Aesthetic Frames

Jacques Derrida and Gardener's Cultivation of Hostility

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The paper focuses on the aesthetic frames of gardening. I propose understanding plant cultivation as an aesthetic framing of divided hospitality and hostility. Following Derrida's critical reading of Kant's thoughts on beautiful frames and Austin's thoughts on performative fails, I argue that the gardener's performativity delimits the beautiful and cultivated order of his garden from the wild and chaotic 'outside' he cannot govern. Progressively, by resisting the 'outside' through inner rituals of framing, the gardener encloses himself 'inside' his locally performed order of cultivation. Based on my deconstructive revision of gardening genres, I conclude that environmentally engaged aesthetics might overcome the traditional gardener's cultivation of hostility towards otherness. | *Keywords: Frame, Gardening, Cultivation, Immanuel Kant, Beauty, Jacques Derrida, Sovereignty, John L. Austin, Performativity*

1. Introduction: Gardener's Sovereignty

My work aims at reframing the problem of aesthetic appreciation of interspecies cohabitation from a human-focused to an environmental perspective, encompassing not only human but also non-human lives. This perspective questions the traditional role of a gardener as a supreme placeholder who takes and holds the space for himself and for members of his human race. Traditionally, the garden is seen as "a paradigm of human relations with nature. As an activity and a result of this activity, it is the foundational and even the founding moment of human culture" (Dadejík, 2012, p. 148). To challenge this view of human-focused management of the natural environment, I propose to rethink the transformative potential of human hands in the double sense of careful touching and calculated manipulation with other living beings.

For this purpose, I suggest revising Jacques Derrida's thoughts on Austin's performatives. Compared to Austin's work on the performativity of

language, Derrida focuses on the performative aspects of our existential traces and their dissemination in our attempts to repeat them. Repetition of these traces in the process of assembling and cultivating plants in gardens can be seen in the interval from the 'wild', untouched, feral nature to the 'cultivated', correctly assembled garden, adjusted to human needs. To illustrate this problem, in *The Best and the Sovereign II* (2011), Jacques Derrida reflects on what cultivated people and wild 'beasts' have in common. To demonstrate how modern philosophers have been widening the distance between the wise, cultivated man and the stupid, wild beast, Derrida reminds us of Robinson Crusoe, the castaway. Derrida notes that Robinson persuaded himself that he is kind to the island he has made 'his own' through cultivation. Therefore, he thinks, he is not only all-powerful, but also all-merciful. The civilisation's castaway became nature's messiah. By imposing his embellishing order of cultivation, Robinson brings beauty, wisdom, and welfare into the natural world, which he sees as lacking grace, logic, and morals. In his subversive commentary, however, Derrida shows that no non-human being is capable of 'stupidity', just like it is unable to commit a 'bestial' crime of intentional cruelty, brutality, or perversion. These are the very qualities of humankind, in the name of which Robinson manipulates nature on the island.

In the following pages, I will examine this gardener's aesthetico-moral problem from the perspective of Derrida's deconstruction. Does Western metaphysics necessarily turn us into sovereign Robinsons, as Derrida suggests? To answer this question, I will focus on the framing of gardening-related aesthetic performatives. Let us have a closer look at this problem by examining how human-centred gardeners frame their hostility towards weeds, pests, and other non-human 'intruders'.

2. Gardener's War on Weeds: Framing the Cultivation

By separating the wild from the cultivated, the gardener delimits the garden from the "outside" that he cannot control and govern. By resisting the 'outside' through inner rituals, the gardener progressively encloses himself 'inside' a locally performed order of selection and stylisation, which can be defined as framing.

Kant discusses the problem of frame in his *Critique of Judgement* (1987), where he claims that the role of the *parergon* (work's frame) is to ornament an already complete *ergon* (genuine work). He describes the frame as a *parergon*, a supplement to the work, *ergon*. He writes that the work ought to allow itself to be well-centred and framed, to have its ground delimited with a frame against a general background. His aesthetic judgement pertains to the intrinsic beauty of the work's core, not its mere surrounding ornamentation, *parergon*. In Kant, the embellished frame is an unnecessary excess of the genuine beauty:

> Even what we call *ornaments* (*parerga*), i.e., what does not belong to the whole presentation of the object as an intrinsic constituent, but is only an extrinsic addition, does indeed increase our taste's liking, and yet it too does so only by its form, as in the case of picture frames, or drapery on statues. or colonnades around magnificent buildings. On the other hand, if the ornament itself does

> not consist in beautiful form but is merely attached, as a gold frame is to a painting, so that its charm may commend the painting for our approval, then it impairs genuine beauty and is called *finery*. (Kant, 1987, p. 57)

In *Truth in Painting* (1987), Derrida's reading of this Kant's book leads him to observe that the frame is not a mere superficial addition to a work of art. The frame is necessary and primary to the work because it allows us to focus, engage in selective attention, and appreciate what is framed. Framing clearly delimits the cultivated insider, the friend, from the excessive outsider, the enemy. Derrida notes that although Kant himself claims the parergon's role is to separate the inside of the work from its outside, in Kant's own description of the artistic work, the parergon remains on an uncertain margin between the work's supposed core and its surroundings. As Derrida puts it:

> Hence, one must know what is framed and know what one is excluding as frame and outside-the-frame. We are thus already at the unlocatable center of the problem. And then Kant replies to our question "What is a frame?" by saying: it's a *parergon*, a hybrid of outside and inside, but a hybrid which is not a mixture or a half-measure, an outside which is called to the inside of the inside in order to constitute it as an inside. (Derrida, 1987, p. 63)

In other words, Derrida's parergon holds its excessive truth when it imposes the experience of 'beautiful' by framing what is supposed to be admired. It invites us to appreciate the delimited, focused, 'given' beauty of art. Without this framework, there would be no 'art' to enjoy. In Derrida, such is the 'truth' of painting that its frame gives us. Deconstruction makes the *parergon* no longer a redundant decoration but a borderline that shapes the work itself.

Similarly, in her book *Frames of War. When is Life Grievable?* (2009), Judith Butler focuses on the Western framing of the figure of 'enemy'. She notes that, in a war conflict, political authorities decide that our compassion should not concern people designated as our 'enemies'. As she puts it, "War sustains its practices through acting on the senses, crafting them to apprehend the world selectively, deadening affect in response to certain images and sounds, and enlivening affective responses to others" (Butler, 2009, p. 51–52). Once political authorities designate someone as the radical 'other', his life becomes precarious and cannot be grieved about. Suspecting the proliferation of uncensored images might mobilise political opposition to a war, the state in war imposes war censorship to control public compassion through limited visibility. State censorship controls publicly circulating recordings to prevent unwanted grief by framing the representation of 'us' and 'them', the 'good' and the 'bad'. The work of framing determines which loss of life remains unrepresentable, unmemorable, and not grievable.

In the case of gardening, the framing proceeds in the same labelling sense of territorial delimitation. Framing in gardening distinguishes insiders from outsiders; it separates those who are cared for from those who are mercilessly eliminated. To frame their territorial war, gardeners use hostile concepts to address the strangeness of non-human beings who enter the garden uninvited. Gardeners treat self-sown weeds as invasive plants as intruders or enemies

because they see them as outsiders to their own framing order. As they feel no compassion for them, they do not hesitate to root them out or destroy them with toxic chemicals. Without any grief or remorse, the results of their gardening work are presented as a victory over ugliness, gracelessness, and chaos.

To frame their territorial peace, gardeners use supportive vocabulary that often addresses their cultivation of chosen plants and animals with hospitality, responsibility, and care. They tend to protect them against mould, bugs, and predators that may 'harm' them. They might also feel compassion if their cultivated non-human beings get sick or die. The result of their gardening work is treated as beautiful, harmonious, and ordered. Because every cultivation tends to delimit itself against its opposite, it encourages one thing and represses another. These binary oppositions are territorial and necessary for the repetitive cultivation process, which follows a previously chosen gardening genre.

Derrida discusses the problem of genre in his essay *Law of Genre* (Derrida, 1980, p. 56), where he describes genre as a generator of normative stylisation, prescribed by the given law of genre. Although the particular law of genre can be set differently each time, once constructed, the law of genre keeps the genre 'pure' through the ongoing repetition of the same pattern. Because the law of genre is imposed and calculable, it can be enforced; its external limits and internal norms are guarded. If mixed, the genre loses its distinctive normative meaning, which consists primarily of the constructed difference from other genres and their prescribed norms.

Just like any other genre, established gardening styles regulate the stylisation that organises the garden's environment; they prescribe the formal limits by which a gardener must proceed in his acts of hospitality and hostility, and how those align with his appreciation of the natural environment. Therefore, the same natural space might be transformed into a French park or a Japanese garden, each time through a different selection of who is invited to come, who is allowed to stay, and who will be expelled. Some plants must be planted, and some others must be regularly rooted out. It is both the inner rule of identity and the outside threat of difference that make a gardening style recognisable – what is aesthetically appreciated or loved in one gardening style might also be hated in another.

Let us look at the differences between the highly controlling stylisations of a French park and a Japanese garden to demonstrate Derrida's claim on genres. The French gardening genre, *jardin à la française*, is a highly decorative style of gardening that reached its height at the Gardens of Versailles. Inspired by the principles of architecture, mathematics and baroque ornamentation, this formal style of landscape design is characterised by strict symmetry and rigorous geometric structure. Key features include symmetrical alleys and straight paths lined with elaborately cut hedges that direct the eye to focal points such as fountains or ponds. Another key element of this gardening genre is the creation of '*parterres*', understood as complex formal flower beds

composed in ornamental patterns, often surrounded by boxwood borders, reminiscent of textile embroidery, and 'topiaries', defined as shrubs pruned into geometric or figurative shapes, illustrating human control over nature (Les Jardins à la Française, 2024). By contrast, the genre of Japanese gardening is a convergence of architecture, meditation, and the environment that promotes a contemplative, spiritual life. The garden's interior is peaceful, unhurried, and harmonious - often referred to as a sanctuary. It is framed by a threshold, a gate, and a fence that emphasise the experience of a 'purifying sensation' as the visitor steps from one contrasting environment into another. To creatively balance the mass and the void, several isolated objects, such as large rocks and pruned bushes, are placed in the central area, surrounded by 'flowing' lines of sand or smaller stones that fill and connect empty spaces (Sturgeon, 2023). Both of these gardening genres are highly controlling of the 'natural' space they design.

Derrida also reminds us that, according to the law of genre, genres must not intermix. As he explains in *Law of Genre* (1980), the authority of every genre rests on its distinction from other genres, a distinction that is supposed to be cultivated. Because the need for the requested external distinction delimits the genre, its value is constituted by the law of normative prescription and prohibition. As soon as the word 'genre' is sounded, a limit is drawn. And when a limit is established, norms and interdictions are not far behind. In other words, cultivation generates an aesthetic truth, which results from the repetition of a chosen law of genre. Cultural rituals, which impose a stylized beauty through such repetition, also impose an aesthetic frame that makes us appreciate the prescribed 'beauty' of a genre we already know.

Stibral, Dadejík, and Staněk (2012, p. 9) illustrate this interdiction against intermixing genres through the example of gardening. As they put it in their book *Zahrada* [Garden] (2012), a garden should not be agriculturally useful and aesthetically pleasant at the same time:

> Humphry Repton considered that 'profit' and 'ornament' are incompatible and that the so-called *ferme ornée* as a combination of a farm and a park is impossible. Other authors, such as Thomas Whately, considered the separation of useful and embellishing functions to be the origin of „bad taste" in gardening, because it led to geometrized gardens and their excessive separation from the surrounding countryside. (Dadejík, Staněk and Stibral, 2012, p. 9)

Understood this way, the gardener can be seen as the sovereign who imposes his law of genre on the natural environment. Being the sovereign, he decides which lives are legitimate and which ones are precarious. Each gardening genre frames nature in its own way. It oppresses and suppresses one thing while protecting and promoting another, enabling the latter to thrive only at the expense of the former. If there were no garden-forming human regulations, there would be no garden – only an aesthetically unframed nature.

3. Gardener's Aesthetic Frames: Derrida on Kant

We have seen that there are various cultivation styles in gardening, each imposing a different manipulation of the natural environment. The garden is therefore both an occasion for aesthetic experience and an affair of sovereignty. By enforcing the law of the chosen gardening genre, the gardener-sovereign reigns over a piece of nature that he manages from his supreme position. He only saves and protects what he decides to keep. He gives or takes permission to stay in his cultivated piece of nature. Behaving this way, gardeners amplify the human desire to have 'a piece of nature' for themselves – a cultivated bit, not a wild one.

When considering the stability of dividing lines between such binary oppositions, there are two moments in which Derrida's deconstruction diverges from Kant's transcendental aesthetics. The first one is the dividing line between beauty/disgust. Contrary to Kant's definition of judgment of the beautiful as a disinterested aesthetic appreciation of beauty,[1] Derrida's deconstructed account of Kant's distinction between ergon and parergon reveals that Kant's own aesthetic judgment of artworks is not entirely disinterested. Derrida points to the frame, the parergon, as a margin – a supplement of the artwork – that not only delimits the artwork and separates it from the surrounding environment but is also necessary because it focuses the spectator's attention on the artwork itself. Understood this way, the frame has a crucial aesthetic function. Contrary to Kant, who refuses to engage the frame in his aesthetic theory of 'disinterested' appreciation of artwork, Derrida does not see the frame as a rival to the artwork in our aesthetic judgements. This inclusion of the frame comes at the price of a shift from the Kantian aesthetic theory of disinterestedness to the Derridian theory of an always-already interested, engaged aesthetic judgement.

These Derrida's observations on engaged framing correspond to Berleant's aesthetics of engagement (Berleant, 1991), which challenges Kant's notion of disinterestedness and replaces it by "a notion of subjects' involvement when experiencing everyday life objects" (Kvokačka, 2020, p. 63–64). As Adrián Kvokačka further explains, Berleant's engaged aesthetics is a meaningful alternative to traditional aesthetic theories because it emphasises the holistic, contextual character of aesthetic sensation. Aesthetic engagement includes active involvement in the evaluation process, sometimes through direct physical activity, but always through aesthetic perception (Kvokačka, 2024, p. 84–91).

Drawing on Derrida's and Berleant's views, I propose calling 'aesthetic frames' the delimiting and focusing tools that intentionally guide spectators' attention toward a chosen mode of aesthetic appreciation. Understood in this 'engaged' way, aesthetic frames lead us either to appreciate or to reject what they frame. In the latter case, they intentionally generate prejudices provoking the

[1] When Kant defines his concept of disinterestedness of aesthetic judgment of the beautiful, he claims that "only the liking involved in taste for the beautiful is disinterested and 'free' since we are not compelled to give our approval by any interest, whether of sense or of reason" (Kant, 1987, p. 52).

viewer's aesthetic affects of disgust or abjection. A similar framing situation to war censorship occurs in our lack of concern for the well-being of plants and animals that arrive at our garden as uninvited strangers. In this respect, Berleant's observations on aesthetic engagement correspond to Judith Butler's engaged views on the violence of framing imposed by war censorship.

As Derrida himself argues, wars cannot be stopped once and for all. Any particular declaration of perpetual peace on Earth would be totalitarian, as it would impose a particular form of sovereignty and abandon the promise to foster a human sense of hospitality toward otherness.[2] Derrida goes even further when he discusses Kant's foreigner, who must consider his host's sovereignty. In Kant, it is the host, master in his home, who chooses his visitors. Without such thoughtfulness, an uninvited guest may easily turn into an intruder or a parasite, an undesirable foreigner, virtually an enemy undeserving hospitality. Wherever the 'at-home' is violated, one can expect an ethnocentric, nationalistic, xenophobic reaction directed against the foreign language, religion, or nation that threatens the traditional conditions of hospitality. Derrida sees that Kant's rule for selecting hosts contains traces of xenophobic perversion.[3]

The second moment of Derrida's divergence from Kant draws a new dividing line between the binary oppositions of friendship and enmity. Contrary to Kant, Derrida does not focus solely on human wars or human hostility toward other humans. Kant thinks nature itself predisposes the reasonable human race to be sovereign, to reign over nature and to appreciate it by both recognising and creating a genuine beauty – thanks to *a priori* structures of the human mind. Kant in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (2006a) argues that the world of rational beings as sovereign reign of ends is based on the logos of an analogy, on a logos as proportion. Similarly, in his essay *Towards Perpetual Peace* (Kant, 2006b), he claims that the soil upon which human culture lies must be unconditionally accessible to all human newcomers, but he excludes hospitality as a right of residence, limiting human hospitality to the right of human visitation.

Revising Kant's thoughts on human hospitality,[4] Derrida points to his views on hospitality and hostility towards non-human beings. Derrida deconstructs this *parergon*'s instability, characterised by its movable disposition, unclear limits, and possible excess, which has two contradictory consequences in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (Derrida, 2005, pp. 20–21). On the one hand, because it cannot make a clear division between the 'inside' and the 'outside', it cannot produce any clear-cut division resulting in binary

2 I have extensively discussed this topic in my article *Perpetual Peace Today: Ethics and Politics of Sustainability* (Fišerová, 2024d).

3 In Derrida's words, "The perversion, the pervertibility of this law (which is also a law of hospitality) is that one can become virtually xenophobic in order to protect or claim to protect one's own hospitality, one's own at-home which makes possible one's own hospitality" (Derrida, 2023, p. 93).

4 I have thoroughly explained this Derridean revision of Kant's conception of peace in my article *Kant and Derrida: Two Ethical Ornaments of Peace* (Fišerová, 2024b).

opposition. Thanks to the logic of parergonality, Derrida's ethical thinking of difference goes beyond this speciesism, beyond Kant's frame of hospitality as an exclusive bond between human beings. Contrary to Kant's binary framing of concepts, Derrida's deconstruction will enable reframing the concepts of friendship and enmity, defining them not as opposed to each other but as bridged. As Thomson notes, in the Derridean reading, Kant's laws of hospitality enact exclusion of species:

> Even if hospitality were to be offered universally to any other human, it would still be a limited hospitality – and perhaps the very definition of a humanism. (Can hospitality be offered to the non-human other: whether animal, vegetable or mineral?). (Thomson, 2005, p. 90)

Derrida's own work answers such a question, suggesting that the aesthetic frame separating these concepts is permeable. Derrida questions Kant's formulation of the exclusion of unhuman beings from perpetual hospitality. Derrida's subversion introduces a hint of interspecies freedom into Kant's cosmopolitan human duty by suggesting that hospitality be offered to non-human beings, too. Within the interval defined by the logic of parergonality, under specific circumstances, an enemy may be imagined as a friend, and vice versa. As he puts it in *Politics of Friendship*, "I can be hostile towards my friend, I can be hostile towards him publicly, and conversely I can, in privacy, love my enemy" (Derrida, 2020, p. 23). By blurring the dividing line between the binary concepts of friend and enemy, Derrida's thinking may help us 'befriend' weeds and make them look less 'invasive'.

These suggestions concerning interspecies cohabitation are developed by philosophers of posthumanism,[5] especially by Roberto Marchesini. In his book *Beyond Anthropocentrism* (Marchesini, 2018, p. 26), Marchesini introduces his theory of "functional biocentrism", which allows us to shift from a random anthropocentric sympathy toward animals and plants to a complex biocentric cohabitation profiting from a co-creative interspecies symbiosis, or *sympoésis*. Similar initiatives have been recently undertaken by contemporary ethical thinkers of posthumanism, such as Cynthia Willett, who notices that thanks to interspecies ethics, we can overcome the anthropocentric prejudices forcing us to understand animals and plants as enemies and slaves and to propose a new biocentric approach, which allows to grasp the animals and plants we cohabit with in our environments as a our friends or citizens. Cynthia Willett argues that anthropocentric ethical thinking overlooks the possibility of interspecies bioethical collaboration. Even philosophers specialised in utilitarian bioethics, who focus on non-functional relationships between animal suffering caused by human industrial 'progress', overlook the functional, biosocial forms of solidarity that exist between species. Also, analytical thinkers, who focus only on institutional and legal issues in environmental philosophy, lack the tools to grasp and appreciate the importance of symbiotic coexistence in interspecies communities, in which individuals often act as equals, as "fellow citizens" (Willett, 2014, p. 6).

[5] I have elaborated on this comparison of Derrida's deconstruction of animality and posthumanist interspecies ethics in my article *Člověk a zvíře, které není jeho protikladem* (Fišerová, 2024a).

I argue that both Derrida's deconstruction and the posthumanist thinkers allow us to reframe the gardener's anthropocentrically biased gestures of hospitality and hostility. Subverting their binary opposition reveals the instability of their underlying metaphysical construction. On the one hand, every gardener's act brings metaphysical 'violence' of the human law to nature. Neither gardening nor philosophy can entirely free itself from the metaphysical violence that is supposed to legitimate human sovereignty over other forms of life. Besides caring for their cultivated plants, gardeners reject invasive plants and liminal animals that cross their boundaries. On the other hand, due to dissemination, during the conventional act of gardening, the gardener becomes identical with his decorum, yet he does it differently each time. He inevitably 'fails' in some ways of doing the gardening 'right' – they might save an animal or a plant they wanted to kill, or they might occasionally intermix genres. Let us focus on the hostile performativity that accompanies gardeners' encounters with 'weeds' and 'pests'.

4. Gardener's Hostile Performativity: Derrida on Austin

Contrary to Kant, Derrida speaks not about a perpetual duty, but rather about an ongoing promise not to threaten the peace. He also reminds us that the concepts of threat and promise are binary oppositions: while I can only promise good intentions, I can only threaten with bad intentions. Derrida emphasises, however, that every performative may fail.

In *Limited Inc* (1977), Derrida comments on Austin's performatives presented in his book *How to Do Things with Words* (Austin, 1962). Derrida recalls that Austin's illocutionary force of utterance depends on conformity with conventional situations and their occasional iteration, which gives speech its performativity. Austin's iteration, however, does not let the same return – it sets new situations and makes it impossible to predict every context. Therefore, any promise may fail - when something goes wrong, the act is at least to some extent a failure. Even if the utterance is not false, it is unhappy. As Austin puts it, "for this reason, we call the doctrine of the things that can be and go wrong on the occasion of such utterances, the doctrine of the Infelicities" (Austin, 1962, p. 14). Because he discovers these performative Infelicities, Austin's iteration becomes characterized by the curious fact that it's a repetition which spreads differences and never lets the same return – it sets new situations and makes it impossible to predict every context. Austin thus emphasised the impossibility of creating a totally satisfying classification of speech acts without any exception.

Derrida welcomes Austin's destabilization of the traditional true/false opposition in his analysis of performativity. But he doesn't accept Austin's moving from the 'truth value' to the 'context value'. In Derrida's view, Austin's performativity, which depends on social conventions, doesn't allow meaning to leave its context (which guarantees the full presence of meaning). Derrida emphasizes that Austin's analysis requires a value for context, and even an exhaustively determined context. Therefore, according to Derrida, there is no irreducible polysemy, no "dissemination" escaping the horizon of

the unity of meaning in Austin: "the long list of 'infelicities' which in their variety may affect the performative event always comes back to an element in what Austin calls the total context" (Derrida, 1977, p. 14). In his reading of Austin, Derrida comes to his "paradoxical but unavoidable conclusion — a successful performative is necessarily an 'impure' performative, to adopt the word advanced later on by Austin when he acknowledges that there is no 'pure' performative." (Derrida, 1977, p. 17). By doing so, Derrida introduces the problem of iteration and demonstrates how rituals idealise repetition to the point that they tend to unsee the performative possibility of their failure.

Derrida appreciates Austin's acceptance of this 'failure' of performativity, emphasising its creative promise. Not only the law of genre, but every law, even the law of language, is an established set of norms that can be performatively enforced. As he puts it,

> Law is the element of calculation, and it is just that there is law, but justice is incalculable; it requires us to calculate with the incalculable; and aporetic experiences are the experiences, as improbable as they are necessary, of justice, that is to say of moments in which a rule never insures the decision between just and unjust. (Derrida, 1992, p. 16)

Put otherwise, Derrida warns that one cannot reach the incalculable justice from inside the calculability of law. Although practices of performing peace are iterable, they are not prescribed by a law, but as an incalculable gift of justice, which is a poetic act of 'pure hospitality'. In other words, one can make poetic gifts of justice to challenge the normative violence of the law, including the law of genre and the law of language.

In *Monolingualism of the Other*, Derrida investigates this poetic relation to the common law of language that every speaker experiences in her 'own', individual way. While language is a prescribed law and contains collectively shared idioms that frame our thinking and doing in a commonly expected manner, one's personal use of language proceeds through individual stylisation, which iterates "in the same outburst of the same idiom" (Derrida, 1998, p. 4). Derrida explores this iteration further through corporeal expressions of language – accents, tones, and rhythms – that are inherent to such a personal 'possession' of language. In this sense, everyone speaks a unique language, a language unto itself. As he puts it, a speaker's

> [s]entence extirpates itself in a logical contradiction heightened by a performative or pragmatic contradiction. It is desperate. The performative gesture of the enunciation would in the act prove the opposite of what the testimony claims to declare, namely, a certain truth. (Derrida, 1998, p. 3)

Similarly, all beings that enter the garden do not speak the same 'language'. They do not even know the order imposed by the gardener on the natural environment. To survive, they might try to mimic the gardener's order. Still, their performative attempts at expression of the gardener's law sound different each time, often in a way that is unintelligible to the gardener, the language giver. Because of this monolingualism of various creatures attempting to 'speak' the gardener's language, the gardener usually misunderstands these 'speakers'. He hears them simply as incomprehensible strangers, annoying outsiders, noisy outcasts.

Let us focus closely on the gardener's performativity. To transform a bought piece of nature into a garden, the gardener repeatedly performs gestures that are either friendly or unfriendly towards various natural beings who try to settle down and cohabit with him. Gardener's double performativity imposes his frames of aesthetic engagement, separating those invited from those uninvited, insiders from outsiders.[6] This dividing frame can be illustrated by a gardener's caring and protective acts on the one hand, and his hostile and destructive acts on the other. While he willingly and empathetically cares for 'his' plants by planting their seeds, watering, shielding, nourishing, fertilizing, grafting, and pruning them, he also tries to 'protect' them against everything that might interfere with his own aesthetic intentions. Through his repetitive gardening, the gardener declares his peace and his war against selected plants, fungi, and animals. The chosen gardening genre imposes its own order of interspecies cohabitation: only some animal and vegetal beings are invited or allowed to stay. His protective gestures do not protect the privileged plants only, but also – and mainly – his own aesthetic frame of the particular order of beauty and ugliness he constructed. This process of constructing enemies usually leads him to aggressive warfare against beings labelled as 'weeds' and 'pests'. Becoming an enemy of uninvited beings who wander into his territory, the gardener intentionally scares them off, traps them, or kills them.

To maintain the garden cultivated according to a chosen genre, gardeners impose their aesthetic frames shaped by their own sense of sovereignty over 'nature'. They frame the 'beauty' of their gardens through the aesthetically engaging act of strictly delimiting their own work from the agency they fear. For example, they systematically destroy various organisms that cause their preferred plants to rot and go mouldy. Besides rooting out unwanted plants, poisonous traps are prepared for unwelcome visitors, such as moles, birds, foxes, mice, and insects. The main reason for gardeners' abjection and horror of these beings is that they exercise their own vital agency in the very piece of nature the gardener has designed as 'his own'. In this perspective, their territorial performativity appears 'destructive' because it disturbs the 'beautiful' order that the gardener constructs and imposes. His profound dislike of otherness stems from his fear of losing control, which might shatter his belief in his own sovereignty.

This gardener's aesthetic 'engagement' is inscribed in his territorial vocabulary, which is traditionally rich in seemingly plausible, still xenophobic idioms such as deratization, disinsection, and disinfection – all focused on effectively erasing liminal beings from the garden. The precariousness of their lives is inscribed in the very idiomatic concepts gardeners use to label them as enemies – they might speak of them as parasites, invasive species, intruders. This hostile vocabulary aesthetically frames their unwelcoming attitudes, which strongly remind one of xenophobic hostility towards human immigrants, often similarly labelled. Even the concepts of wild and feral, constructed as the binary opposition to cultivated and tamed, are used to warn

[6] I have further discussed this kind of framing by hostility in my article *Outsiders or Insiders? John Berger and the Ethical Reframing of Animals* (Fišerová, 2024c).

of the dangers posed by the unpredictable and uncontrollable. This warning connotation serves as a gardener's trigger to weaponise his 'defence' with powerful gardening tools and toxic chemicals. Intruders of all kinds are gardeners' nightmares – not only might they ignore the dividing line and come uninvited by climbing the protecting fence, but they might also enter his garden from the sky, or even from the soil. How shall one protect his 'proper', cultivated nature from the 'strange', wild nature, if it literally overcomes the frame and enters the protected space from any direction? Unable to deal with their worries, xenophobic 'warriors' make war against self-sown plants and liminal animals who are trying to create new bonds with them. Through their cultivation of hostility toward otherness, human-focused gardeners persistently participate in shaping their own aesthetic frames and in destroying environmental relations that make new interspecies cohabitations possible.

This is, however, not the only way to go. To minimise the risk of such unnecessary environmental hostility, new interspecies bonds shall be performatively engaged and constructed. To opt for another aesthetic framing, one might use inclusive language that supports a different gardening approach. This path of reflection leads to new gardening perspectives that would nourish welcoming and negotiating relations across various natural and 'unnatural' or cultural, cultivated environments. Such a reframed aesthetic approach would avoid the construction of a gardener's identity based on prejudices and hate that would occasionally 'unite' fearful gardeners with environmentally unfriendly industries producing toxic chemicals designed to wipe out potential plant and animal visitors. In this perspective, acceptance of alterity would not destroy the garden's aesthetic frame; it would complete its missing parts and create them anew. Inventing new performative gestures – both in the garden and in language – means reframing the gardener's cultivation of hostility.

5. Conclusion: Reframing Gardener's Cultivation of Hostility

Let us return to the idea of gardeners as deconstructed Robinsons, as self-declared sovereigns who remain trapped in their wars against 'wild' nature that surrounds their carefully framed territory. Is there a way to reach a more 'peaceful' cohabitation?

One answer was given by Derrida's revision of Kant's thoughts on perpetual peace. While Kant frames peace in terms of legal duty, treating strangers as political outsiders, Derrida's perspective of a peace-to-come, which is performatively constructed and iterated over time, allows for the hosting of strangers as quasi-insiders. Contrary to Kant's aesthetics of disinterested judgment, Derrida's focus on the promise of inclusion mobilizes environmental aesthetics in its engagement. Both deconstruction and posthumanism emphasize this ongoing nature of our peace-making processes with otherness. Together with an environmentally thoughtful rethinking of our gardening genres, making our aesthetic frames permeable may help us not only reconsider our selective hospitality and hostility but also experience new aesthetic pleasures in our encounters with otherness.

To reduce the metaphysical violence of our conceptual thinking, Derrida introduced a porous frame between the binary oppositions. Its porosity changes the relation between the concepts of friend and enemy. It is no longer a fixed opposition but rather instability and permeability. As he puts it, "to constitute the space of an inhabitable house and a home, one also needs an opening, a door and windows, that is to say one must open a passage to the foreigner" (Derrida, 2023, p. 96). Contrary to Austin, who regards the possibility of failure as a mere accident, Derrida invites us to work further with this performative dimension of speech, which helps us reframe the violent idealisation in our use of language. This Derrida's subversive appreciation of the failing performative justifies the invention of environmentally 'friendlier' gardening genres, such as biodiversity (Sterry, 2023), sustainable (Boswall, 2022) and permaculture (Richards, 2025) gardening, which make room for wildflowers, self-sown plants, and wandering liminal animals. Applied this way, Derrida's performative dissemination calls for adaptation, reinvention, and improvisation to challenge the established gardening genres.

Finally, Derrida's deconstruction makes aesthetic frames more permeable and porous, which opens the way for a new conception of environmental justice. Derridean justice is conceived as "justice-to-come" (Derrida, 1992, p. 24): it is perpetually approaching, arriving; its meaning is never entirely present. Justice-to come exists only as a promise, which is maintained in a state of permanent deferral. As such, environmental justice cannot be enforced: it remains a promise, a 'ghost' haunting the present meaning of the gardener's order dividing his declared friends and enemies. Blurring this dividing line in biodiversity, permaculture, and sustainable gardening helps gardeners befriend animals and plants that were previously rejected as parasitic pests or invasive weeds. Deconstructed gardening acts can open new paths for sympoiesis (Isar, 2025) in interspecies cohabitation that might overcome the nature/culture divide. To cultivate new gardening genres that impose new respect for the precarious lives of liminal non-human beings would mean redirecting aesthetic framing toward 'peaceful' ethical values of interspecies cohabitation, such as thoughtfulness, curiosity, and vulnerability in our relations to otherness.

Environmentally engaged aesthetics, which follows this path, focuses on constructing modes of cohabitation in which one feels free to form new interspecies connections. Instead of cultivating traditional hostility and abjectness, biodiversity, permaculture, and sustainable gardeners include liminal beings in their aesthetic framing – they invite the very otherness that horrified and disgusted their predecessors. They develop a new ethical and aesthetic generosity that welcomes a partial loss of human control over the natural environment and a partial gain of sympoietic alliances with its non-human living constituents. Because they cultivate hospitality in gardening, they foster new forms of interspecies symbiosis. They discover new ways to aesthetically appreciate the uncultivated nature, without which there would be no garden to cultivate.

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