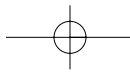


Characterizing the Inhabitant in Robert Kerr's *The Gentleman's House, 1864* William M. Taylor

Any account of design as a unique form of creative practice must acknowledge the varied sources, conceptual frameworks and institutional contexts that have shaped its historical development. This is particularly the case when considering the ethical context arising from various calls in nineteenth century Britain for “good” design to ameliorate the harsher effects of industrialization, to promote national commerce or to improve individual character through better forms of habitation. To a large degree, aspects of this ethical context persist today. Professional liabilities, pedagogic practices, and forms of governance remain dependent upon there being some connection between architecture and spatial manipulation and human betterment. By considering not only the great proponents of nineteenth century design—figures such as Pugin, Morris, and Howard—but also lesser known writers whose works were directed to those most likely to benefit from improvements in the domestic sphere, we find points of reference for recasting issues stemming from contemporary design practices.

With this goal in mind, I begin by stressing the importance of nineteenth century writers of works on domestic architecture and household economy for an understanding of both ethical and practical aspects of design today. This paper details one such work, Robert Kerr's treatise, *The Gentleman's House*. It focuses on Kerr's characterization of the inhabitant—the occupant of the well-formed home and garden—as the key beneficiary of the designer's ministrations and the source for practical methods of effective planning. Through the articulation of its environment, the figure of the inhabitant in Kerr's work became an inherently normalizing aspect of a design process. That is, by invoking the character of the inhabitant as a way of comprehending or communicating plans and spaces, Kerr portrayed design as a distinct form of creative practice, while the experience of space imagined through reference to this figure was, to a certain extent, universalized.

The figure of the inhabitant remains a key feature of contemporary design discourses—particularly architecture and landscape architecture—though it is largely taken for granted given the routines of professional practice and, more likely, its own “ordinariness.” At the drawing board, few designers work without someone in mind: a client perhaps or even more abstract creature: some

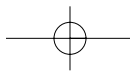


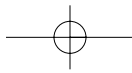
projection of the self or alterego, complete with imagined sensibilities and preconceived responses to space. Similarly, it would not be uncommon for a design student to “walk” someone through a project as a way of explaining its salient points. In such cases, the imaginary figure in a room or landscape comes to share the same space of interpretation as the critic just as a reader might be said to identify with a character in a novel. By addressing Kerr’s use of characterization, however, I intend that this paper raise issues of more than arcane or mere literary interest.

Ultimately, through this brief consideration of Kerr’s treatise, I suggest that the historic constitution of design as a unique form of creative practice and its incorporation of a rhetorical strategy involving the use of characterization, has served as a means for thinking about human identity as it is impacted upon by environmental—architectural and landscape—factors and planning. The inhabitant’s accommodation to its surroundings served to articulate a moral condition through which a state of domesticity became a vehicle for the production of self-knowledge. The several reprints of Kerr’s work and the popularity of similar books on domestic economy, home improvement, and garden design in the second half of the nineteenth century attest to the availability of the category of the domestic as a means for responding to questions relating to individual and national identity.¹ Accordingly, such categories as convenience and comfort, like the terms health and well-being in a biological or medical context, provided material for the exercise of identities endowed with the faculties of choice and will.² Historically, the house and garden came to represent spaces set apart from the office or factory. In retreating from the rigors and demands of the latter into the safe and nurturing shelter of the former, it generally was believed that one found a space in which to be oneself and to exercise a certain “hard-earned” freedom. This is a belief that persists today.

This paper seeks to present design not as an abstract and timeless concept, but as a historically contingent phenomenon, the result of practices aimed at transforming human behavior. Likewise, without wishing to offer a history of the inhabitant as merely an “idea,” but rather to emphasize the importance of this figure for moral philosophers; and social and political theorists as well as commentators on design theory, architecture, and landscape architecture; this paper will elaborate the points raised above through a framework inspired by the work of Michel Foucault. This involves a sensitivity to the manner in which forms of human subjectivity (the “just” or moral citizen, the “gentleman” homeowner, the “good” housewife) are formed through practices associated with the governance of (primarily) urban populations. This perspective is shared by Foucaultian scholars, particularly of the “governmentality” school.³ In general terms, it emphasizes the value of historical circumstance—Foucault’s “discursive formations” with their

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- 1 Kerr’s *The Gentleman’s House* was published in three editions: 1864, 1865, and 1871. A facsimile edition, published with an introduction by J. Mordaunt Cook, was released in 1972 (New York: Johnson Reprint Co.). Reactions to Kerr’s book were mixed, though generally favorable, as Mordaunt acknowledged. Many of the ideas Kerr expressed in the text were developed further and explained elsewhere, particularly in numerous articles and through his well-attended lectures. Kerr was a respected educator; he was co-founder and first president of the Architectural Association in London; second professor of the Arts and Construction at King’s College, and examiner and councilor at the RIBA.
 - 2 Monica Greco, “Psychosomatic Subjects and the ‘Duty to Be Well’: personal agency within medical rationality,” *Economy and Society* 22:3 (August, 1993).
 - 3 The literature on Foucault and his work is extensive. A key text outlining his theory of governmentality with accompanying critical commentary is Graham Burchell & Colin Gordon, eds., *The Foucault Effect* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991).





“surfaces of emergence”—as a means of understanding contemporary practices. Particulars aside, this paper has an additional purpose in applying the work of Foucault to the study of design history in such a manner. It seeks to introduce readers of *Design Issues* to a few social theorists working outside the fields of design theory, architecture, and landscape architecture, whose analyses nonetheless seem relevant. They challenge one to consider how the use of language has placed design firmly at the nexus of relations between knowledge and power.

Robert Kerr maintained that “No room ought to pass muster on the plan until the designer has in imagination occupied it and proved it comfortable.” While one most likely can imagine some dimwitted architect of the 1860s failing Kerr’s test of mental occupation, it is hard to imagine *today* an architect who configures rooms without practical consideration given to the manner in which one moves from one to another or who fails to rely on some measure of convenience, privacy, or accessibility in designing for human well-being. These qualities have long since established norms of habitation, guided the historical development of design practice and education, and continue to underscore the professional status of the architect and landscape architect. In terms of familiar issues and practices—the speculative dimension or ethical context of design, for instance, the play of functional necessity and stylistic expression or the centrality of planning in architectural form-making (to name but a few)—this paper asks the reader to consider how design can be seen to play an important role in representing and forming human desires, needs, and capacities.

The Gentleman’s House

Many books on domestic architecture were written in the second half of the nineteenth century. Robert Kerr’s *The Gentleman’s House* stands out for the author’s strong advocacy and explicit formulation of what today one might consider good planning, but which the author himself termed “Plan.” While one finds earlier treatises in which the careful disposition or *convenience* of rooms was encouraged—particularly in the genre composed of works describing the design of rural cottages and workers’ housing—Kerr’s manner of exposition is worth noting in that he drew upon a series of historic or well-known residences, each carefully delineated, and accompanied by extensive commentary detailing the manner of their arrangement. It is, perhaps, ironic that Kerr’s advocacy of sound planning in architecture over ostentation and issues of style and historic precedent should have relied upon the remains of aristocratic dwellings—many inspired by Palladio and drawn from Colin Campbell’s eighteenth century *Vitruvius Britannicus*—for exemplification, but then these are laid bare, almost always indicated as simply delineated floor plans unaccompanied by elevation or section, or the slightest hint of classical ornament.

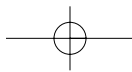




Figure 1
Plate 20 "West Shandon, Dumbartonshire,"
Plate 20 in Robert Kerr, *The Gentleman's
House*, third edition, revised (London: John
Murray, 1871): 59.

The Gentleman's House begins with a history of the evolution of the modern English house. Kerr found two of its three chief attributes—privacy and arrangement—little advanced by the eighteenth century, but the third, the "catalogue of rooms," more in evidence. The differentiation of space into halls, galleries, and various chambers and parlors was evident even earlier—in the noble dwellings of the sixteenth century—but these were "too indefinitely contrived, as regards their precise use and their relation to each other in disposition." Evidently, there was little to be seen of the modern notion of convenience. A work such as *Vitruvius Britannicus*, despite the variety of handsomely illustrated mansions of the period commonly displaying the grand saloon and symmetrical rectangular subdivision of rooms of Palladianism, nonetheless was a catalog of the "waste of space characteristic of the system." It proved to be the "ingenuity of the succeeding generation" of the nineteenth century that made sense of the forms of accommodation housed within the Palladian manor, devising from the inchoate plans of Campbell and his contemporaries, Vanbrugh and William Kent, the "scientific mode of adjustment and arrangement" that was the subject of the book.⁴

For Kerr, the much-cited revivalism of the first half of the nineteenth century arose from a general freedom of thought which challenged the dominance of the Palladian plan, but which "ripened" into an narrow antagonism between the choice of classical or Gothic style. Both classical and Gothic plans were capable of providing suitable domestic comfort, according to Kerr, though the styles themselves did not guarantee it as such. The Manor of West Shandon in Dumbartonshire (figure 1), for instance, completed in 1863 in the year prior to the publication of the first edition of *The Gentleman's House*, was said to have exhibited the peculiarities of the medieval revival in "a manner more than usually characteristic." Though the principal rooms of the house were more or less symmetrical, they had been "purposefully irregular, sometimes eccentrically so." Similarly, were one to indicate lines of thoroughfare passage, they would:

"wander at their own sweet will" in labyrinthine freedom quite beyond the reach of art. The entire composition gives one the idea of a rabbit-warren; you can get from anywhere to everywhere at a jump—provided you know the way. (58–9)

Kerr concluded that both the classical and the Gothic styles could exhibit the qualities of "Plan" and, on the basis of their domestic arrangement, need not be antithetical:

to live in the one would be precisely the same as to live in the other; in a word, one might choose between them by lot (at least such is the intention, whether successfully accomplished or not); and yet this is our argument—that the one exhibits throughout an all-pervading *balance* which need

4 Robert Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, third edition, revised (London: John Murray, 1871): 45, 49. Subsequent references to Kerr's text will be placed within parentheses in the main body of the paper.

not be constrained, and the other an all-pervading *freedom* which need not be unruly, as two distinct styles of Plan between which there seems to be thus far really no difference of value. (60)

Kerr capitalized the first letter of the terms “Plan” and “Thoroughfare,” using them in a singular and indefinite sense to elaborate an a-historical quality of domesticity. This was made manifest, in varying degrees, in a series of specific building plans through the ages, culminating in that most progressive period, the nineteenth century. He reinterpreted the now, well-trodden clash of architectural styles in terms of their being varying means of configuring space. In *The Gentleman’s House*, the classical and Gothic appeared as distinct environments, irrespective of which an organic unity of experience was presumed.

Pleasing and Comfortable Landscapes

This sense of habitable environment was reinforced in *The Gentleman’s House*, where Kerr’s plans were thrown open to the outdoors. Observations on landscape gardening occupy a relatively small section of the book, since the author began by advising the prospective homebuilder to consult with a proper landscape gardener at the earliest possible moment. A portion of this section of the book is occupied with a discussion of style in landscape-gardening which paralleled, in condensed form, his examination of architectural style. A rehearsal of his analysis of classic/Italian and picturesque/English manners of garden design will be deferred here, except to relate that Kerr held a common view that, whereas the picturesque style in architecture was derived from medieval influences, in landscape gardening it was, in fact, modern, derived from new principles of landscape art in the latter part of the eighteenth century. This was one historic instance that supported there being a common perspective for the elaboration of design principles appropriate for both house and garden. Given the legitimacy of both styles of landscape gardening “in the hands of an intelligent and experienced artist,” there existed a practical dependence between house and grounds through their design (321–26). This was particularly clear when considering the “artistic connexion (sic) of the House with the ground”:

To some extent in the case of even a small residence, but in a degree which increases with its style and magnitude, the building ought to be connected with the surrounding surface of the ground in a way which may be called artistic; and in dealing with mansions of superior class the utmost efforts of the designer have frequently to be called into request to form around the house, as itself only the central object or casket, a carpet of design, which shall spread on every side in the various forms of terrace and court,

parterre, garden, and lawn, until the architectural element is gradually expanded, expended, and exhausted, and the artificial blended insensibly into the natural. (315)

Home and garden were formed into a cohesive entity in a number of ways. First, Kerr's "carpet of design" placed renewed emphasis on the "adjuncts" of the house, the immediate entrances, terraces, and parterres to facilitate the play of classical symmetries and the natural grace of the picturesque, say, or to mediate incongruities between upright and ornamented walls and the plain of green grass around it. The principal of blending the artificial into the natural was to have some curious repercussions such as soil which, when not suitably planted in garden or likewise formed into "a bond of combination," exhibited a "sort of nakedness that cried out to be covered." (315) To the contrary, under the "refining control of art," the irregularity of nature was permitted to approach "almost to the door." (326) Second, in that such compromise and blending was viewed primarily as a matter of planning, designs were carried out in some detail to ensure that the design fabric was fully knitted together. Hence, it was suggested that flowerbeds be introduced in any of the "recesses of plan," though they had to be used judiciously lest a terrace be mistaken for a parterre, that is, lest the overall legibility of the chosen style or the function of an particular element of the design be misconstrued. (332) Thirdly, and perhaps most important, the positioning of a "spot of ground" such as that of an interior apartment so as to maximize its availability for sunlight or shelter, all the while mindful of desirable views and privacy created a distinction Robin Evans observed in the text between spaces one sees and those one inhabits or moves through.⁵ The figure of the inhabitant of both interior and exterior compelled the designer to effect a compromise between both qualities, based on an imagined experience of space. Not only were distant views and immediate exposures significant, ease of movement had to be facilitated requiring careful consideration of ground levels between rooms and adjacent terraces or courts. Conversely, though ease of communication between rooms and terraces could have been facilitated by establishing level ground throughout, stylistic integrity commanded that the latter be visibly distinguished from surrounding lawns through a change of elevation and the provision of either a balustrade or grass slope.

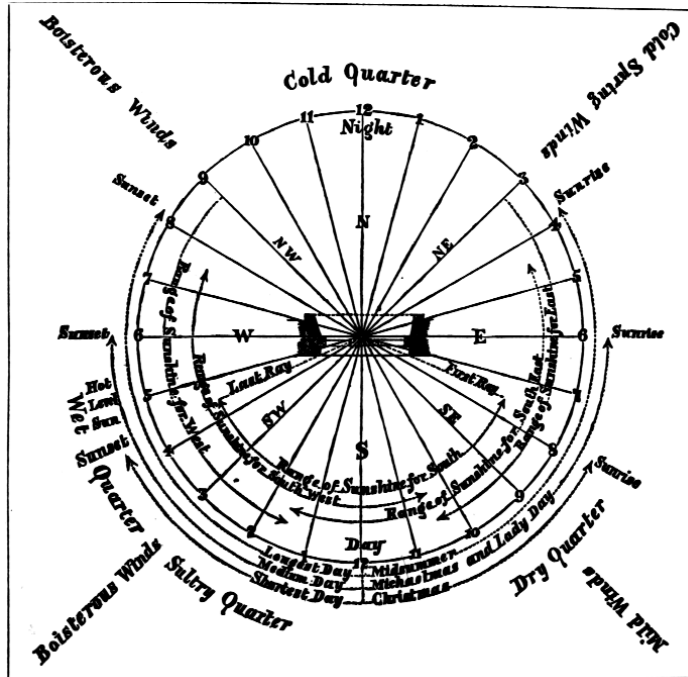
Aspect and Prospect

To negotiate this geography of inner chamber, border terrace, and "further lawn," Kerr's designer came equipped with the author's "Aspect-Compass." This was a means for determining *scientifically* the most suitable relation between a window and its exposure to sunshine and weather (its aspect), and the corresponding room to the surrounding landscape and qualities of light in which the latter

5 Robin Evans, "Figures, Doors and Passages," *Architectural Design* 4 (1978): 267–78.

Figure 2

"Aspect Compass," illustration in Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 81.



ASPECT-COMPASS.

(Note.—Throughout the whole treatise, when questions of aspect are under consideration, this diagram will serve for the illustration of the argument.)

was to be seen (its prospect) (figure 2). The compass, with a schematic plan of a south-facing window at its center, charted the bearings of various climatic phenomena: the hours of sunshine for different exposures, the positions of sunrises and sunsets throughout the seasons and the directions of winds be they boisterous, cold, or mild (314–15).

Despite the desire that the “artificial blend insensibly into the natural” in plan, the inhabitant of this terrain was not so easily accommodated. The effect of aspect upon a room and upon the adjoining landscape did not always correspond as Kerr pointed out. Views from a south-facing window, for instance, could be thwarted by the glare of the sun in the “picture.” Likewise, eastward and westward windows in breakfast room and study, respectively, could permit the warmth of the sun’s rising and falling, but the “charm of a daylight lighted from behind the spectator can never be had.” (83) Likewise, the appreciation of views changed throughout the day and given the prevailing weather of a locality. If one’s desire, “given a certain landscape,” was to turn it to best advantage, then one had to “comprehend the varieties of *chiaro scuro*” presented by the natural environment.

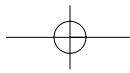
This rather prolonged exegesis of Kerr’s *Gentleman’s House* serves to illustrate how the map of relations between interior and exterior spaces entailed in plans—like the device of his aspect-

compass—assumed a guise of rationality which belied the necessity of compromise based on subjective value. Just as the antagonism between aspect and prospect created spaces within which one either moved or saw things, the inhabitant was cast as a sensible being who not only occupied a particular room or spot of ground physically, but also experienced that precise location visually, acoustically, and even oralfactorily as well. Recourse was made to an imagined experience of space through which such compromises were choreographed. Designing the home, then afforded “opportunity for the exercise of much ingenuity in the disposal of rooms so as to possess the advantages of aspect and prospect together, unconnected and frequently conflicting as their demands must be.” (83–4)

I would suggest that the call for ingenuity here should neither be dismissed as gratuitous, nor be seen to invoke simple cleverness. Rather, it called forth an imaginative process dependent upon a particular way in which the figure of the inhabitant was construed and the plan as a representational technique was deployed. The inhabitant invoked a form of characterization dependent upon the articulation of specific spaces and their relation to an imagined subject through the spaces he or she inhabited, moved through, saw, and felt. Consider for instance, Kerr’s discussion of the necessity of comfort and:

Take, for instance, the case of a Gentleman’s Study of small size; and suppose, when the occupant comes to place his desk in it, he discovers that he must chose between three evils (not an unfrequent case), namely, whether to turn his back to the fire, or to the door, or to the window. He will be told, perhaps, that the reason of this awkwardness lies in the conflicting claims of a neighbouring apartment; or that is the fault of the access, or the chimney-breast, or the prospect, or what not; but the simple fact is that it is the fault of the architect—the room has never been *planned*. It is true, it would be dangerous to assert that the architect is bound to provide for each individual apartment an arrangement as perfect and complete as if itself alone were the subject of design; questions of compromise must continually arise, and often they will prove hard of solution; but the skill of the designer has its chief task here, in reducing every compromise, by sheer patience of contrivance, to a minimum; and the plan can never be considered perfect whilst anything of the sort is so left as to provoke the perception of a radical defect or even a serious discomfort. (70–71)

Comfort was a measure of the accommodation of the occupant to its immediate environment. Involving a passive response to the perception of spatial attributes and sensation of environmental qualities, it was inherently normalizing. It was related to, though



distinguished from convenience, which resulted from a suitable arrangement of component parts as “shall enable all the uses and purposes of the establishment to be carried on in perfect harmony.”

Robin Evans described the significance of *The Gentleman's House* as a nineteenth century landmark in the gradual emergence of a new kind of inhabiting subject in architectural discourse. In the earlier plans and paintings of Renaissance architects and artists such as Alberti, Palladio, and Raphael, he discerned a polyvalent figure, free to move from room to room via multiple doors, free from the restrictions of serviced rooms and auxiliary passages: a figure of chance encounters and animated carnality who remains unrestrained by an exact and conforming architecture—much less so the position of furnishings. To the contrary and foreshadowing modern patterns of domestic life, Evans found various norms of habitation emerging from the increasing differentiation of domestic spaces, the criticism of “thoroughfare rooms” as “inconvenient,” and repeated concerns for privacy expressed in treatises on domestic architecture by the middle of the nineteenth century.⁶

Reading Character

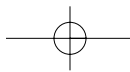
Coincident with the sense of increasing domestic individuation evident in *The Gentleman's House*, Ian Hunter has described how, in the nineteenth century, the literary construct denoted by the term “character” became an object of moral reflection—in his terms, a “projection or correlate of the reader's moral self and personality.” Certain techniques and practices allowed readers to project their own interiority into a work of literature, the purpose of which was moral transformation or—in Foucaultian terms—the production of knowledge via disciplinary individuation.⁷

Extending Hunter's frame of reference to include architecture and design, similar techniques and practices came to invoke the figure of the inhabitant through an imaginative reading of characters *in space*. These included, first, nineteenth century discourses on comfort. Reminiscent of earlier practices of Christian pastoralism though given secularized form, the manipulation of space came to facilitate the adjustment of an individual's style of life to his or her own sense of well-being and moral integrity. The chief goal of this accommodation was the restoration of motivational energies in a world of labor. The emphasis here was not only on the attributes of particular character-types—the “soft” nature of the retiring woman, the vulnerability of children, the ribald character of bachelors, and so forth—but on the settings for the actions of these figures and the extent to which these settings could be manipulated so that decent habits were imbued. Kerr, for instance, detailing the spatial qualities essential to a comfortable life, described how spaciousness induced a sense of well-being in the inhabitant in the following scene:

There are many otherwise good houses in which the sense of contractedness is positively oppressive; you experience a

⁶ Ibid., 272-73.

⁷ Ian Hunter, “Reading Character,” *Southern Review* 16:2 (July, 1983): 230-34.



constant fear of overturning something, a sense of being in somebody's way; you speak in a subdued voice, lest you should be heard outside, or upstairs, or in the kitchen; you breathe as if the place were musty; you instinctively stoop to pass through a doorway; you sit contractedly in your chair, and begin even to lie contractedly in bed; and to step out into the open garden, or even upon the footpath of a street, seems an act of leaping into free space! And there are others, perhaps of much less aggregate size and importance, where the mind and body, the spirits and even the self-esteem of a man, seem to expand and acquire vigour under the simple influence of elbow-room. (74)

Second, certain techniques—notably the use of grammatical tense in the preceding illustration—allowed the reader to share the same psychological space as the inhabitant. In the end, it was *you*, the reader, who was oppressed by a sense of claustrophobia, *you* worried about upsetting the furniture, *you* sat cramped in a chair or lay awkwardly in bed. Conversely, when “amplitude of space is made the rule” as in larger or more dignified houses, we had the difficult task of “keeping it all together.” Furthermore, Kerr’s language was anything but plain as he would have had one believe, but rather incorporated a set of specific meanings which both inhabitant and reader were intended to understand. Accordingly, plans acquired an “extended and straggling character,” and corridors seemed “interminable,” while spaces were “wasted.” The reader was invited to experience the spaces indicated and thereby acquire a knowledge of what these terms meant when they were applied to architectural or landscape configurations.

Thirdly, the technique of reader—identification was furthered by invoking norms of physical habitation. Kerr’s *Gentleman’s House* rendered the experience of dwelling a matter of convenience, emphasizing actions of passage and relations of proximity. The idealized inhabitant was one who had to mediate the demands of spaces he or she moved through and those in which he or she observed things. The reader was meant to share in these domestic perambulations and visions. In an earlier example of this practice, in the equally popular *Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion* of 1838, John Claudius Loudon elaborated the design of his own home and garden which was to:

...have some pretensions to architectural design; being, at the same time, *calculated for invalids*, and, therefore, furnished with verandas extending nearly round the whole building for taking exercise in during inclement weather.⁸

Like Kerr’s terraces and parterres, Loudon’s verandas negotiated the transition from interior space to exterior environment (figures 3 and 4). Their plans did not suggest the quality of the space they

8 The emphasis here is mine. John Claudius Loudon, *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982, originally published in London, 1838): 325.

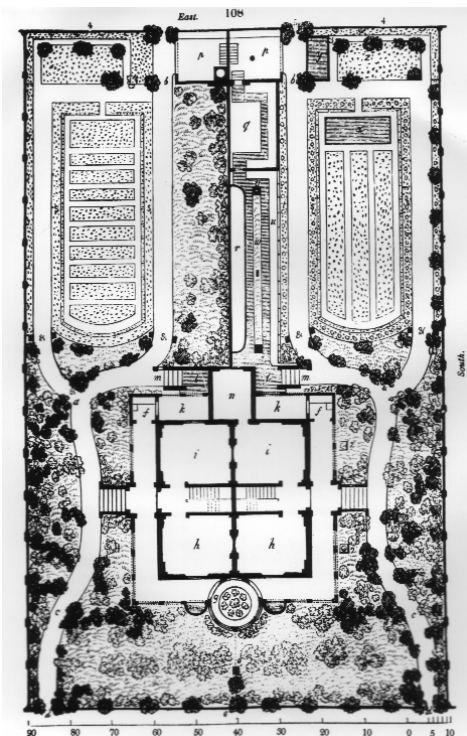


Figure 3, above

"A double-detached suburban villa plan in Porchester Terrace, Bayswater," Figure 108 in John C. Loudon, *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1838), 326.

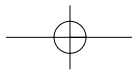


Figure 4, above right

The "double-detached suburban villa" that served as John Loudon's own home in Bayswater, London. Photo by the author.

enclosed nor were these and adjacent rooms governed by principles of proportion. They comprised, rather, diagrams of relationships between spaces designed for a very specific purpose: ease of movement. In the case of Loudon's design, convenience was moderated based on the character-type of the invalid. Relations of proportion were supplanted by those of proximity and interconnection. The initialing of all interior rooms and adjacent exterior spaces was keyed to respective purposes, while visible character, consequently, was rendered problematic since it was the effect of some other quality, namely, functional coherency.

In both Kerr's house for a gentleman and Loudon's home for an invalid, the use of plans was inherently normalizing. That is, they invoked standard ways of using—moving through, visualizing, and obtaining comfort from—the spaces they represented. This raises a fourth and final point regarding the role that plans played in further distinguishing the figure of the inhabitant. Plans and associated commentary provided the basis for a knowledge of habitation by functionally differentiating between rooms and by specifying modes of relation between them. This facilitated an overlap between the fully integrated building and the morally integrated life. There followed the need that compromises be minimized, that plans be rendered compact, and that space not be dissipated. It is not surprising that the many works of domestic economy of the latter half of the nineteenth century brought together a concern for



space with a concern that effort not be wasted in the home. Such appeals to “economize space” and such terms as “mechanism” (74–76) to describe the convenient plan reflected not only the transference of terms from classical physics and economics to such fields as architecture, but the more general and powerful deployment of positive science to explain inherently social phenomena. That a literary construct such as character should be so central in obtaining the most “scientific form” of integrity possible is remarkable in works of self-help such as the 1888 manual *How She Did It or Comfort on \$150 a Year*. In a preface to the reader, the author:

wishes to say, as strongly and impressively as words can express it, that its story is not merely founded on fact, but is an actual portrayal, step by step, of her own experience, her own wonderful success in carrying out a long-cherished theory of comfortable economy.⁹

Given her claim that “The every-day life described is not a poetically imagined affair, but one that she has absolutely lived and gloried in,” the author nonetheless relied on a fictional creation, Faith Arden, in “solving one of the difficult and perplexing social problems of the day.” Through the ensuing monologue, the reader followed the book’s heroine as she took on the task of fashioning a house so that she could live on restricted financial resources. Mindful of unwarranted extravagance and meriting the determination her name suggests, she confronted more fashion-conscious critics:

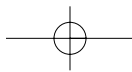
I will have a house, the plan of which I have carefully studied out, in which housekeeping shall become a practical delight, with no wearying or repulsive details. I will settle down to a life of pure enjoyment, into which the grosser elements of everyday existence shall have little place. I shall have every comfort, unalloyed by household anxiety; and the bread of contentment will be sweeter to me than the richest feast you have every spread before your guest in your own houses.¹⁰

Before concluding, a final word is in order regarding the environments in which the inhabitants of the preceding examples found themselves. Foucault’s concept of disciplinary individuation arose as knowledge of the human body—its physical operation, psychological attributes and capacity for productivity—informed techniques for normalizing relations between individuals and their social milieu. The aforementioned works are notable for contributing to various pedagogic formations (relying on manuals of residential architecture, gardens, and domestic economy) that effected the technical connection between the rhetorical analysis of character and scene and the “machinery for the construction of moral selves or good personal character.”¹¹ The figure of the inhabitant appeared during a period in which the biological sciences highlighted the

9 Mary Cruger, *How She Did It or Comfort on \$150 a Year* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1888).

10 *Ibid.*, 9.

11 Hunter, “Reading Character,” 233.



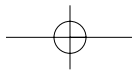
impact of environments upon the body and described *life* as that force which was guided by evolution and adaptation, modes of accommodation, and norms of adjustment. A work such as Alexander Bain's *The Senses and the Intellect* of 1855, for instance, contributed to an emerging awareness that knowledge was formed through experience, dependent upon an individual's actions, and not that defined philosophically. One implication of his work was the link that came to be established between the sensation of spatial qualities such as light, warmth, or sound and the inhabitant's occupation of space and movement through it. Environmental qualities became the product of the inhabitant's temporal existence, available to narrativization and not simply the character intrinsic to objects and spaces.¹²

Interesting, one also finds in the nineteenth century a form of moral psychology emerge with a similar environmental cast, reinvigorating what had previously served as caricature. By way of explanation, we find in *The Gentleman's House* several senses of the term "comfort." First and foremost, it indicated an absence of such evils as "drafts, smoky chimneys, kitchen smells, damp, vermin, noise, and dust; summer sultriness and winter cold; dark corners, blind passages, and musty rooms." In broader terms, it also suggested the idea that each room in the house should be planned according to its purpose, that it was "free from awkwardness, inconvenience, and inappropriateness." Expounding upon a popular theme, Kerr introduces another sense of the term, that of a style of living. Hence, we find that "indoor comfort is essentially a more Northern idea, as contrasted with a sort of outdoor enjoyment which is equally a more Southern idea, and Oriental." Similarly, the French were motivated by certain habits that connected them to the ancient Romans, while the English were related to certain Gothic traits "by direct inheritance through the Saxons." These claims of descendency invoked the familiar nationalist theme of "blood and soil," though these were rendered entirely relative due to peculiarities of climate, domestic habits, social distinctions, and material wealth (69–70). Just as the concept of the organic structure of living beings redefined the basis of biological knowledge by the latter half of the nineteenth century, the organic structure of society was given an environmentally derived form, allowing the figure of the inhabitant to move between various homes depending on his or her ethnic character.

Conclusion

By way of concluding, I'd like to shed a slightly different light on the figure of the inhabitant and briefly suggest how the discourses of comfort, techniques of reader-identification, and practices of reading plans confined him or her within a complex web of obligations. First, the desire for comfort was accompanied by the need for a great many *things*, not only the quality of spaciousness and a room

¹² Alexander Bain, *The Senses and the Intellect* (London: John Parker & Sons, 1885) cited in Robert Young, *Mind, Brain and Adaptation in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 121.



for every activity, but furniture to fill them with, windows to see through, but not be seen, servants who formed their own thriving “community” behind their own shut doors, soil that cried out to be covered and lawns to be weeded and mowed. The nineteenth century discourse on comfort was built upon a burgeoning material culture and a system of production and consumption that afforded it. This point seems so obvious as little more need be added here. One may imagine, nonetheless, the inhabitant being drawn from the web of legal obligations associated with property ownership tying him or her with lines of credit, rents, and mortgages, paternity and inheritance, and employment and servitude, all strung between the rafters of the home.

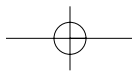
Secondly, as the curator of this museum of materialism, the inhabitant was defined in part by a need to manage its contents and appliances. He, though more likely *she*, had to constantly distinguish between functional necessity and ostentatious ornament, negotiate the breach between home and garden, and equip the last wasted space. Acquiring a knowledge of the attributes of the home brought, not so much its mastery, but a transformation of behavior as one sought to remedy its deficiencies. The goal of “domestic economy” was not only regulation, but also the ever more precise specification of the factors that impinged upon human comfort and well-being.

In illustration of this, it is worth considering for a moment a work published in the same year as *The Gentleman’s House* titled *Our House and Garden: What We See, and What We Do Not See in Them*, in which the author brought the advances of science to the attention of the average homeowner.¹³ He described, among other phenomena, the reasons why one felt cold upon arising for bed, discerned the freshness of the air, the dampness of different materials from which linen and bedclothes were made, the porosity of walls and the watertightness of masonry; the composition of the air, its movement and closeness, and the smells of objects within confined spaces. The author equated an ever greater scrutiny of the home with travel, since the former proved to be equally beneficial to mind and body. What united home and garden proved to be a knowledge of biology, the natural sciences, and even meteorology:

When we leave our house and enter our garden, a new class of phenomena, other abounding marvels, are ready to greet us. Of these, many are apparent to our senses—we might remark them at the first glance, if we but *think* a little—many other wonders belong to the unseen movements of the vegetable world. We have recourse, therefore, to the chemical philosopher to explain to us in some degree hidden mysteries that we can otherwise only known by the results they produce.¹⁴

13 Cuthbert Johnson, *Our House and Garden: What We See, and What We Do Not See in Them* (London: William Ridgeway, 1864).

14 *Ibid.*, 144.



The effort to discern the workings of such “hidden mysteries” to capitalize on their ameliorative potential or to minimize their more deleterious effects, brought together homeowner and housewife and their fictional counterparts and scenes depicted in the works discussed here into an pedagogic apparatus. This entailed a particular way of thinking *through* space aided by these literary devices and by representational forms such as plans, perspectives, planting guides, and sections. These devices and graphic tools further bound the inhabitant by obliging him or her to decipher their meanings.

Ironically, these various constraints of possession, management, and interpretation persisted alongside an overarching rhetoric of domestic freedom. Kerr described the home as the Englishman’s “most cherished possession,” inhabited by a species that inherently wished to “avoid obtrusiveness” (69). From such claims, echoed in numerous tracts of the period, the figure of the inhabitant assumed the guise of the retiring homeowner. The freedoms entailed in human health and well-being were freedoms from both drafts and fetid air, the dampness of walls and linen, dark, cramped spaces, but also from unwarranted physical and visual contact. In the realm of governance, the logical and contemporary correlatives of aspect and prospect perhaps are “skyrights” and “visual privacy.” These may not have been fully realized in planning and building regulations enacted by the date of publication of Kerr’s *Gentleman’s House*, but the basis for their elaboration—the figure of the inhabitant subject to both domestic obligation and right to domestic space—was being established. Given the moral discourses on labor through which space was linked to opportunity—construed not only in biological terms, but as a natural right—then truly a home required plenty of “elbowroom.”

One also should also note here that, in configuring the home, the use of characterization coincided with a change in relations between designers and their clients. Kerr’s dual vocation as an architect and educator accounted for the importance he placed on the elaboration of a method for designing home and garden more scientifically. It also justified his insistence on communicating to prospective homeowners the qualities of a true gentleman’s house. In some ways, this realignment of relations between designer and client paralleled shifts which occurred late in the eighteenth century between doctors and their patients which marked a significant transformation in bio-medical discourses. In broad social terms, the consequence of such a reformation of the architectural profession was perhaps not as great as it was given the heightened prestige afforded to doctors and other health professionals.¹⁵ Still, I would argue that the use of characterization and attendant design practices were important in defining the professional parameters of architecture and landscape architecture.

In this sense, the value of pastoralism underlying professional design practice entailed not so much a relationship of power

15 Nikolas Rose, *The Psychological Complex* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985) and Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* (London: Tavistock Press, 1973): Chapter Six.

in which authority was ensured on the basis of a specialized knowledge—the authority, say, of a medical specialist with a detailed knowledge of human physiology and disease. Rather, it served to articulate and to represent to the occupant a “psychopathology” of the home.¹⁶ Based on the model of contagious disease, this psychopathology depended upon the individual’s self-conscious experience and interpretation of his or her surroundings. It resulted in a moral imperative being placed on the inhabitant to remedy the diverse and environmentally situated causes of stress.¹⁷

Accordingly, the categories of convenience and comfort, so central to Kerr’s *Gentleman’s House*, were not states imposed upon the individual by a particular environment, configuration of rooms and corridors or relation of aspect and prospect. Rather, they were dependent upon a particular kind of inhabiting subject, one endowed with freedom of choice and a readiness to assume a lifestyle productive of health and well-being, familial cohesion, and emotional stability. This desire for domestic integrity, like the “duty to be well” in the contexts of biology or medicine, depended upon visible signs of “initiative, adaptability, balance, and strength of will.”¹⁸ As a result, the domestic environment became typecast as a series of scenes for the enactment of one’s moral life as techniques of government mediated between powers of domination and techniques of the self.¹⁹

As a domain for actions of various sorts, both freely chosen and legally binding, the home continues to accommodate the range of activities constituting domestic life. It defines a spatial domain in which connection between forms of subjectification and subjection in their varying degrees of “looseness” can be defined. To alter slightly a previous observation, the home provides an arena for various techniques of the body, forms of genetic and social relation, and modes of expression, which, though connected to the world of labor, informs disciplines which escape total determination by that world. The family home indeed may be thought to be a site for the analysis of power at a microphysical level, the site, say, where medical, psychiatric, and educational discourses articulate a range of bodily and building practices. One must be mindful, however, that likewise it is the site for imagining the lingering allure of individuality, autonomy, and personal freedom constitutive of the self. Accordingly, when evaluating the calls for “good” design evinced by reformers and treatise writers in nineteenth century Britain—both visionaries such as Pugin and Morris, and “practical” figures including Kerr—one should be mindful of the politics of identity with which their works engaged. Through something called design and the increasingly common use of a kind of rhetorical strategy involving characterization, their works became a means for thinking about human identity as it could be accommodated and transformed through sound architecture and planning.

16 Anthony Vidler, “Psychopathologies of Modern Space: Metropolitan Fear from Agoraphobia to Estrangement” in Michel Roth, ed., *Rediscovering History: Culture, Politics, and the Psyche* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

17 Greco, “Psychosomatic Subjects,” 359–360.

18 *Ibid.*, 369.

19 Grahame Burchell, “Liberal government and the Techniques of the Self,” *Economy and Society* 22:3 (August, 1993), 268.