The Garden as a Performance*

Mateusz Salwa†
University of Warsaw

ABSTRACT. The aim of the article is to suggest that one should think of gardens in terms of performances and not necessarily of architecture, painting or poetry, for it is possible to show that, strangely enough, gardens seem to share certain features with such performance arts. Such an approach seems fruitful as it allows one to grasp the fact that gardens combine culture and nature and to underline the role of the latter which cannot be reduced to sheer medium as it is traditionally done. The contention is that gardens should be treated more like ongoing, dynamic, partially planned process in which people can participate in different ways on a par with other inhuman "actors". Moreover, the category of performance seems to offer a useful frame favoring helping to solve certain problems inherent in traditional ways of thinking about gardens.

Gardens are usually analyzed in terms of architecture (garden planning belongs to landscape architecture), painting (formal gardens are to be seen as a sort of perspective views, whereas landscape ones are to be appreciated in terms of the picturesque), and finally poetry (gardens are to be interpreted as texts). There are few attempts at juxtaposing them with other arts, such as land art, which are advocated not so much by garden historians, as by philosophers (e.g. Leddy, 1988; Ross, 1993). One of the advantages of such an approach is the fact that it highlights what seems to be somewhat undervalued – even if it is obviously taken into account – by the traditional framework, namely nature and gardens' dynamic character stemming from nothing other than their natural dimension. However, there seems to be another useful point of reference allowing one to underline these aspects in an even more satisfactory way.

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† Email: mateusz.salwa@uw.edu.pl

My aim here is to suggest that we should think of gardens in terms of performance, for it is possible to show that, strangely enough, gardens seem to share certain features with such arts as theatre, especially when their performing dimension is underlined. I would like, then, to clarify what it means to conceive of gardens as performances or to state that they are like performances.

It is my contention that the approach proposed below is fruitful as it allows one to grasp in a phenomenological vein the essence of gardens whose primary constituent is the fact that they combine culture and nature. As the idea of a totally artificial garden seems not compelling (a contrary opinion may be found in Parsons, 2008, pp. 114-127) and although it is clear that it is not possible to treat these terms straightforwardly as merely opposing each other, I am of the opinion that without this dichotomy it is impossible to describe gardens, in which I do not depart from a widely shared opinion. However, on the other hand I am likely to think of gardens as of places in which this dichotomy is overcome (at least in the Hegelian sense of "aufheben") or to put it differently in a performative idiom I am inclined to think to that gardens are places which perform it and overcome it. Moreover, the category of performance seems to be applicable as it offers a useful frame favoring not only enclosure of different perspectives but a sort of conciliation of them as well, and as a result it helps to solve certain problems inherent in traditional ways of thinking about gardens.

One more qualification is needed: the perspective assumed below will be mainly that of a visitor or, so to say, audience, and not of the creator, that is landscape architect or gardener. However, everything that will be said seems to apply at the same time to contemporary common yards or house gardens and to a large extent to everyone cultivating her own garden.

Garden studies have quite a long history and cover a wide range of thoroughly researched topics – from the history of botany to social and gender matters (Leslie and Hunt, 2013). It is then noteworthy that the field from which the general interest in gardens sprang, namely garden aesthetics, at least in its philosophical dimension, seems nowadays to be somewhat underdeveloped. However, in the past 20 years one witnessed an increasing interest in „philosophy of gardens" (Cooper, 2006) or "philosophy of gardening" (O'Brien, 2010), which without any doubt would have pleased the

Italian philosopher, Rosario Assunto, who in the 60's and 70's pioneered this kind of approach (Assunto, 1994). There are probably different motives behind the philosophical rehabilitation of gardens (the revival of aesthetics of nature or non-art centered aesthetics, just to name two of them), but what is more important is that it seems to go along with an intuition generally shared by garden historians that such definitions as the one offered by, for example *Encyclopedia Britannica* stating that a garden is a "plot of ground where herbs, fruits, flowers, vegetables, or trees are cultivated" (Britannica) are maybe correct, but definitely incomplete as they do not pinpoint the essence. For the sake of the argument let us compare the above definiton with the following one, included in the Florence Charter:

> "The historic garden is an architectural composition whose constituents are primarily vegetal and therefore living (...) Thus its appearance reflects the perpetual balance between the cycle of the seasons, the growth and decay of nature and the desire of the artist and craftsman to keep it permanently unchanged. (...) As the expression of the direct affinity between civilisation and nature (...), the garden thus acquires the cosmic significance of an idealised image of the world (...). By reason of its nature and purpose, a historic garden is a peaceful place conducive to human contacts, silence and awareness of nature." (Florence Charter, 1981)

This statement finds its echo in the opinion of one of the most prominent garden specialists who says that what is essential to gardens is that they reflect far better than other arts (or cultural phenomena) the human condition that is suspended between culture and nature (Hunt, 1998, p. 272).

Nevertheless, the problem with a definition like the florentine one is that although it fits the way garden theorists conceive of gardens it is highly ambiguous, if not even elusive. Although gardens are a well defined and institutionally legitimized field of research, some academicians are of the opinion that they are quite different from all the others. James Elkins states that:

> "Garden history, unlike the history of painting, sculpture, and architecture, has no conceptual foundations. It lacks the elements of

> scholarly and critical consensus: a conventional set of interpretive methods, agreed-upon leading terms, ruling metaphors, and descriptive protocols." (Birksted, 2003, pp. 4-5)

In sum, on the one hand the garden as such is a significant, universal and – one would think – very well known phenomenon, but on the other hand it evades crystal clear delineations and lacks "conceptual foundations". This particular ontological and epistemological status of gardens was expressed in another way by Michel Foucault who named them one of the most important examples of heterotopias, or "other spaces" that cannot be defined in terms used to describe "normal" spaces because they question everyday categories (Foucault, 1986).

The core of contemporary "garden aesthetics" seems to lie in defining the "garden-essence". And it is all but problematic: can we allow such essentialism? *Prima facie,* the answer should be negative for we cannot ignore formal, historical, cultural or geographical dissimilarities, so at best we can talk of "family resemblance" uniting different gardens. In spite of that there seems to be a feature uniting them at a deep structural level, which is the fact – as the unanimously shared opinion has – that they are situated between art (or in broader terms: culture) and nature. And this is where gardens' otherness stems from.

The art/nature relation may be understood in two ways: either we treat gardens as phenomena in which art and nature overlap, so gardens are "art-and-nature", or we treat them as phenomena placed outside the realms of the two, which means that they are "neither art, nor nature". It seems that for garden historians the first solution seems more plausible – gardens are particular artworks in which nature is just one of their elements or expressive media like stone in the garden fountains or bricks in the garden architectural follies. But for philosophers this seems problematic for – as they think – there is too much nature in gardens to treat them as standard artworks. Incidentally, at the same time they seem to think quite rightly that there is too much art inherent in them to think of them in terms of nature or rather pristine nature (Cooper, 2006, pp. 21-62). As a result, gardens, again, seem to be a kind of shaky ground without conceptual foundations.

The fact that a garden is not pristine nature is beyond any question for it is always a person behind it: it is up to her to plan, set and cultivate

it in a manner that in many respects resembles the way one cultivates a field of grain**.** In a word, gardens are artifacts based in one way or another on nature. It means no less than that there can be no totally artificial gardens devoid of what we commonsensically conceive of as nature or – to put differently – that gardens are humanized pieces of nature even if the extent of humanization may differ a lot: from formal gardens to landscape ones (or even *jardins trouvés*). And even if there is nothing uncommon in the fact that there are artifacts, so to say, built of nature, the way they use it is far from obvious. This is why the nature inherent to gardens makes them non-standard art, so non-standard that philosophers feel obliged to prove that they are artworks at all (Miller, 1993; Ross, 1998).

It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate the genealogy of the opinion that the artistic status of gardens is doubtful, but it will be enough to mention just one name, that of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel for whom gardens were too close to nature and not permeated by the Spirit enough to be regarded as works of art. So, in a way, the philosophical enfranchisement (to paraphrase the well known Arthur Danto's expression) of gardens is tantamount to making a step leading to pre-Hegelian aesthetics and to the Kantian idea that when we are looking at a work of art, we should know it is manmade, but at the same time we should somehow believe that it is natural (Leddy, 1999).

This move, however, is not unproblematic. Although on the one hand Immanuel Kant without hesitation defined gardening to be a kind of painting, and before him Horace Walpole claimed that gardens were pretty much like poems and on the other it is architecture to be the most straightforward historical and cultural context for them, any descriptions of gardens in terms of these arts – either taken individually or together – seem to be highly unsatisfactory, even if are justified from the historical perspective. They result in a reductive enclosing of gardens in a grid of concepts offered by art-centered aesthetics that remain blind to those aspects that can be grasped by aesthetics of nature.

Why, then, gardens are artifacts whose artistic status is questionable?[1]
1) They are not objects standing in front of us like paintings but they rather

[1] I gather here different arguments raised by the above mentioned authors: David E. Cooper, Mara Miller and Stephanie Ross.

sorround us, which means that we are not spectators contemplating them from a distance, but we enter them or we immerse in them. In a word, we participate in them. 2) Gardens are not stable, they constantly change over the years, decades, seasons, according to the circular rhythm of biological processes regulating annual growth and decay as well as according to the linear passage of time. It is therefore difficult – if possible at all – to decide what the original or finished shape of the garden is or was. 3) Gardens have a conspicuous phenomenal dimension for such factors as light, temperature, weather etc. play a crucial role in them. They are not external elements like lighting or temperature conditions in a museum, but rather internal ones. As a result it is unthinkable to enter the same garden twice: not only will the plants will be older, but also what we will experience will be different because, for example, the way sunlight falls will differ. 4) Gardens are to a large extent unpredictable because of the presence of nature which cannot be submitted to full control, hence the creator – whoever it might be: the architect or a cohort of anonymous gardeners – cannot know what exactly the result will be. Contrary to architecture, gardens are – to use Schiller's phrase – living forms to which one cannot subject herself. 5) As far as the question of authorship is concerned, we may ask whether instead of treating nature as a medium of human expression similar to paint or stone we should not treat it as one of the co-creators. This leads to another problem: 6) What is the meaning of garden? Is it what was planned by the landscape architect or what came out of the interaction between him and nature? Or maybe is it what we feel regardless of the creator's intentions? 7) Last but not least, gardens far more than other arts are multisensioral in the sense that the sight is the leading sense, but taken alone turns out to be insufficient as we experience gardens through our bodies.

Now, if we – as it is traditionally done – take painting, poetry or architecture as our points of reference, then we can, indeed, state in the Platonic vein that gardens lack an artistic essence for not only do they have no structure typical for arts, but also they are too ephemeral, changeable or unstable to by analyzed in any way and thus to have any "conceptual foundations". However, if we put aside for a moment gardens and wonder whether there is a sort of art defined by the above features, what comes to mind is, generally speaking, performing arts or performance arts by which

we mean "those art forms in which, as we would normally put it, our access to, and appreciation of, *works* (as receivers) is at least in part mediated by *performances of those works*" (Davies, 2004, p. 207). Clear examples are: music, theatre or 20c. art performance.

A German performance theoretician Erika Fischer-Lichte points out following features as defining theatrical performances: there are no contemplative spectators, but only immersed participants (contemplation is a sort of participation, no better than other possibilities); performances are not stable, every time a performance is performed, it is different if for no other reason, then only because it is performed again. They have a strong phenomenal aspect, because such factors as light, space, time etc. are decisive for what audience participate in, which means that they are not merely external or accessory. Performances are multisensorial for they stress bodily interactions and reactions and this one of the ways their meanings are produced. What is more, they blur the traditional distinction between author and actor or creator and audience as all of them co-create and recreate time and again the performance. Therefore it is wrong to treat actors as vehicles of author's ideas. As a result performances are rather unpredictable and have no fixed meaning (Fischer-Lichte, 2008).

Albeit the above theory seems to be quite radical and thus contentious, for it reduces theatrical performances to unrepeatable and unique events (even if they follow a general and stable scheme), whereas the question why and how these events refer to its origin (text or scenario) is far less important. Nevertheless, its radicality is helpful for it stresses what other, more moderate theories notice, too, namely that in the case of such arts as theatre or music it is erroneous to treat actors' or musicians' play as something that serves only as a vehicle for the work of art of the creator's intention (e.g. Hamilton, 2007).

In the light of what has just been said, we may, I think, venture that gardens are like performances. If we agree on the above characteritics of gardens on the one hand and of performances on the other, we can see a striking similarity. But what does it really tell us about gardens? Are we entitled to state that what is at stake here is something more than a superficial, maybe even misleading, comparison? Is it then legitimate to suggest that we think of gardens in terms of performances or state that they are like them? Obviously, this analogy begs for clarification.

My intention is not to convince anybody that gardens are in some literal or strong sense performances, so my thesis is not, strictly speaking, ontological. My contention is, then, more epistemological in the sense that I would like to suggest that we should change – as maybe Kendall Walton would say – the category under which we think of and experience gardens. So, my aim is a modest one: it is about making a thought experiment which consists of changing our perspective and trying to treat gardens as if they were (artistic) perfomances, having in mind any possible shortcomings of such an analogy. In other words, we can treat the expression "gardens as performances" as a metaphor which given the common features shared by its two terms seems to be a well grounded one and one which has a pretty strong explanatory force.

Such an approach may at first seem paradoxical, if not even implausible, for it juxtaposes two domains that virtually could not be any more divergent from each other (human actions *vs* physical objects, events *vs* places, etc.), nevertheless it is well rooted in the tradition we are discussing. It does not differ much from when one compares gardens with architecture, painting, poetry, or land art, as whenever a philosopher states that gardens are like, say, paintings, she resorts to a metaphor, too. As a result she may grasp some of gardens' aspects that otherwise would have remained unnoticed, e.g.: comparing them with architecture makes us notice that gardens are spaces to inhabit, talking about painting stresses gardens' visual aspect so that they can be experienced as painted landscapes, finally treating gardens as poems suggests that we try to decode their hidden meanings. What we are offered in such cases is an informative comparison which, nonetheless, suppresses other aspects which thence seem to be either irrelevant or facultative, depending on the will of a gardener who may, but does not have to, include them in his project (e.g. olfactory sensations which are always present, but usually neglected as a mere inevitable background except for, say, rose gardens or scent gardens; the same holds true for the presence of animals). Now, comparing gardens with performances follows in the footsteps of the older perspectives, only that it changes the point of reference.

Artistic performances as understood by Fisher-Lichte do not seem to be any more distant from gardens than buildings, pictures or texts. If they appear so, it is rather because of the bias of the tradition, and not of any

structural resemblances joining gardens with buildings, pictures, etc. Let me repeat: in both cases we coin a metaphor whose task is to allow one better come to terms with gardens' essence. What, then, can make one opt for a specific metaphor is to what extent it sheds new light onto gardens in the sense that it broadens our view of them.

There is little doubt that traditional way of conceiving of gardens turned out to be fruitful if for no other reason than because it used to form landscape architects' minds and thus was embodied in existing gardens (had it not been for this tradition, we would have had historic gardens we actually have). At the same time, the suggested new approach does not exclude the traditional comparisons, as it does not impose a single, supposedly adequate way of experiencing a garden (as it is the case in the traditional approach: e.g. we are told that English landscape gardens are mainly to be looked at, for they consist of a sequence of views that can be admired while strolling around). It rather offers a general framework within which any manner of experiencing it fits (it is therefore conceivable to experience an English garden only visually, but it is likewise possible to experience it some other way which maybe does not meet the creator's requirements but is not any worse because of it, it is just different).

What is more, the performance metaphor underlines something which the other ones used to neglect or to push to the margin, namely the presence of nature. Although, as mentioned before, gardens are conceived of as being between art and nature, the latter's importance is likely to be highly reduced. Philosophically speaking, it counts only as a factor effectively undermining gardens' artistic status. As a result, gardens do not quite fit within art-centered aesthetics, even if their artefactual (and in majority of cases: artistic) character is hard to deny. However, it seems rather erroneus to grant nature only a negative role. Even if we are not inclined to think of gardens in terms of ecosystems, ecology etc., we appreciate nature in them and a part of the pleasure a visit to a garden or cultivating our own yard gives us stems from the fact that we can experience nature. Were we to find out that a garden is totally artificial (say, of plastic), firstly we would be, I think, terribly disappointed, and secondly, it would influence our experience, behavior, interpretation etc. It seems, then, that notwithstanding the tradition as well as gardeners' or architects' intentions possibly embedded in it, we should take nature seriously into considera-

tion, seeing it as a positive factor, namely as something which does not so much question their artefactual (artistic) status making them at best non-standard artworks, as adds a particular dimension to them.

What gardens owe to nature is their dynamic, changeable and temporal character and therefore they can be called "dynamic objects" as defined by David E. W. Fenner. According to him static aesthetic objects "are designed to stay in the forms imposed upon them by their creators for as long as possible. This list would include many buildings (...) and the vast majority of painting" (Fenner, 2006, p. 2). On the other hand "one can talk about dance and other performing arts as being inherently dynamic (...). They involve movement and change through time and through action" (Ibidem, 3). Further on he divides dynamic objects in two categories: dynamically closed objects, namely those which have "a clear beginning, a clear ending, and a clear, logical (to use that term in its broadest sense), to some degree predictable, development" and dynamically open objects which do not have such a structure and are to a large extent unpredictable (Ibidem, 3-4). The paradigm of the latter is natural objects. It seems that garden belong to the second category although they have, as it were, a structure which is nothing less than their project. As a consequence gardens may be an interesting topic for environmental aesthetics (e.g. Carlson, 2000; Berleant, 2007). Incidentally, gardens being an example of a dialectical relationship between art and nature (Crawford, 1983),should be analyzed both by art-centered and environmental aesthetics.

It seems that thinking of gardens in terms of performance favours grasping the dynamic character of gardens without losing their structure stemming from their creator's intentions. In order to clarify the analogy being discussed, we need to answer at least two questions: who performs and what is performed? In order to do that, we may note that in plastic arts such as painting, there are two figures involved: creator and beholder, whereas in performing arts there is a creator, performers and audience-participants (Graham, 2005, pp. 149-163). We may add that the creator and the performer might be the same person as well as the performer and the beholder might be one. Now, if we think of gardens in terms of plastic arts, we treat them as paintings which were created at a specific moment of time by a landscape architect (we obviously do not take into consideration garden workers) who, moreover, coded some meanings in it. Our aim is,

then, to appreciate and read them just as we do with paintings. But when we say that gardens are like performances, we insert them in the second grid according to which there is a creator of the garden, performers of the garden, and audience participating in the garden. Can it be done?

In my opinion it can in two slightly different manners. On the one hand we may assume that the landscape architect is the creator but not so much of the garden itself as of its project. In many respects a plan of a garden is similar to a musical score or a scenario. To expand this analogy further we can say that the architect is like a composer or playwright who notwithstanding her intentions will never see her piece accomplished, performed once and for all. Visitors are, then, participants, and all the elements of the garden, by which I mean mainly animate and inanimate nature, are the performers – not to say: actors – while such factors as weather, temperature, light etc. play an analogous role to the one of, say, lighting of the stage. From this point of view, a garden is like a theatrical play. On the other hand, if we are more likely to assume a post-human perspective, we may treat gardens more *a la* 20-century artistic performance and Fischer-Lichte's theory and state that - as in the previous suggestion – the architect is the creator of the garden, while visitors, nature and all other elements are performers. In this case there is no passive, distanced audience whatsoever and nature is as active as people involved. But no matter which solution we opt for, a garden is more like a performing art than a painting.

The above suggestion may sound paradoxical, but, I think, it is only because we are used to a certain – predominantly modern or rather 18 th-century – way of thinking of gardens in terms of paintings or architecture or even texts. In parentheses we may note that it is not only the fate of gardens, because sometimes we tend to treat in the same manner for example music and again this is the 18th c. heritage (Graham, 2005, pp. 153-154).

Anyway, what does it mean to treat a garden in terms of, say, painting? It means that we find it to be predominantly visual – a garden is a series of subsequent views that all together combine into a fixed shape possessing some fixed meaning conferred to it by the architect and coded through a passive medium, namely nature. Despite the fact that nature is a necessary element in the garden, because of its untamedness it is conceived of as a having detrimental effect, e.g. it can physically destroy the architect's project.

Now, our everyday experience which is reflected by the above arguments against gardens being standard artworks tells us something different: gardens are not only visual but also made of everything that might be smelled, heard and touched. We are sensually engaged in them. And as far as their meaning is concerned we can, obviously, muse on what the architect could have wanted to convey, but on the other hand it is as much obvious that what counts is what a garden expresses to us here and now and not only on, as it were, a discursive level, but on an emotional one as well (see the discussion in Treib, 2011). In other words, what characterizes them is their atmosphere which is partly planned by the creator, but partly emerges from the features of the garden regardless of the intentions of the author and it exists only inasmuch as it is actually sensed by someone (Cooper, 2006, pp. 47-53). This is one of the reasons why gardens can be defined "psychotopias" (Richardson, 2005).

Summing up, the category of performance which seems to fit the everyday idea of what a garden is best. At the same time it seems so vast and flexible that it covers more reductive approaches as those which tend to treat gardens as paintings. Visual contemplation ceases to be the dominant approach and turns into just one way of participating in a garden. And presumably it is not the most illuminating or rewarding one.

What does it mean, then, to think of gardens in terms of performances? What does it mean to treat them as performances as visitors? First of all, it means to stress their event-like character. Going to a garden is not like going to a museum: it is not our visit to be an event, but what is visited itself is an event gathering ourselves and nature with a frame offered by the architect. Second of all, it means to see gardens as constant "processes" or "actions" performed by nature and partially planned by humans in which we start to participate as soon as we enter them**.** And this means that nature is something more than a sheer material used by the architect or gardener. Nature is more like an actor in a play. Finally, it means that there is no fixed meaning of a garden, in the sense that garden is not a medium conveying a meaning established by the architect or gardener – its meaning is at best created individually on the basis of his „suggestions".

This approach seems fruitful for other reasons, too. By pointing out a recognized kind of art, it helps to grasp the fusion of art and nature, doing justice to the latter, which is no longer treated as a necessary but

somewhat negative (or at best: neutral) element. Finally, it helps to deal with the fact that no garden has a stable, pre-established meaning. In sum, it is only when we think of gardens in terms of performances we obtain "conceptual foundations" thanks to which we can analyze gardens in their phenomenality, changeability, but at the same time take into account their long history, different uses they were put into, a variety of interpretations etc. In a word, if we agree – as we should – saying that what is characteristic for gardens is their spatiotemporality, then treating them as performances seems to be a solution devoid of contradictions.

There is still another reason why the suggested perspective seems illuminating. It favors questions that are typical for performing arts, but that are less obvious in the case of plastic arts. The main question is no longer whether we manage to correctly decode the meaning conveyed by the creator of the garden, but rather whether the performance in which we participate is in a way authentic? Do we and does nature perform in the way it was planned by the architect or gardener? What are the limits of the correct performance? Can we cross them and if so, then how far can we go? Such questions allow one to reconsider the historical dimension of gardens which are re-created or even re-enacted by every single visitor during her every visit.

One final remark seems to the point. Even if one agrees that it is important to stress the dynamic character of gardens, one may ask whether there are no better, less controversial candidates for metaphorical reference than performance. 20th century abounded in artistic projects that stressed art's changeability, unpredictability, temporality etc., as well as turned audience into co-creators, e.g. happening, installation art or interactive art. Why, then, should one chose performance? The answer is double. On the one hand, were we to think of gardens in terms of the just mentioned genres, we would well grasp the processual dimension of the former, but, nevertheless, we would again reduce nature to the role of sheer medium which cannot cross the borders imposed upon it by the creator. On the other hand, there is another sense of the term "performance" which is useful in the context, and far less important in the case of the mentioned genres.

David Davies states that artistic performances are "of a distinctive kind, in virtue not of their manifest properties per se, but of the way in

which their manifest properties are used by performers to articulate the content of their performances. Artworks in general, and artistic performances in particular, call for a distinctive kind of "regard" from receivers in virtue of how they are intended to work" (Davies, 2011, p. 14). In other words, the action as performance remains unaltered, but at the same time it gains another dimension: it is about how the action is carried on and about how this "how" exerts influence on the action itself. In a similar vein Roger Scruton observes that there is a difference between a tree growing in a wood and a tree growing in a garden as the latter enters into a relation with people in the garden whereas the former is, as it were, solitary (Scruton, 2000, p. 83). We may, therefore, say, that by virtue of being enclosed in a garden, nature is not only what it is but is seen as nature or – to put it differently – is seen as that which is conceived of as nature within particular culture.

What this suggestion implies might be that such a tree growing outside a garden cannot make us ruminate on what nature means to us. Such a conclusion would be obviously false, but what does seem to be true is that such a tree – contrary to one in a garden – does not demand from us any particular look or consideration: it does not perform its growing, it just grows. In other words, a tree in a garden makes us focus our attention on its naturalness or rather makes us aesthetically engage in its naturalness: without us it would not perform it and as a result we would not pay attention to what it means for a tree to be natural not only in the garden, but outside of it as well. This is how we can interpret gardens as heterotopias.

To sum up, the category of performance seems to allow one to grasp and solve the main problems stemming from the fact that gardens are spatiotemporal phenomena involving not only humans' intentions and actions, but inhuman (belonging to animate and inanimate nature) actions and processes as well. If we, then, agree that what is essential for gardens is that they somehow mediate between culture and nature, then – again – it is useful to conceive of them as performances in which human and inhuman actors participate on equal basis having varying roles assigned to them, which means that dialectical relation between art (culture) and nature is not stable but something produced on and on again, whenever we enter a garden.

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