

Gardens An Essay On The Human Condition Robert Pogue Harrison

From the PREFACE . To many excellent people who take a gloomy view of life, studies of art and beauty seem to be but trifling ; I must therefore urge as an excuse for this essay that the greater part of it was written during a period of broken health, when slowly recovering from the effects of over-work. Further, I would plead that a serious purpose lies behind it, namely, that of influencing the newly recovered art of garden design. The revival of garden-craft is the work of English architects, more particularly of Sedding, R. Blomfield and F. Inigo Thomas. But still, as in the days of Fynes Moryson, the formal garden in England falls short of the great examples of the Italian Renaissance; it is seldom related as it should be to the surrounding scenery; it is often wanting in repose and nearly always in imagination. During the last few years several sumptuous volumes have appeared illustrating the old gardens of Italy, yet except for a few hints given by Mrs. Wharton in her most valuable and charming book, little or nothing has been said about principles. If the world is to make great gardens again, we must both discover and apply in the changed circumstances of modern life the principles which guided the garden-makers of the Renaissance, and must be ready to learn all that science can teach us concerning the laws of artistic presentment. I intended to publish with this essay another on the history of the garden during the Dark Ages, but here again Time, against whom I am beginning to have serious grounds of complaint, has been too much for me. However, so far as matter is concerned it is complete, and I hope to issue it in the autumn. Everyone who has travelled in Italy appreciates the courtesy and kindness shown by Italians to strangers of all nationalities - perhaps one would not be wrong in saying more especially to Englishmen. Since I first began in the early 'nineties to study old Italian gardens I have visited more than two hundred in all parts of the country, and I cannot sufficiently express my thanks to the owners. -George R. Sitwell, May, 1909.

A little girl comes to live in his uncle's lonely house and discovers a boy, her handicapped cousin and a mystery of a locked garden.

Published in 1774, *Essay on Gardens* is one of the earliest texts showing the progressive shift in French taste from the classical model of the gardens at Versailles to the picturesque or natural style of garden design in the late eighteenth century. In this formulation of his ideas concerning landscape, Claude-Henri Watelet describes an ideal farm and also his own very real garden, *Moulin Joli*, near Paris. He advances the theory that the useful and the pleasurable must be combined in the planning, preservation, and decoration of the land by offering a relatively novel design that uses experimental methods to create a comfortable estate. The result is a horticultural and ecological laboratory that includes a residence, a farm, stables, a dairy, an apiary, a mill, walks, vistas, flower beds, an area reserved for medicinal plants, decorative statues, a medical laboratory, and even a small infirmary for ailing members of the community. Given the wide scholarly interest in the field of garden design and its history, this first English edition of Watelet's small but influential book will interest historians of landscape design as well as students of the history of architecture. Joseph Disponzio's informative introduction to Samuel Danon's masterful translation situates the *Essay on Gardens* within the framework of other landscape and garden treatises of the late eighteenth century. Although the original text was not illustrated, this edition includes a selection of charming drawings and etchings of *Moulin Joli* by Watelet himself, Hubert Robert, and others.

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Humans have long turned to gardens - both real and imaginary - for sanctuary from the frenzy and tumult that surrounds them. Those gardens may be as far away from everyday reality as Gilgamesh's garden of the gods or as near as our own backyard, but in their very conception and the marks they bear of human care and cultivation, gardens stand as restorative, nourishing, necessary havens. With *Gardens*, Robert Pogue Harrison graces readers with a thoughtful, wide-ranging examination of the many ways gardens evoke the human condition. Moving from the gardens of ancient philosophers to the gardens of homeless people in contemporary New York, he shows how, again and again, the garden has served as a check against the destruction and losses of history. The ancients, explains Harrison, viewed gardens as both a model and a location for the laborious self-cultivation and self-improvement that are essential to serenity and enlightenment, an association that has continued throughout the ages. The Bible and Qur'an; Plato's Academy and Epicurus's Garden School; Zen rock and Islamic carpet gardens; Boccaccio, Rihaku, Capek, Cao Xueqin, Italo Calvino, Ariosto, Michel Tournier, and Hannah Arendt - all come into play as this work explores the ways in which the concept and reality of the garden has informed human thinking about mortality, order, and power. Alive with the echoes and arguments of Western thought, *Gardens* is a fitting continuation of the intellectual journeys of Harrison's earlier classics, *Forests* and *The Dominion of the Dead*. Voltaire famously urged us to cultivate our gardens; with this compelling volume, Robert Pogue Harrison reminds us of the nature of that responsibility - and its enduring importance to humanity.

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Excerpt from *An Essay on the Making of Gardens: Being a Study of Old Italian Gardens, of the Nature of Beauty, and the Principles Involved in Garden Design* I intended to publish with this essay another on the history of the garden during the Dark Ages, but here again Time, against whom I am beginning to have serious grounds of complaint, has been too much for me. However, so far as matter is concerned it is complete, and I hope to issue it in the autumn. Every one who has travelled in Italy appreciates the courtesy and kindness shown by Italians to strangers of all nationalities perhaps one would not be wrong in saying more especially to Englishmen. Since I first began in the early 'nineties to study old Italian gardens I have visited more than two hundred in all parts of the country, and I cannot sufficiently express my thanks to the owners. About the Publisher Forgotten Books publishes hundreds of thousands of rare and classic books. Find more at www.forgottenbooks.com This book is a reproduction of an important historical work. Forgotten Books uses state-of-the-art technology to digitally reconstruct the work, preserving the original format whilst repairing imperfections present in the aged copy. In rare cases, an imperfection in the original, such as a blemish or missing page, may be replicated in our edition. We do, however, repair the vast majority of imperfections successfully; any imperfections that remain are

