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IMAGINARIES OF THE FUTURE 02: POLITICS, POETICS, PLACE

Paradoxical Idylls: Post-industrial Ruinscapes and Pre-industrial Arcadias

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The re-greening of post-industrial sites creates distinct landscapes, perhaps a new form of idyllic retreat. For example, Duisburg Nord Landscape Park in the Ruhr, Germany, is a 230-hectare site on which redundant industrial structures have been preserved and in some cases given new leisure uses, surrounded by a decontaminated landscape combining natural (succession) regrowth with new planting. The outcome is a landscape which reconciles a past of exploitation and pollution (but also of work) with a greener future; but this seemingly happy state masks the site's histories and conflicting contexts. And while the re-greening of such sites denotes the end of Europe's industrial era, the beginning of that era – in England in the eighteenth century – was also marked by what was then a new kind of landscape: the landscaped park. In both cases, natural growth is shaped by human artifice to produce vistas and views. In one, focal points are provided by statues and fake ruins; in the other, by the relics of an industrial past. A series of paradoxes emerges: the past in the present (or the present reconfigured as a past); nature reconfigured as culture (or culture in the form of natural growth); and a narrative of time and place which is not exactly what it seems. But do wastelands transformed into post-modern idylls reconcile or merely erase the industrial past? Does the glimpse of arcadia they offer represent escapism, or a better post-industrial world?

Post-industrial ruinscapes constitute a distinct kind of landscape: trees, grasses and wild and cultivated plants are used to re-green sites in which redundant industrial structures are not cleared but preserved. Left as industrial wastelands, such sites would merely signify the demise of material production (located elsewhere during globalisation); but when cleared, decontaminated and used for leisure purposes, they are lent aesthetic value. This implies another narrative, spanning from eighteenth-century landscaped parks to the present as a means to set aside plots of land as productive not in material terms but symbolically. That is, the post-industrial landscape, or ruinscape, becomes an adjunct to the dominance of symbolic economies – image, reputation, public perception – in a post-industrial era. In process, re-greening industrial spaces reconstructs the multiple and conflictual pasts in which they were developed: work and workers' solidarity, but also an ethos of exploitation of people and land and – it is now known – pollution and greenhouse gas emission. These histories are all historically specific, as is the re-greening of redundant industrial sites; yet the manipulation of natural growth seems to reassert a seasonal cycle, even a degree of timelessness, in the perceived continuity of natural forms.

Both the beginning and the end of the industrial epoch were marked by new kinds of landscape: the English landscaped park and the post-industrial re-greened ruinscape park. Both are spaces of retreat: the former for the contemplation of the privileged owners and their guests, reading the vistas and incidental presences (such as statues) of the park via a classical education; the latter for diverse publics, from dog-walkers and joggers to cultural tourists (such as myself) for whom redundant industrial structures carry a message of post-industriality. A difference emerges here, in that the contemplation of nature allowed by an aristocratic freedom from work contrasts with the democratised, but also marketised, leisure of today's immaterial production. Both offer an idyll but that of the landscaped park, drawing on classical sources, was aligned to a separation of high knowledge – the good, the true and the beautiful – from low skill, just as it was separated, not least visually, from the

surrounding (productive) farmland which, beside income from mineral exploitation and slavery, paid for the luxury of the park. I wonder, nonetheless, if there is common strand of reassurance or reconciliation in both cases: the landscaped park appeared in a period of rapid social and economic change and not infrequent civil unrest; the post-industrial park in a period of de-industrialisation which imposes equivalent (although different) tensions in the social and economic fabric. Parks are where such stresses can be put aside in an ephemeral suspension of history, not unlike the conventional suspension of disbelief of theatre. In the landscaped park, foreign wars and civil strife could be forgotten. Similarly, the aesthetic re-coding of industrial sites engenders a sense of stasis or continuity in a society dominated by change and insecurity. Nature becomes a tool of culture, establishing a non-contentious domain. It is, I suggest, illusory.

Like a landscaped park, a post-industrial park suggests well-being while the construction of nature on which it relies is essentially urban – even allowing succession growth (of plants which naturally grow in an area) is a design decision. This is not simply due to the location of industry in towns, which grew as migration from rural areas and mechanisation displaced people from the land, canals enabled the transport of materials and goods, steam power transformed production and craft workshops were replaced by mass production in factories. It is a reflection of a cultural – especially literary – characterisation of the urban environment as a site of dirt, crime and disease, and a counter-characterisation of the countryside as an idyllic arcadia. Neither construct can be called realist. They remain interesting, however, because they articulate paradoxes of time and rehabilitation. To examine these, I look at Duisburg Nord Landscape Park (*Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord*), in the Ruhr, and the landscaped park at Rousham in Oxfordshire, designed by William Kent between 1738 and 1741.

Duisburg Nord

The Ruhr, in north-west Germany, was a region of coal, iron, steel and chemical production in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Today it is a vast post-industrial landscape as sites are re-coded as leisure spaces. The towers, gantries and bunkers

which signified material production are like the follies of new pleasure-grounds offering escape from the stresses of post-industrial urban living. The site's re-greening aimed at economic regeneration, which has not happened; but my concern is, instead, with Duisburg Nord as aesthetic space.

Duisburg Nord occupies the 230-hectare site of the Thyssen ironworks, its blast furnaces, water tanks, gantries, canals, rail lines and derelict brick structures retained in a site now used as an outdoor leisure resource. Local people ramble, walk dogs or watch birds, and cultural tourists contemplate the spectacle of industrial ruins amid a green expanse. The ruins are preserved but retain elements of decay, such as rust, and are strangely distanced, relics of a lost world, giant-works framed by nature.

Duisburg Nord merges into the even larger Emscher Landscape Park, along the Emscher river. Other examples of post-industrial sites in the Ruhr include Oberhausen (an exhibition hall in a disused gasometer), Bottrop (a sculpture on a slag heap), Bochum (a mining museum), Dortmund (art and history museums, preserved colliery), Marl (a landscaped ruin of a chemical plant), Gelsenkirchen (a landscaped park on a mining site) and Zollverein, near Essen, once Europe's largest combined coal mine and coking plant (museums of regional history and design, and a chic restaurant, amid extensive succession growth of trees).

Coal mining began at Duisburg in 1899. The ironworks began production in 1903, generating 37 million tonnes of iron over its lifetime (1 million tonnes annually at its peak in 1974). Air raids in 1944 halted production (this resumed in 1947) but shifts in the global economy led to the end of mining in 1959, although the coking plant continued until 1977 and the blast furnaces until 1985. Then, the 'fires which had been roaring 24 hours a day, every day of the year, lighting up the sky … were finally extinguished and Duisburg was sitting on a ruin' (Kift, 2011: 75).

Closures occurred throughout the Ruhr, leaving an estate of universalised dereliction across sites which were too big to clear. Their reconfiguration was enabled by the vehicle of an International Architecture Exhibition (*Internationale Bauausstellung*, IBA), a structure with a track record from Joseph Olbricht's *Mathildenhöhe* in Darmstadt in 1901 to an inner-city project involving citizen

participation in Kreuzberg, Berlin in 1979–1987. These projects entailed innovative design and planning. Hence, when the IBA label re-coded the Ruhr as architecture, and a new resource in a post-industrial economy, it did so under the sign of design: aligned to the cultural sector, but also an indicator of new thinking and, perhaps, new meaning.

The re-greening of such sites was intended to change perceptions of the region as in decline, with a shrinking population, unable to attract investment. Cultural tourism was seen as one of the bright sparks of the new economy, parallel to the insertion of new art museums in redundant industrial buildings (such as Tate Liverpool in a warehouse or Tate Modern in a power station) or in derelict industrial zones (such as the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao).

Beginning in 1989, the IBA announced seven aims: to reconstruct the landscape; to restore the ecology of the river system; to create an outdoor adventure space; to act as a cultural heritage site; to produce new employment; to introduce new forms of housing; and to offer social, cultural and sports activities for local people and visitors (IBA, 1999). Some were curtailed. Employment was restricted to jobs servicing the leisure facilities and landscaping, and plans for new housing were limited by continuing demographic decline, but ecological restoration and provision of leisure facilities were achieved. The IBA describes Duisburg Nord as 'an industrial memorial' (1999) and justifies the turn to leisure space on the grounds that businesses were unlikely to develop the site in other ways. The outcome is practical – the gasometer has been filled with water and is used for diving lessons; the exterior of the concrete ore bunker is used for climbing lessons – and symbolic, a memorialisation of the region's past for local and external publics.

Memorials state the demise of what they commemorate, within a dominant narrative. In this case the narrative is a selective reading of history via inanimate objects re-presented like art works (implying an aesthetic space comparable to the white-walled modern art museum). Meanwhile, histories of work, and the workforce's memories of solidarity and good wages, like the record of exploitation and landscape destruction, are set aside. Yet the two readings of the industrial past – a source of

jobs and workers' solidarity, and of noxious pollution and greenhouse gasses – are inseparable, posing a contradiction which any design scheme would articulate only in a contentious way. Instead, the memorialisation of the site, its re-coding as a post-industrial ruinscape, looks to aesthetic distancing: fusing decay and preservation, time and stasis, the site is contained in the reveries it offers.

Visually, Duisburg Nord and Emscher Landscape Park are poetic in their balanced asymmetries: vertical iron structures, horizontal waterways, enclosed gardens and open vistas offer a coherent but meandering landscape of discovery. Decontamination leaves no visible traces, although large areas were left to be naturally cleansed over many years (under the remit of the Forestry Department, not the IBA), but the preserved industrial structures, the succession growth and new planting on imported soil re-frame the site as a landscape in which the ruins become nodal points (**Figures 1** and **2**).

Duisburg Nord offers a café, visitor centre, exhibition hall and open-air cinema, as well as cycle tracks on old rail lines and footpaths. A guidebook notes 'There's plenty of fun for children' in three playgrounds, a garden and a wind tower next to 'the so-called Nest and Egg square where many varieties of birds have found a new home' (Kift, 2011: 79). A canal, previously an open sewer, now carries clean water. Rainwater is harvested for irrigation. Mayflies hover among yellow lilies and reeds in cooling tanks. More than a hundred plant species have re-emerged naturally. It really is re-greened, and offers a model for other brownfield sites. For Anneliese Latz (of Latz+Partner, the landscape architect) it is 'a garden where we work or whose stillness and beauty we enjoy in contemplation' (2010: 189).

Reading the Ruhr's ruinscapes

I approach a critique of Duisburg Nord in two ways: around the question of histories and erasures, drawing on an article by architect Deborah Gans; and in comparison to the eighteenth-century English landscaped park, citing cultural historian Kerstin Barndt. I am not concerned with economic regeneration, and Karl Ganser, Director of the IBA at Duisburg Nord, states in any case that despite a lack of economic growth, 'people feel better, even though objectively the economic situation remains

Figure 1: Duisburg Nord, planted areas framing industrial structures (author's photo).

unchanged' (Barndt, 2010: 277). That is, leisure and landscape are conducive to well-being, which sets Duisburg Nord in a history of association between green nature and human nature.

Gans puts Duisburg Nord in context of the wider re-greening of the Ruhr, in which 10,000 hectares of derelict industrial land are now selectively decontaminated. She notes the extensive cleaning of waterways in Emscher Landscape Park and reads the distributed rather than centralised aspect of the project – a landscape of many nodes and paths – as countering a tendency to urban mono-functional zoning. She summarises the IBA as viewing:

Figure 2: The restored canal, Emscher Landscape Park (author's photo).

> The loose sprawl of the post-industrial Ruhr laid upon a fractured and fissured ground of disused industry and allied worker settlements as an opportunity for a new order … Like the first industrialists, they too mined the site but for its latent urbanity as well as for its historical culture (Gans, 2004: 51).

This creation of a new order is a means for Germany to 'come to terms with its own past' (Gans, 2004: 51); that past includes capitalist exploitation: 'Most of the contamination is … the trace of the war between labour and capital' (Gans, 2004: 51). Gans uses the term 'Lebensraum' ('living space', now a loaded term due to its use by the Nazi regime to justify eastward expansion) for the proliferation of industrial structures across the Ruhr:

> The Emscher region is vast because industrialists saw the landscape as an open field, unchallenged and without impediment to free-ranging colonisation – a Lebensraum. Structures were erected willy-nilly in the countryside, used until a resource was depleted … and then moved. Industry blazed trails of contamination as it moved from south to north, mining, building and discarding. … This shifting ground of employment subjected

the region's initially mixed society of agriculture, steel and commerce to an increasingly focused idea of labour, of inhabitants who put their lives at the service of progress (2004: 51–52).

Now, Gans argues, the trails of contamination are a 'new green armature' connecting the Ruhr's 17 cities (2004: 52). In planning terms, this spatially distributed organisation is part of a holistic approach to city-regions (Sieverts, 2003).

In a more pointed critique, Barndt writes that the re-greening of the Ruhr ignores histories of class and collective identity:

> The elevated markers of land art that now dot every other slag heap in the region can serve as indicators, for they inscribe the disappearance of labour into their scopic regime. The new vantage points invite adventurous climbers to rise above the reconstructed landscape and contemplate the view. This privileged and individualised vision is significant in the context of post-Fordist modernisation. The new landscape of affect … symbolically enables visitors to rise above local history (2010: 277–78).

Gans hints at such a tendency to distance the local, and notes that the IBA reads 'quality' as 'aesthetic quality, quality of building design and construction … [and] quality of life, which the IBA authors describe as bound up with these physicalities' (2004: 53). Barndt reads the Ruhr's transformation, however, as an aesthetic erasure of one side of history in favour of preservation of another, non-contentious side in the form of ruins, comparable symbolically to the statues, temples and grottoes of a landscaped park. The history of the IBA, too, has elements of idealism, or escapism: Olbricht's artists' colony in Darmstadt 1901 exists in the context of a wider desertion of cities by artists, notably by the artists' colony which occupied much of the village of Worpswede, Lower Saxony from the 1880s into the 1900s, seeking a good and simple life in rural surroundings (Jacobs, 1985).

Another perspective on Duisburg Nord is that the site's recycling, if green, is part of capital's normal process. Dylan Trigg argues that 'places of labour and craft … have been rendered superfluous' as:

> The cyclical nature of capitalism, whereby new industries suggest rational progress but only at the expense of destroying old industries, entails a reworking of space in which disorder and mutability are suppressed (2009: 121).

Other commentators are less politicised. Julian Raxworthy notes the designers' engagement with Duisburg Nord's materiality while patterns of circulation put 'people into different physical relationships with the industrial relics' (2008: 76). Krystallia Kamvasinou (2006), reading the *terrains vagues* of post-industrial landscapes as having a political content, emphasises the role of local participation in Duisburg Nord and that Latz+Partner enhanced existing patterns of the site's post-closure use, through informally using coal bunkers to practise rock climbing, an aspect formalised in the IBA project.

For Gans, reading the IBA's agenda, architectural quality signifies a regeneration of the Ruhr whereby any iconic structure 'stands as an unrenounceable element in the environmental and economic regeneration strategy' (2004: 53). This denotes a top-down approach: the agenda of aesthetic quality as evident in architecture or landscape design as a sign of re-coding in global cultural terms; and a site taken as open and unrestricted, like a blank sheet, which is also, according to Gans (2004: 53) how industrialists saw it in the nineteenth century (except, of course, the cultural tourist and the jogger do far less damage).

While Duisburg Nord's climbing facility illustrates a sanctioned leisure use, geographers Tim Edensor *et al* see the non-institutionalised use of post-industrial sites as their attraction:

> A lack of overt regulation … provides a space outside the strictures of health and safety, systematic surveillance and material maintenance. Commonly conceived by planners, business people, local politicians and residents as the derelict vestiges of former industry, when industrial sites are closed down and abandoned they are unmoored from 'stabilising networks which ensured epistemological and practical security' (2012: 66, citing Edensor, 2005: 313).

Being *allowed* into such sites denies illicit joy, while rules and restrictions – forms of cultural or social ordering – may be disguised by a seemingly natural environment. At Duisburg Nord, rehabilitation seems to reconcile the excitement of discovering industrial structures unmoored from their functions with the prescriptions of the design process in terms of a historically specific aesthetic. Citing Kamvasinou, Catherine Heatherington argues that Latz+Partner enabled overlapping relationships to the site:

> Layers of history … are made visible in the new landscape, creating narratives which can be read by the visitor in multiple ways. The extended relationship approach is exemplified in Latz's use of the railway tracks; these stretch across the surrounding landscape towards the river Emscher and fan out in curves to the individual buildings … Thus the view of the railways from the [viewing platform at the] top of the blast furnaces, whilst alluding to the developing post-industrial landscape, situates the site within the industrial history of the Ruhr, connecting it with the river Emscher, the waterway that brought raw materials to the area (2012: 180).

Perhaps Heatherington's response is refracted by her knowledge of design and immersion in the visual sense, while local people have varying, experiential feelings about the site. But Heatherington is astute in saying that brownfield regeneration employs 'a common palette of materials – rust, steel, Cor-Ten, concrete, gablons – which, while aesthetically interesting and sometimes challenging, create a generic narrative' and that such symbols may become 'little more than static memorials' and that prescriptive narratives can mean that 'the visitor will … have no impetus to connect further with the site' (2012: 183).

Industrial nuances

The idea of a generic narrative leads to my second critical framework on Duisburg Nord, a comparison with the landscaped park. But before that, I want to refer to another project in the Ruhr, also under the IBA, by artist Herman Prigann at Gelsenkirchen. On a redundant mining site, extensively bombed in 1942, and near

his childhood home, Prigann introduced incidental found fragments of architecture from demolished buildings as ornamentation of the wooded landscape, making paths and shelters, and constructed a tower on the summit of the slag heap using concrete slabs from demolitions on the site. Strangely familiar, and uncanny, architectural fragments appear, as the visitor wanders along footpaths, as signs of dissolution amid succession re-growth. Then the tower, titled *Heaven's Ladder* (*Himmelstreppe*, 1997–2000), appears through the trees as if reaching to the sky (see **Figure 3**). It is a useless structure, not really able to transport humanity to heaven, like a folly; it is also not unlike an archaeological relic, a remnant of a partially legible past, and symbolically indicates a desire for transformation which re-frames its practical redundancy. Prigann writes:

> The goal: aesthetic transformation of the industrial wasteland into a fascinating landscape of experience. The idea: the beautiful unfolds in a landscape that reveals the traces of its depletion n and destruction everywhere. … The way: a long-term connection to the area. The process of aesthetic appropriation … occurs on a step-by-step basis, without a previously set planning concept but with a vision. … An archaeological field develops. The integration of succession [growth] areas and the maintaining of open spaces, the planting of wild dog roses and other plants follows. Routes and paths are constructed. … On the peak rises a landmark (2004: 132).

In conversations with Prigann in 2002, he called *Heaven's Ladder* a memorial to industry. But industry, he emphasised, was nuanced; it should not be written off as bad because it provided the benefits of new products now in daily use, along with work and solidarity. It was also environmentally destructive. Prigann called nature his collaborator, from succession growth, and saw its work as nuanced, too, covering over his insertions but never completely (as drainage patterns retain traces of human intervention for millennia). His own work, similarly, would never be completed because succession growth was part of its means. This non-teleological position contrasts with the IBA's emphasis on planning aims and with the use of generic solutions to which Gans alludes (2004). For Prigann, the fragments of industry which remain act as scar
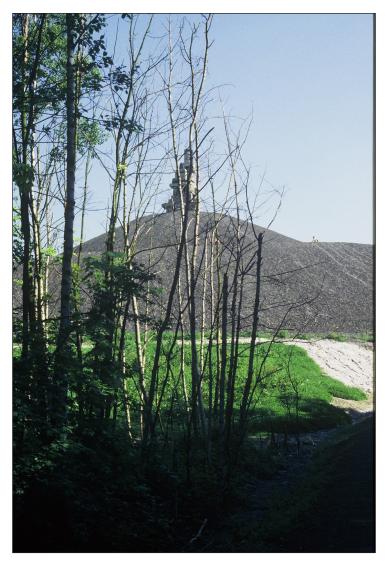
Figure 3: Herman Prigann, 1997–2000, *Heaven's Ladder*, Gelsenkirchen (author's photo).

tissue from a wound which will heal but never be invisible, and need not be erased because its partial retention is a coming-to-terms with its having been.

Another landscaped park?

Barndt identifies a dialectic in the landscaping style of Duisburg Nord and Emscher Landscape Park as specifically reminiscent of the eighteenth-century landscaped park:

Confronting the desire for recreation with a playful historical allusion, the new environment offers the user different viewpoints of the same site. Similar to British gardens from the eighteenth century, with their sweeping vistas and hidden temples, the new landscape in Duisburg features labyrinthine pathways, inviting visitors to discover surprising details and spectacular open views … [or] explore the gardens and playgrounds in the bunkers below. One step further down the terraced landscape of the industrial park, the theme of active recreation turns to contemplative, and the vista opens toward a garden scene among the ruins (2010: 279–80).

Barndt adds that the site's 'postmodern eclecticism' (2010: 280) combines elements ranging from clipped hedges to wildflower gardens, from industrial structures to recreational facilities. If there are commonalities, then, between post-industrial ruinscapes and English landscaped parks, they revolve around the construction of vistas and contrasts of scale and the use of nodal points within landscaped expanses. Both scenarios are for aesthetic contemplation, if in different ways. Both, too, rely on balanced asymmetry, seeming informal but in fact designed and purposive.

There is no direct historical connection yet the parallels are interesting. For instance, a small garden contained in a roofless bunker at Duisburg Nord consists of a spiral made by pieces of wood placed amid leaf growth (see **Figure 4**). Landscaped parks similarly contain small spaces of containment. But here, is leaf growth the ground and wood the image, or the reverse? The answer, from modernist art, would be both, establishing a purely pictorial space which does not mimic perception but has its own rules of form – the aesthetic autonomy claimed by modernist art. Similarly, landscaping in the eighteenth-century park, using natural forms as well as monuments, constructs a space which is contained in an aesthetic realm however far the landscape sweeps towards the horizon (which may be the estate boundary).

Barndt cites historian Peter Fritzsche: 'the eighteenth-century landscape configured both the opposition of art and nature and the ultimate reintegration of art into nature' (Barndt, 2010: 281, citing Fritzsche, 2004: 99). So, too, Duisburg Nord is a mediation of nature against the vicissitudes of the human condition. The

Figure 4: Latz+Partner, spiral garden, Duisburg Nord, (author's photo).

spectre haunting that condition is mortality. Historian of ideas Todd Samuel Pressner writes 'the imaginary of ruins is necessary for any theory of modernity' while destruction and ruination are 'not simply the endpoint … of the project of modernity, but processes that are present at every stage of modernisation' (2010: 194). That imaginary applies in post-industrial ruinscapes and landscaped parks, both reliant on paradoxical juxtapositions. Edensor suggests, for instance, a pairing of 'the quest for a seamless order' and a desire for 'surprise, contingency and misrule' in post-industrial sites (2005: 53).

Seamless order and misrule are incompatible polarities on a scale of ordering, but perhaps not irreconcilable, as in the ruinscape which preserves decay and allows succession growth to interrupt design. Perhaps it is such juxtapositions which draw out the divergence of paradox – the one *and* the other, as if compatible incompatibles within a given context – from mere contradiction.

Rousham

The park at Rousham, designed by William Kent between 1738 and 1741 for General James Dormer (whose descendants still occupy Rousham House), looks at first sight like a natural landscape of fields and woods. There is a walled garden containing

fruit, vegetables, a maze of low hedges and flower beds around a pigeon tower, as would have been found in Tudor and Stuart times. But behind the house (which is seventeenth-century) a lawn, or bowling green, provides a space from which to contemplate the slopes of grass and trees beyond, as if in a transition from culture to nature. But the landscape (the park), too, is culture in the form of the picturesque, seemingly informal but nonetheless designed. Architectural historian Jonathan Hill notes the derivation of the picturesque from 'Renaissance gardens, Chinese landscape drawings and seventeenth-century Italian paintings' and that 'its diverse origins were valued' while the 'multiple journeys, abundant allegories and imported trees' aligned it to 'the choices and opportunities available to the fortunate and prosperous in English society' (2016: 60). This implies a subject able to exercise agency, not unlike the agency exercised by an actor on a proscenium stage who seems to determine the progress pf the plot, if through a theatrical suspension of disbelief. Perhaps to walk through a landscaped park is to perform a script of a kind. Hill writes:

> The picturesque garden was equivalent to a history, formulating an interpretation of the past in the present through classical reconstructions, antique sculptures and Mediterranean trees. As ancient Rome was a model for Georgian Britain, classical forms were of contemporary relevance, and simultaneously ancient and modern, especially when seen in a newly picturesque setting (2016: 61).

At Rousham, the Vale of Venus consists of two cascades with rustic stonework in Palladian style, a statue of Venus on the upper cascade and two stone swans (**Figure 5**). This would have been a place to contemplate the classical world as a re-ordering of life in Georgian England. To the side, screened by trees, is a vaulted arcade, the Praeneste, flanked by classical vases at each end (**Figure 6**).

Kent's Rousham is polyvalent in its references. To the east is a pyramid-roofed structure in the woods (not very like a pyramid but designed before excavations began in Egypt during the Napoleonic period); to the north is an Italian gothic house. Hill cites David Coffin: 'The architecture … seems to be determined by their geographical

orientation, Gothic toward the north, Egyptian at the east, and ancient Roman at the south' (Coffin, 1986: 419, cited in Hill, 2016: 66). To walk through the gardens is to re-construct a history, its many parts marshalled into a present as defence against the actualities outside the gates. The park is a sequence of visual incidents, as staged as theatre, which Kent organised on outward and return paths through woods of native and imported trees. There are landmarks such as a stone Apollo and the Temple of Echo, adding to a sense of a material version of a scene painted by Nicolas Poussin or Claude Lorrain (both collected by the English gentry). As it happens, Poussin's
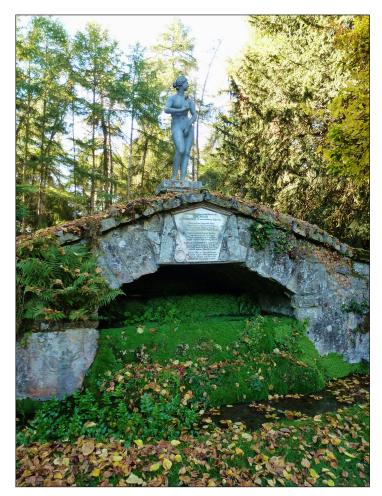

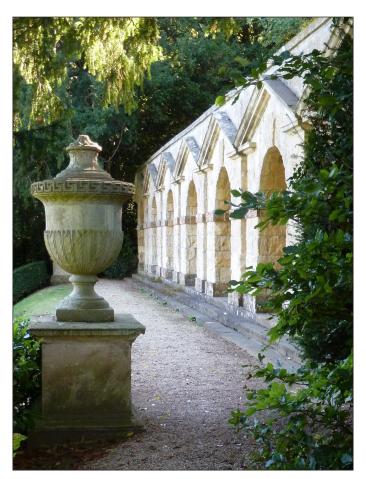**Figure 5:** William Kent, Vale of Venus, Rousham (author's photo).

Figure 6: William Kent, the Praeneste, Rousham (author's photo).

The Sacrament of Ordination (1647, Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh) includes a square stone building with pyramidal roof, but the painting came to England only in 1798, acquired by the Duke of Bridgewater.

As non-productive land, the landscaped park was generally financed by wealth from mineral extraction, colonial ventures such as sugar plantations and the slave trade, and increased productivity in the surrounding estate. New patterns of cultivation and drainage, and improved seed, played a part, along with the government's protection of high grain prices. But geographer Stephen Daniels argues that improvement had a moral sense:

The idea of improvement was central to landed culture. Initially used to denote profitable operations in connection with land, notably aristocratic enclosure, by the end of the [eighteenth] century improvement referred to a range of activities. It denoted moral and aesthetic dimensions or implications of estate design and management; furthermore it referred to a broad range of conduct, from reading to statecraft (1993: 80).

Daniels adds that, just as the landed gentry could look on their estates via the unified view of a vista, so they could imagine society holistically, while 'If the idea of improvement implied a progressive, stable polity, the very power and range of its uses in an increasingly complicated society tended to disperse and destabilise its meaning' (1993: 82). The park itself was an enclosure of hitherto common land, depriving users of grazing and forestry. As enclosures increased, the unrest of the outside world increasingly intruded. For instance, at Otmoor in Oxfordshire, in 1829, a thousand people tore down seven miles of fences; forty-four villagers were arrested but when the militia brought them to Oxford a crowd which had gathered in the streets for St Giles Fair freed them (Mabey, 2014: 8).

The park, then, re-stages nature as a retreat from foreign wars, trade and social divisions, and from the unrest provoked by enclosures. Cultural historian Simon Pugh writes of Kent's design at Rousham, '[it] is undoubtedly clever. Its most distinctive feature is that it appears much larger than it is, achieved by closing off part of the garden [by walls] … and by opening the garden out to the south and the north-east' (1988: 18). For Pugh, Rousham illustrates the pastoral as a neo-classical vision. This is compatible with the picturesque described by Hill (2016) inasmuch as both follow aesthetic rules such as staged informality and balanced asymmetry, and derive from classical precedents. Or, as Pugh writes:

The Rousham landscape, although in no way like the Roman *campagna*, is defined as possessing those universal ingredients which give it identity with that landscape, on a literal level through the ingredients that it has

in common with the original sites, but also through the mood, through
historiography (1988: 35; italics original).

The landscape, then, is determined by a classical cultural framework drawing on the
Grand Tour, on which the gentry viewed the sites of Mediterranean classical culture,
references to Virgil's pastoral poetry and John Dryden's translation of the *Georgics.*

The framework also includes art, as in two paintings by Poussin titled *Et In Arcadia
Ego*, the first (1627) in the collection at Chatsworth House. In both versions, three
shepherds and a shepherdess discover an ancient tomb partly hidden by trees. One of
the shepherds tries to make out the inscription. The shepherds, inhabiting a region
of Greece remote even in classical times, would not have been able to read. But the
viewer can, and may interpret the text as the occupant of the tomb, saying the afterlife
is bliss, or death's voice: mortality lurks within the idyll. Nothing in Poussin's work
is accidental (Unglaub, 2006; Panofsky, 1936), which does not preclude intentional
ambivalence. The nodes (statues and temples) of the landscaped park are similarly
open to polyvalent interpretation.

Historian and curator Christopher Woodward writes that grottos and black rocks
were put in landscaped gardens to lead spectators to think of self-preservation;
winding rills, wooded slopes and classical temples were, in contrast, reassuring:

> Ladies were expected to shiver with horror as the path disappeared into
> a cold, dark grotto with a waterfall thundering in the invisible distance.
> Emerging into a gentle valley grazed by sheep they paused on the steps of a
> classical temple, and a gentleman in the party might be moved to declaim
> Virgil's *Georgics.* These country gardens were designed as circular walks
> deliberately punctuated by such incidents, and in the eighteenth century
> were opened to all respectable members of the public (2002: 121).

The encounter with darkness is contained by the encounter with light. The
introduction of ruins (in Kent's designs for the park at Holkham in the 1730s and
in Lorrain's paintings) is an encounter with mortality, echoing eighteenth-century

scientific interest in the processes of decay. At Rousham, references to Egyptian, Roman and Gothic cultures also suggest time – and Empire's – passing within the continuity of a landscape envisaged as a whole, coherent scheme (or history).

There is a tension, still, between the aesthetic realm of the park and the outside world's social divisions. Pugh writes:

> The simulated regression to a primitive age does nothing to question the permanent crises that were beginning to be recognised as a feature of capitalism. This regression disguises barbaric forms of social domination dressed up in the seeming egalitarianism of a free world of natural justice and rights and a natural habitat which the garden purports to be a copy of (1988: 21–22).

Landscaping could mean moving cottages out of sight. And, as Pugh argues, 'real life' makes no appearance (the poor are absent while their labour produces the estate's income) and 'where squalor is unavoidable' it is subsumed in 'the picturesque effect' while 'ruination historicises the natural habitat' and, in the pastoral, 'the outside world remains apart from the narrative within and only invades as a highly ritualised drama' (1988: 19). Drama, or theatre, indicates the performative aspect of the walk through the park and the same suspension of disbelief as provided by the proscenium stage.

One element in such a drama at Rousham is a sculpture of a dying gladiator by Pieter Scheemaeckers (a copy, now somewhat eroded). This sculpture has several meanings: the Roman gladiator as a proto-Christian symbol of sacrifice; a noble death (possibly that of General Dormer, who died in 1741, the year the park was completed); or a reference to the shadow side of Rome, the violence underpinning its representations of power in a reference not without resonance for an English ruling class in a period of colonial exploitation. The park refuses the formality of French gardens like Versailles where flora stand in rows like soldiers on parade but, Pugh writes, 'the English garden takes over the military images of control, and cleverly redefines those images in an emerging language of liberal democracy' (1988: 57).

Liberalism did not mean enfranchisement but a seemingly stable regime, and a social hierarchy in which the power of the landed class was naturalised. The park was thus a literary re-mapping of nature following Virgil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, both collections of pastoral poetry conveying, for Pugh, 'a spiritual and anti-materialist Rome, its topographical vagaries ideally suited to the Virgilian pastoral ideal' in a time of civil war (1988: 20).

Retrospects

Hill writes, referencing eighteenth-century advances in natural science:

> As nature was considered a machine, mankind could have been its driver and engineer, making technical adjustments to improve performance. But in an era that associated power and status with land ownership and was yet to face the full force of industrialisation, the gentleman farmer was a model for the enlightened management of nature and society (2016: 45).

King George III, too, was called Farmer George for his attraction to rural life. But this was a period of technological progress and commercialisation; Daniels notes that, by the nineteenth century, land improvements entailed cutting down trees, increasing rents and driving straight roads through hitherto meandering vales:

> The new regime is as uninviting for the spectator as it is for the labourer. No longer is our gaze dispersed gently into the landscape but is driven rapidly through it. … the landscape is … so ruthlessly mobilised for money as to be … no landscape at all (1993: 98).

Daniels cites the re-design of an estate landscaped by Humphry Repton at the beginning of industrialisation. At the end of the process, with post-industrialisation, the Ruhr articulates another pastoralism masking its complex histories in a vision of nature as a reconciling agent.

The landscaped park offered visitors vistas connecting incidental landmarks, sequential yet informal, setting culture (statues) and nature (cultivated growth) in

a non-present separated spatially (and metaphorically temporally) from the world. Duisburg Nord does something similar, enclosing the site, inscribing a new culture-nature on it, translating a history of industrialisation into a green future-vision, and – like a landscaped park – constructing a world within but apart from the wider world's economic and social troubles. Duisburg Nord offers an informality and asymmetry; succession growth lends a sense of naturalness while the preservation of industrial ruins intimates time passing. In the Romantic framework of sublimity, intimations of mortality and temporality are contained and distanced (as art) in order to reconcile the viewer to the world's vicissitudes. At Rousham, the statues of Apollo, the Vale of Venus and the temple of Echo denote a past world re-presented in the present; at Duisburg Nord, the public for the site is democratised yet the narrative is not so different: the industrial era, with its conflicts subsumed in an imagery of ruins, is re-staged as a quasi-natural scene.

Barndt writes 'Incorporating wild vegetation in this process of naturalisation, Latz+Partner are literally counting on nature to grow over or heal historic destruction' (2010: 281). This is, from my experience, undeniably enjoyable. Yet my enjoyment is mixed with an anxiety as to what future Duisburg Nord portends, just as my enjoyment of Rousham is coloured by awareness of the conflictual conditions of Georgian England. Rousham and Duisburg Nord set aside the world outside their enclosures to cultivate nature as the basis of a non-conflictual stasis, or arcadia. This arcadia, however, is thrice haunted: by mortality as in Poussin's *Et In Arcadia Ego*, as time's arrest in preservation also indicates its passing; by the demise of industry subsumed in the spectacle of the ruinscape, whereby preservation seals that demise in an aesthetic space as autonomous as modern art; and by the exchange relations and force of productivity which scarred the land, even when reconciled by the succession growth which recovers it. Perhaps all idealised worlds remain haunted by realities which they disguise and bury, offering the enchantment of ruins to a disenchanted world. If so, arcadia, like utopia, remains a literary vehicle of critique, as it was for Virgil writing pastoral poetry in retreat from a Roman civil war, while practical schemes such as Duisburg Nord invoke a greener future while partially erasing

histories which led to the need for that re-greening. Where nature is conscripted as re-enchantment, it is illusory.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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