Reading about the unconscious. JdeF: Jardin de l'Autriche, Jardin de Laval.
- Trying to *really* see the municipal flowerbeds of Outremont. Various parks and public spaces of Outremont.
- Thinking about semiotics and the unconscious. Jardin de l'Italie
- No activity, just a question to the garden: what is “beauty appeal”? MBG, Fruiticetum.
- Trying to see influence of past renovations based on the plans for them. JdeF: Jardin de la Brittanique, Pavillon de la Jamaïque
- Trying to see beauty in a community garden. Jardin communautaire de Mile End.
- Reading the garden’s history while in the garden (via narrative on interpretative panels). MBG: Full circuit, minus the Arboretum, Fruiticetum, School Gardens and Leslie Hancock Garden.

Other sites visited

- The remains of the old garden at the Le Grand Séminaire
- The phytoremediation garden at the Centre d'Excellence de Montréal en Réhabilitation de Sites (on the Lachine canal)
- Tree pit gardens of Mile End
- Maguire meadow (two visits)
- The 2009 ‘coup de cœur’ gardens of the Plateau-Mont Royal (award winners in the burrough’s home gardening contest)
- Municipal flowerbeds of Outremont (in parks and green spaces)
- Jardin communautaire de Mile End

- Ruelle verte in Milton-Parc
- Sidewalk planters on Parc, Laurier, Rachelle and in NDG

APPENDIX TWO

The following selection of writing exercises is intended to demonstrate the type and variety of exercises undertaken during the fieldwork. Some were completed in one sitting; others required a few drafts before I felt that I had accomplished what I wanted to accomplish (for the most part I include the final drafts here, except where those were prepared significantly after the fact). They are presented in chronological order, along with details concerning the date and location of the visit, the activities undertaken, and the challenge set for the exercise.

Exercise # 2, May 5, 2009: JdesFl, USA Garden and canal banks

Activity: documenting the soundscape

Writing task: verbally representing the soundscape

In the *jardins des floralies*, I follow forgotten paths, and sit on steps littered with winter debris. The way is blocked by sprawling shrubs, by long limbs of yellow-spattered forsythia which arch up and out but ultimately, towards the earth, where they layer themselves and begin again, unaided. Below me, the murky green canal water, and above, the translucent green of new leaves on a willow tree.

The three-note trilling of red-winged blackbirds is everywhere here, the counterpoint or keynote perhaps, to the steady but not quite monotonous, the irregularly rhythmic, ceaseless thurrummmmm of highway and airway and bridge traffic.

But there is also, simultaneously, periodically, a chaw chaw chaw. A chick chick chick chick chick. And the tweeeeeeee-t, which, raised at the end, sounds like a question. Tweeeeeeee-t? There is a pitter patter scrabble in the underbrush as squirrels chipmunks robins groundhogs and bumble bees hunt through the dry leaves and new growth and early blossoms for worms and bugs and seeds and pollen. Twee! Chicka chicka chicka. And almost continuously, the trill of the red-winged blackbird, which is indescribable, and which I have known since elementary school, but don't remember why. Dee dee dee dee. Caaaw. A seagull, which everyone knows.

I am looking across the shallow, murky canal at the Alberta garden on the other side. It is nothing like what I remember of Alberta – nothing at least like the rolling grasslands of Nose Hill park in Calgary, where I used to walk, and where such a great diversity of wildflowers can be found. But it still makes me think of the Elbow river and how I swam in it one day, in a park in the southeastern part of the city, where the kids at least seemed to be having fun, on a day when it was unbearably hot. I think of what led me to do that, of how murky the water was, even where it was deep. Was it the heat? Or was it loneliness? The despair of being alone in a hot city. People swim here too, at the beach on the other side of the island, in water which has been filtered by a series of ponds. An infrastructural and environmental triumph, so I understand, though from

here it still seems like a bad idea. Perhaps it is because I am not alone that way anymore. I listen to the caw-caw-ing and the rapid dee dee dee-ing. The occasional whirring of roller blades on pavement, the soft clunk of bicycle gears changing as people ride by above me. I try to really hear the trilling of the red wing blackbird, so as to describe it. This is the nature of my current state of privilege.

Exercise # 3, May 12, 2009: MBG, First Nations Garden

Activity: trying to use interpretative panels to answer historical questions

Task: a set of instructions for constructing a historical model (a living system, à la Muecke) of the First Nations garden.

Start with context. For example: ‘this garden, which was previously composed of groupings of native tree species, was opened in 2001 on the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Montréal’. Attach question marks pointing outward: what was the treaty about? Did it involve the land the garden occupies? Was everyone happy about signing? Next, using a concept ('ecosystem' or 'biome' or something like that), establish two different baskets, or regions or levels for collecting things. You need a way of dividing the things collected by the model. Maps may be useful; they need not be comprehensive to be cohesive. Begin adding things - plants, for example. Treat them like examples, or items on a list. It’s boring but it works. Locate each thing, each plant and connect a name to it – better yet, several names. Evoke different groups of people, whole cultures and ways of living. Use the plant to point to other things: for example, practices and activities. Make it unclear whether they are past or present, but occasionally change the tense and attach the qualifiers ‘traditional’ or ‘modern’. This should give the impression of both a rich ‘heritage’ and an acceptance of ‘progress’. Activate stereotypes where they are useful, but provide a few surprises. Spread a heavy coat of good intention. Attach stories about legends. In the end there should be several questions pointing away from the model, pulling it tight and giving it tension. As long as the assumptions holding it together are strong, it will hold.

Exercise #5, May 18, 2009: JdesFl, floral park as a whole

Activity: trying to replicate points of view captured in tourist album, garden by garden

Task: write a fictional account of the Jardin de Laval

The Dreaming Garden

When you come across the dreaming garden, you feel as if you have been walking around half-asleep. How could you not have known it would be here?

It lies along a fork in the path you almost did not take, one which seemed as if it would not really go anywhere. In fact, it doesn’t – and this is its secret. This is a garden, dreaming. A garden put to bed for the last time years ago – impossible to say when – and left to lie here, dreaming, ever since.

The garden dreams of the people who have come to visit, the people who dug the earth, rolled in stones, and built benches. It dreams of children hopping from one stone to another, crouching beside the water, of generations of water striders, and the family of raccoons who made a den among the boulders pushed up against the freshly mounded earth. The garden dreams of human visitors and four-legged inhabitants, of drunks, lovers and hooligans, but most

of all the garden dreams of becoming forest. It lies still, it seems, but strains and swells toward a progress both upward and outward. The saplings planted so long ago by rough, gloved hands, have become trees towering above islands of juniper. A climbing vine has departed its trellis to reach for the branches of the tree above it. Below, low-growing garden plants advance across the open spaces, almost but not quite swallowing up the benches and stones in their path. They reach up the slope to the bike path, which is present, but not visible, on the other side of the thickening sumacs. The garden dreams of becoming thick with trees, of developing its own structure, writing its own history.

You sit, carefully, on one of the benches. It is still solid, but slightly damp. You turn and lean slowly backward, settling down on your back, looking up at the canopy of leaves that was not there when the bench was made, and laid here – wood on top of concrete blocks. The sumacs crowding around the bench brush your arm and it tickles. It tickles but you don't move your arm because you want to feel the garden becoming forest. You concentrate on feeling the stillness becoming movement, the stillness growing. It is not long, of course, before you fall asleep, before the garden begins dreaming you.

When you awake it is only a little darker but the mood in the garden has turned. With a start you notice a tendril of undergrowth against your wrist. Surely it was not there before. But surely it did not grow there while you slept. Suddenly you are unsure about this dream of a garden you have stumbled into. You get up to leave. You think you will come back, but you are also not sure of what you will come back to. Perhaps, in your absence, in the difficulty of making time to return, the dream will come true. Perhaps what you will find is a forest dreaming it was once a garden.

Exercise # 8, July 6, 2009: JdeF, Bog

Activity: observing

Task: writing a poem based on observations

Observations: La tourbiere transplantée

The bog is becoming a forest
a concentration of growth
inscrutable and tangled.

The bog is not a bog.

The bog is a density
a force turned inward
layering questions
decomposing
in the usual way
after all.

Only the larch and the black spruce
have survived the long experiment
the trip south
thirty hot summers
surrounded

by other gardens.

The boardwalk is rotting
the observation decks slowly sinking
beneath spreading reeds
and ferns
and raspberries.

The red wing blackbirds
And the mosquitos
reign here
and nothing yields
to observation.

Dead things
growth
secrets.

Everything turns toward the tangled centre.

The transplanted bog
is thickening,
harbouring,
becoming
something else.

Exercise #9, July 8, 2009: MBG, Pond and Lilacs

Activity: resting and rejuvenating

Task: to provide as detailed a description of the visit as possible

I am moving slowly today. Fatigue dominates my every thought as I walk towards the ponds and the flowery brook. It is not only because I am tired that I want to take seriously this idea that the garden rejuvenates its visitors, but also because being tired makes this idea live for me. I long for rest. I turn off the main road onto the path that leads to the flowery brook, and then off that path onto the grass between beds of spent peonies and irises and not-yet blooming daylilies - a surprising predominance of green. I am sad that I have missed the peonies. Walking around these beds towards the pond, I see a woman stretched across a bench facing the pond. She is holding a camera to her chest, her eyes closed, apparently quite peacefully asleep. This increases my longing, my need, to rest. Not only to rest but to sleep. I am surprised and slightly ashamed to feel this need so strongly, in so public a place. I look around me, feeling faintly desperate, the promise of relief close at hand, yet withheld. I feel exposed, ashamed of my purpose—not to contemplate and appreciate, but to sleep.

I continue walking around the edge of the pond, taking in several sheltered spots in which I imagine lying down, curling up and sleeping. But there is something not quite right in each case: a man sitting nearby on a bench, another sitting directly across the pond, the grass wet in some places, and too densely sheltered in others. The thing, I realize, is to find somewhere sheltered but not too obviously so. To feel at home, yet have nothing to hide. This is what the woman sleeping on the bench has found. I finally settle on a bench around the other side. It is shaded, but at a prominent viewpoint onto the pond. I bunch up my jacket to make a pillow, and stretch out on my side, just as I have seen the other woman do. It is not comfortable, but I try to make do.

I close my eyes and try to relax into the hard curve on the bench seat. It is not easy and besides that I am self-conscious. I open my eyes and look out over the pond. Perhaps I will not sleep, but only rest. Be rejuvenated by the beauty or tranquility of the scene, as I imagine one is meant to be. The reeds on the edge of the pond roll and billow gently, and uncomfortable as I am, I experience a sense of expansion, a surge of emotion and memory that seems meaningful, though vaguely so. It is often this way when I first enter the garden—everything seems so surprisingly beautiful. It is not, I think, that the reeds are speaking to me, but it is something like that.

There is a pair of mallard ducks resting in front of me, on the edge of the pond. The male watches me from over his shoulder, his beak burrowed into feathers, but his eye open. The female on the other hand, is relaxed, further away from me. I lie there for a while, trying to relax, closing my eyes and then opening them again, watching the wind blow ripples across the surface of the pond. Eventually the ducks get up, and waddle away, towards some people who are sitting on another bench, perhaps giving the appearance of being duck-feeders. Aren't ducks remarkable I think, the way they walk, the roundness of their feathery but sleek bodies. This is what spending time in the garden often does to me: it makes all the ordinary things seem extraordinary.

That said, I am not rested. I get up, gather my things and walk further along the edge of the pond, until I come to a larch of some variety, its branches closer to the ground than the others. I am more relaxed now than I was before, more clear in my purpose. I sit down, bunch up my jacket again and lie down, curl up under this tree that now seems designed for this purpose. I look out at the rolling reeds and wonder again, at their meaning, and then fall deeply asleep.

When I wake up, I am indeed pleasantly rejuvenated. I don't think this is what Teuscher had in mind, but it is what the garden has given me and the main thing I feel is grateful. I gather up my things and walk the rest of the way around the pond, passing the now empty bench where the other woman had been lying. I wonder where she has gone, how she felt upon waking.

Exercise #10, July 11, 2009: MBG

Activity: continuous walking of entire garden (approx 2.5 hours, 2 washroom breaks)

Task: continuous writing, punctuation only where breaks took place

I wanted to walk the garden from one end to another, so I began with the *Rosarie*, much of it in bloom and yet still not at all interesting, all those spare shrubs, the same height, grouped according to red, pink and yellow, mostly, the early ones finished and getting weedy, the funny round bubble fountains and the aquatic gardens in between, where it feels strange to walk without stopping, by these basins designed for optimal viewing, for close attention and learning, and yet on I go, forcing myself to take a loop through the eastern edge of the rose garden, and then back into the Chinese garden, slowed now by families and tourists, strolling, spread out across the path, and when I enter the garden I make my first mistake, encounter my first dead end, but stop, only for a second, before turning back, taking the only route out which is through the gift shop, the clerk smiling at me from behind the counter as I knowingly find the back entrance and continue back out into the garden, swerving ever so slightly to confirm, yes, those are soybean plants, which reminds me to skip the pavilion with its didactic panels on soybean production, and its sesame balls for sale, so I take the bridge to the right, remarking to myself

how pleasing it is to walk across foot bridges, with their slight rise and the water beneath, and then I am noticing the jagged edges of the stones in the path, remembering that this is supposed to make you walk slowly, measure your steps, and so on, which I am doing, not walking too fast, though I am in fact eager to leave the Chinese garden and move on into the alpine garden, where, in fact, I hesitate for half a second and change my mind so that I might take a path I have not taken before, one that I think is part of the mineralogical garden, but is also filled with random (though attractive) perennials and annuals that somehow makes it seem as much municipal as mineralogical, and then I am briefly distracted and pulled off course – though I don't stop – by a panel about 'species at risk' or something like that, but there are none of those here, just begonias and coleus and astilbes, in any case, I am soon taking a sweet little path through another part of the mineralogical garden (I think) though again there are all these begonias and coleus, and then I am skirting the garden of crevasses and crags, or something like that – the one with the sharp-edged rocks laid on their edges against one another, with all the tiny alpine saxifrage and so on, and then I am really in the alpine garden, which is blooming like a mountain miracle, though indeed many of the plants are not what I would call alpine in their characteristics, but it is easy here to choose a route on the basis of interest, since there is something to see in every direction, and I loop a couple of times to see more of it, though I don't do any repeating or backtracking, and then accidentally I find myself coming out on the other side of the First Nations garden (I had intended to loop back through the Chinese garden), but no worry, I just roll with it, dip into the deciduous forest, where I find I am closely followed for a little while by someone else who is moving continuously, which is strange, which makes me realize how strange what I'm doing is, but then she falls away and when I see her again she is running and I understand that she is breaking the rules but trying to be respectful about it, which is interesting to me, and then I realize I am unintentionally backtracking, will have to repeat a few metres of trail, which was probably unavoidable at some point but still, I was trying not to do this, but then I am back on track, on un-walked trail, choosing my route more quickly, more fluidly now, relaxing a bit, because this is easier than walking through the alpine or the Chinese garden, where there are so many more plants, more colours, more people, where it is sunny and hot – here it is shady and cool and there is less to see, and I take a break at the toilets.

Then I am back on the trail, enjoying myself now, thinking about the gardens which are ahead of me, the long walk through the arboretum, and indeed the Japanese garden is a pleasure, the paths longer and the plants more serene somehow even though there is plenty of activity around the pond and shelter, and it is hot again, but then I come quickly on the shade garden which I expect to be a pleasure but which is not, for I discover that work has been done, the overly well-established ground covers have been pulled out, there are begonias and coleus and giant fuschia standards all over, plunked here and there as far as the eye can see, it is quite gruesome, even though part of me acknowledges the cohesion of the colour scheme, I still find it entirely too much like someone's backyard, some lady's backyard, a garden maintained by some landscaping company and not by anyone with taste, it is an insult, the idea that this colour is necessary (in a shade garden!) that visitors can't appreciate a garden that doesn't have colour (bright screaming colours!) throughout, and this is a truly surprising turn of events, because I think back, I try to remember and I am quite sure they didn't do this last year, but then I am on into the rather wild and somewhat degraded hardwood forest and it is in bad shape too, all these trees and shrubs planted just off the trail, obviously transplanted under less-than-ideal conditions, now wilting or dead, it is also quite gruesome actually, though in a different way than the shade garden, and then I am back out into the sun again, walking through the eastern edge of the arboretum,

toward the pond and the tree house, and now I starting to feel quite tired, but in that way which gives me pleasure, since I know I will keep going, and anticipate the relaxation that comes with keeping going, and I am tempted to not stop again for a break, but then I realize this is the last opportunity, so I come round the other side of the pond, and turn into the tree house to use the restrooms.

The kid who is manning the information booth in the tree house comes running after me to let me know the train is coming soon, but I laugh and tell him thank you, it's ok, and as I walk outside I think I must look tired, even though I don't feel that bad, not yet, though thinking of what is still to come makes me feel tired in advance, still, I choose the path that will take me past the spruce trees, and then the junipers, because of the way it rolls and always seems somehow to reveal an unexpected aspect of the arboretum, a hidden topography not apparent from elsewhere in the arboretum, and I am always a bit disoriented with regard to how large the arboretum is, and how far I have yet to go, but the walking is still pleasant, I feel I have a rhythm and I loop around to the road on the far side (accidentally) before I find the entrance to the rhododendron garden, which is however interesting to approach from the west, which is what is intended, and where there are more rhodos and other shrubs I had not seen before, then it is quiet and cool inside the garden, as I remember it, the path springy, and forking unexpectedly, I take a route over rocks that reminds me of hiking and then another loop just to prolong it, because it is so quiet and cool and then I am back out into the sun again, walking on grass, and then back on gravel path, surprised at how far I still have to go, and then surprised again to see the ponds so close, the most obvious route through the middle, where I see that they have ripped out many of the reeds that line the pond, and it looks like an ugly scar, though I'm sure those reeds were encroaching, I did enjoy the way they waved together in unison, one long, thick band of movement around that whole side of the pond, and I wonder what the point is, what the intended effect, perhaps it is to see the pond more in the context of the landscape, which could be nice, if I didn't remember the reeds, but then I am approaching the flowery brook and my attention is taken up by the daylilies and the irises, the unavoidable attractions of colour, even though irises and lilies are kind of monotonous, planted this way, in masses, but there are some other plants in bloom too, and several pleasing footbridges and overall it is quite lovely, as usual, and then I am heading back around the other side of the pond, steeling myself for the work of traversing the fruiticetum, which is quite lovely viewed from one end to another, but plant by plant is quite boring, nonetheless, I force myself to walk up and down, and to try out the stairs, thread through the arbours supporting various vines, the whole arrangement frankly a bit forced, and then I find myself, a little unexpectedly, in the Quebec corner, entering from a different point than usual, and even though it doesn't last long, I still enjoy it, the greener gardens being more soothing, more amenable to motion, than the stacks of colour elsewhere, and then I am out into the cloister garden, and backtracking to cover off the poisonous and ethnobotanical gardens, because this is the point I'm at right now, so tired, so bored, I don't care and all my energy is focused on just *not leaving*, on taking this exercise through to its conclusion, although I am not so tired that I don't notice how hastily re-planted certain of the 'backyard' gardens are, more of this plopping and sprinkling of annuals, then more backtracking and then I am looping through the garden of innovations, satisfying myself with sweeping glances and feeling justified in my haste because it is all so available and obvious and bright and then it is into the garden of economic plants, where it is hard to be interested under the best of circumstances though I do enjoy, briefly, walking past the rows of corn since this gives me the barest hint of a memory of the fields lining the roads of my childhood, but it is not nearly enough, I really am rushing now, into the

garden of perennials where I am perplexed again by the number of annuals – although I guess dahlias are not really annuals even if they don't survive the winter – but still more of this plopping and sprinkling and it hurts my feelings, it feels cheap, a quick fix to the weeds and the over-growing I noticed the other week, things are brighter really, than they should be, and I wonder again if it has always been like this, am I just noticing now by virtue of seeing this practice repeated from one garden to another, in any case, I am almost done, I do a quick tour of the *cours du sens* and then I am out into the welcome gardens, which are not as focused on edible plants as I had thought, which are quite boxy and linear actually, even though the plants themselves are interesting, and then the last thing I notice, is the fountain, how complex it is, how substantial, and now I understand why it comes up over and over again in the various historical accounts.

In the end I am tired, I don't care about anything.

Exercise # 13, Aug. 8, 2009: MBG, Perennial Garden, Garden of Innovations, Backyard Gardens, Flowery Brook, Japanese Garden, Rose Garden

Activity: photographing “exceptional moments” (a phrase quoted in the history of the MBG)

Task: writing 3 sentence descriptions to go with the photographs

- 1) An unidentified giant towers above fall asters, its leaves the size of small umbrellas, its stem thick and sturdy but light—the improbable result of only one season's growth. Fantastically out of proportion with the plants around it, the plant attracts little attention; it has no flower.
- 2) At the garden's edge, a wilderness of weeds and survivors creeps among the normally self-confident, low maintenance shade plants. The hostas are usurped by wild parsley and plants bearing strange red fruit, which makes you wonder about what goes on here at night, in between the seasons.
- 3) The bright pink globe of this Dahlia is so large, so close to being perfectly round, it is almost obscene. What is it about Dahlias, you wonder. Are there any limits to what can be done?
- 4) The coleus (unidentified but familiar) is a deep, spreading maroon. It strikes the eye in favour of the pink lupine, the white hydrangeas. Ubiquitous yet impressive.
- 5) The purple Phormium has a green companion—a lover perhaps, picked up over a long winter in the greenhouse. Now they are both back out under the sun, feeling the heat, attracting attention.
- 6) This plantain is purple. What is more remarkable, you wonder: that purple is all it took (to make a weed beautiful), or that purple can be *made*, like that?
- 7) The rows of Kale in the garden of useful plants are indeed ornamental in their utility: green against grey against green against smoky purple. Beauty in use as opposed to the use of beauty; the idea of usefulness being beautiful.
- 8) A row of in-folding cabbages, their heads growing large and round—like decisions made, becoming more and more certain with each layer, each leaf curled tight around the one before. Imagine the garden producing babies in this way, a miraculous harvest only slightly more improbable than what is already promised.
- 9) In the garden of innovations we find the electric red miniature kangaroo paw: another remarkable achievement, especially against the chartreuse oxalis—a pairing so daring it is almost obnoxious. Perfect for prime time.

- 10) The garden is a beautiful setting for beautiful moments. Precious, fleeting moments, captured one after the other, after the other, on film. This is how we learn to look.
- 11) The sheer variety of the same is breathtaking. The masses, the movement, the suggested scale—like a fantasy about coneflowers. A measure of the coneflower's potential.
- 12) And then the view from up close, where wonderful little machines buzz and float, where work is done, where depth, and persistence, are promised. Where sameness divides into an infinity of differing moments, impossible in their intricacy.
- 13) Even a moment in-between delivers an impression – one is impressed by thoroughness, the continuity of colour. No space is left unadorned, no pocket un-filled. Green is a background, not a colour.
- 14) Make a connection with the earth: take off your shoes. Get closer to nature: intervene at the level of hunger, create dependency.
- 15) Beauty is here made obvious, accessible, unmistakable. It is high summer, these are daylilies.
- 16) Even the shade garden sparkles, here in the land of endless colour and innumerable delights. Even the dark, shy corners are made to shine, and speak of beauty.
- 17) Indeed, from the darker corners shines colour all the more electric for its depth, its origins. Contrasts that would be lost in the light, pulse a subtle brilliance from the shade, a whole new point of view.
- 18) The garden provides a perfect setting. A scene of perfection, where events of beauty alight and unfold, shimmering briefly but perfectly and repeatedly throughout the day, and especially on weekends.
- 19) The garden is also a stage for other unfoldings, moments precious if not exceptional. A bright blue bustle of satin shimmers in the heat – is it perspiration or sentimentalization that lays a mist over the scene?
- 20) A perfect peach rose opens above a carpet of purslane and dandelion. Beauty and the beasts. The difference between a singular intention, and pure intentionality.

Exercise #15, Aug. 21, 2009: JdeF, Jardin de la France, Jardin de l'Italie, Jardin du Québec, Jardin de l'Autriche

Activity: searching for beauty, photographing it

Task: turning one observation from the visit into a story

In the summer, you take the metro to Île-Ste-Hélène on your days off. You are here to walk. You wear your daughter's old jeans; on top, something decent, with sleeves and a collar but lightweight. The running shoes you found second-hand for this purpose are too big, but more comfortable than anything else you own.

You walk away from the metro station, up the path that leads through the trees to the Pont-des-Îles, where you climb up the cycling on-ramp and begin to walk across, feeling nervous and exposed, the river always much louder and faster than you remember, but which you know must be crossed, and which is only the first test you will pit yourself against while you are here. You walk toward Île-Nôtre-Dame, the island they made out of excavated soil when they dug the tunnel for the metro. On the other side, you walk down the ramp and away from the bridge, towards the race track. But then turn right to cross the canal, where you come to the casse-croute and the pedalboats—this is where the real walk begins. It begins when you walk under the

bridge, the Easter Island replica in the middle of the lawn on your left, a short stubby arm of the canal coming to a dead-end at your right, and the gardens before you.

You walk with your head down, trying to remember to lift your feet so that your heels don't drag, scuffing away the rubber on the sole of your comfortable shoes. Your head is down, your walk has become more of a march, but you still see the gardens from the corner of your eye, from the edge of your vision, which is safer, because these gardens are very colourful, some of these gardens are on the verge of going wild. Especially the first gardens you pass on the left: flower beds from the path all the way down to the canal on the other side. It is too much, especially with the roses, which you know by their smell when they are blooming. It is better just to know they are there, to catch the scent by chance, and to sense rather than see the colour emanating toward you, rather than look at them directly, which could be very distracting. Even the thought of it makes you uncomfortable. But you still come, you still care about beauty, even if you can't face it directly. You still take the trouble to come here. To walk back and forth, from the casse-croute, to the round flower bed, where there used to be a fountain. It is almost, but not quite a straight line—you can't see one end from the other.

At the flower bed fountain—for this is what it resembles, a great outpouring of colour, the plants have grown so high and so wild—at the flower bed fountain you stop. You force yourself to stop and sit on one of the benches arranged in a circle around the flowers. You sit, for two, sometimes three minutes. You sit still and you look at your feet because you can't bear the colours, the extravagant heights and shapes of the plants in the fountain. You can't bear them and yet you also love them. You are drawn to them over and over. Week after week you come back to walk here, up and down the path, over and over, and to sit, quietly, on this bench, on the edge of a small joy and the sharp prick of a terror you know but have learned to keep at bay. It is a test—a test and a training—to come back here week after week, to see how things have grown, to know that nothing stops the growing. Even when it is hot and there is no rain, something is always growing. In the depths of the abandoned gardens, where colour gives way to growth, where it is not blossoms but cobwebs and mosquitos that proliferate, the heat slows things and wilts them, but it does not stop the growing. The growing continues, death bleeds into another kind of life, a miracle making no distinctions, not caring about colour, or beauty, only continuation.

You sit on the bench and look at your feet and it is not a pleasure but a test, because you know about this. About the relentless progress of growing things, the way all beauty turns to rot. The test is to sit before this work of beauty and to know it also as the stinking, buzzing, cobwebbed jungle it could become.

This is the strength you need, living at the edge of things; this is the price of knowing how delicate the balance really is, the monstrous nature of all beautiful things.

**Exercise #17, Sept. 12, 2009: Front yard, school and tree pit gardens of the Plateau-Mont-Royal
Activity: taking the '*Circuit des coups de coeur*'**

Task: describe the tour in the voice of a gardener whose garden wasn't included

Well you know how disappointed I was about not winning a '*coup de coeur*' this year – this is the third year I've put in a real effort, and the most I've ever spent on my front garden, and still, nothing. Anyway, I decided that I'd take the 'tour', see what other people have done, what the so-called judges deem worthy of their recognition.

The first one I saw was north of Bernard, on Esplanade. Well you couldn't find a more boring front garden. I mean, there was a nice water feature – at least I think there was. I could hear it but not see it from the sidewalk, there was such a jungle of green. Only a couple of lonely phlox still blooming. The owners had brought their houseplants out in order to try and increase the interest, but it was still pretty pathetic, I thought. I mean, maybe it was lovely in July. But any garden worth its salt should have *something* to offer in early September. There's almost a whole month really before things start to die back, after all. Anyway, they did have a nice door and matching trim – I must remember to get Reg to re-paint ours next spring. Maybe something slightly outrageous – like bright blue and lime green. That seems to get the judges' attention.

The next one I saw, on Clark, was even less remarkable. Aside from a large and lovely smokebush, and a couple of very *chouette* umbrellas on the balcony, I could *not* see what had won the judges' favour. It made me think that I should consider investing in some nice outdoor furniture (I just don't have the space for a smokebush). But it hardly seems fair that that should come into the equation. If it does, we should all just give up gardening and focus on saving enough money to move to Outremont.

The third one however, redeemed the whole affair for me. It was *really* lovely, and it took up almost half a block. If only I had that kind of space – the things I could do! Anyway, this garden was still going strong in September. There were ginger plants blooming along its length, and the most artful arrangement of coloured foliage that I have seen outside the botanical garden. Plus a whole bunch of that *Verbena bonarensis* – they had it interspersed with other taller plants just right, so the blooms seemed to float above everything else. Anyway, let's just say that this is a garden I could learn a few things from – they really used the element of repetition to their advantage without overdoing it. It didn't look at all formal, just pleasing and interesting at the same time.

Of course, after this, my little tour took another downward turn. I visited the two schoolyards which had been singled out, and this convinced me that the judges are more concerned with making little kids feel good (or perhaps, their parents and teachers!) than with actually rewarding horticultural achievements. In the one case, the little gardens in front of the school were quite pathetic – small and weedy, with only some gaudy pink petunias blooming. Of course, this is not the greatest surprise – after all, it's hard to imagine the kids (or teachers!) being convinced to come and weed the school gardens over the summer – but so disappointing that such sad-looking gardens should be awarded accolades! It's like giving out A's to poor students in some twisted effort to motivate them – do they really deserve to be rewarded for exceeding low expectations? The gardens at the other school were more impressive, but still, overrun with an invasive grass that someone idiotically decided to use as a recurring element – I'd say it's recurring a little more aggressively than you'd like!

These gardens were followed by a couple of other disappointments – gardens which reinforced my sense that people are being rewarded for their perceived effort as much as anything else. Good taste certainly doesn't enter into too significantly. But I did end the tour with a charming little exception: a 'tree pit' that contained a miniature Chinese garden within it – complete with little Buddhist monks, a reflecting pool, rock pathways, bridges etc. I'd never seen anything quite like it, and although I think they sort of missed the overall point of 'beautifying' – that is, the garden is too small to have that effect – I did enjoy the surprise of it. I wonder how many people actually notice it? Have they had any problems with people stealing the figurines?

So overall, I'd say the *circuit* was a big disappointment. Not exactly what I'd call motivating for next year. I have the impression more and more that the judges are operating on entirely subjective criteria. Maybe they are even just choosing their buddies. For next year, I am

going to have to decide whether I want to really go for it – you know, buy some furniture, repaint and so on – or if I just want to forget about it. I know what Gerald will say: enough Sylvia, enough! But you know how I always need to be motivated by something – what would the point of working on the garden be if I wasn't trying to win something? Lord knows, no one around here notices or cares!

Exercise #19, Sept. 20, 2009: The gardens of my dreams

Activity: I undertook this exercise after a visit to the JdeF spent thinking about semiotics and the unconscious, but it was not a direct response to the garden itself—just some memories and feelings floating around that I felt I needed to let out (to see what they might be about)

Task: describe dream-gardens

The summers I was sixteen, seventeen and eighteen, I worked for a garden designer named John David, whose clients were rich and moderately famous. The gardens he created for them were extensive and teeming – generously fertilized and watered and therefore somewhat unnaturally abundant and beauty-full. He had been an artist before becoming a gardener, and his tastes tended toward the grandiose, though he also had a meticulous eye for detail. Working for him in these gardens was an initiation, not only into horticulture, but also a certain kind of beauty – one that I see now as decadent, but which back then made up my surroundings on a daily basis.

The first two summers I worked for John David, we worked mainly on one property – a huge multi-building estate in the country with large gardens in several different locations. One of those gardens – the one I spent the most time in – was built of tiers and rock formations surrounding a sunken swimming pool and hot tub. My early experiences of watering, weeding and deadheading unfolded in this somewhat edenic environment: surrounded on all sides by flowering plants, ornamental trees, and signs of luxury. I worked alone much of the time, listening to music that played on speakers situated throughout the gardens and – the more I knew what to do – feeling at home there, as if the gardens were partly mine. Elsewhere on the property, John David created more and more gardens, becoming increasingly audacious in his methods – special-ordering expensive perennials, transplanting mature trees, and excavating old building sites. In the third summer, the clients fired him, saying that they could not afford the scale of his visions for their property.

After that, I was put in charge of the gardens at another property – these ones more modest in scale, but no less beautiful. There I worked alone, in charge now of every aspect of the gardens' maintenance and care. The owners of this weekend property were never there, and I felt even more that they were my own gardens. I had a key for using the bathroom in the poolhouse, and a favoured location in a nearby meadow for eating my lunch and napping. In some significant sense, this was where I lived that summer: among peonies and coneflowers, roses and daylilies – edging, weeding and watering my way through the long, hot days, alone save for the assortment of semi-wild cats that also lived there.

When I dream of gardens – which I do periodically – they are not usually actual gardens that I have known. They are also not gardens that I own (perhaps because I have never owned a garden – except if you count container gardens). Sometimes these dream gardens are owned by someone I used to work for (usually the clients I liked and cared for the most), but sometimes the

owners are strange to me. In any case, I am always deeply implicated – either I have made or cared for the garden, and I feel pride and attachment to the garden.

The gardens themselves are hard to describe. Sometimes I dream the plants in the gardens, sometimes the garden is too vast to go into detail, but it is always the garden as a whole, the collection of the plants together, that dominates the dream. Somehow, the variety of plants, their juxtaposition, is deeply pleasurable. I feel in these dreams as if I have entered a paradise of sorts, as if some great wish has been made to come true. Though the gardens sometimes strike me in the dream as strange in some way, they are always deeply beautiful – a beauty I *feel* as well as see, A beauty that is at once an emotion, and a return or confirmation of something true I had been missing.

Sometimes I dream of working in gardens, especially of selecting and arranging plants. There is of course, no other garden task so pleasing, as arranging a new planting. This is not something I have had much opportunity to do in my actual work as a gardener, since my expertise pertains more to plant care and garden maintenance than design. Yet in my dreams I create gardens which are surprisingly, almost impossibly beautiful, though not in a way that I can really describe. They are also somehow more meaningful than ordinary gardens, invested with feelings and ideas that also resist description.

While I am sure these gardens come in some sense from my past, my early gardening memories (which must after all, be inflected with a certain teenage energy and desire) – I am at a loss to articulate their power and attraction, what they say about the psychology of my current involvement with gardens....

Exercise #23, Nov. 1, 2009: MBG, Shade Garden

Task: reading the history of the Garden in its interpretative panels

Activity: writing about the garden's relationship to the past from two perspectives (that of the former longtime employee I interviewed, and my own)

In the Montreal botanical garden, the garden not of the past, but of history, we find, in the beginning, flowers and trees. Oodles and oodles of flowers, thousands of trees – a slow-building explosion of growth and beauty, undeniable in its impact and importance. There were flowers everywhere, the garden literally spilled over its boundaries, distributing its bounty of beauty far and wide, as equitably and as tastefully as was practically possible. People noticed, people were proud, and the city became known for its trees and its flowers, its conspicuous surplus of floriferous beauty, its horticultural if not its political openness.

The contemporary appetite for embellishment is, of course, considerably expanded, requiring, not only ‘year-round interest’ but also non-stop colour, which is supplied in the autumn – as if the changing leaves were not enough – by thousands of brightly coloured lanterns, and a spectacle of unearthly proportions which unfolds (each year somehow better than the last) in the Chinese Garden, which is already in itself an achievement of historic significance, “seemingly straight out of the Ming Dynasty”.

And it was not only the number of trees and flowers, the thousands and millions produced, distributed and cared for, but also their quality, and diversity, which reached new levels during this time, which was unequalled on a municipal level, which was among the best in the world. Montreal was a cornucopia spilling over, a work of municipal art in progress, growing both more refined and more expansive, more impossibly beautiful, with each international event, each election, each great man finally able to give expression to his magnificent vision.

But let's say you manage to get beyond the lanterns, and say that the tram filled with screaming kids has receded into the distance as you enter the shade garden. The fuschias and

omnipresent begonias and coleus are long gone and many of the perennials lie prostrate and moldering, with fallen leaves, into the soil. The birds are still here, and the view along the length of the path through the garden is somehow clarified: the bare branches above and the bare earth showing through fallen yellow leaves more beautiful in some ways than when the garden was carpeted in other, more deliberate colours. This is the garden's own history: one which is cyclical, and whose events have their own, necessarily obscure context.

Of course, things have changed, things have gradually become – perhaps not less bountiful – but somehow less magnificent. The pride is not the same, people are not so aware of where everything comes from, who exactly, has made it so. People do not feel the garden in the same way. They come to see it, they recognize its superiority, but they do not feel its touch, they do not identify. The garden has become larger, more impressive, and yet also more vulnerable, less vital, less central. Having withdrawn from the streets and parks of the city, having agreed to specialization, it is less present; even as it focuses on its strengths, its powers are diminished.

Autumn permits a return to what is essential, what will always be special. Back, not to basics, but to a beauty uninterrupted by its own upstaging. A pleasure all the more potent because it contains loss, because it is limited, because it is fading. A subdued abundance, after the excesses of summer. A beauty that can be grasped—perhaps never adequately captured, but at least enjoyed, and remembered.

GLOSSARY of French Terms and Names

carré d'arbre: tree pit

campagnes d'embellissement: beautification campaigns

Division des arbres: Trees Division

Espace pour la vie: Space for Life

Floralies extérieures: Outdoor Floralies

Floralies intérieures: Indoor Floralies

Office d'embellissement: Beautification Office

Opération un million de fleurs: Operation a million flowers

Parade des fleurs: Parade of flowers (also referred to in English as the beautification parades)

Sensibilisation: sensitization; or, awareness-raising

Service des parcs: Parks Service; or Parks Department

Service des Travaux publics: Public Works Department

Terre des Hommes: Man and his World

ville fleurie: city in bloom; or, flowering city

ville verte: green city