

# *John Evelyn as modern architect and ancient gardener: 'lessons of perpetual practice'*

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The arts of gardening and of building – frequently treated as a pair by early modern writers – play a minor but significant part in the Quarrel between the Ancients and Moderns: they are often there somewhere in the background of the dispute, furnishing analogies and colouring its figurative language. In a quarrel over modernisation and primitivism, this is no more than one would expect. After all, the construction of shelter and the enclosure of food sources are the most basic necessities of organised human life, and they are capable of the greatest elaborations and ornamentations as well. Gardening and building seem close to nature, rooted in the experience of dwelling, and this gave them a plausible claim for historical priority over the representational arts. So in the conjectural history that opens his essay ‘Upon the gardens of Epicurus’, Sir William Temple, the leader of the British ‘Ancients’, describes how the human imagination first turned away from the pleasures of honour, pride and conquest to the business of ‘embellishing the Scenes [man] chooses to live in; Ease, Conveniency, Elegancy, Magnificence, are sought in Building first [...] And the most exquisite delights of Sense are pursued, in the Contrivance and Plantations of Gardens’.<sup>1</sup> Sir Thomas Browne is one of many seventeenth-century commentators who note that God created gardens on the third day, and man on the sixth: ‘Gardens were before Gardiners, and but some hours after the earth’.<sup>2</sup> But God’s Edenic priorities might plausibly have been architectural, suggests Abraham Cowley in his Pindaric ode ‘The garden’:

<q><v>For God, the universal Architect,  
'T had been as easie to erect  
A Louvre, or Escorial, or a Tower,  
That might with Heav'n communication hold  
As Babel vainly thought to do of old...  
...But well he knew what place would best agree

With Innocence, and with Felicity'.<sup>3</sup>

Cowley's arguments for the eligibility of gardens over buildings are purely rhetorical, of course. But they show how naturally the comparison came to early modern writers. In a classical vein, Jonathan Swift's 'Battel of the Books', the most widely read British contribution to the *Querelle*, begins with a landscape-gardening project. The 'Moderns' petition the 'Ancients' – immemorial tenants of the highest peak of Parnassus – for leave 'to come with Shovels and Mattocks, and level the said Hill', which is spoiling the view from their inferior summit.<sup>4</sup> The 'Ancients' suggest that they build upwards instead. Swift inserts an Aesopian fable about the quarrel between an ancient bee and a modern spider into the middle of the 'Battel'. The bee is a horticultural surveyor who visits 'all the Flowers and Blossoms of the Field and Garden'; the spider's web, meanwhile, which 'he Spins and Spits wholly from himself [...] displays to you his great Skill in Architecture'.<sup>5</sup> Gardening is more easily associable with archaic pleasures and freedoms, building with progressive technology. Both are present at the origins of the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns, and both are considered to be as deeply rooted in the past as they are susceptible to modernistic improvement.

Horticulture and architecture are nowhere more closely related, and nowhere more ambivalently aligned to the Ancient or Modern, than in the writings of the diarist John Evelyn, to whom Cowley's garden ode is addressed.<sup>6</sup> As a founding fellow of the Royal Society and a tireless improver of various arts and trades, Evelyn can be identified broadly with the Moderns, an alignment also indicated by his friendships later in life with key players in the British 'battle of the books'.<sup>7</sup> He was a supporter of William Wotton, author of *Reflections on ancient and modern learning* (1694), to the 1697 second edition of which he contributed a new section on gardening.<sup>8</sup> He was also an important patron to Wotton's distinguished ally Richard Bentley, whose *Dissertation on the epistles of Phalaris*, another central text for the British quarrel, first appeared as an appendix to the same volume.<sup>9</sup> Kristine Haugen has even suggested that it was Evelyn who drew Bentley into the dispute.<sup>10</sup> More than three decades before Temple read Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (1686) and published his own essay 'Of ancient and modern Learning' (1690) in response, Evelyn had been importing earlier but related French cultural debates – and, crucially, French technical expertise – into England. Between November 1643 and June 1647, Evelyn studied and travelled in Italy and spent much time in France, eventually marrying Mary Browne, the daughter of the English Resident in Paris, Sir Richard Browne.

This connection was important for the extended project of French translation that he embarked upon during the 1650s and 1660s.<sup>11</sup> Among the francophone works he reworked in English were volumes on gardening – including Nicolas de Bonnefons’s Le Jardinier françois (1651, translated 1658) and Robert d’Andilly’s Manière de cultiver les arbres fruitiers (1652, translated 1660) – and the finest book that he was involved in producing, his translation of Roland Fréart de Chambray’s Parallèle de l’architecture antique avec la moderne (1650, translated 1664), to which he added his own learned historical ‘Account of architects and architecture’.<sup>12</sup> His work as an expositor of technical knowledge was complemented by extensive practice as an architectural planner and horticulturalist: at Sayes Court, his home from 1647, and at Wotton, the family estate, to which he moved in 1694; as a founding member of the Royal Society’s Georgical Committee from 1661; and, as advisor, on the houses and estates of many friends and acquaintances, as well as on the project to rebuild St Paul’s Cathedral and London after the fire of 1666.<sup>13</sup>

Evelyn’s commentators often observe that his associational alignment with natural scientists and improvers is undercut by a tendency to ancienneté – that is, to an austere and revisionistic kind of ancient classicism – and by a meditative, retiring Christian piety that seems very much at odds with the bustling, projecting spirit that is supposed to characterise ‘the Moderns’.<sup>14</sup> In this essay I want to separate out an important and, I will argue, highly distinctive strand that is present throughout Evelyn’s writings, and that we can identify as particularly modernistic – albeit, as we shall see, with one complicating classical anticipation. This strand is his line of thinking about the ethical status of artisans, technicians, practitioners and virtuosi, and about the significance of various measures of status to our understanding of the quality of knowledge involved with applied arts like gardening and building. John Evelyn is one of the earliest British writers to envision a new role for technical and manual expertise in the intellectual lives of highly educated members of the governing classes. A range of his writings manifest an unusually sensitive appreciation of the cognitive complexities involved with manual and technical work. Related to this sensitivity is Evelyn’s equally distinctive sense of the difficulties involved with the codification of such knowledge in books like the ones he produced. Evelyn’s horticultural writing is especially interesting because it combines this understanding of technical intelligence with a keen apprehension of its limits as a shaper or determiner of natural processes, such as landscape formation and the growth of vegetables.

Evelyn published on other manual technologies, such as those involved with the graphic arts.<sup>15</sup> But it is the unusually close relation of his architectural thinking and his horticulture ideas, and the comparability of their ancient roots and modern refinements, that makes them especially relevant to this volume. Gardening and building are frequently set off in a sort of arbitrary competition with one another. In the manuscript titled Elysium Britannicum, or The Royal gardens Evelyn writes:

<q>In effect, we finde, that without Gardens, Buildings and Palaces manus tantum sunt opera, nec sapient naturam; and 'tis well ~~observed~~ {pursu'd} by my Ld: Bacon that men were at the height of Building, before they were ~~exact~~ {tolerable} in Gardining. quasi elegantia illa Hortorum esset res perfectior. {as if Gardining were the more excellent ~~& superior~~ {& accomplisht}}<sup>16</sup></q>

The Latin quotations, as Evelyn indicates in a side note, come not from an ancient source but from Bacon's essay on gardening in his Sermones fideles: in the English version found in Bacon's Essayes the first phrase is rendered 'are but Grosse Handy-works', and 'nec sapient naturam' ('nor do they smack of nature') is omitted.<sup>17</sup> Evelyn's corrections to his manuscript suggest the fineness of his thinking on the topic. By changing 'observed' to 'pursu'd' Evelyn draws attention to the rhetorical, paradoxical nature of the point that Bacon is making here: that good gardening is a greater cultural refinement even than good architecture, with all its demands of technical ingenuity. Similarly, the correction of 'exact' to the more informal 'tolerable' suggests a concession that horticulture is not a science capable of mathematical precision. This may seem an obvious enough point, except that it was a claim that had been made for architecture by Vitruvius and (in the modern age) by John Dee, and it needed reconsideration in the sphere of landscape architecture.<sup>18</sup> Evelyn is trying to describe a different sort of perfection that is aimed at in the garden. But at the same time he changes the vaguely vaunting '& superior' to the unexpected '& accomplisht', an epithet that defines the perfection of the art itself in terms of the personal expertise of its representative practitioner, the expert horticulturalist. The idea that Evelyn unthreads from Bacon's essay and sews carefully into his own manuscript is that horticulture's intricate involvement with non-artificial processes – its creations necessarily 'smack of nature', more or less – makes it a more complicated object for technical understanding and artistic development. Proof is provided by the later date of its refinement in conjectural narratives of social and cultural evolution. This is a crucial insight for Evelyn's garden writing, but it also reflects back into his thinking about the accomplishments of the architect.

## <h1>Building</h1>

In the autumn of 1664 Evelyn published his translation of A Parallel of the antient architecture from the French of Roland Fréart de Chambray. It appeared around the same time as his Sylva, or A Discourse of forest trees, the two volumes on architecture and gardening being received at court as a complementary pair.<sup>19</sup> Evelyn had begun work on the Parallel more than a decade earlier, however, during the uncertain days of the Protectorate, when he was loosely associated with the circle of the cultural reformer Samuel Hartlib. Between 1652 and 1656 Evelyn was involved with a quintessentially Hartlibian project, previously undertaken and relinquished by Sir William Petty, to compile a history of manual trades.<sup>20</sup> The text of the Parallel that he published in 1664 reflects his own principal concern in that work – the concern that would lead to his abandonment of it after about 1657 – with the status and value of mechanical knowledge in the applied arts, and in the intellectual lives of educated persons more generally.<sup>21</sup> These concerns were particularly relevant to the field of architecture because it was in an architectural treatise, Vitruvius's De architectura, that the otherwise universally adopted distinction between liberal and mechanical arts, between humane praxis and vulgar techne, was first broken down, uniquely among the surviving works of antiquity.<sup>22</sup> The exemplary modernity of Evelyn's thinking on this issue – discomfiting as it was to Evelyn himself – may be seen in his efforts to transfer a controversial debate about ethics and knowledge from the field of architecture to a rather different one, the field of horticulture.

Evelyn's original contribution to the Parallel is the 'Account of architecture and architects' that appears as an appendix to the translation, together with a pair of dedicatory essays. Architecture continued to interest him through his career, as is evident from the extensive revisions that he made to the essay in 1697, when he attempted unsuccessfully to publish a second edition.<sup>23</sup> Evelyn's principal concern in the 'Account' is the ethos of the artist-technician. He is very careful to distinguish a peculiar class of architect as learned 'Surveyor of the Works' or 'Fabrúm praefectus' – the person responsible for drawing up the designs of the building and (apparently) over-seeing their realisation – from the fabri or mechanical tradesmen working under them, as well as from the 'Operae or Labourers' working under them. Vitruvius identified himself with this surveyor's role, and in the early eighteenth century Alexander Pope did not think it below the earl of Burlington's candidacy, although the British equivalents, the posts of Comptroller of Her Majesty's Works and

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Surveyor-General, became near-sinecures after Sir John Vanbrugh's appointment to the former in 1702, and William Benson's to the latter (succeeding Sir Christopher Wren) in 1718.<sup>24</sup> Evelyn also acknowledges the role of the 'Architectus Sumptuarius' – the customer who pays for the building and whose special concern, as distinct from that of the 'accomplish'd Master-builder' – in the realisation of 'an accomplish'd Building'. He means 'accomplished' here in terms of the expertise of its builders, of its intrinsic technical merit, but mainly in terms of its actually getting built.<sup>25</sup> There is a slightly different emphasis in these distinctions of status from those made by Sir Henry Wotton (who adapted them in turn from Vitruvius) in The Elements of architecture (1624), Evelyn's likely model in this passage. Wotton gets some way into a discussion of wooden frames (aspiring pine is best for uprights, trusty oak for 'trauerse worke') before being struck suddenly by the 'indignitie' of his dealing with such gross materials. This is 'a Dutie more proper to a second Superintendent, ouer all the under Artisans', Wotton decides, as opposed to that of the 'Architect, whose glory doth more consist, in the Designement and idea of the whole Worke [...] the nobler Part (as it were) triumph over the Matter'.<sup>26</sup>

Wotton's contrast between genteel architect and horny-handed supervisor or master-builder is one that Evelyn begins to collapse. Wotton's daintiness about physical materials is abandoned as well. This involves a certain amount of levelling up in Evelyn's categorisation of tradesmen. Evelyn expects a degree of ichnographic literacy and skill in drawing in 'every vulgar Workman':

<q>And truely, if a thorough insight of all these [lineary Arts] (as undoubtedly they are) be necessary to a good Artist; I know no reason but such a Person (however it hath pleased our Schools in Universities to employ and decree their Chaires) might with very just reason be also number'd inter liberalium disciplinarum Professores, and not thrust out as purely Mechanical, inter opifices, a conversation hitherto only admitted them; as if talking, and speculation about words, were comparable to useful demonstrations.<sup>27</sup></q>

To suggest that tradesmen or fabri should be elected to university chairs, and that their arts should be recognised as liberal, is to make strikingly explicit the radical social implications of Baconian reform. Evelyn insists, of course, that the builder will have to make most of the running in this revolution, by transforming himself, according to Vitruvius's prescription, into 'Philotechnos, an industrious searcher of the Sciences, which is the same that a good Philologer is amongst our Literati'.<sup>28</sup> One explanation for this reconsideration of the ethos of

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technicians is that Evelyn had been presented, for the first time, with a living model for this imagined artisan-professor in the form of Robert Hooke, the newly appointed curator of experiments at the Royal Society. There are admiring references in Evelyn's diary to Hooke's 'industrious' microscopical demonstrations from July 1663, and in March the following year Hooke was among Evelyn's guests at a select dinner for Royal Society luminaries.<sup>29</sup> It was after the fire of 1666 that Hooke emerged as a surveyor and architect in his own right.<sup>30</sup> But it is clear from the Parallel that Evelyn could imagine, at least in theory, the entirely new role of philosopher-mechanic that Hooke was creating for himself, and that he understood its peculiar appropriateness to the architectural arts.<sup>31</sup>

Evelyn's distinctively modern thinking about the intellectual dignity of learned mechanicians is all the more striking given its setting in the translation of a book by an avowed 'Ancient'.<sup>32</sup> Fréart de Chambray had a genteel contempt for technical knowledge and manual skill, and hoped by means of his more liberal mathematical researches to 'ascend even to the very source of the Orders themselves, and derive from thence the Images, and pure Ideas' of the ancient architects.<sup>33</sup> Chambray is an unrepentant conceptual idealist. The Parallel opens with a defensive anticipation of the objections of its readers:

<q>That being no Artisan, it did not become me to prescribe to others the rules of their Mystery [...] That the mind is free, not bound, and that we have as good right to invent, and follow our own Genius, as the Antients, without rendring our selves their Slaves; since Art is an infinite thing, growing every day to more perfection, and suiting it self to the humor of the several Ages, and Nations, who judge of it differently, and define what is agreeable, every one according to his own mode, with a world of such like vain and frivolous reasonings, which yet leave a deep impression on the minds of certain half-knowing people, whom the practice of Arts has not yet disabus'd; and on simple Workmen, whose Trade dwells all upon their fingers ends onely: but we shall not appeal to such Arbiters as these.<sup>34</sup></q>

Fréart argued that contemporary architecture had been corrupted by modernising builders who were concerned primarily with originality. Architects needed to step back from their work, he argued, to look for the natural harmony, or the system of relations it might have with ancient models. This, he thought, is 'the real intelligence of Art'.<sup>35</sup> There is an implied connection here between original technical development and the location of an art on 'fingers ends onely'. Manual expertise typically involves an element of improvisation and experiment. It takes critical discipline, by contrast, to return an art to its earliest, simplest principles, to 'be

born again, as ‘twere from New to Antique’.<sup>36</sup> This is a process of renewal, says Fréart, that must necessarily exclude the expertise of artisans, and that is inimical to the sort of progressive, relativistic thinking that respects makers’ knowledge. Evelyn translates these sentiments coolly enough, but remains confident that the Parallel will add to ‘the few assistances which our Workmen have’. No other volume will afford master-builders and surveyors ‘so full instructions in the Art, no so well inable them to judg, and pronounce concerning the true Rules and Maximes of it’.<sup>37</sup> He aims his translated volume at readers among the artisanal ‘Workmen’ on whom Fréart turns his back.

Evelyn’s Parallel is a richly illustrated folio volume, an expensive luxury item for wealthy readers. But the text itself is far from exclusive. Evelyn commends it for practical use, in a spirit of scientific openness, as a supplement to the real-world experience of senior manual practitioners. Fréart’s original text professes to be a rationalistic investigation of ancient or even ideal aesthetic forms. In a spirit far closer to that of Vitruvius and his humanist interpreters – Leon Battista Alberti, Cesare Cesariano, Andrea Palladio and Daniele Barbaro among them – Evelyn maintains that architecture must involve both ratiocinatio and fabrica.<sup>38</sup> The learned and liberal components of the art, particularly its geometry, are crucial to it; but so too are its involvement with the contingencies and improvisations of handicrafts, mechanics and manual construction. Architecture was unique among the arts in that its principal ancient textual source, Vitruvius’s De architectura, anticipated and gave authority to this otherwise distinctively modernistic idea: that technical expertise and liberal, practical wisdom might be united in a single person. It was a reconciliation that Evelyn, as a Baconian experimenter and reformer of the natural sciences, found deeply congenial at an intellectual level, if not always convenient at a social one. Where Evelyn did something quite new, however, was in his exportation of this distinctively architectural reconciliation of techne and praxis into another art, one concerned less with fabrication than with cultivation. Evelyn believed that making and reasoning were also balanced against one another in the art of the gardener.

## <h1>Gardening</h1>

The ideas about architecture and manual expertise that Evelyn explored in the Parallel are mainly instrumental. They are focused on the business of designing and making, and show little concern about the experience of dwelling, or effort to argue backwards from that

experience to a more pragmatic conception of the art. In his writings about gardening, by contrast, the active, technical components of Evelyn's thinking about horticulture are involved from the start with a passive and experiential perspective. They considered what it is like to live and work in a garden.<sup>39</sup> He believed that the good gardener should have 'an experienced hand & an ingenuous spirit', and, as Joanna Picciotto has shown, he considered these qualities of manual skill and moral innocence to be mutually dependent.<sup>40</sup> Four years before the publication of Sylva and the Parallel, Evelyn wrote to Sir Thomas Browne, who had recently published his own essay on 'The Garden of Cyrus, or The Quincunx', about a grand project for the establishment of an academy of gardening philosophers:

<q>a noble, princely, and universall Elysium, capable of all the amœnities that can naturally be introduced into gardens of pleasure, and such as may stand in competition with all the august designs and stories of this nature, either of antient or moderne times; yet so as to become usefull and significant to the least pretences and faculties. We will endeavour to shew how the aire and genius of Gardens operat upon humane spirits towards virtue and sanctitie, I meane in a remote, preparatory and instrumentall working. How Caves, Grotts, Mounts, and irregular ornaments of Gardens do contribute to contemplative and philosophical Enthusiasms [...] besides which, they contribute to the lesse abstracted pleasures, phylosophy naturall and longevitie. And I would have not onely the elogies and effigie of the antient and famous garden heroes, but a society of the Paradisi Cultores, persons of antient simplicity, Paradisean and Hortulan saints, to be a society of learned an ingenuous men.<sup>41</sup></q>

Evelyn's vision of a garden-college takes some modernistic perspectives, such as its Hartlibian emphasis on usefulness and openness (to 'the least pretenses and faculties'), or the inclusion of 'phylosophy naturall' in its curriculum of studies. But the main devotional purpose of the project is framed in terms of an archaic a-modernity, of a simplicity of morals that he imagines as existing beyond either 'antient or moderne times', in a para-historical, paradisiacal era. Browne was himself doubtful about the merit of ancient classical gardens – an opinion that Evelyn would adopt himself later in life – so he probably found this displacement of paradise into an historical space beyond the documented classical ages quite sympathetic.<sup>42</sup>

Evelyn's line of thinking here is not, however, his own. The plan of hortulan piety and the language in which he expresses it are derived from his correspondence with a sequestered

clergyman and philosopher, once a fellow of King's College, Cambridge, called John Beale.<sup>43</sup> The copy of an important letter from Beale, almost certainly intended for Evelyn, survives among the Hartlib Papers, dated 30 September 1659, two months before Evelyn's letter to Browne. Beale describes his own hortulan vision as radically anti-modern. He imagines an 'Antique Garden' based not on botanising plantsmanship but on the experience of gardening in a natural landscape, on the significance of 'Walkes, Mounds, groves & Prospects':

<q>I would take <vp> such a Viewe, as can bee had of Paradyse, & the most famous & most ancient Horti: In a following chapter (as if you would frame your spirit to write somewhat heartily on both sides, & leave it to the reader to please himselfe in his choice) you may recount the Moderne Gardens, to see which will bee the foyle to the other. I told you that I find my selfe fitter to doe you some service in the former chapter than in the latter. And though I am fully convinced, that God hath in later dayes very amply improvd our knoweledge, & hath given vs the Light of many very wonderfull experiments. Yet I may make bold to thinke, that Gods owne handyworke, the first Paradyse did farr exceede our Moderne Gardens: And (as if our Ancestors by Tradition continued some of the Gardens of the first Monarchy were more Magnificent, & more Heroicall; I may say, more Divine, then can bee paralleld by our narrowe, mimicall way.<sup>44</sup></q>

Beale's characterises his correspondent Evelyn as a progressive, experimental hortus, contrasted with himself as pious paleo-traditionalist. This perhaps explains the latter's similar if equivocal use of the Ancients-Moderns distinction in his letter to Browne a few weeks later. Evelyn is clearly attracted to Beale's ancient position, borrowing his talk of 'Heroicall' gardener-ancestors ('antient and famous garden heroes') and adopting his enthusiasm for mounds, prospects and other landscape features (slightly classicised as 'Caves, Grotts, Mounts') in the letter to Browne. But he remains self-consciously a Modern himself, and cannot fully adopt Beale's enthusiasm, even while mimicking it for another correspondent. In a well-known letter written earlier that month to Robert Boyle, Evelyn had outlined his plan for a more ordered and Baconian 'colledge' of hortulan saints. The emphasis there had been on the privacy and discipline of the paradisi cultores, each member being assigned 'a smale bed-chamber, an outward roome, a Closset, and a private Garden, somewhat after the manner of the Carthusians [...] Every one to cultivate his owne Garden'.<sup>45</sup> It seems that between the writing to Boyle on 3 September and writing to Browne the following January Evelyn's correspondence with Beale has added a note of wildness to a previously orderly vision.

The wilding of Evelyn's modernist horticulture is also evident in the Elysium Britannicum manuscript, where Evelyn incorporated Beale's rhapsodic description of the landscape around Backbury Hill in Herefordshire (compassing the dramatic site of a hill-top iron-age fort) into a chapter on the 'plotting and disposal of ground'. Evelyn writes in his introduction to the description:

<q>At no hand there{fore}let our ~~Gardiner~~ {Workman} enforce his plot to any particular Phantsy, but, contrive rather how to apply to it the best shape that will agree with the nature of the Place; and study how even the most imperfect figure, may, by the Mysteries of Arte and fantasy, receive the most gracefull ornaments, and fittest for a Garden.<sup>46</sup></q>

Even before he gets to the passages that he acknowledges as Beale's Evelyn is borrowing expressions from his correspondent, particularly with respect to the function of 'Phantsy' in gardening. In the second of two manuscript prospectuses preserved among the Hartlib Papers for books on 'A Physique Guarden' and 'A Garden of Pleasure' respectively, Beale epitomises one pair of chapters as 'Adviseing Not to enforce the platform of any particular phantsy', and 'deviseing by an insinuating paradoxe, Howe the most imperfect figure may by the mysteryes of Art & phantsy receive the most gracefull Ornament, & fittest for a garden'.<sup>47</sup> Evelyn, who either received his own copy of the abstracts or was shown them by Hartlib, has transcribed these sentences directly into Elysium. Only Evelyn's undated correction to the manuscript marks a personal stress point in his resetting of Beale's words. He crosses out 'Gardiner' (actually his own word) and inserts 'Workman' instead. What this indicates is that by renouncing his 'particular phantsy' in the arrangement of the garden plot Evelyn's horticulturalist must accept something nearer to a manual tradesman's status. The correction enacts a pious humbling before ~~the givenness of~~ the garden plot as a given thing. Perhaps 'gardiner' smacks too much of Fréart-style idealism and abstraction. It is to 'workman' what 'architect' is to 'builder', and Evelyn senses the rhetorical implications of the distinction. An architectural analogy is appropriate here because, as Beale's second prospectus makes explicit, one of the authorities behind his anti-classicising garden aesthetic – his 'Concept, That as Fabriques should be regular, soe gardens should bee irregular, or caste into a very wilde regularity' – is Sir Henry Wotton's Elements of architecture, a debt that Evelyn is content to take on as his own.<sup>48</sup>

The wilding of Evelyn's gardening theory through the influence of John Beale added a further level of uncertainty to his already equivocal thinking about horticulture and the

ethics of artisanal work. It had the potential to undermine his carefully cultivated semi-public role as a surveyor-virtuoso, because it de-valued the learned components of garden design, its connections with geometry and natural science. Evelyn has been blamed for appropriating and suppressing Beale's writings on horticulture, writings that represent a revolutionary anticipation of the Claude-style landscape aesthetics that rapidly came to dominate British gardening practice in the age of William Kent and Capability Brown.<sup>49</sup> It is true that Beale's horticultural thinking was avant-garde in its extreme a-modernity. It seems more likely, however, that Beale's reticence about publication rubbed off on Evelyn, who had quarrels of his own with the public world in any case.<sup>50</sup> It was a reticence connected to a nervous incapacity for reading and writing described elsewhere in Beale's correspondence, and caused ultimately by the trauma of the regicide and interregnum.<sup>51</sup> In the preface to *Sylva* Evelyn wrote of the difficulty with which he had retrieved 'the simple Culture' of British gardening, the uncodifiable traditions of native horticultural practice, 'from the late confusion of an intestine and bloody War [...] which made the noble Poet [Virgil] write, "[...]How hard it was | Low subjects with illustrious words to grace"<sup>52</sup>. The word 'culture' refers to the practice of tillage in general, as it does in the title of Evelyn's own Philosophical discourse of earth, relating to the culture and improvement of it for vegetation (1776). But Evelyn is referring to artisanal traditions of knowledge and experience involved in that practice as well, traditions that were valid objects of study for seventeenth-century Baconians.<sup>53</sup> The Hartlibian 'History of Trades' project had been modernistic and progressive in its purpose, but it led Evelyn into reflections on the morality of traditional teaching that would not have looked out of place in an essay by Sir William Temple. In *Sylva*, for example, Evelyn described how

<q>In ancient and best Times, Men were not honour'd and esteem'd for the only Learned, who were great Linguists, profound Criticks, Reader and Devourers of Books: But such whose Studies consisted of the Discourses, Documents and Observations of their Fore-Fathers, ancient and venerable Persons; who (as the excellent Author of the Rites of the Israelites, cap. xv, &c. acquaints us) were oblig'd to Instruct, and Inform their Children of the wonderful Things God had done for their Ancestors [...] But taught them likewise all that concern'd Agriculture; joyn'd with Lessons of perpetual practice; in which they were, doubtless, exceedingly knowing [...] And tho' now adays this noble Art be for the most part, left to be exercis'd amongst us, by People of grosser and unthinking Souls; yet there is no Science whatever, which contains a vaster Compass of Knowledge.<sup>54</sup></q>

Evelyn's notion of ancient 'Lessons of perpetual practice' is particularly striking, because it unites traditional religious instruction, technical information and a continuous inheritance of manual culture in a single imagined process. Evelyn understands that there is something more than habits of work and occasional improvisation involved here: a distinct way of 'knowing' (or a particular form of 'knowledge' or 'Science') is also conjectured, and the word is emphasised by repetition. Most striking of all, however, is Evelyn's turning from classical Greco-Roman examples of ancient husbandry and art to a pre-Talmudic Hebrew model, stripped of demonstrable detail, and now reduced to a sketch of a traditional culture of learning.<sup>55</sup> Evelyn attempts to imagine himself into an archaic era summoned previously in the letter to Browne, one predating and remote from the classical Ancients. He finds an image for a British vernacular agricultural heritage in the distant Jewish past.

## <h1>Conclusion</h1>

Looking back in 1697 to the 1664 dual publication of his most significant treatises in agriculture and horticulture, Evelyn pointed out to Richard Bentley their natural affinity, both being 'my swete diuersions during the dayes of destruction and devastation both of woods and buildings, whilst the rebellion lasted so long in this nation'.<sup>56</sup> The reflection suggests how equitably Evelyn divided his alternating impulses towards ancient restoration and modernistic revision not only when gardening, but also when building. However, a closer reading of the Parallel against his horticultural writing indicates that gardening practice offers Evelyn an opportunity to think beyond the expertise of modern technicians, and to imagine a more profoundly ancient and primitive role for the virtuoso. Architecture, on the other hand, remains for Evelyn primarily a mathematical and critical discipline. In the prefatory essay to his 1656 translation of the first book of De rerum natura, Evelyn paints a somewhat gaudy allegorical tableau to describe the experience of reading Lucretius's work. The reader is a 'Wandering Traveller' descending from craggy uplands into 'some goodly and luxurious valley'. Here 'the smiling crops of a hopeful harvest, and all the youth and pride of a teeming and cheerful Spring, conspire to create a new Paradise, and recompense him the pains of so many difficult accesses'.<sup>57</sup> Evelyn finds it hard to stick to his Elysian imagery, though, and soon wanders off into the sphere of architectural technique: in the next paragraph Lucretius's poem has become a rusticated arch built as a temple to Nature, 'full of Ornament and exquisite Workmanship'. Perhaps conscious of his mixed metaphors Evelyn ends up hedging his bets, concluding that De rerum is a 'stupendious & wel-built Theatre of Nature'. It is

appropriate that good architecture and workmanship should prevail over the wild garden in this one-paragraph struggle for figural predominance, as they do in Evelyn's essentially modernistic idea of the progress of knowledge and the arts. But horticulture remained his principal concern as a writer throughout his career. It remains striking how strongly his thinking about gardening pulled him backwards towards darker, more archaic ideas of what it means to be a workman in the world. In the literary undergrowth of Evelyn's horticultural texts, we find a seventeenth-century virtuoso thinking with and through the ancient-modern divide. His subsequent taking of sides seems by comparison a mere contingency of cultural allegiance.

<sup>1</sup> William Temple, 'Of the Gardens of Epicurus, or Gardening in the year 1685', Miscellanea: the second part (London, Richard And R. Charles Simpson, 1690), p.75-141 (80).

<sup>2</sup> Sir Thomas Browne, 'The Garden of Cyrus', in The Major works, ed. C. A. Patrides (Harmondsworth, 1977), p.325-26.

<sup>3</sup> Abraham Cowley, 'The garden', in John Evelyn, Sylva, or A Discourse of forest trees, ed. John Nisbet, 2 vols (London, 1908), vol.1, p.cx.

<sup>4</sup> Cambridge edition of the works of Jonathan Swift (henceforth CWJS), gen. ed. Ian Gadd et al., 17 vols (Cambridge, 2008-), vol.1, A Tale of a tub, ed. Marcus Walsh (2010), p.144.

<sup>5</sup> CWJS, vol.1, p.150-52

<sup>6</sup> For Cowley and Evelyn see Gillian Darley, John Evelyn: living for ingenuity (New Haven, CT, 2006), p.204-205; see also Evelyn's seldom-discussed Pindaric reply, 'To Abraham Cowley sending me his Poeme – The Garden' in the MS 'Otium Evelyni', BL Add. MS 78357, f.27v-8v; also in Evelyn to Cowley, 24 August 1666, London, BL, Add. MS 78298, f.157v.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Hunter, 'John Evelyn in the 1650s: a virtuoso in quest of a role', in Science and the shape of orthodoxy (Woodbridge, 1995), p.67-98; Michael Hunter, Science and society in Restoration England (Cambridge, 1981), p.87-112.

<sup>8</sup> Evelyn first met Wotton as a child prodigy in 1679; see Diary of John Evelyn, ed. E. S. de Beer, 6 vols (Oxford, 1955), vol.4, p.172-73. Evelyn also contributed to Wotton's aborted life of Boyle; see letter of 30 March 1696, Diary and correspondence, ed. William Bray, Henry Wheatley, 4 vols (London, 1906), vol.4, p.32-42. Evelyn told Bentley about the collaboration, 22 March 1695/1696; see Correspondence of Richard Bentley, ed. Christopher Wordsworth, 2 vols (London, J. Murray, 1842), vol.1, p.118; William Wotton, Reflections upon ancient and modern learning, second edition, with large additions (London, J. Leake, 1697), p.299-307.

<sup>9</sup> Evelyn's correspondence with Bentley began through Pepys in 1693; see Bentley, Correspondence, vol.1, p.74-75. Wotton and Boyle both received pre-publication copies of Numismata from Evelyn in 1697; see Evelyn, Diary, vol.5, p.283, n.3.

<sup>10</sup> Kristine Haugen, Richard Bentley: poetry and Enlightenment (Cambridge, MA, 2011), p.104, 110.

<sup>11</sup> For Mary's crucial role in Evelyn's translation projects, see Darley, John Evelyn, p.128, 147; more generally, see Hunter, 'John Evelyn in the 1650s', p.68.

<sup>12</sup> See also Jean de la Quintinie, The Compleat gard'ner, translated by John Evelyn (London, Matthew Gillyflower, 1693); and René Rapin, Of gardens (London, Thomas Collins, 1672), translated by his son John.



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<sup>13</sup> For Evelyn's role as architectural advisor to Clarendon at both Eltham Lodge and Cornbury, see Darley, John Evelyn, p.187-90; his London plans are in London revived: considerations for its rebuilding in 1666, ed. E. S. De Beer (Oxford, 1938); for earliest consultations regarding the restoration of St Paul's see Evelyn, Diary, vol.3, p.448-49 (27 August 1666); more generally, see Alice T. Freedman, 'John Evelyn and English architecture', in John Evelyn's 'Elysium Britannicum' and European gardening, ed. Therese O'Malley and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (Washington, DC, 1998), p.153-70 (162).

<sup>14</sup> Joseph M. Levine, Between the Ancients and the Moderns: baroque culture in Restoration England (New Haven, CT, 1999), p.23-32.

<sup>15</sup> For Evelyn and graphic arts, see Antony Griffiths, 'John Evelyn and the print', in John Evelyn and his milieu, ed. Frances Harris and Michael Hunter (London, 2003), p.95-113; and Craig Ashley Hanson, The English virtuoso: art, medicine and antiquarianism in the age of empiricism (Chicago, IL, 2009), p.80-83.

<sup>16</sup> John Evelyn, Elysium Britannicum, or The Royal gardens, ed. John E. Ingram (Philadelphia, PA, 2001), p.33.

<sup>17</sup> Francis Bacon, Essayes or counsels, ed. Michael Kiernan (Oxford, 1985), p.139; Francis Bacon, Sermones fideles, sive interiora rerum (London, Edward Griffin, 1638), p.237.

<sup>18</sup> Euclid, The Elements of geometrie of the most auncient philosopher Euclide of Megara [...] With a very fruitfull præface made by M. I. Dee -specifying the chiefe mathematicall sciences (London, John Daye, 1570), f.d.ijr: 'And though, the Architect procureth, enformeth, & directeth, the Mechanicien, to handworke, [...] & the building actuall, of house, Castell, or Pallace, and is chief Iudge of the same: yet, with him selfe (as chief Master and Architect) remaineth the Demonstratiue reason and cause, of the Mechaniciens worke in Lyne, plaine, and Solid'. This passage was a favourite of one of the Royal Society's few tradesman-fellows, Joseph Moxon; see Mechanick exercises, or The Doctrine of handy-works. Applied to the art of printing. The second volumne (London, Joseph Moxon, 1683), p.5-6.

<sup>19</sup> 28 October 1664, Evelyn, Diary, vol.3, p.387.

<sup>20</sup> Walter E. Houghton, jr., 'The history of trades: its relation to seventeenth-century thought: as seen in Bacon, Petty, Evelyn and Boyle', Journal of the history of ideas 2 (1941), p.33-60; Hunter, Science and society, p.91-111; Kathleen Ochs, 'The Royal Society's history of trades programme: an early episode in applied science', Notes and records of the Royal Society 39 (1985), p.129-58; and, with specific reference to Evelyn, Hanson, English virtuoso, p.75-80.

<sup>21</sup> The central document of Evelyn's work on the history is vol.172 of his papers, 'Trades: Seacrets & Receipts, Mechanical as they came casually to hand', commonplace book at London, BL, Add. MS 78339; see Hunter, Science and shape of orthodoxy, p.76, for estimated dates of his work in it.

<sup>22</sup> Pamela O. Long, Openness, secrecy, authorship: technical arts and the culture of knowledge from antiquity to the Renaissance (Baltimore, MD, 2001), p.30-35 and, on the further synthesis of techne and praxis in Alberti's De re aedificatoria, p.122-29.

<sup>23</sup> The 'second edition with large additions' appeared posthumously in 1707.

<sup>24</sup> Philip Ayers, 'Pope's Epistle to Burlington: the Vitruvian analogies', SEL 30 (1990), p.429-44 (436, 441); for the public surveyorship appointments see John Summerson, Architecture in Britain 1530 to 1830 (London, 1953), p.179-83.

<sup>25</sup> Roland Fréart de Chambray, A Parallel of the antient architecture with the modern, in a collection of ten principal authors, translated by John Evelyn (London, Thomas Roycroft, 1664), p.117; note the dishonourable ascription 'This man began to build, and was not able to finish'.

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<sup>26</sup> Sir Henry Wotton, The Elements of architecture, ed. Frederick Hard (1624; Charlottesville, VA, 1968), p.14-16; see p.122 for similar anxieties. For Wotton's moralising of Vitruvius see Vaughan Hart, 'From virgin to courtesan in early English Vitruvian books', in Paper palaces: the rise of the Renaissance architectural treatise, ed. Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks (New Haven, CT, 1998), p.297-318 (314-16).

<sup>27</sup> Fréart, Parallel, p.118

<sup>28</sup> Fréart, Parallel, p.132.

<sup>29</sup> Evelyn, Diary, vol.3, p.356-57, 370; for Hooke's status, see Mordechai Feingold, 'Robert Hooke: gentleman of science', in Robert Hooke: tercentennial studies, ed. Michael Cooper and Michael Hunter (Aldershot, 2006), p.203-18 (206).

<sup>30</sup> His three major architectural projects, the College of Physicians, Bethlehem Hospital and Montagu House, were undertaken during the 1670s; see Jacques Heyman, 'Hooke and Bedlam', and Alison Stoesser, 'Robert Hooke's Montagu House', in Robert Hooke: tercentennial studies, ed. Cooper and Hunter, p.153-64, 165-80.

<sup>31</sup> See Rob Iliffe, 'Material doubts: Hooke, artisan culture and the exchange of information in 1670s London', British journal for the history of science 28 (1995), p.285-318, and especially p.293-99 on Hooke's architectural 'modules'.

<sup>32</sup> See Fréart, Parallel, p.6, for the importance of viewing actual ancient monuments: 'It is therefore undoubtedly the safest way to have access to the Sources themselves, and to follow precisely the Models and Proportions of such antient Structures as have the universal consent, and approbation of those of the Profession.'

<sup>33</sup> Fréart, Parallel, p.3.

<sup>34</sup> Fréart, Parallel, p.1.

<sup>35</sup> Fréart, Parallel, p.3. For Vitruvius on originality, see Alina A. Payne, The Architectural treatise in the Italian renaissance: architectural invention ornament and literary culture (Cambridge, 1999), p.49-51.

<sup>36</sup> Fréart, Parallel, p.3.

<sup>37</sup> John Evelyn, dedication to Sir John Denham, in Fréart, Parallel, f.\*b1v.

<sup>38</sup> For the constitution of architectural *auctoritas* from *ratio* and *fabrica*, see Indra Kagis McEwen, Vitruvius: writing the body of architecture (Cambridge, MA, 2003), p.32-34; for early modern commentary on the idea, see Long, Openness, secrecy, authorship, p.30-35, 122-29, 223-24. See also John Oppel, 'Alberti on the social position of the intellectual', Journal of medieval and Renaissance studies 19 (1989), p.123-58.

<sup>39</sup> The best expoloration of these themes is Graham Parry, 'John Evelyn as hortulan saint', in Culture and cultivation in early modern England: writing and the land, ed. Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (Leicester, 1992), p.130-50.

<sup>40</sup> Evelyn, Elysium Britannicum, p.350; Joanna Picciotto, Labours of innocence in early modern England (Cambridge, MA, 2010), p.69-75.

<sup>41</sup> Evelyn to Sir Thomas Browne, 28 January 1657/8 [actually 1659/60], The Letters of Sir Thomas Browne, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London, 1946), p.299-305 (301); for dating, see E. S. de Beer, 'The correspondence between Sir Thomas Browne and John Evelyn', The Library, 4th series, 22 (1941-1942), p.103-106.

<sup>42</sup> See the manuscript fragment of a passage once intended for the opening section of 'The Garden of Cyrus', BL MS Sloane 1846, f.48v, printed in The Works of Sir Thomas Browne, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, 4 vols (London, 1964), p.227: 'Wee are unwilling to diminish or loose the credit of Paradise, or only passé it over with [...] Eden, though the Greeke bee of a later name. In this excepted, wee know not whether the ancient gardens doe equall those of later times'; compare [the opinion](#) Evelyn [expressed](#) to William Wotton, 28 October 1696, Diary

[and correspondence](#), vol.4. p.9-11.: ‘[descriptions of ancient gardens] fall infinitely short of our phisic gardens, books and herbals, every day augmented by sedulous botanists’.

<sup>43</sup> See Peter H. Goodchild, ‘“No Phantasticall Utopia, but a Reall Place”’: John Evelyn, John Beale and Backbury Hill, Herefordshire’, *Garden history* 19 (1991), p.105-27; Michael Leslie, ‘The spiritual husbandry of John Beale’, in *Culture and cultivation in early modern England: writing and the land*, ed. Leslie and Raylor (Leicester, 1992), p.151-72.

<sup>44</sup> Beale to Evelyn, 30 September 1659, *Hartlib Papers*, HRI Online Publications, Sheffield HP 67/22/1A-4B, at 2A, <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/hartlib>, accessed 7 January 2016.

<sup>45</sup> Evelyn to Boyle, 3 September 1659, in Evelyn, *Diary and correspondence*, vol.3, p.261-67 (263); see Michael Hunter, *Establishing the new science*, p.181).

<sup>46</sup> Evelyn, *Elysium Britannicum*, p.96.

<sup>47</sup> Beale, ‘A Garden of Pleasure Encouraged & directed By the Ideas of Phantsy’, Sheffield, *Hartlib Papers*, HRI Online Publications, 25/6/3A.

<sup>48</sup> Beale to Evelyn, 30 September 1659, *Hartlib Papers* 67/22/2A; see Evelyn, *Elysium Britannicum*, p.96: ‘There being nothing lesse taking, then an affected uniformity in greate & noble Gardens, where Variety were chiefly to be courted; and which Sr: H: Wotton has well observed’; the 1723 and 1733 editions of Evelyn’s *Parallel* translation were published with Wotton’s *Elements* bound in.

<sup>49</sup> Timothy Mowl and Brian Earnshaw, *Architecture without kings: the rise of puritan classicism under Cromwell* (Manchester, 1995), p.215-16.

<sup>50</sup> See John Evelyn, *Publick employment and an active life prefer’d to solitude* (1667), p.13-14, in *Public and private life in the seventeenth century: the Mackenzie-Evelyn debate*, ed. Brian Vickers (Delmar, NY, 1986), p.149-50: ‘A good *Architect* may without great motion operate more than all the inferior *Workmen*, who toil in the *Quarries* and dip their hands in *mortar* [...] he that governs as he ought, is *Master* of a good *Trade* in the best of *Poets* sense as well as mine.’

<sup>51</sup> See Michael Leslie, ‘The spiritual husbandry of John Beale’, p.151-72; see also Beale’s exceptionally self-revealing letter to Hartlib, 28 November 1659, *Hartlib Papers* 60/1/1A-4B; for Evelyn’s reticence, see *Public and private life*, ed. Vickers, *passim*, and Hunter, *Science and society*, p.81-82.

<sup>52</sup> Evelyn, *Sylva*, vol.1, p.lxxx, quoting Virgil, *Georgics*, vol.3, lines 289-90: ‘verbis ea vincere magnum | quam sit et angustis hunc addere rebus honorem’. See Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of learning*, in *The Oxford Francis Bacon*, ed. Michael Kiernan (Oxford, 2000), vol.4, p.134-35, for a discussion of this passage in a similar context.

<sup>53</sup> The *OED*’s earliest usage of ‘culture’ to denote ‘arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively’ [6] dates from 1677, which *Sylva* anticipates by three years.

<sup>54</sup> Evelyn, *Sylva*, vol.1, p.lxxx-lxxxii; I have not been able to trace the ‘Rites of the Israelites’ or its author.

<sup>55</sup> Alexander Ross, the principal seventeenth-century Anglophone authority on Hebrew religious practice, summarises the history of the pre-Talmudic Judaism in the first section of his *Pansebeia, or A View of all religions in the world* (London, Thomas Childe, 1655), p.26, emphasising the co-existence of written and oral tradition.

<sup>56</sup> Evelyn to Bentley, 20 January 1696-7, *Diary and correspondence*, vol.4. p.14.

<sup>57</sup> John Evelyn, *An Essay on the first book of T. Lucretius Carus De rerum natura* (London, Gabriel Bedle, 1656), f.A6v.