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Dissertation

Ideologies, Reception and Public Sphere Formation - a Case Study of the 19th
Century Birmingham Botanical Gardens

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation critically examines the conception, design, and spatial practices of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens in the 19th century. Through the collaborative efforts of a section of the city's elites and according to the plan by John Claudius Loudon, it was established to fulfil scientific and social functions. The current investigation is based on the careful observation of the site, archival research, and textual analysis and employs *Thirdspace*, a concept proposed by Edward Soja. *Thirdspace* encompasses the two other spatial dimensions - perceived and conceived spaces - while opening up new analytical possibilities. The first chapter links the design features and material components to the scientific, industrialist and imperialist interests. The second chapter addresses the contemporary reception of the space and its activities while implicating it in generating a public sphere. The spatial activities also facilitated the expression of the identities related to socioeconomic class, race and gender, which will be the focus of the third chapter. This research reveals that the formation, design features and activities of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens were imbued with multiple ideologies, rendering it a material manifestation and an active agent of power and knowledge while reinforcing contemporary sociocultural dynamics.

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STATEMENT

I wish to thank my tutor, Dr Peter Muir, whose constant guidance and support were invaluable in completing this dissertation. This research has been inspired by the interplay of the social and material aspects of landscapes and their mutual dependency in shaping the other, which was the focus of Section 3 of the A844 module. I confirm that this work has been prepared entirely by myself and has not previously been submitted as part of a degree or other qualification of The Open University or any other university or institution.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation engages with the designed landscape of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens (henceforth referred to as ‘the Gardens’) established in Edgbaston in 1832. (1) The need for such a facility is underscored by an exponentially growing population and the smoke, grime, noise and unsightliness associated with the industrial development. Designed by John Claudius Loudon, the formation and operation of this 12-acre space was mediated by the collaborative effort of various professionals and volunteers.¹ (2) Loudon’s plan incorporated a pleasure ground, botanical areas for trees, an American ground, a kitchen, an agricultural and experimental area with heated walls, circular glasshouses, a series of fountains culminating in a grand jet, grass walks and aviaries.² Seemingly, the aspirations for the Gardens were scientific – to study, cultivate and circulate new species of plants arriving in Britain from its colonies, and social – to provide a vital open space for the society. However, the implications of the activities organised for the visitors and inhabitants of the surrounding areas were extensive - rendering the Gardens ‘far from a neutral container’.³

To reveal the various facets of the Gardens’ space, this study employs the concept of *Thirdspace* by the cultural geographer Edward Soja.⁴ In his postmodern reading of space, Soja reinterprets and extends Henri Lefebvre’s “three moments of social space” or the “*trialectic of space*”, encompassing perceived, conceived and lived spaces.⁵ While Soja’s First and Second spaces are analogous to perceived and conceived dimensions proposed by Lefebvre, *Thirdspace* closely approximates the lived aspect or the ‘spaces of representation’ - as Lefebvre preferred.⁶ Due to its

¹ Ballard 1983:11-13

² Ballard 1983:20

³ Livingstone 2003: 7

⁴ Soja 1996; Livingstone 2003: 54

⁵ Soja 1996: 65

⁶ Soja 1996: 67

‘contemporary relevance’, Soja emphasised *Thirdspace* analysis or ‘*thirthing-as-othering*’ as a vantage point for reading social spaces – ‘a position from which to encompass, understand and potentially transform all spaces’.⁷ While being ‘symbolic’, these spaces ‘contain all other real and imagined spaces simultaneously’.⁸ They may be charged with ‘politics’, ‘racism’, ‘capitalism’ and many other ideologies that ‘concretise the social relations of production, reproduction, exploitation, domination and subjection’; they may be ‘dominated spaces’, the ‘spaces of the peripheries’, ‘spaces for struggle’, ‘liberation’ or ‘emancipation’.⁹ *Thirdspace* not only critiques ‘*Firstspace* and *Secondspace* modes of thought’, but also adds ‘new possibilities’ to spatial understanding, making it a ‘possibilities machine’.¹⁰ Thus, employing the ‘*Thirdspace*’ approach exposes various analytical routes for the ‘multifarious’ space of the Gardens.¹¹

The first chapter examines the design and material components of the Gardens, unravelling how these manifested power and knowledge, linking key elements to the British political interests in the 19th century - specifically industrialist and imperialist goals. The historical context of the creation of the garden is significant in framing this chapter, like the increased import of exotic plants from the colonies, the rapid growth of the industries in and around Birmingham, mass internal migration and the design features enabled by new technology. The design and materiality were also foundational in facilitating spatial practices, considered in the second and third chapters. The second chapter concerns the contemporary reception of the evolving material fabric and social and scientific activities throughout the 19th century. By drawing on the recent developments of the concept, it also implicates the Gardens in the production of a collective agency – a public sphere -

⁷ Soja 1996: 68-69, 81

⁸ Soja 1996: 68-69

⁹ Soja 1996: 68

¹⁰ Soja 1996: 81

¹¹ Livingstone 2003: 54

through shared consciousness among private individuals operating collaboratively towards a common goal.¹² The spatial practices also facilitated the enactment of identities defined by the contemporary society. The third chapter highlights how exclusionary messages entrenched these practices - reinforcing social segregation.

There is an increasing realisation of landscape's role as a matrix of human interactions with nature and its instrumentality in deciphering sociocultural processes.¹³ While Soja, following other social theorists - like Lefebvre and Michel Foucault, proposed an analytical model to interpret space, interdisciplinarity in academic enquiry of history of garden spaces is gaining more significance recently.¹⁴ The recent recognition of the need for 'extra-visual considerations' in landscape studies owing to the observer's movement, underscores the complex 'interactive process between humans, landscape and nature'.¹⁵ Scholarly interest in landscape as an active vehicle - "an instrument or agent of cultural power" and its relations with ideologies has also gained eminence in research.¹⁶ Ideologies of gender, class and race in relation to landscape have interested geographers and landscape historians alike.¹⁷ Unraveling such ideological connotations of a garden site: geomorphology, design and built forms, horticultural objects, 'circulation routes', 'sight lines', 'perspective views', 'visitors' experience', constitutes a fresh interpretation of garden spaces.¹⁸ Such approaches have allowed, on one hand, infer 18th century English colonial gardens as sites of power linking social hierarchy to English estates, on the other shown the materiality of the *Garden of Versailles* to be a medium for manifesting social position, power and statecraft.¹⁹

¹² Calhoun 2005; Warner 2002; Fraser 1992; Habermas 1989; Hartigan 2005; Calhoun 2017; Cody 2011

¹³ DümpeImann 2011: 631

¹⁴ Birksted 2003: 6; DeLue and Elkins 2007; Kolodney 2012; Hillier 2008; DümpeImann 2011; Foucault and Miskowiec 1986; Soja 1996

¹⁵ Birksted 2003: 10, 18; Bois 1984

¹⁶ Harris 1999: 436; Harris 2007a; Harris 2007b

¹⁷ Rose et al 2014: 146- 190; Harris 1999: 439; Elizabeth Kryder-Reid 1994; Leone 1984; Schenker 1994

¹⁸ Harris 1999: 439-40

¹⁹ Mukherjee 1990; Williamson 1993: 4-9; Mukherjee 2002: 28

The embeddedness of the manipulation of the ‘object-viewer relationship’ in the practical aspects of design endorses landscape production as a social act.²⁰

Started as ‘physic’ gardens for the study of medicine, botanical gardens transformed in the 18th and 19th centuries due to direct nexus with the discoveries in the colonies, soon becoming locations for ‘botanical imperialism’.²¹ While these plant collections were economically advantageous for the empire, their display showcased power, order and knowledge.²² These gardens were a stark demonstration of taming of nature and distant lands, legitimised through the ‘enlightened rationality’ of European cultures.²³ A study of arboretums and botanical gardens in Britain by Paul Elliott has discussed their varied motivation and purpose - scientific, commercial, medicinal, pleasure and nationalism, emphasising their potential role in mediating human-nature interaction - rendering them, like many other landscapes, ‘constitutive of systems of human interaction’.²⁴ Zaheer Baber has argued that botanical gardens, - both in colonies and at home, through facilitating scientific knowledge, which had significant implication in colonial pursuits - was among ‘the key sites – physical, intellectual, social, cultural - in which colonial power was literally rooted.’²⁵ Furthermore, slavery has been connected to British colonial botanic gardens in the 18th and 19th century.²⁶ A recent anthropological approach by John Hartigan examined a new understanding of the public, in particular, the ‘presence of nonhumans’ in the ‘multispecies assemblage’ of botanical gardens that, in keeping with Bruno Latour’s recent intervention, is constitutive of the public comprised of multispecies.²⁷

²⁰ Harris 1999: 439; Harris and Ruggles: 7; Kolodney 2012:100

²¹ Livingstone 2003: 53-54; Elliot et al 2007: 14

²² Livingstone 2003: 55; Dümpelmann 2013: 11

²³ Livingstone 2003: 52

²⁴ Elliott 2007; Livingstone 2003: 7

²⁵ Baber 2016: 679

²⁶ Williams 2021

²⁷ Hartigan 2015: 485, 501; Latour 2005

The above investigations and the scholarly attention to the production of social spaces in community gardens point to the dearth of in-depth and well-deserved engagements with the sociocultural aspects of botanical gardens, which have been mainly the subject of scientific and historical enquiry.²⁸ Thus, the interplaying ideologies - social, political and scientific – involved in the creation of botanical gardens and the synergy between their material and social components warrants further systematic investigation with a site-specific focus. Moreover, the contemporary reception of these spaces and their impacts on users remains unattended. The current research addresses this paucity. The employment of a socio-spatial approach for a botanical garden, particularly the concept of *Thirdspace*, is novel here. While this provides the overall direction, an additional range of scholarly texts, including - Dorothy Holland, Harriet Ritvo, Chandra Mukherji, Craig Calhoun, Michael Warner and Nancy Fraser, Dell Upton, Amanda Vickery, Erving Goffman and Michael Baxandall, remains crucial for drawing the inferences. Alongside careful observation of the site, the archival materials - minutes of meetings, newspaper reports, letters, and photographs held locally at the Wolfson Centre for Archival Research (WCAR) and Cadbury Research Library (CRL) have been indispensable for this research. Critical reading of the comprehensive compilation of historical facts - *An Oasis of Delight* by Phillada Ballard has further informed the current investigation.²⁹ This dissertation argues that the conception and material composition of the Gardens in the 19th century - imbued with power and knowledge, had links with imperialism and industrialisation. Moreover, it establishes that the evolving materiality and practices of the Gardens were variously received while facilitating the expression of contemporary social identities and relations and engendering a public sphere through its coordinated operation.

²⁸ Granzow 2017; Glover 2005; Barron 2017; Djokić 2017, Ballard 2003

²⁹ Ballard 2003

CHAPTER 1: CONCEPTION, MATERIALITY AND DESIGN: IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCES

Although garden spaces remained sheltered from political discourses and controversies, they were not ‘apolitical’ - befitting Dorothy Holland’s *Figured World* model of ‘politics by other means’, which provided a theoretical framing to identify the late 17th century emulative design and material features at the *Garden of Versailles* as an effort to create Rome to ‘imply logics of power by analogy’.³⁰ A similar approach in this chapter elucidates how the conception, design and material fabric of the Gardens in the 19th century linked to the British colonial and industrial imperatives – the sources of the new wealth, which remained largely hidden from the ordinary people. Consumption of this wealth through proper imitation of fashion became a statement of elite taste and social position as the traditional modes of showcasing hierarchy based on inheritance declined. In the 18th and 19th century England, for the recently turned wealthy - through fortunes earned by colonial domination and intensive industrial growth, managing vast expanses of estates became a significant preoccupation.³¹ Owing to this manner of acquisition, these privately owned ‘naturalised gardens’ were ingrained with power and new meaning.³² The pace at which foreign plant specimens populated these private estates exceeded any previous period, an attribute shared by the botanical establishments.

The impetus for organised collection of botanical specimens, evident from the rate at which botanical gardens emerged in the first half of the 19th century, ties in with British colonial aims; seventeen new gardens were founded within this period - usually by private societies, comprised

³⁰Dorothy Holland cited in Mukherjee 2012: 512; Urrieta 2007; Mukherjee 2012: 511

³¹ Mukherji 2002:28

³² Mukherji 2002:28

of the new elite class.³³ After a failed attempt in 1801, the successful passing of the proposal to open the Gardens in 1829 by the Birmingham Botanical and Horticultural Society indicates recovered prosperity of the local merchants and landowners over the two previous decades of success of the local industries and businesses.³⁴ The burgeoning industries, poor air quality and general unpleasantness due to the nearly doubled population within the first few decades causally impacted the conception of the Gardens.³⁵ The success of this organisation was significant. Surprisingly, within the first two years of its official opening, the Gardens boasted over 9000 species of plants, including many foreign arrivals; this astounding rate allowed it to surpass London's, which had opened much earlier at Chiswick in 1823.³⁶ (3)

Harriet Ritvo linked the enhanced import of new species with the European colonies in various geographies.³⁷ These were appropriated in gardens, transforming them into enormous collections of exotic species. These assemblies, referred to as botanical or zoological - depending on their constitution, endowed the word 'garden' with a new sense; rather than suggesting 'a cultivated territory walled off from the wilderness', the new meaning alluded to 'wilderness walled off from the surrounding civilisation'.³⁸ Thus, Humphrey Repton's 'juxtaposition' of exotic and local varieties in the gardens of Woburn Abbey or Ashridge Park was not simply a result of availing the 'opportunity to possess and adopt these exotic species' but the new 'sensibilities' that 'inclined and empowered' Europeans to 'exploit such opportunities', which corresponded with a revised relationship between the human beings and nature - resulting from an enhanced understanding of

³³ Ballard 2003: 15

³⁴ *Aris's Gazette* cited in Dent 1973: 421-22; Ballard 2003: 16

³⁵ Ballard 2003: 15

³⁶ George Chadwick cited in Ballard 2003: 25; Knowles 1834: MS 1520/2/1/1/1

³⁷ Ritvo 1992: 368

³⁸ Ritvo 1992: 368

the latter through scientific advances.³⁹ Although the dissemination of production excess and an insatiable demand for raw materials caused by the industrial revolution fuelled the European expansionist voyages in the 18th and 19th centuries, the journeys were also driven by a specific ‘cultural predisposition’ - a combination of curiosity, fetish and a perception of the non-European ‘other’ world - the exotic.⁴⁰ A guide for the collectors - *Exotic Botany* by Sir James E. Smith, the founder and president of the *British Linnean Society*, was laden with fetishising rare plants to enthuse imagination and desire among its elite readers equipped with financial means to collect and grow such plants while enhancing botanical taste.⁴¹ Importantly, there was an eagerness to possess exotics among the Gardens’ proponents - the owners of the local industries, foreign merchants and royalty - capable of engaging agents to collect rare seeds and plants; some already possessed sizeable collections of exotic plants.⁴² Correspondence regarding the import of apple trees from America to an eminent local businessman, Mathew Boulton, testifies to the taste and intent of such acquisitions.⁴³ (4) Notably, Boulton chaired the first meeting in 1801 proposing to create the Gardens.⁴⁴

The Gardens’ collection not only reflected its effective strategy – through curator David Cameron’s connections, it confirmed people’s eagerness to consume the exotic and the fruits of the empire. Loudon’s integration of picturesque and geometrical elements was in keeping with the commission. The overall planting scheme followed the Gardenesque style - a method created by Loudon to provide each plant ‘an immediate environment of inviolable space around it’.⁴⁵

³⁹ Ritvo 1992: 368; Elliott et al: 7

⁴⁰ Ringmar 2006

⁴¹ Tobin 2004: 175; James Smith cited in Tobin 2004: 181-183

⁴² Ballard 2003: 27

⁴³ Price 1828: MS 3782/13/20/69; Earle and Earle 1828: MS 3782/13/20/69

⁴⁴ *Aris’s Gazette* 1801: MS3782/21/25/17; WCAR 1801: MS 3782/12/112/95;

⁴⁵ Simo 1988: 179

Gardenesque was inspired not only to showcase the inherent beauty of plants but also maximise the aesthetic potential of the new exotic specimens by allowing them to flourish optimally without intervention from the surrounding flora.⁴⁶ Gardenesque also befitted smaller plots of middleclass residences who Loudon ardently encouraged to take up gardening, which for him was crucial for every family - especially in the newly industrialised cities with associated socio-economic demands. The extraordinary rate of industrial developments in the 19th century led to unprecedented demographic shift and sociocultural change.⁴⁷ While Birmingham's population grew by more than forty per cent between 1821 and 1841, the resulting rapid and forced obliteration of the rural landscapes was reflected in their enhanced cultural value and picturesque aesthetics of planting.⁴⁸ 'Picturesque naturalism' and longing for the undisturbed countryside also coincided with the 'popularity and fashionableness of tree collecting', especially novel varieties.⁴⁹

Imported specimens were most prominent in British gardens, resonating imperial success, and for Loudon, cultivating exotics in artificial conditions was an accomplishment that elevated gardening into a "work of art".⁵⁰ His enthusiasm for the exotics extended further than their optimal planting arrangement in keeping with his attitude of creating a tropical 'microcosm'; he promoted the idea of an aviary and a zoo to complement the exotic plant collection as later additions at the Gardens.⁵¹ Loudon went even further. In 1817, he recommended including 'examples of different human species' from distant parts of the globe "imitated, habited in their particular costumes" to "serve as gardeners or curators of the different productions".⁵² Given that the material culture of a

⁴⁶ Simo 1988: 169

⁴⁷ Elliott 2007: 7

⁴⁸ Raymond Williams cited in Schenker 2013: 114

⁴⁹ Elliott 2007: 7

⁵⁰ John Loudon cited in Laird 2013: 78

⁵¹ Ballard 2003: 20; Elliott et al 2007: 11

⁵² John Loudon cited in Dümpelmann 2013: 12

space may be conducive to specific imaginings – as highlighted in the case of the French formal gardens - planning and design of the private English gardens seem constitutive of the material politics to legitimise the new definition of social standing gained through colonial wealth, manifesting affluence, power, discipline and order over nature as well as the ability to integrate diverse natural elements within an organised whole.⁵³ While Kew Garden’s escalating visitor count indicated public’s keenness to scrutinise the wild exotic species in an ‘orderly, predictable and accurately labelled display’, the acquired exotic plants, in addition to informing the schema of the botanical gardens, also enabled the ‘middleclass hobbyist to construct a miniature empire in the back garden’ which could ‘easily expand to include a slice of the tropics’.⁵⁴

Many of such tropical and subtropical novelties constituted extravagant displays in Loudon’s pioneering and intricately designed iron and glass conservatories – an assimilation of modern technology for maintaining artificial climate for the exotic varieties, like hot-house plants and dry-stove plants.⁵⁵ However, a glasshouse as a focal point in a botanical garden, as seen in the plan for Birmingham, was unusual and ambitious, and a late tendency in Loudon’s design attitude of combining ‘utility with beauty’.⁵⁶ This circular arrangement of glasshouses, to cover over one and a quarter acre, included underground steam pipes heated by two central boilers.⁵⁷ (2) A tunnel connected it to the main road to facilitate the service access. While eight Tuscan pillars were designed to support the cistern supplying water to the ‘beehive’- shaped hothouses and the jets, an overshot wheel functioning as a pump was created to maintain the water circulation.⁵⁸ Although Loudon’s dome-shaped glasshouse was not accomplished at the Gardens, his innovative

⁵³ Sherry Ortner cited in Mukherjee 2012: 512- 13; Mukherjee 1990

⁵⁴ Ritvo 1992: 374; Ritvo 1992: 371-3

⁵⁵ John Loudon cited in Dümpelmann 2013: 12; Ritvo 1992: 372; Simo 165-190

⁵⁶ Simo 1988: 4

⁵⁷ Ballard 1983: 18-21, Simo 1988: 182 -183

⁵⁸ Simo 1988: 182-83

combination of curved glazing bar in wrought iron with ridge and furrow glazing was the focus of his many experiments.⁵⁹ The hothouse design, most famously applied at the Crystal Palace exhibition of 1851 in Hyde Park, was informed by the ‘calculations of the angles of the sun’s rays at different times of the day’ showcasing Loudon’s attitude of surpassing “antiquated rules and precedents”.⁶⁰ The proposed replacement of wood and cast iron with wrought iron and copper for the frames and sashes for increased durability and sunlight while achieving lightness and elegance of the structure, was “the greatest improvement” so far in the garden “architecture” for Loudon.⁶¹ The continued use of metal for horticultural constructions was consequential to the mechanisation of their production process.⁶² In Birmingham, after rejection of Loudon’s plan, an ‘elliptical conservatory’ and a linear arrangement of hothouses were completed by a local manufacturer.⁶³ Nevertheless, Loudon’s ambition to accomplish a “living museum” in his glasshouses - comprising every species of plants and aided by the installation of modern devices, like automatic control of temperature inside a hothouse - proposed in the “*Hints for a National Garden*”, testifies to the emphasis he attached to collection, accumulation and scientific propagation of plants from different destinations.⁶⁴ The rationale behind Loudon’s design seems in keeping with the cultural significance and curiosity the exotic varieties generated.

Loudon’s scheme, published in *The Gardener’s Magazine* of August 1832, carefully selected planting to accomplish both the scientific and ornamental purposes while accounting for the topography of the land.⁶⁵ The success of a botanical establishment depended on the designer –

⁵⁹ Simo 1988: 8; Simo 1988: 112; Laird 2013: 78

⁶⁰ Simo 1988: 8; John Loudon in Louw: 47

⁶¹ John Loudon cited in Simo 1988: 106, 114 -16

⁶² Louw 1987: 50

⁶³ Ballard 1983: 20-21

⁶⁴ John Loudon cited in Simo 1988: 105-6, John Loudon cited in Simo 1988: 116

⁶⁵ Ballard 1983: 19

suitable for someone with scientific and professional knowledge of rare varieties of plants and the infrastructure to grow them, advanced survey techniques and soil chemistry in addition to a connection with the markets and collectors. Plants were directly supplied to such institutions throughout the 19th century, constantly shaping their form. For example, plant hunters like Ernest Wilson contributed enormously to shaping the Gardens. Procuring ideal botanical varieties was a significant focus of contemporary horticultural societies. Connoisseurial botany was expertly employed to delink specimens from their origin and transform them into desirable objects for consumption in Europe, befitting what Latour identifies as “abstracting” – where local knowledge became “universal”.⁶⁶ For Latour, central to this is the complex process of ‘inscription’, which involves ‘decontextualisation’, ‘translation’ and ‘recontextualization’ and may include sketches and descriptive texts of plants, people, and landscapes, measurements of longitude, latitude, distances, depths, heights, charts of the stars’ movements, tides, and weather patterns.⁶⁷ ‘Inscription’ facilitates “abstraction”, which according to Latour, comprises various stages, whereby “each stage extracts elements out of the stage below to gather in one place as many resources as possible”.⁶⁸

The addition of these resources is similar to “cycles of accumulation” – repeatedly familiarising and obtaining things that are “distant”; it is an ‘empowering’ phenomenon as it endows the ‘ability to visualise, without actually seeing a place, its people, its plants, and other resources’.⁶⁹ Further, cultivating flora accumulated from ‘other’ parts of the world simulated the capacity to ‘tame’ wilderness from distant geographies. When introducing the idea of botanical gardens in 1758, John Hill articulated that such collections should distinctly represent the “four great regions of the earth”

⁶⁶ Bruno Latour cited in Tobin 1999: 212, 214

⁶⁷ Tobin 1999: 214; Tobin 2004: 176-177; Latour 1999: 24-79

⁶⁸ Bruno Latour cited in Tobin 1999: 214-15; Tobin 2004: 176-77

⁶⁹ Bruno Latour cited in Tobin 1999: 213

- Europe, Africa, America, and Asia, reminding “*of the climes whence they come*” – thus reducing a ‘global macrocosm to a microcosm’, which seems an ideological extension of the 18th century French botanical gardens.’⁷⁰ Accordingly, rockeries represented miniature mountains. James Bateman’s gardens, created in 1850 at Biddulph Grange in Staffordshire, evoked Egyptian landscapes, the Himalayas, and China; rockeries were installed in Birmingham in 1895.⁷¹ Such “cabinet of curiosities” exemplified the exotic “other” through miniaturised imitation of significant structures and the accompanying acclimatised plants - transporting the visitor to the far reaches of the empire.⁷² This ordered re-presentation inspired people to venture to new destinations - their wilderness ‘domesticated, civilised and ordered’, making familiar and desirable the distant places aiding further accumulation of information.⁷³ Resultingly, many Europeans made the new colonies home.⁷⁴

Art - botanical, ethnographic, and landscape illustrations - were effective forms of ‘inscriptions’.⁷⁵ A recent exhibition displaying botanical paintings by the Mughal Court painters in India capturing the detailed morphology and attractiveness of specimens exemplifies this. Intriguingly, these paintings needed the approval of expert collectors like Joseph Banks at the Kew Gardens before being published.⁷⁶ Establishing global dominance from a distance through ‘inscriptions’ was crucially supported by economic, technological and military prowess - allowing “a point to become a centre by acting at a distance on many other points”.⁷⁷ Latour’s concept of technoscience helps to interpret the relationship between power and knowledge in the context of

⁷⁰ John Hill cited in Livingstone 2003: 52; Livingstone 2003: 52; George Sinclair cited in Elliott et al 2007: 7

⁷¹ Ballard 2003: 63; Brent Elliott cited in Dümpelmann 2013: 12

⁷² Jane MacKenzie cited in Dümpelmann 2013: 12

⁷³ Tobin 1999: 213; Bruno Latour cited in Tobin 1999: 25

⁷⁴ Ritvo 1992:373

⁷⁵ Tobin 1999: 214

⁷⁶ The Wallace Collection 2019; Tobin 1999: 196; Bray and Dalrymple 2020

⁷⁷ Bruno Latour cited in Tobin 1999: 214-15; Tobin 2004: 176-77

colonial activities that operated through “expeditions, collections, probes, observatories and enquiries” to enable such a centre.⁷⁸ Birmingham, akin to Kew and similar institutions, was equipped with the organisational structure and design to act as a centre facilitating the “cultures of circulation” - a concept although referred to the distribution of texts, has recently been borrowed to explain the nature of exchange operating in botanical gardens.⁷⁹ Of course, the Kew Gardens was exemplary of this.

As Kew and many other institutions in Europe were overwhelmed with exotic varieties and their confusing morphologies, a resulting need was felt to rationalise them using a formal system, like the taxonomy proposed by Carl Linnaeus, to emphasise an objective view of the natural world, and effectivise the circulation of knowledge among various centres using a universal language.⁸⁰ Loudon allowed seven acres of planting in the Linnean system in keeping with his strong connections with the Linnean Society.⁸¹ Interestingly, Linnaeus’ “insistent unity” was also driven by his realisation of “the same distributions and the same order” in all aspects of nature, which according to Foucault, represents a combination of ‘imperial, scientific, and religious concerns’.⁸² The adoption of the Linnean system by the British collectors was motivated by its “simplicity” and “uniformity” and the urgent need owing to the speed of accumulation.⁸³ Although Loudon’s, adherence to the Linnean vocabulary may have been in line with his goals of “variety” and “order”, the efforts to rationalise botanical knowledge were controversial and frequently collided with local plant knowledge in the colonies that prioritised the habitats and utility of plants.⁸⁴ Zaheer Baber

⁷⁸Bruno Latour cited in Tobin 1999: 215; Latour 1999: 24-79

⁷⁹ Lee and LiPuma 2002: 391; Hartigan 2015: 491; Bruno Latour cited in Hartigan: 491

⁸⁰ Baber 2016: 672

⁸¹ Ballard 1983: 20

⁸² Michel Foucault cited in Baber 2016: 673

⁸³ John Leach cited in Tobin 1999: 183

⁸⁴ Simo 1988: 175; Baber 2016: 675; Toledano 2021: 230

investigated the interconnectedness of botanical science, botanical gardens, and the British Empire and European colonial interests to demonstrate the “social embeddedness” of the development of botany.⁸⁵ In addition to learning, its logical application was also crucial for the long-distance transplantation, the success of which amounted to a sizeable proportion of the colonial economy.

Knowledge and materials circulated in various forms and various levels between the European nations and their colonies, including tree-transplanting techniques and scientific apparatus.⁸⁶ Kew was an active site for growing medicinal plants before the British colonisation ventures, however, restructured and repurposed to support Britain’s new imperatives - colonial as well as scientific.⁸⁷ Generating and transmitting knowledge, Kew became a centre of the network that connected botanical gardens in Calcutta, Singapore, Malay, St Vincent and St Helena and Sydney. Lucille Brockway observed that Kew, under the leadership of the highly influential Banks, through its scientific, regulatory and authoritative role, not only exerted British hegemony over botanical knowledge but also converted “knowledge to profit and power, for the empire and the industrial world, of which Britain was then the leader”.⁸⁸ For Richard Drayton the “mere gardeners” in the colonial Indian gardens were “engaged in one of the most irreversible and unnoticed effects of imperialism: the protected propagation of European plants, animals, and ideas of landscape in new conditions, often under the supervision of Kew.”⁸⁹ The following chapter will investigate the nature and effect of such multidirectional exchange of knowledge and materials and other spatial activities in the context of the Gardens.

⁸⁵ Chandra Mukherji cited in Baber 2016: 660

⁸⁶ Elliott 2007:9

⁸⁷ Baber 2016: 660

⁸⁸ Lucille Brockway cited in Tobin 1999: 176; Livingstone 2003: 55; Desmond 2007: 205

⁸⁹ Drayton 2000: 181

CHAPTER 2: RECEPTION AND PUBLIC SPHERE FORMATION

As highlighted in the previous chapter, the Gardens assumed a position within the global network of exchange of plant materials and knowledge encompassing human agencies in many geographical destinations. While scientific and horticultural activities predominated, the space supported social and recreational events. This chapter considers the contemporary reception of the space and its various activities in the 19th century and the formation of a collective agency through its operational mode. However, due to the limited scope and archival material, the focus is restricted to the key design elements and activities. Owing to a lack of consensus on the interpretive methods regarding the reception of a landscape, the current analysis employs Baxandall's concept of the "period eye" to capture the contemporary audiences' perception, which is relevant to a specific culture and historical timepoint and informed by the "culturally relative pressures of perception".⁹⁰ A similar approach has been successfully applied in the context of a medieval urban open space.⁹¹ The archival material is further interrogated to implicate the Gardens' spatiality in the emergence of a public sphere by drawing on the recent advances of the concept and critical analysis of the activities.⁹²

The rationale behind Loudon's design was a combination of scientific and ornamental; using the natural topography – a sixty meter drop, to furnish a view from a height - the conservatory was constructed at the apex of the site.⁹³ (5) For garden designers, 'mapping the mobile beholder' within space and time as well as determining the perspective are pivotal.⁹⁴ Design elements may

⁹⁰ Harris and Ruggles 2007: 15; Birksted 2003: 9; Michael Baxandall cited in Harris and Ruggles 2007: 15

⁹¹ Renzo Dubbini cited in Harris and Ruggles 2007: 15

⁹² Warner 2002; Calhoun 2005; Calhoun 2017; Cody 2011

⁹³ *The Gardener's Magazine* cited in Ballard 2003: 19

⁹⁴ Birksted 2003: 9

‘frame and screen’ a ‘preferred’ gaze and how it is ‘projected onto’ a landscape - highlighting landscape’s role as ‘an agent of power’.⁹⁵ A similar analytical framing established that the garden of Versailles included deliberate design features to orchestrate a bird’s eye view - an ‘earthly’ equivalence of a ‘heavenly perspective’.⁹⁶ According to Dianne Harris and Fairchild Ruggles, vision in the context of landscapes is complex; it encompasses specific objects in the foreground as well as the background, engaging with the viewer’s ‘knowledge and memory’ while moving ‘rapidly’ and ‘imperceptibly’ ‘between specific moments and places, like ‘peripatetic vision’ while considering ‘present and past experiences’ and evoking the concept of “narrative vision” or “depth”.⁹⁷ Spaces being ‘deambulatory’, vision, mobility and bodily experience are crucial for perceiving a garden, landscape or nature.⁹⁸

Thus, ‘extra-visual’ parameters and ‘multiple perceptual relationships between the beholder and landscape’ are critical for experiencing gardens.⁹⁹ Walking as a way of perceiving a landscape - allows ‘change in the position of the observer’ recalling ‘parallax’ – ‘change’, or ‘displacement of the apparent position of a body’ due to the movement of the observer.¹⁰⁰ Loudon’s design according to the society’s commission incorporated walks as a constituent of the pleasure ground - provided by the shaded ‘straight and meandering peripheral’ paths alongside trees planted in the picturesque style as well as turfed areas.¹⁰¹ (2, 5) For Loudon, pleasure grounds - described in the *Encyclopaedia of Gardening* in 1822, included various walks through enjoyable views

⁹⁵ Kolodney 2012: 97

⁹⁶ Mukherji 1990: 660

⁹⁷ Harris and Ruggles 2007: 12 -13, Augustin Berque cited in Birksted 2003: 13; Bois 1984: 34, Fumihiko Maki cited in Birksted 2003: 13

⁹⁸ Birksted 2003: 10; Bois 1984: 34

⁹⁹ Harris and Ruggles 2007: 15; Birksted 2003: 9

¹⁰⁰ Hunt 2016: 298; Bois 1984: 40

¹⁰¹ Simo 1988: 179

incorporating exotic trees, ornamental plants and rocks as achieved in Birmingham.¹⁰² Contemporary accounts reveal that walking in these grounds was indeed a pleasurable experience for the visitors. Two particular reports are notable here. The *Aris's Gazette* described the opulence of the first public *fête* of 1834 held within the expansive grounds on the 11th of August.¹⁰³ The second *fête* in June 1851 was organised by the Mayor to entertain the Royal Commissioners of the *Great Exhibition* in London, which included foreign visitors touring the factories in Birmingham.¹⁰⁴ In these reports, the reference to strolling or walking in the lawn while listening to music or inspecting the flowers and fruits underscores the significance of mobility and accumulating multiplicity of sensations in experiencing a landscape. Thus, both reports foreground the 'extra-visual' component of reception of the Gardens' space, relating to the phenomenological positioning of a mobile beholder, since "nature", which is part of a garden/landscape, is not "entirely in front of us" but also constitutes our "ground" – or "holds us".¹⁰⁵

Sensory engagements of the visitors were enhanced by further material additions, for instance, the fountain installed in 1852 - flowing water adding 'temporality' by "conveying rhythm", affects optical and acoustic experience.¹⁰⁶ (6) Additionally, theorisation by Dell Upton regarding cognition of space through sound compels consideration of embodied experience as vital.¹⁰⁷ Further structural additions - like the lily house in 1852, the palm house in 1871, a bandstand in 1878, an extension of the glass house and exhibition hall between 1885 and 1894 and the installation of electric lights in 1899 - extended horticultural as well as social capacities.¹⁰⁸ These

¹⁰² John Loudon cited in Laird 2014:248

¹⁰³ *Aris's Gazette* cited in Ballard 2003: 33

¹⁰⁴ *The Illustrated London News* 21 June 1851, p585 cited in Ballard 2003: 45-46.

¹⁰⁵ Bois 1984: 34; Birksted: 7; Maurice Merleau-Ponty cited in Birksted: 14

¹⁰⁶ Ballard 2003: 41; Gilles Deleuze cited in Birksted: 11

¹⁰⁷ Dell Upton cited in Harris 2007b: 5

¹⁰⁸ Ballard 2003: 42, 53, 61, 79, 64, 49

features possibly contributed to the layers of experience and meaning of the space similar to a recent observation of changed spatial practices related to alterations in the material infrastructure of a public garden - bestowing it with new meaning.¹⁰⁹ From 1833 onwards, concerts and promenades – activities that demanded a higher level of participation, were held in the grounds of the botanical gardens and remained popular throughout the century, being ‘numerously and fashionably attended’.¹¹⁰ (7) The widening range of activities - including theatrical and musical performances after 1887 and philanthropic activities in the 1890s, added layers to the experience of the users and visitors.¹¹¹ While experiences remained generally positive, poor standard of maintenance sometimes invited negative criticisms. A report in the *Gardeners’ Chronicle* in 1865, concluding the garden to be ‘unworthy of the town’, exemplifies this.¹¹² However, most significant was Loudon’s opinion of the Gardens, published in *The Gardener’s Magazine* in August 1839. Although critical of the design of the conservatory, he was “highly gratified” overall, particularly by the planting, including the novel varieties, which was among “the most complete in Britain” and had “considerable effect in improving the general taste... for plants” in Birmingham.¹¹³ This admiration for the Gardens’ success in its intended pedagogical role of promoting gardening among middleclass families correlated with Loudon’s broader aim. He also praised the curator David Cameron’s efforts in maintaining the Gardens’ excellent condition. A similar report in the *Gardeners’ Chronicle* in 1844 consolidated the Gardens’ promising horticultural achievements.¹¹⁴

The most eminent among the activities, however, were the competitive exhibitions, which apparently received encouragement from the London Horticultural Society, demonstrated through

¹⁰⁹ Granzow 2017

¹¹⁰ *Illustrated London News* cited in Ballard 2003: 46; Botanical Gardens 1889: MS1520/39/3/17

¹¹¹ Ballard 2003: 78-80

¹¹² *The Gardeners’ Chronicle* cited in Ballard 2003: 45

¹¹³ John Loudon cited in Ballard 2003: 29-30

¹¹⁴ *The Gardeners’ Chronicle* cited in Ballard 2003; 30

the donation of a large silver medal in February 1830.¹¹⁵ After the success of the first exhibition in June 1833, it was organised again in July and August.¹¹⁶ (8) Favourable reports of the exhibitions - initially in *Aris's Gazette* and later in the *Gardeners' Chronicle*, along with an increasing number of attendees every year, was well received.¹¹⁷ Praised for the 'spirit' that it 'excited', which could promote and extend 'tastes for botany and horticulture and every branch of Floriculture', the exhibitions and flower shows continued in different formats and venues, frequently accompanied by music.¹¹⁸(9) Sometimes displaying "strikingly novel arrangements" and being generally 'enjoyable' events, these exhibitions continued to fulfil horticultural and scientific goals, attracting amateurs and professionals, and diversifying spatial activities.¹¹⁹ Following the first award of standard of excellence in 1839, the Gardens was similarly honoured on a few occasions later in the century. After a period of decline around mid-century, its reputation was restored following the appointments of William Latham and later Thomas Humphreys as curators. While the publication of more than ten articles between 1872 and 1883 in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* affirms its popularity, efforts to increase scientific commitments remained consistent. In 1882, a section of the land was dedicated to the students of the Department of Botany of Mason College – later the University of Birmingham.¹²⁰

Shared horticultural and scientific aims linked members and shareholders at the Gardens and situated it within an outwardly extended, circulatory network of geographically distanced human agencies and institutions – like Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community'.¹²¹ For Anderson,

¹¹⁵ Sabine 1830: MS1520 43/5

¹¹⁶ Darwall and Knott 1833: MS1520/3/2

¹¹⁷ Ballard 2003: 32

¹¹⁸ Knowles 1834: MS1520 2/1/1/1

¹¹⁹ Ballard 2003: 45; Kenrick 1859: AC1/1/2

¹²⁰ Ballard 2003: 51-54

¹²¹ Benedict Anderson cited Cody 2011: 38; Benedict Anderson cited in Mukherji 2012: 512-13

‘deep ties’ and a ‘sense of belonging to a mass political subject’ mediated by the print medium characterise such communities.¹²² Of this, Kew seems emblematic - given its expansive global programme under Banks’ leadership, assisted by navy officers, diplomats, missionaries and explorers in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Banks remained committed towards Britain’s independent access to commercial commodities like hemp, tea and mulberry.¹²³ For him, Kew’s efforts in sourcing and cultivating these were not only ‘profitable ventures’ but also ‘patriotic’.¹²⁴ While the current research does not confirm a national aim for the Gardens in the same way, its collection - benefitting from the members of the committee and shareholders with foreign links, indirectly fed Kew’s ventures. Catalogues of plants illustrate its contacts, like Kew, with botanical institutions outside the island.¹²⁵ The efforts of the curators and their connections throughout the century enabled imports from destinations like Dublin, Hamburg, Vienna, Naples, Saint Petersburg, Sydney, India, Madagascar, Mexico and Nepal; several communications also demonstrate its connectedness with Kew and other institutions in London.¹²⁶ (3) Particularly, a letter in 1841 by Sir William Hooker, the director of Kew while expressing gratitude for the material sent by Cameron, invited him to “select some things” from Kew to add to Birmingham’s collection.¹²⁷ Notably, exchange of copious amounts of material started just after a year of its opening; Cameron sent more than 1000 plants to the major donors of the Gardens’ collections.¹²⁸ These point towards the efficiency of the Gardens’ cultivation-related activities. Cameron also published actively; he wrote for *The Gardener’s Magazine* on several occasions, which, published

¹²² Cody 2011: 38-39

¹²³ Livingstone 2003:54, 171-78

¹²⁴ Tobin 1999: 177

¹²⁵ Ballard 2003: 30-32, 130, 131-147; Livingstone 2003: 55, Cameron 1833: 1520/45/1-16

¹²⁶ Lucklock 1841a: MS1520/2/3/1/2; Lucklock 1841b: MS1520/2/3/1/2; Forrest 1841c: MS1520/2/3/1/2; Phipson 1841d: MS1520/2/3/1/2; Knowles 1834: MS1520/2/1/1/1; Lindley 1831: 1520/ 37/1/1; Ballard 2003: 48, 54-58

¹²⁷ Wilfred Blunt cited in Ballard 2003: 26

¹²⁸ Cameron n.d: MS1520 37/1/3; Cameron 1833: MS1520 45/1-1

and edited by Loudon and contributions by other eminent professionals, enjoyed a wider readership throughout Europe.¹²⁹

The scientific and horticultural activities of the gardens were rooted in a shared sensibility among individuals whose voluntary collaboration was rooted in various modes of communication: conversations in meetings, reading and interpretation of texts. Intriguingly, there is a precedence of the practice of science within public spheres in popular arenas.¹³⁰ During the 19th century, while some scientific lectures happened in coffee houses, botanists, gardeners and horticulturists - well-versed in the *Linnean* system of classification and contemporary discourses on gardening, gathered to share practical knowledge and materials in public houses.¹³¹ Notably, plants were alluded to as ‘political metaphors’ and imagined as ‘nations – each with its own province and member species’.¹³² These sites of interactions, or the ‘interpretive communities’, crucially emerge around the circulating forms and enable maintaining the ‘circulation’ – a ‘cultural process with its own forms of abstraction, evaluation and constraints’ dependent on ‘the interaction between the ‘type of the circulating form and interpretive community’.¹³³ Notably, specimens, apparatus, transplanting techniques, and experience were transferred between the countries of the British Empire and the mainland.¹³⁴ The circulation of forms - textual or non-textual in such ‘structured circulations’ or the ‘cultures of circulation’ always ‘presupposes’ the presence of relevant ‘interpretive communities’, which decide the nature of the forms circulated, the course of circulations and the dynamics of the ‘exchange’ practices, potentially inventing new forms and

¹²⁹ Simo 1988: 10; Ballard 2003: 28

¹³⁰ Livingstone 2003: 85

¹³¹ Livingstone 2003: 84-85

¹³² Livingstone 2003: 54

¹³³ Lee and LiPuma 2002: 192; Gaonkar and Povinelli 2003: 391

¹³⁴ Elliott et al 2007: 9; Kapil Raj cited in Baber 2016: 671; Sanjay Subramanyam in Baber 2016: 671

founding institutions.¹³⁵ Birmingham Botanical and Horticultural Society represents such an institutional formation.¹³⁶ (10) Additional societies were launched owing to the immense interest in the cultivation of the exotics. For instance, *The Floral Society*, which, jointly with the horticultural society, started magazines named *Floral Cabinet or Magazine of Exotic Botany* in 1836 and *Floral and Horticultural Book Society* in 1837 - enriched with practical gardening knowledge.¹³⁷

The horticultural society coordinated actions to identify and resolve financial or management issues at the Gardens affecting public opinion through an exchange of ideas at the meetings alongside circulating a range of additional materials, including plants, seeds and forms of texts: letters, minutes, leaflets and magazines. Such spatial activities provided the ‘performative basis’ for the structured circulation, which is a ‘self-reflexive’ entity facilitated through participants’ conformation to a set of actions and goals written and pre-agreed among themselves.¹³⁸ Evidently, the Birmingham Botanical and Horticultural Society worked according to its agreed set of rules.¹³⁹ (11) Such ‘reciprocal performative actions of participants’ at the Gardens was generative of a collective - like the public sphere, which also draws on ‘stranger sociability’.¹⁴⁰ Although usually based on print-mediated discourse or speech, in Birmingham, ‘stranger sociability’ was grounded in the establishment of a ‘common identity’ based on an intensified motivation towards a common horticultural and social objective of a collective of individuals.¹⁴¹

¹³⁵ Lee and LiPuma 2002: 192; Gaonkar and Povinelli 2003: 391; Hartigan 2015: 492

¹³⁶ Knott 1839a: MS1520/7/2/3

¹³⁷ Ballard 2003: 27; *Practical Gardener* 1837: 1520/10/3

¹³⁸ Lee and LiPuma 2002: 193-95

¹³⁹ Knott 1839b: MS1520/7/2/3

¹⁴⁰ Lee and LiPuma 2002; Gaonkar and Povinelli 2003: 388-89, 391; Cody 2011: 39

¹⁴¹ Warner 2002: 55-57; Cody 2011: 39

The above observations, the recent theorisations advocating a plurality of publics and the modifications and critiques of the initial concept of the public sphere by Jürgen Habermas allow implication of the Gardens in the 19th century as an institutional space generative of a collective agency operating like a self-organised public sphere.¹⁴² ‘Diverse’, ‘site-specific’ and ‘non-universal’ public sphere - comprising ‘groups in continual motion’ has been implied also in the context of museums.¹⁴³ Such articulation is based on construing museums as discursive public spaces where alternative forms of discourse are conducted – including visual components. The public in these settings is involved in complex ‘exchanges and negotiations between different forms of communications and practices’ related to the viewing experience.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, the “public sphere” was conceived as a “spatial concept” – linked to “social sites or arenas where meanings are articulated, distributed and negotiated”, and the participating “collective” of individuals construed as “public”.¹⁴⁵ Although in the case of the Gardens’ public, likewise for the museum, an ‘orientation to the state’ is not discernible, the operation in both spaces are legitimised through ‘common discourse’ constituting an active public space.¹⁴⁶ The public at the Gardens also support the recent notion of a ‘multispecies public’, proposed by extending the possibility of publics ‘beyond printed text’ within diverse relational contexts as observed by Latour.¹⁴⁷ The publics in these formations are facilitated by various material infrastructures.¹⁴⁸ Production of a ‘public sphere effect’ through spatial activities within garden spaces was also recognised among voluntarily associated members engaged in community gardening, facilitating rational, ‘collective

¹⁴² Fraser 1992:116 -137, Ryan 1992: 259-88, Warner 2002: 56; Cody 2011: 39-40; Calhoun 1992; Calhoun 2005: 5

¹⁴³ Barrett 2011: 1-14, 11, 36

¹⁴⁴ Barrett 2011: 16

¹⁴⁵ Miriam Hansen cited in Barrett 2011:42; Barrett 2011:20

¹⁴⁶ Calhoun 1993: 277, Barrett 2011:20; Cody 2011: 39; Warner 2002

¹⁴⁷ Cody 2011: 46-47; Latour 2005: 14-41; Hartigan 2015

¹⁴⁸ Schwarte 2005; Hartigan 2015: 491-92; Latour 2005: 14-41

judgements' and making goal-orientated 'collective decisions'.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, exclusions related to gender and class in the Gardens disallowed certain sections of the society from equal participation, which echoes the critiques of Habermas's "bourgeois public sphere" and contests the idealisation of the 'continuity and universality' in places like the coffee houses, which in reality only allowed a 'narrow segments of the European population, mainly educated, propertied men'.¹⁵⁰ Recent research demonstrated that identity formation was not just a matter of private sphere, but access to public spheres was dependent on the will of the actors and identity-related differences among people, for example, class and gender.¹⁵¹ The complex range of activities at the Gardens that facilitated the emergence of a public sphere, also mediated the expression of identities, which will be the primary concern of the next chapter.

¹⁴⁹ Glover et al 2005

¹⁵⁰ Fraser 1992: 116-37; Landes 1988; Eley 1992: 289-339; Calhoun 2012: 6; Habermas 1989; Laurier and Philo 2007: 270; Knott 1839a: MS1520/7/2/3

¹⁵¹ Calhoun 1993

CHAPTER 3: EXPRESSION OF IDENTITIES

‘Performance’ in social interactions was the focus of Goffman’s analysis of identity formation using ‘theatrical analogy’, suggesting that the ‘physical properties of the frame’ contribute to the formation of social identities.¹⁵² Accordingly, like other social spaces, botanical gardens, through their material components set “specific boundaries”, facilitating or disallowing enactment of identities through symbols and practices.¹⁵³ This chapter aims to elucidate how the spatial attributes of the Gardens in the 19th century rendered it an active agent by allowing or restricting expression of identities based on socioeconomic status, gender or race.

At the time of the Gardens' conception, possessing exotic plants, like other imported fashionable commodities, was a marker of social hierarchy and superior taste.¹⁵⁴ Funded by a few wealthy members of the society, the Gardens first opened only for the shareholders and donors.¹⁵⁵ Shareholders’ right to free admissions - allowing their family and four extra persons was by payment of a subscription.¹⁵⁶ Non-members entered for one pound.¹⁵⁷ This subscription-based model was shared by botanical gardens in many cities, ensuring recreational facilities for the elites while disallowing working-class access. Such stipulations on time or entry payment - were established in Glasgow, Liverpool, Sheffield, Leeds and Belfast. Although working-class entry was allowed in Birmingham after twelve years of opening, it exemplifies the earliest regular and

¹⁵² Harris 2007a: 192

¹⁵³ Erving Goffman cited in Harris 2007a:191-2

¹⁵⁴ John Willis 1993

¹⁵⁵ Knott 1839a: 1520/7/2/3

¹⁵⁶ Ballard 2003: 24; Knott 1839b: 1520/7/2/3

¹⁵⁷ Ballard 2003: 34

affordable access anywhere in the country.¹⁵⁸ The subscription-based model was also similar to other entertainment venues, like concert halls, theatres and pleasure gardens. While interclass ‘mixing’ was controlled in the theatres through restrictive seating arrangements, the sociability conditions in the pleasure gardens, like Vauxhall and Ranelagh – earlier thought to be ‘archetypal mixed environments’ were also charged with hierarchy.¹⁵⁹ From 1844, Birmingham’s working-class visitors were admitted to the Gardens on Mondays and Tuesdays for a penny, which, from 1847 was restricted to Mondays only; correspondingly, “persons moving in higher ranks of life” were discouraged from visiting on Mondays for effectively maintaining segregation from the working classes.¹⁶⁰ Further demarcation of exclusive areas and entrance fees to special activities limited associational possibilities. Penny visitors were restricted to minimise disruptions in the entertainment and activities of the middleclass and wealthy subscribers through prohibition from areas like the conservatory and the hothouse. Similar stipulations applied for the school visits. The local boarding schools were allowed entry for an annual payment of five pounds. Whereas local charity schools were allowed free of charge only after ten years of the Gardens’ opening - in 1842.¹⁶¹

The exhibitions and shows carried further exclusionary messages. The report on the attendees of the first exhibition, saying “the most respectable residents of the town and the vicinity”, is charged with the ideology of social hierarchy.¹⁶² Moreover, the exhibited categories of rare and fine specimens or forced-grown flowers and fruits required specific resources for cultivation, like

¹⁵⁸ Glasgow Herald cited in Ballard 2003: 36; George Chadwick cited in Ballard 2003: 36, A.L Winning cited in Ballard 2003: 36; Eileen McCracken cited in Ballard 2003: 36

¹⁵⁹ Greig 2012: 52

¹⁶⁰ Annual Report cited in Ballard 2003: 46

¹⁶¹ Ballard 2003: 35

¹⁶² Robert Langford cited in Ballard: 31

hothouses or employment of professional gardeners, affordable to wealthy growers only.¹⁶³ (8) Evidently, this made the financial position of the exhibitor a determinant for participation. Additionally, the prize winners were from among the social elites, including the Earl of Dartmouth and the Earl Grey of Coby - to name a few among the donors and shareholders, which was justified by the committee as an expression of gratitude to these individuals for supporting the horticultural society's efforts 'at their own expense'.¹⁶⁴ Further, only the shareholders and donors were on the list for donation of seeds and plants.¹⁶⁵ The first public *fête* of 1834, which was a fundraising event, was also discriminatory. While the *Aris's Gazette* on the 11th of August, described its opulence and exclusivity – being attended by many titled individuals and families, ten shillings entrance fee for the adults was too expensive and prohibited access to most working-class individuals.¹⁶⁶ Likewise, *fête champêtre* of 1851 for the Commissioners of the Great Exhibition, hosted by the Mayor of Birmingham allowed only the privileged members of the society.¹⁶⁷ Thus, like pleasure gardens elsewhere in the country, the Gardens' social practices - rather than showcasing uniform social mixing, 'defended exclusivity' and safeguarded 'social division'.¹⁶⁸

In addition to the entry restrictions, picnics, games or smoking were disallowed for the working-class visitors. If necessary, two policemen were to be on duty to keep order on the days of their visits to maintain discipline. The high numbers and irresponsible behaviour of the Monday visitors were also linked by the committee to the damages to the lawns and flower beds, concluding that such large numbers of working-class visitors may not be "conducive to the Gardens' well-being" - demonstrating the perception among the social elites of lack of sociability skills among the

¹⁶³ Darwall and Knott 1833: MS1520/3/2; Ritvo 1992: 372

¹⁶⁴ Dartmouth 1833: MS 1520/2/1/1/1

¹⁶⁵ Knowles 1834: MS1520/2/1/1/1; John Ross cited in Ballard 2003: 27

¹⁶⁶ *Aris's Gazette* cited in Ballard 2003: 33

¹⁶⁷ *Illustrated London News* cited in Ballard 2003: 46

¹⁶⁸ Greig 2012:53

working classes.¹⁶⁹ This was grounded in the ‘discourse of politeness’, which ‘provided the ideological support’ for the new forms of interactions among social segments who so far remained socially and spatially distant, like the aristocratic and newly wealthy.¹⁷⁰ Being ‘polite and genteel’ were central to such social encounters seeking to bridge the stark disparity in the status of the interacting partners, and was a factor of personal attributes and cultural knowledge instead of hereditary connections.¹⁷¹ Botany and horticultural knowledge, particularly of exotics - like music and art, was associated with the elitist culture and superior taste, and botanical gardens - like concert halls or art exhibition, were venues promoting it. Events like the exhibitions at the Gardens were an arena of mixing opportunities for socially aspirant middleclass members with their aristocratic counterparts. The Gardens’ activities were equally conducive to the mixing of different sexes. The description of the first flower show of 1870 in the *Illustrated Midland News* on the 11th of June as a “dangerous ground for the young and hitherto callous heart, and not always safe to the more mature” - highlights this range of social mixing.¹⁷² (12) Such occasions were visibly augmented when the Archery, Croquet and Lawn Tennis were opened in 1868 when the committee sub-let a section of their lower grounds to the Edgbaston Archery and Lawn Tennis Society as an option to increase the revenue.¹⁷³

Such need arose due to the declining number of shareholders and subscribers as many wealthy families moved away from industrial pollution to open rural locations, which deepened the financial problems for the Gardens - particularly mid-century onwards.¹⁷⁴ In response, Thomas

¹⁶⁹ Annual Report cited in Ballard 2003: 47

¹⁷⁰ Greig 2012: 54

¹⁷¹ Greig 2012:54

¹⁷² *Illustrated Midland News* cited in Ballard 2003: 53

¹⁷³ Ballard 2003: 47

¹⁷⁴ Ballard 2003: 65

Goodman - one of the shareholders, proposed plans in 1845 to rescue this situation.¹⁷⁵ Accordingly, the subscription and the entrance fee for the working-class and the weekly wage earners were reconsidered, which resulted in disagreement among the members, leading to resignations. At the annual meeting of 1846 many members indicated that the Gardens was too ‘exclusive’ and less appealing to the general public lacking scientific knowledge.¹⁷⁶ The working-class admissions to the Gardens continued to be a contested matter and in 1884 some of the committee members declined to contribute, pointing that the Gardens did not sufficiently fulfil its philanthropic role, however, “partakes very much of the character of a private enterprise”.¹⁷⁷ Similar concerns were paramount behind the creation of public spaces in the country, and the late 18th and 19th century realisation of discipline and provision for better working conditions as parameters for consistent productivity.¹⁷⁸ Betterment of health and working conditions, promotion of social order and instilling the social values of the middleclass among the working-class population became a preoccupation of many local merchants, like Joseph Chamberlain, who transformed into social reformers.¹⁷⁹ In these efforts, allocation of a garden space was considered a mode of ordering moral and physical characters of working-class individuals.¹⁸⁰ Among the most prominent reformers in Birmingham, who made substantial changes to housing, education, public health and working conditions through regularising work hours and wages were George Dawson and Chamberlain.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁵ Goodman and Lucklock 1846: MS1520/2/1/1/2; Lucklock 1846: MS 1520/2/1/1/2; Goodman 1846: MS1520/9/1; *Midland Counties Herald* cited in Ballard 2003: 38;

¹⁷⁶ Ballard 2003: 39

¹⁷⁷ Avery 1884: MS1520/24/7/35

¹⁷⁸ Gaskell 1980: 481-82

¹⁷⁹ Skipp 1983: 110-114, 159

¹⁸⁰ Gaskell 1980: 481

¹⁸¹ Skipp 1983: 71, 159-76; CRL 1845: MS703/3/24; CRL 1859: SF2/1/1/13

Birmingham's elite community also showed concerns about slavery. Although the Gardens' space cannot be directly linked to slavery in this research, employment of slaves of local origin during the early part of the century in colonial botanic gardens within the Gardens' circuit of exchange, links European botanical collections and the "spaces of natural history" with the "inhuman spaces of slave ships".¹⁸² Birmingham's situatedness at the heart of the industrial revolution also suggests deep ties with slavery as highlighted in a recent exhibition - *Sugar Coated Tears*, by Vanley Burke which displayed reproductions of instruments used for punishment and restraint based on historical evidence.¹⁸³ A significant presence in the 19th century of diverse ethnic groups in the area has also been confirmed recently.¹⁸⁴ While in 1789, a petition was forwarded to the parliament to support slavery based on its benefits to the local economy, in the 19th century many socially distinguished individuals in Birmingham - especially the members of the *Lunar Society*, like Mathew Boulton and James Watt, discussed the issues of slavery and the family members of donors, like John Cadbury and Samuel Lloyd, advocated for its abolition.¹⁸⁵ The *Birmingham Ladies Negros' Friend Society for the Relief of Negro Slaves* was recognised as the most active after the *British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society*, founded through the efforts of Birmingham's Joseph Sturge.¹⁸⁶ These showcase a trend of involvement of educated women from the middleclass and wealthier sections of engaging in activities and interests regarding public, political and state matters. Despite this, gender remained another discriminatory factor affecting employability.

¹⁸² Williams 2021; Kathleen Murphy cited in Williams 2021: 142

¹⁸³ Vanley Burke cited in Green 2007: 196; Callaghan 2011; Dick 2011

¹⁸⁴ Callaghan 2011; Dick 2011

¹⁸⁴ WCAR 1825: MS 3173; Skipp 1983:115

¹⁸⁵ WCAR 1825: MS 3173; WCAR 1825: MS 3173; Ballard 2003: 16; Skipp 1983: 111-15

¹⁸⁶ WCAR 1825: MS 3173; Green 2008

There was no recruitment of female gardeners in Birmingham until the early 20th century when the curator was ‘satisfied with the results of this experiment’ despite the lack of training.¹⁸⁷ This may suggest an anticipation of a different standard of work from women in some jobs. Training, childbearing, education and strength remained usual limitations faced by many women workers, depending on the demands of a job.¹⁸⁸ Despite this, in addition to domestic and childcare duties for which they were solely responsible, throughout the 19th century women’s contribution to the workforce of various industries - especially in the textile industry has been economically vital for the country.¹⁸⁹ In Birmingham, a significant proportion - about forty per cent, of the workforce consisted of women and girls in the button-making factories in the 19th century.¹⁹⁰ Employment of children, sometimes in potentially dangerous health conditions in the brass foundries and button-making was common.¹⁹¹ However, wages for the women workers in highly productive textiles and metal trades of Birmingham were rising according to the growth of these factories, contrasting the lower wage offered in most cities and the rural industries.¹⁹² Yet, unlike their counterparts from wealthier classes, working class women afforded a limited time for recreational activities.¹⁹³ The situation was quite different for the middleclass women in the 19th century; many were discouraged from entering the workforce and were limited to gendered domestic roles – a sign of the ‘household’s high status’.¹⁹⁴ It has been argued that the households were structured as zones or “separate spheres”, with ‘different responsibilities’ around work and family – areas of influence for men and women being differentiated; the public sphere – work and business and civic

¹⁸⁷ Annual report cited in Ballard 2003: 83

¹⁸⁸ Burnette 2008: 327-35

¹⁸⁹ Foster and Clark: 2-3

¹⁹⁰ Berg 1993: 235

¹⁹¹ Skipp 1983: 67

¹⁹² Berg 1993: 235

¹⁹³ Berg 1993: 250

¹⁹⁴ Burnette 2008: 323 -24

involvement being the man's domain while the woman was concerned with the private sphere of the household and children.¹⁹⁵ However, recent research have contested such a generalized interpretive framework of 'separate spheres', 'domesticity' and 'public and private', which considers women as 'passive victims' in a 'private cage'.¹⁹⁶ The new approach of challenging such simplistic, conservative notion of 'separate spheres' is more agreeable to the women's response to the 'unprecedented expansion of opportunities' in the late Georgian and Victorian women.¹⁹⁷ This notion also provides a backdrop to the growing interest in gardening activities among the women of the new middleclass families in the suburbs resulting from the massive influx from the neighboring country sides - constituting more than two-thirds of the residents.¹⁹⁸ Gardening became a tool for expression of creativity for women of the 19th century middleclass homes as well as a route for entry into the public domain of the horticultural societies – blurring the 'separate spheres'.¹⁹⁹

Recognising and capturing such social momentum, garden designers like Loudon addressed women gardeners in his book *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion*, with instructions for gardens on small plots, hoping to achieve better gardening taste in the country.²⁰⁰ The scope of exhibiting rendered gardening a popular activity of middleclass life and their identity, while providing a new social platform.²⁰¹ Loudon's gardenesque style - due to its practicality and affordability, was a potent entry point for many middleclass gardeners with small gardens and modest means²⁰². Many women also wrote horticultural and botanical texts, which, shaped by

¹⁹⁵ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall cited in Vickery 1993: 389-90; Schenker 2013: 131

¹⁹⁶ Colley 1992: 237-81; Vickery 1993: 383, 389

¹⁹⁷ Vickery 1993: 400

¹⁹⁸ H. J. Dyos cited in Bilston 2011: 146

¹⁹⁹ Schenker 2013: 131-32

²⁰⁰ Schenker 2013: 125

²⁰¹ John Loudon cited in Schenker 2013: 132-33; Constantine 1981

²⁰² Simo 1988:179

“gender ideologies”, were meant for the women audience rather than professional gardeners.²⁰³ However, exceptions remained - Jane Loudon’s (Loudon’s wife) books were oriented towards and read by professionals. The involvement of women in gardening, while adding a new dimension to the private sphere and their identity, weakened the public/private dichotomy. The garden’s space became a site of professional inclusivity for women. While gender roles started to relax, the living conditions of the factory and construction workers remained generally sub-standard despite the efforts of many thoughtful women and men. Clearly, for the working classes in Birmingham, like many other cities, even the restricted access to the Gardens must have offered a respite. A report in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1851 described how ‘happy’ the Monday visitors “appeared to be” while “luxuriating in the glories presented”, which might have contrasted severely to their grim living conditions.²⁰⁴ The constitution of such group of workers may have been heterogeneous owing to immigration, given the constant demand for workers to sustain the intense industrial action in Birmingham. It was not uncommon for the workers within one factory to develop a bond rooted in shared working and living conditions, language or religious beliefs.²⁰⁵ Contrarily, language was sometimes a discriminating attribute within a working community as shown in the case of the immigrant workers in Manchester in the early 19th century.²⁰⁶

The Botanical Gardens in the suburbs like Edgbaston, offering the new ‘non-rural opportunities’ for leisure, consumerism, communities, and technologies, lured internal migration.²⁰⁷ For designers like Loudon, the use factor of botanical gardens was not only the enhancement of horticultural interest but its offer of ‘communal recreation’. Accordingly, a

²⁰³ Shetir 1996: 61

²⁰⁴ *Morning Chronicle* cited in Skipp 1983: 139

²⁰⁵ Ayres 2021: 171

²⁰⁶ Ayres 2021: 174-75

²⁰⁷ Bilston 2011: 146

“cultivated botanical garden” could bring more “cheerfulness” than a ‘public square’, owing to the lack of “the peculiar animation” ‘of a space full of workers” in the latter.²⁰⁸ Loudon’s vision seems consistent with combining industrial development of the cities with nature, which was significant for the contemporary socioeconomic climate and holds in the world that we currently live in.

²⁰⁸John Loudon cited in Bilston 2011: 150

CONCLUSION

As eloquently put by Soja, although space is “primordially given”, its “organisation, and meaning...is a product of social translation, transformation and experience”.²⁰⁹ Thus, empirical case studies, like the current research, remain fundamental in understanding this diverse entity. The focus of this dissertation - the Birmingham Botanical Gardens was founded in the 19th century by a group of social elites as an institution where manipulating nature accomplished multiple goals - scientific, ornamental and sociocultural. The current analysis of the Gardens’ site and critical consideration of relevant archival and textual materials reveal the ideologies subterranean to the exterior aims ultimately shaped its design, contemporary reception, operations and practices. While the conception of the Gardens underscores the city’s environmental state owing to rapid industrialisation, scientific knowledge, social objectives and imperial success informed the design, and material order. In particular, the glasshouse and the efficient heating system attested to aesthetic considerations, horticultural requirements and technological advancement. The planting scheme - an admixture of picturesque and gardenesque styles on one hand, reflected the enhanced cultural value of trees and allowed the successful propagation of exotic plants from distant colonies in maintained condition on the other.²¹⁰

Exoticism, resulting from ‘cultural illegibility’ implies the extraction of living objects from their sociocultural contexts, transplanting them within the British setting while linking them with the local taste and fashion and introducing them to the chain of European consumption.²¹¹ The immense accumulation of exotic varieties in the European gardens were not driven by their easy

²⁰⁹ Edward Soja cited in Hillier 2008: 222

²¹⁰ Simo 1988: 169; Elliott et al 2007: 7

²¹¹ Harriet Guest cited in Tobin 2004: 171

availability consequential to the voyages of the 17th and 18th-centuries, rather an attitudinal predisposition towards exploiting such opportunities of collecting novelties – signifying European perception and response to the non-European ‘Other’.²¹² Such prevailing taste and eagerness of cultivating and possessing exotic plants among the elites in Birmingham was a requisite for the Gardens’ conception and success. The integration of the imported species and other features, like rockeries in the botanical gardens, essentially captured the tropical diversity within a ‘microcosm’ allowing a glimpse of the empire - although re-presented in an orderly fashion, through the imposition of European classification systems, like Linnean taxonomy.²¹³ Ramifications of such displays - ‘whereby an absence is rendered present’, in addition to being empowering, extended much further.²¹⁴ Crucially, it provided a chance to indulge in the rewards gained through power and domination while justifying the national investment in acquiring and maintaining foreign lands. Furthermore, through analogy, the materiality of the garden familiarised and fostered imagination and desire for new and potentially dangerous destinations - enticing individuals to travel from their home countries to procure and maintain distant lands. When many European colonisers strived to possess maximum global land, this was pivotal to success.

Like botanical institutions elsewhere, the Gardens was a location for consolidating colonial power by enhancing the economic benefits of the colonisers by facilitating the exchange of materials, both living and non-living - texts, knowledge and technology. Latour's work on technoscience, recognising the power “to act at a distance on unfamiliar events, places and people” is invaluable in understanding such colonial operations.²¹⁵ While the Kew Gardens epitomises such an institution, sites like the Gardens and institutions in other major cities were vitally posited

²¹² Ritvo 1992: 368-9; Knellwolf 2002: 11

²¹³ Elliott et al 2007: 11

²¹⁴ Tobin 1999: 25

²¹⁵ Bruno Latour cited in Tobin 1999: 214

within the network of “extraction and translation” of various circulating forms.²¹⁶ These networks, whose emergence and maintenance were dependent on economic, political, technological and military factors, allowed the coloniser to act simultaneously on many distant colonial regions. Expeditions, collections, and militarisation allowed the coloniser to “mobilise, cumulate and recombine the world” and exert hegemony over the colonised.²¹⁷ The enlacement of the Gardens within the complex exchange systems evokes Arjun Appadurai’s conceptualisation of categories of global landscapes created through specific cultural “flows” and its related notion of “the production of location” based on the ‘structured circulation’ of multiple cultural forms - or ‘cultures of circulation’.²¹⁸ Such circulation presuppose the existence of relevant interpretive communities, which through founding institutions - like the Gardens, define the rules of interpretations.²¹⁹ The self-reflexive and goal-oriented operations of such institutions provide the performative component of the circulation while constituting collective human agencies. This dissertation suggests the institutional space of the Gardens as generative of a public sphere, drawing on Habermas’s and recent advances of the concept and its operation, facilitated by discursively based coordinated actions by an exclusive group of individuals - here the Birmingham Botanical and Horticultural Society and its support network.²²⁰

Collaborative functioning of various sections: the horticultural society, the Gardens’ staff, and the donors were fundamental to the successful organisation of scientific and social events. The popularity of the Gardens increased through its ornamental features and spatial activities –

²¹⁶ Bruno Latour cited in Tobin 1999: 214-16

²¹⁷ Bruno Latour cited in Tobin 1999: 214-16

²¹⁸ Arjun Appadurai cited in DeLue and Elkins 2007: 117; Arjun Appadurai in Gaonkar and Povinelli: 390-91; Gaonkar and Povinelli 2003: 390-91; Lee and LiPuma 2002: 192-3

²¹⁹ Gaonkar and Povinelli 2003: 390-91 Lee and LiPuma 2002: 192-95

²²⁰ Latour 2005; Barrett 2011; Gaonkar and Povinelli 2002; Warner 2002; Fraser 1992; Calhoun 1993, Li and LiPuma 2002; Laurier and Philo 2007

promenades, concerts and exhibitions being the most frequent events in the 19th century. Moreover, in 1839, Loudon applauded the Gardens' role in improving the taste for imported specimens and promoting gardening activities among middleclass families.²²¹ Despite the financial constraints, constant evolution through new material acquisitions and diversifying activities, the Gardens maintained a positive contemporary reception of the space. A garden's space has a paradoxical relation with the beholder - enwrapping as well as being in front simultaneously, and is viewed with shifting perspectives owing to the changing bodily positions of the receiver through activities, like walking. The involvement of 'extra-visual' perceptions through multiple sensory engagements, for example, acoustic parameters, remains crucial.²²² Evidently, the planting scheme and the material organisation were conducive to such extra-visual and phenomenological experience, which was grounded in the acquired knowledge and taste through discourses on exotic plants in books like *Exotic Botany* and *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion*, and furthered by the organised spatial activities, like exhibitions. Such activities within the complex material and structural formulation of the Gardens facilitated certain "expressions" of historically and culturally specific identities.²²³

The prescribed norms of performance based on class, gender or racial identity in a given society at a specific historical moment are the results of cultural preconditioning. Working-class visitors were not allowed in the botanical gardens of many cities, and Birmingham was no exception. The subscription model in these institutions and other entertainment venues, like pleasure gardens, allowed donors and members exclusivity and special privileges. Although seemingly providing interclass mixing, such congregations, however, displayed social hierarchy.²²⁴ While interclass

²²¹ John Loudon cited in Ballard 2003: 29-30; Birksted 2003

²²² Birksted 2003

²²³ Judith Butler in Harris 2005: 422

²²⁴ Greig 2012: 52

sociability was controlled at the Gardens by demarcating exclusive areas and managing entry conditions, these grounds provided ample opportunities for gender mixing and the emergence of new social classes - defined by acquired wealth and taste - for example regarding exotic commodities, instead of inheritance. Activities in the 19th century also conveyed exclusionary messages. For instance, cultivating the most coveted exhibits – the rare specimens or forced-grown varieties that required expensive resources affordable by the wealthy was most appreciated.²²⁵ Thus, the social segregation within the space reflected and reinforced the contemporary sociocultural scene. However, the lack of women staff at the gardens - in line with the overall low employability of women, was not representative of Birmingham's usual situation. While not linking directly, this research indicates the Gardens' connection to sites of slavery and racial discrimination through its exchange relations with similar colonial institutions. While Birmingham's central positioning within the industrial development strengthens such nexus, the 19th century not only witnessed concerns from social elites and their families regarding the living conditions of the workers and women and the abolition of slavery but also Birmingham was at the forefront of these efforts.

For John Dixon Hunt, a garden's "design is with nature" but "also with culture".²²⁶ Befitting this, the current study shows that the design vocabulary and material fabric of the Gardens - configured as a satellite within the orbit of British colonial activity, was imbued with dominant British ideologies - expansionist, industrialist, scientific and social hierarchy. Its evolving material format manifested affluence, discipline and order over nature and the ability to integrate diverse and distant natural elements within an organised totality while rationalising a new social order –

²²⁵ Darwall and Knott 1833: MS1520/3/2; Ritvo 1992: 372

²²⁶ John Dixon Hunt cited in Dümpelmann 2011: 628

mediated by technology, economic mobility and colonial wealth. Cognition of the Gardens' artefacts and practices promoted shared imaginings and consciousness, engendering collective formations - enabling its operation as an auxiliary site of power, control and knowledge. This research further confirms that while the space resonated with the broader social context, it also impacted the external world, like fostering interest in gardening and a desire for the non-European world. This dual attribute renders the Gardens and similar spaces compelling tools for inferring extraneous cultural processes. While the limited scope and duration of this research prevented pursuing many potential lines of enquiry, it opened possibilities for endeavours, which are required to construe the space of this popular attraction in a multicultural city through the evolution of its identity, its reception and practices - a summation of which shapes lived experiences and perceptions for its many users. This dissertation, being the first attempt to imply a botanical garden an active agent in cultural formation, has vast relevance for understanding similar institutional spaces.

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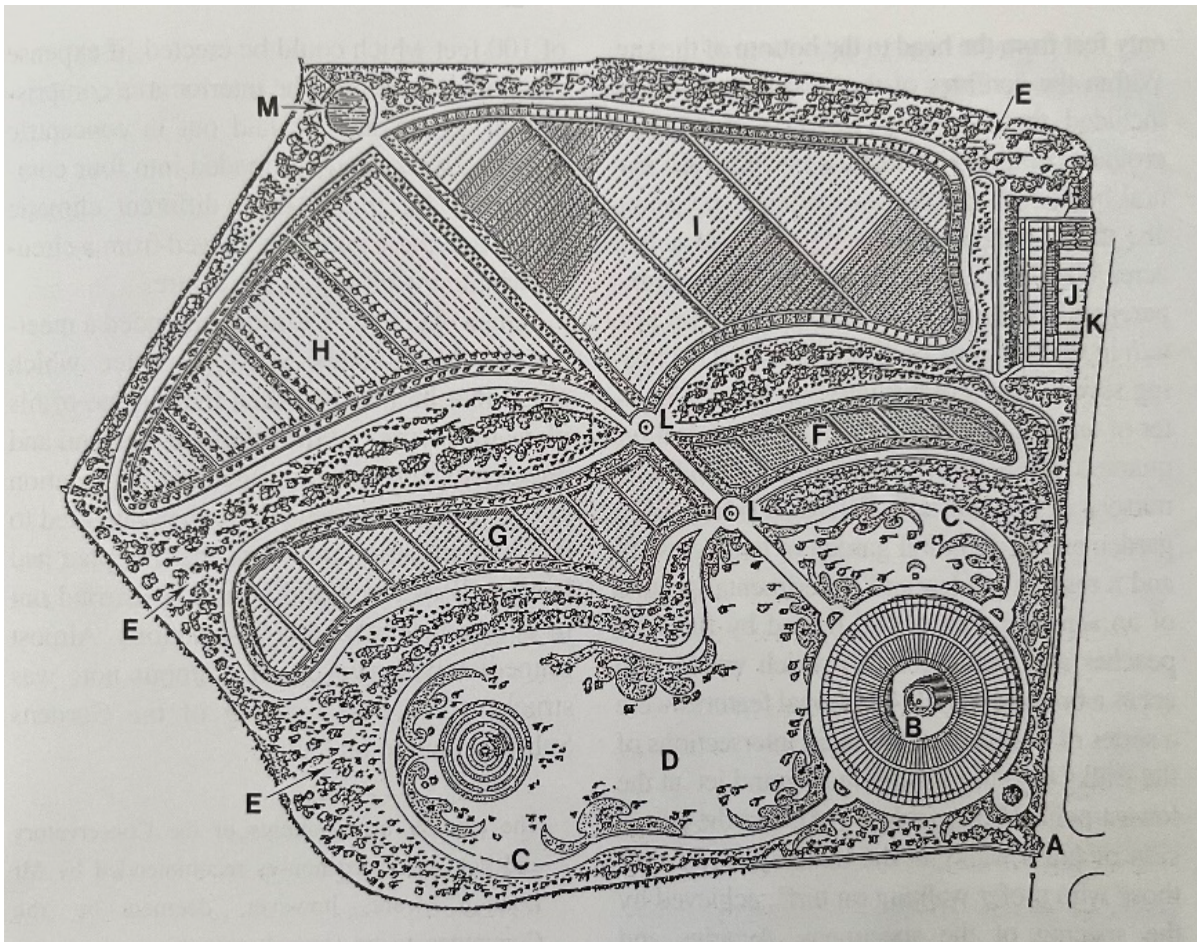
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ILLUSTRATIONS



1. A view of the entrance, 2023. Shikha Bose; photo: digital photograph of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.



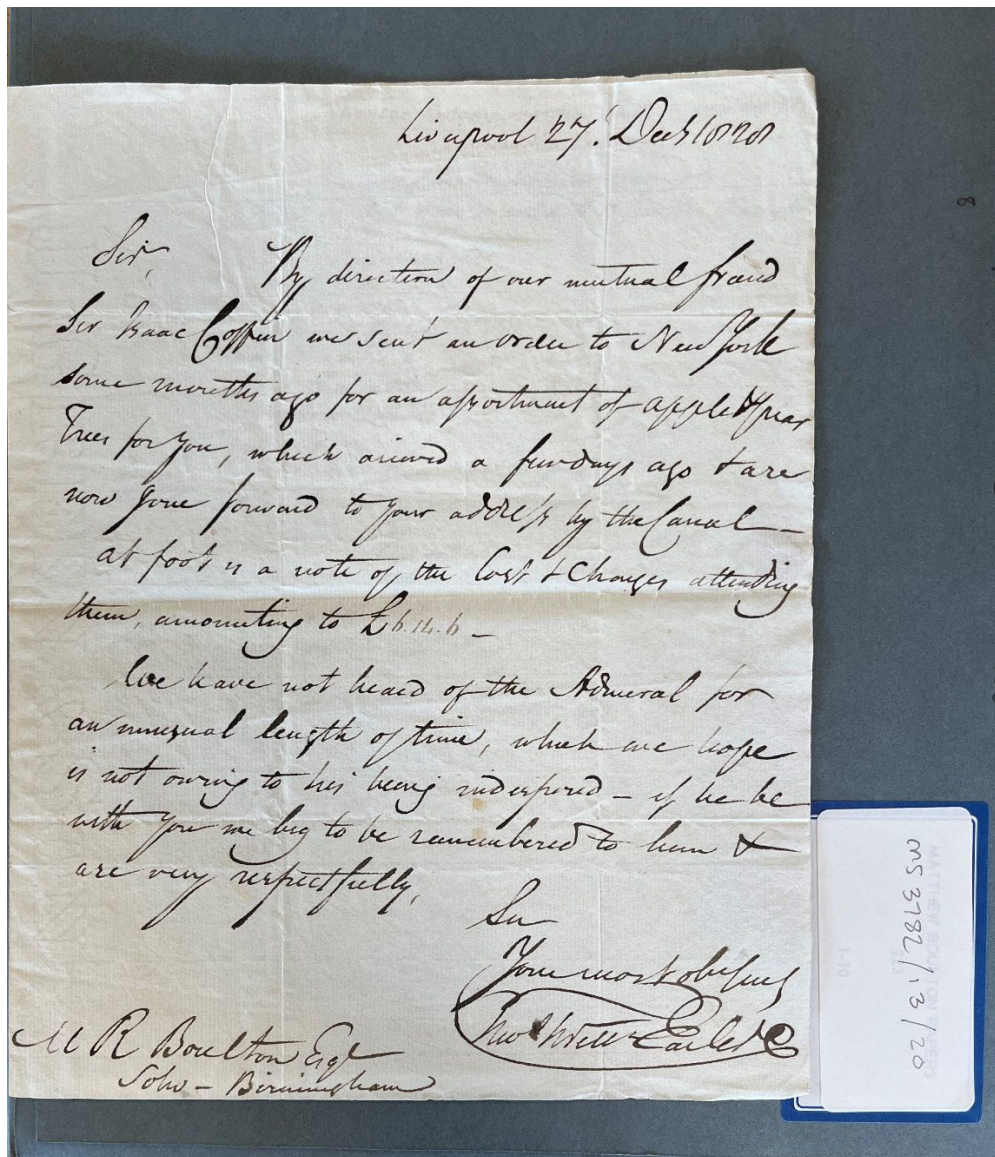
2. John Claudius Loudon, plan of the layout of the Gardens published in *The Gardeners Magazine*, August 1832, drawing on paper. From WCAR, LS JL/ 19, p 414-15. Reproduced with the permission of the Library of Birmingham.

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Stirling of Liverpool 00; Mr Henderson
Milton House 44; R. Bevan, Esq. 33 Mr.
W. Hunt, Bath 35; C. Barclay, Esq. 31;
Mr J. Riley 30; Mr. Geo Young Taunton
35; Mr. Geo. Cunningham, Liverpool 15;
Miss Boswell 10; Lord Grey of Goby 9;
Mrs Smallwood 8, and some others
amounting in the whole to 200, which
have been sent either for Plants received
or likely to be received.

The number of species now in the Society's
Gardens (exclusive of almost innumera-
ble varieties) cannot be computed at
much less than 9000 many of which,
among the exotics, are of the most rare
description; and it must be highly
satisfactory to know, that by the judicious
management of your Scientific & indepen-
dently Curator, most of the Plants from
Calcutta and other distant parts, have
recovered themselves, & are now in a
healthy & flourishing condition. Indeed
the rapid increase in the collection of
Plants rendered it necessary to erect a
new House for their protection, and at

3. GB Knowles, minutes of annual meeting of Birmingham Botanical and Horticultural Society on 16 October, 1834, pen on paper, from WCAR, MS1520/1/1/1, p. 152. Reproduced with the permission of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.



4. Earle William and Earle Thomas, advice dated 27 December on the apple trees from Linnean Botanic Gardens, Flushing (America) for delivery to Mathew Boulton, 1828, pen on paper, from WCAR, MS 3782/13/20/69. Reproduced with the permission of the Library of Birmingham.



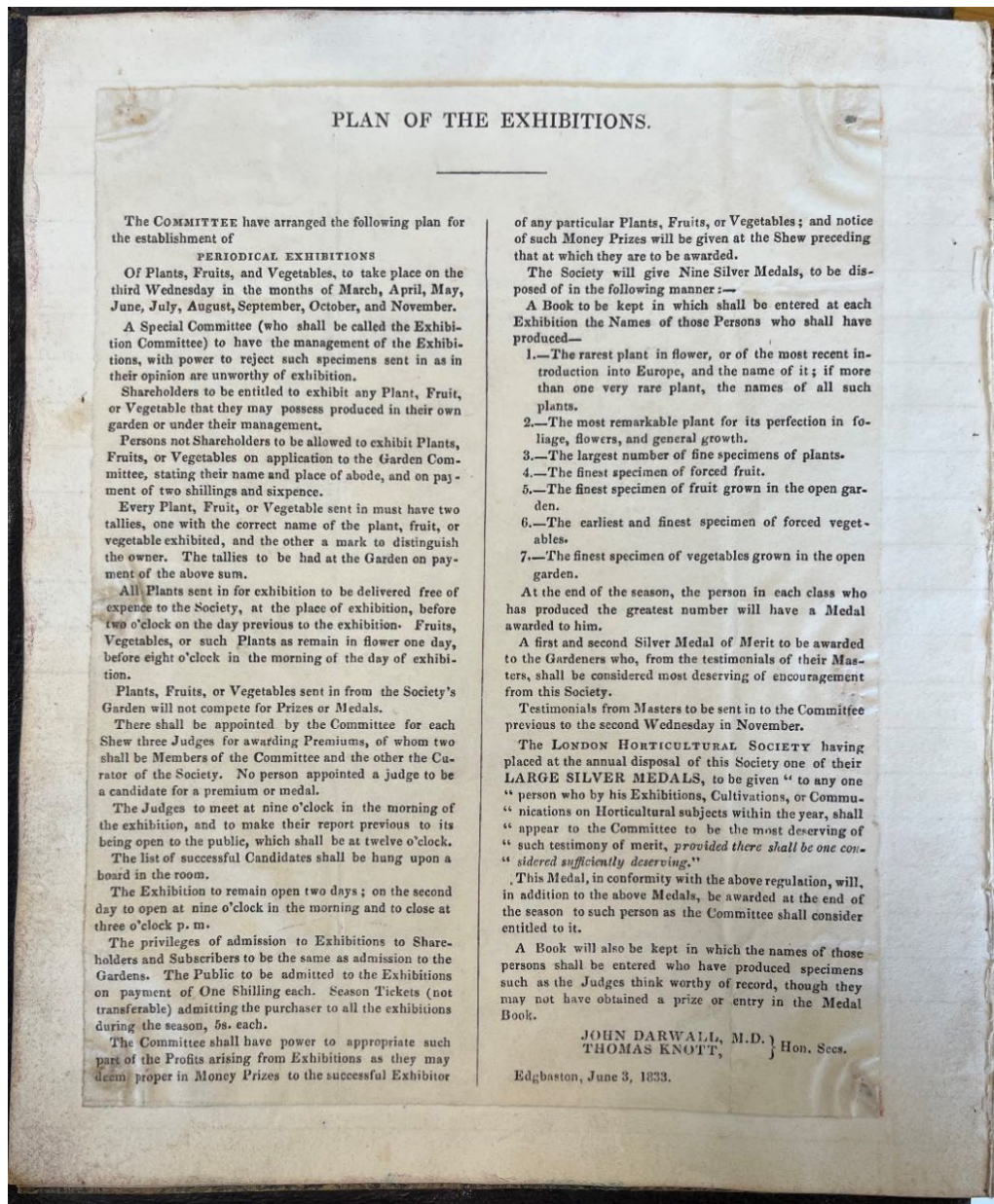
5. A view from the conservatory situated at the apex of the site, 2023. Shikha Bose; photo: digital photograph, Birmingham Botanical Gardens



6. Unknown artist, *The Fountain* - designed in 1850 and installed by Charles Edge, c. 1875, drawing on paper, from Robert Dent, *Old and New Birmingham, Volume III, 1878-80*, Wakefield, EP Publishing Limited, 1973, p. 439.



7. Botanical Gardens, *Promenade Concert*, 1889, printed flyer, WCAR, MS1520/39/3/17. Reproduced with the permission of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.



PLAN OF THE EXHIBITIONS.

The COMMITTEE have arranged the following plan for the establishment of

PERIODICAL EXHIBITIONS

Of Plants, Fruits, and Vegetables, to take place on the third Wednesday in the months of March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, and November.

A Special Committee (who shall be called the Exhibition Committee) to have the management of the Exhibitions, with power to reject such specimens sent in as in their opinion are unworthy of exhibition.

Shareholders to be entitled to exhibit any Plant, Fruit, or Vegetable that they may possess produced in their own garden or under their management.

Persons not Shareholders to be allowed to exhibit Plants, Fruits, or Vegetables on application to the Garden Committee, stating their name and place of abode, and on payment of two shillings and sixpence.

Every Plant, Fruit, or Vegetable sent in must have two tallies, one with the correct name of the plant, fruit, or vegetable exhibited, and the other a mark to distinguish the owner. The tallies to be had at the Garden on payment of the above sum.

All Plants sent in for exhibition to be delivered free of expence to the Society, at the place of exhibition, before two o'clock on the day previous to the exhibition. Fruits, Vegetables, or such Plants as remain in flower one day, before eight o'clock in the morning of the day of exhibition.

Plants, Fruits, or Vegetables sent in from the Society's Garden will not compete for Prizes or Medals.

There shall be appointed by the Committee for each Shew three Judges for awarding Premiums, of whom two shall be Members of the Committee and the other the Curator of the Society. No person appointed a judge to be a candidate for a premium or medal.

The Judges to meet at nine o'clock in the morning of the exhibition, and to make their report previous to its being open to the public, which shall be at twelve o'clock.

The list of successful Candidates shall be hung upon a board in the room.

The Exhibition to remain open two days; on the second day to open at nine o'clock in the morning and to close at three o'clock p. m.

The privileges of admission to Exhibitions to Shareholders and Subscribers to be the same as admission to the Gardens. The Public to be admitted to the Exhibitions on payment of One Shilling each. Season Tickets (not transferable) admitting the purchaser to all the exhibitions during the season, 5s. each.

The Committee shall have power to appropriate such part of the Profits arising from Exhibitions as they may deem proper in Money Prizes to the successful Exhibitor

of any particular Plants, Fruits, or Vegetables; and notice of such Money Prizes will be given at the Shew preceding that at which they are to be awarded.

The Society will give Nine Silver Medals, to be disposed of in the following manner:—

A Book to be kept in which shall be entered at each Exhibition the Names of those Persons who shall have produced—

- 1.—The rarest plant in flower, or of the most recent introduction into Europe, and the name of it; if more than one very rare plant, the names of all such plants.
- 2.—The most remarkable plant for its perfection in foliage, flowers, and general growth.
- 3.—The largest number of fine specimens of plants.
- 4.—The finest specimen of forced fruit.
- 5.—The finest specimen of fruit grown in the open garden.
- 6.—The earliest and finest specimen of forced vegetables.
- 7.—The finest specimen of vegetables grown in the open garden.

At the end of the season, the person in each class who has produced the greatest number will have a Medal awarded to him.

A first and second Silver Medal of Merit to be awarded to the Gardeners who, from the testimonials of their Masters, shall be considered most deserving of encouragement from this Society.

Testimonials from Masters to be sent in to the Committee previous to the second Wednesday in November.

The LONDON HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY having placed at the annual disposal of this Society one of their LARGE SILVER MEDALS, to be given "to any one person who by his Exhibitions, Cultivations, or Communications on Horticultural subjects within the year, shall appear to the Committee to be the most deserving of such testimony of merit, provided there shall be one considered sufficiently deserving."

This Medal, in conformity with the above regulation, will, in addition to the above Medals, be awarded at the end of the season to such person as the Committee shall consider entitled to it.

A Book will also be kept in which the names of those persons shall be entered who have produced specimens such as the Judges think worthy of record, though they may not have obtained a prize or entry in the Medal Book.

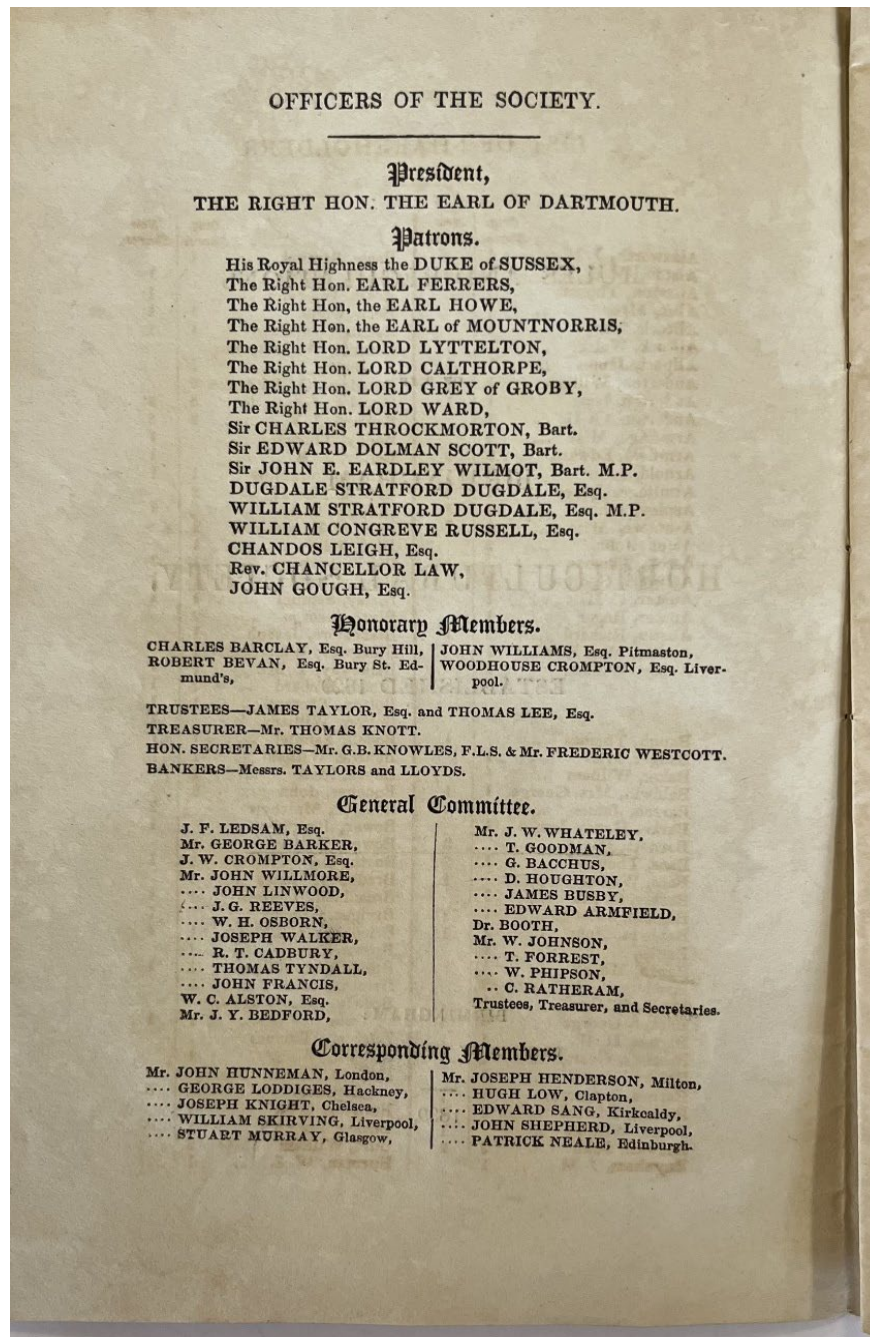
JOHN DARWALL, M.D. }
THOMAS KNOTT, } Hon. Secs.

Edgbaston, June 3, 1833.

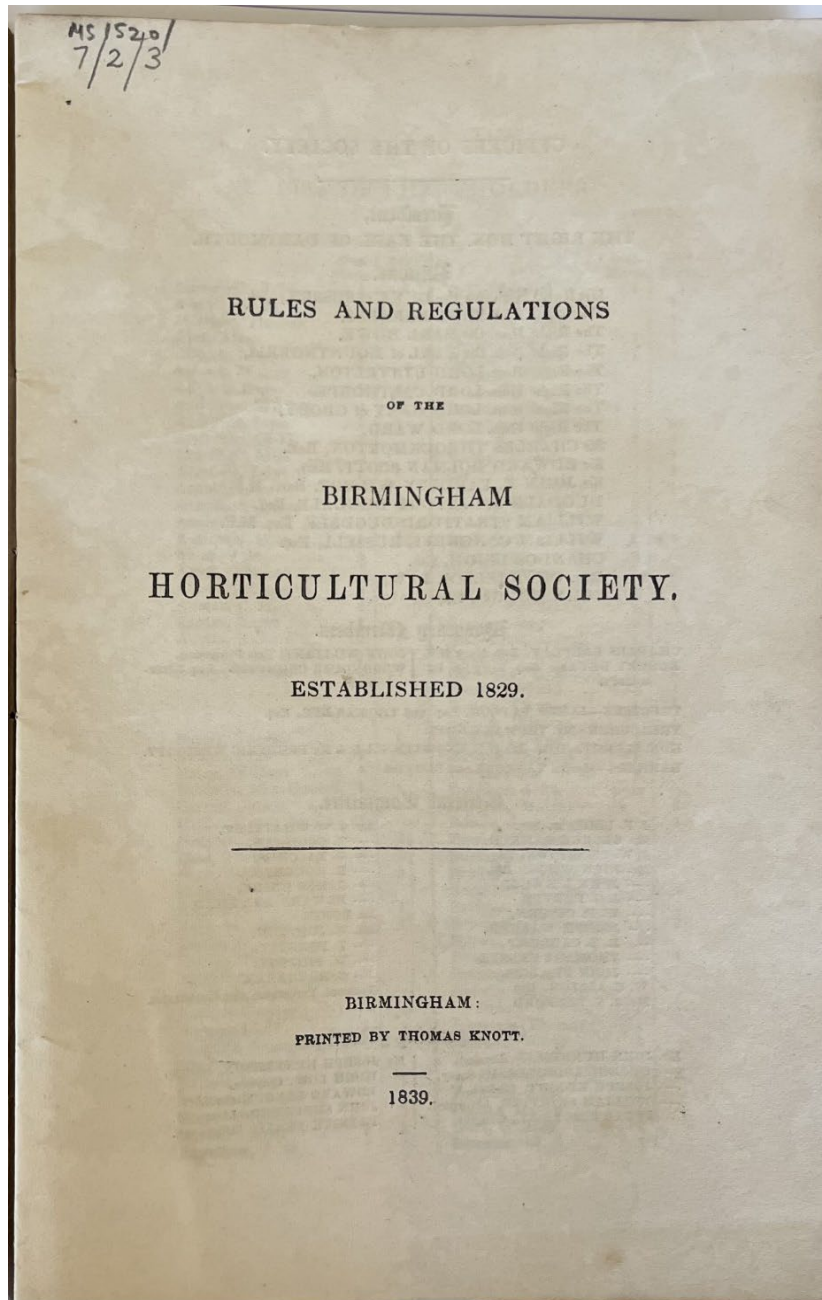
8. John Darwall and Thomas Knott, *Plan of the exhibition*, 1833, print on paper, from the magazine of the Birmingham Botanical and Horticultural Society, WCAR, MS1520/3/2. Reproduced with the permission of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.



9. Birmingham Botanical and Horticultural Society, *Orchid Show*, 1886, printed flyer, WCAR, MS1520/39/4/2. Reproduced with the permission of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.



10. Thomas Knott, *officers of the Society* 1839, print on paper, from the *Rules and Regulations of the Birmingham Horticultural Society*, WCAR, MS1520/7/2/3. Reproduced with the permission of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.



11. Thomas Knott, *Rules and Regulations of the Birmingham Horticultural Society*, 1839, print on paper, from WCAR, MS1520/7/2/3. Reproduced with the permission of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens



12. *Illustrated Midlands News*, *The First flower show of the season* published, 11 June 1870, drawing on paper. From WCAR, L/FF/08/1: 668955. Reproduced with the permission of the Library of Birmingham.

