

## 4. What Gardens Mean

### THE SISTER ARTS I

#### *Gardens and Poems*

In this chapter I want to examine critically one aspect of Horace Walpole's claim that "Poetry, Painting, and Gardening, or the Science of Landscape, will forever by men of Taste be deemed Three Sisters, or *The Three New Graces* who dress and adorn Nature," namely, the link between gardening and poetry. Clearly, Walpole's conceit builds upon the sister-arts tradition, the association of poetry and painting. This tradition is generally traced to two venerable sources (1) a remark by the Greek poet Simonides (556-467 B.C.): "Painting is mute poetry, and poetry a speaking picture;" and (2) a phrase from line 361 of Horace's *Ars poetica* (13 B.C.): *Utpicturapoesis* ("As is painting, so is poetry).

While the saying from Simonides is suggestive, the quotation from Horace needs to be put in context. In this section of his epistle, Horace is arguing that critical standards should be flexible and that some faults should be forgiven in a worthy poem. To illustrate his claim he turns to the example of painting and points out that different paintings please in different circumstances. Some reward close scrutiny, bright light, repeated encounters; others do not. Ben Jonson's verse translation of the passage reads as follows:

As painting, so is poesy.  
Some man's hand Will take you more, the nearer that you stand;  
As some the farther off: this loves the dark;  
This, fearing not the subtlest judge's mark,  
Will in the light be viewed: this, once, the sight  
Doth please: this, ten times over will delight.

These casual, unsystematic remarks about artistic criticism were taken up and elaborated by countless painters, poets, critics, and theorists. They transformed them into a set of rigid precepts, thus generating the tradition of the sister arts.

Jean Hagstrum traces this tradition in his book *The Sister Arts*. He shows how occasional remarks by Horace, Simonides, Plato, and Aristotle were elevated by Renaissance thinkers and used to ground dogmatic theory. Writers who contributed to this tradition include Alberti, Leonardo, Dolce, Dryden, Dufresnoy, Pope, and Reynolds. Its influence waned after the publication of Lessing's *Laokoon* (1766), which argues that painting and poetry serve separate tasks.<sup>4</sup>

The link between painting and poetry can be put to varied purposes. The sister arts can be celebrated in order to encourage literary pictorialism, on the one hand, or to establish the nobility of painting, on the other. While Hagstrum takes the first tack in *The Sister Arts*, tracing the pictorial tradition in neoclassical English poetry, Rensselaer Lee takes the second in his monograph *UtPictura Poesis*, which traces the rise of the humanistic theory of painting. Dean Tolle Mace, however, seeks a common thread. He argues that the doctrine of the sister arts "came into being not because poetry and painting sought out one another's pictorial devices, but because both arts became equally

concerned with developing powers of expression." Writing about Dryden's "Parallel of Poetry and Painting" (1695), Mace says that "it grew out of [Dryden's] conviction and the conviction of the age that all great art must treat great human subjects. This being so, all great art must thus be parallel in some way to poetry, the art which had been perfected through the ages to deal with great human subjects. '16 For Mace, then, the crucial commonality between painting and poetry is the ability of each to represent significant human action.

Given this reading of Horace's simile, it may seem puzzling that Horace Walpole pro posed gardening as a sister to both poetry and painting. Gardens do not seem well suited to the tasks Aristotle sets out in the *Poetics* as definitive of the arts of poetry and drama. In particular, how can gardens deal with great human subjects and represent significant human actions? In what follows, I shall show that some eighteenth-century gardens did indeed accomplish such tasks. Gardens such as Stowe and Stourhead contained complex

## 2. GARDENS, POEMS, AND EMBLEMS

Those gardens from the first half of the eighteenth century which most resemble poems have been variously labeled. Ronald Paulson calls them poetic gardens, and John Dixon Hunt calls them emblematic gardens, while others simply speak of the English landscape garden. A number of these gardens are laid out as a circuit. The visitor strolls along a path which brings him past a series of monuments, scenes, and vistas. The viewer's experience is carefully controlled. Benches and inscriptions indicate special points of interest-striking views or sculptural or architectural ensembles with complex charged meanings.

One of the most frequently made comments about such gardens is that they must be read, that walking along the path in many ways resembles seeing successive pages of an emblem book. For example, Ronald Paulson says of Lord Cobham's garden at Stowe that "the visitor... saw a carefully prepared scene with statues, temples and other objects of a high degree of denotation arranged to express a topos-a philosophical or literary com monplace-on which he could meditate or converse .... What he saw was virtually a page from an emblem book, and page followed page as he strolled along the garden path.",, John Dixon Hunt says of the same garden that it offered "constant examples of visual exhibits, often accompanied by inscriptions or mottoes, the full meaning of which depends upon the exact encounter of word and image that we find in the emblem book. "9 Paulson remarks of another eighteenth-century garden, Henry Hoare's estate at Stour head, that Hoare "makes his garden almost literally a poem, creating a series of emblems whose statement at its most general is about the course of man's life on earth."1°

Let me pause here to describe in a bit more detail the emblem books with which these eighteenth-century gardens are being compared. Emblem books, common from the 1500s on, were handbooks combining images, mottoes, and inscriptions drawn primarily from classical literature." Alciati's *Emblemata*, published in 1531, and Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, published in 1593, were frequently reprinted and translated. These handbooks were intended to assist the inspiration of poets, painters, and orators, and their association of word and image soon became common cultural coinage. Educated people, seeing a particular phrase or image, would know its traditional meaning and associations.

iconographical programs that visitors could "read" as they strolled through the grounds. Garden historians have amply documented the powers of such gardens, and I shall draw on their research. But before describing particular gardens and their messages, I want to say something about how an arrangement of plants, earth, and

water-augmented by architecture and sculpture-can become articulate.

The subjects Ripa treated included virtues and vices, temperaments and humors, arts and sciences, continents and nations. Later editions of his work considerably expanded the range of emblems. For example, Jean Baudouin's 1644 Parisian edition offers emblems of the five senses, the nine muses, the twelve months of the year, as well as a host of items that come in groups of four-the four elements, the four seasons, the four winds, the four types of poems, the four parts of the day, and the four ages of man. 12 Hagstrum writes that a typical page of Ripa shows "a single figure, usually female, wearing her iconic symbols and representing an emotion like love, melancholy, or anger, an idea like perfection or literary mimesis, an art like poetry or music, a city like Rome, or a river like the Tiber," 13 while Hunt describes the 1709 London edition as containing "Various images of virtues, vices, passions, arts, humours, elements, and celestial bodies." 14

Consider two images from Ripa. (1) Art is portrayed as a woman in a flowing green robe. In her right hand she holds a hammer, a pencil, and a burin, three tools needed for the artist's imitation of nature. In her left hand she holds a stake supporting a climbing plant. The commentary explains that "the Stake supplies Nature's Defects, in holding up the tender plant." The emblem thus expresses a neoclassical ideal endorsed by writers as diverse as André Félibien and Alexander Pope, namely, that art does not just copy nature but improves her. Note that a "garden" (a plant guided and supported by a stake) symbolizes this relationship. (2) Delight is portrayed as a young boy in a green suit holding violin and bow. A book on Aristotle and one on music lie open at his feet. Two pigeons stand kissing nearby. This image is glossed as follows: "The Green signifies the Vivacity and Delightfulness of green Meadows to the Sight: the Violin, Delight in Hearing; the Book, Delight in Philosophy; the Doves, amorous Delight." 16 Both the green suit and the green meadows symbolize the growth and fecundity of the natural world, while various ones of the props indicate the importance of the senses through which we take in and appreciate that world. Once again gardens are relevant here. Thinking about the unique place they occupy between nature and art helps us understand and amplify the emblem.

By 1709 Ripa's *Iconologia* had been translated into English, but a number of English authors had already furthered the emblematic tradition. Both George Wither and Francis Quarles published books titled *Emblemes* in 1635, and Henry Hawkins's *Parthenia Sacra* appeared in 1633. *Wither's texts are much more discursive than Ripa's. Each image is accompanied by a motto (in Latin), a couplet, and an extended poem. The books by Quarles and Hawkins are more religious than classical in orientation. Each of Quarles's emblems takes its inspiration from a Bible verse, while Hawkins, who was a Roman Catholic, devotes his entire text to an emblematic celebration of the Virgin Mary. The garden is the unifying image of Hawkins's book. Parthenia Sacra is in fact a devotional manual which invites its readers to meditate upon twenty-two emblems drawn from the fictional garden of Parthenia. These include the garden itself, the rose, the lily, the heliotrope, the iris, the olive, the palm, the fountain, and the mount.*

Despite the differences between the early emblem books with their ties to classical sources and the later ones with more narrowly religious agendas, they all would have inculcated in their readers certain habits of mind: a readiness to associate word and image and a tendency to interpret the sensory world as rife with implication and in need of exegesis. Thus emblem books employed associations like the following: the pelican is an emblem of self-sacrifice, the peacock of pride, the bee of flattery, the crocodile of luxury, the crab of irresolution, and so on. Many of these pairings originated in contemporary lore-for example, it was thought that when food was scarce the pelican would feed its young with blood from its own breast-but they came to attain the status of

a conventional code. Plants entered into this lexicon as well. Alciati concluded his emblem book with a list of various trees and their significance,<sup>17</sup> and flowers too were associated with particular virtues and traits of character. Thus ivy was an emblem of constraint, the oak of long life, the vine of lust, laurel of victory, cedar of mercy, the violet of humility; the marigold of charity, the hyacinth of hope, the sunflower of contemplation, the tulip of beauty, the lily of chastity; and the narcissus of stupidity; By Elizabethan times the so called language of flowers was well developed; nosegays and bouquets contained messages that could be decoded by reference to the flowers they contained."

In sum, the emblematic tradition integrated references to classical culture, the Bible, and more primitive lore and superstition. Together these sources provided a wealth of character and incident whose significance would have been instantly recognized by "cultured" people-those who formed the audience for the arts of painting and poetry; Furthermore, because the emblematic tradition assigned conventional significance to particular visual images, it could be transferred to the art of gardening. Using a combination of resources-inscriptions, sculpture, architecture, plants, even topography-a garden designer could recreate an image from an emblem book or highlight certain elements whose significance would be immediately appreciated. This explains one way in which gardens, in the absence of alphabet, syntax, and grammar, could convey meaning.

In comparing scenes from a garden to pages from an emblem book, however, I haven't yet got to the heart of the sister-arts claim that I mean to explore. As Hunt noted, emblem books present a succession of "encounters" between words and images. Each image is accompanied by a title and a written elucidation. Thus emblems straddle the divide between **the visual and the verbal arts**. Poetry; by contrast, is a predominantly verbal art.<sup>19</sup> How then can a garden approximate a poem? Visual resemblance is certainly not the key here. I suggest the relevant overlap is one of function: a garden can often convey the same content as a poem; furthermore, it can do so in part by exploiting the fact that gardens, like poems, are experienced over time.

Let me briefly review the way poetry functions. Poems are, first and foremost, composed of words. And, with the exception of onomatopoeic words like "murmur," "buzz," and "slither," whose sounds mirror their meanings, linguistic meaning is conventional or arbitrary; We could have called cats "dogs" and dogs "cats" without any loss of efficiency; Thus part of the force of poems comes from the conventional meaning of their component words, however that is construed.<sup>20</sup> But semantic properties don't exhaust poetry's force. Readers must also take into account more "remote" aspects of meaning-images presented, metaphors employed, associative and expressive properties conveyed-as well as syntactic features like rhyme and rhythm and such cumulative effects as narrative line and temporal relations. On the basis of this sketch, a garden would count as poetic if it had denotative content, if the individuals, concepts, properties, and events referred to were related in ways conveyed by the garden's structure, and if these relationships became apparent to visitors as they viewed or strolled through the garden.

In what follows, I shall describe and discuss four gardens from the first half of the eighteenth century: Twickenham, Stowe, Stourhead, and West Wycombe. In each case I shall argue that, in important ways, these gardens function like poems.

### 3. POPES TWICKENHAM

Alexander Pope was the preeminent poet of Augustan England; he also wrote about gardens, advised his friends on the disposition of their estates, and created his own garden at his estate at Twickenham, beginning in 1719. He is an especially appropriate figure to discuss in connection with the comparison between gardening and poetry because he helped to formulate the doctrines of both disciplines. Yet Pope was also an amateur painter, and so his writings and his garden are relevant as well to the second of Walpole's two comparisons.

Pope's garden at Twickenham has an interesting commercial connection to poetry. The poet acquired his estate with profits derived from his successful subscription translation of Homer's *Iliad*. He leased a small villa on the Thames and eventually cultivated a surrounding five-acre plot.<sup>21</sup> The villa was about fifteen miles from London, and the area was decidedly rural in feeling. In creating a garden there, Pope was clearly and self-consciously echoing themes and forms from his poetry.

Though Pope wrote poems of many kinds throughout his career, all his writings are distinguished by their ties to the classical world. Never schooled in a systematic manner, Pope acquired his learning first at the hands of a Catholic tutor, and then through a self-guided course of reading. He told his friend Joseph Spence that during his "great reading years" he read "all the best critics, almost all the English, French and Latin poets of any name, the minor poets, Homer and some of the greater Greek poets in the original, and Tasso and Ariosto in translations."<sup>22</sup> During this time Pope also exercised himself with projects of translation and imitation.<sup>23</sup> He thus emerged familiar with the great authors of antiquity and conversant with a variety of genres. One critic lists the many kinds of poetry Pope attempted as follows: the mock epic, the georgic, the pastoral, the dream vision, the didactic, the heroic epistle, the elegy, the familiar epistle, the formal verse satire, the moral epistle, the prologue, the epilogue, the ode, the epigram, and the epitaph.<sup>24</sup>

Many writers see parallels between Pope's poetry and his gardening. Just as Pope's poems treat classical themes, utilize classical forms, and imitate classical exemplars, so too his garden combines themes from classical poetry and forms from classical architecture with the learned allusiveness of the arts of its day. Consider the features of Pope's estate. His three-story house was set alongside the Thames, a grassy lawn running down to the river. Behind the house, the main road to London separated the house from the garden. An underground tunnel-Pope's grotto-ran beneath the road and led to the garden, which occupied a rectangular plot about twice the width of the front lawn. Maynard Mack, in his study *The Garden and the City* lists the garden's features as follows: "a grotto, three mounts (one of these quite large), some quincunxes, groves, a wilderness, an orangery; a vineyard, a kitchen garden, a bowling green, a shell temple, and an obelisk."<sup>25</sup> He also calls attention to the poet's "striking use of openings, walks, and vistas, each terminating on a point of rest, supplied by urn or statue.

Stylistically, Pope's garden combines both forward- and backward-looking features.<sup>27</sup> The entire ensemble was arranged axially, though not in line with the underground passage leading from the Thames. Upon emerging from this passage (i.e., the "grotto,") the visitor passed the shell temple and a large mount, traversed first a wide alley flanked by groves and then a circular bowling green, walked between two smaller mounts, **and finally approached the obelisk to the memory of the poet's mother, which Mack describes as the "visual and emotional climax" of the garden .2'** The linearity of the garden was **countered by its bowers, hills, and thickets, as well as by the surrounding "wildernesses" quincuncial groves penetrated by serpentine paths. Urns were arrayed in various parts of the garden, and over the grotto entrance was inscribed a line from Horace, "Secretum iter, et fallentis semita vitae," translated by**

## **Spence as "A hid Recess, where Life's revolving Day,! In sweet Delusion gently steals away. 1129**

Two other features of Pope's garden must be described before we can consider its likeness to a poem. The first is Pope's grotto—more technically, a cryptoporticus, or subterranean portico.<sup>30</sup> It consisted of several chambers through which trickled a small stream. The walls and ceilings were decorated with a collection of rocks, spars, flints, and shells, which Pope had gathered on his travels or been given by friends. The poet had also attached small pieces of mirror to the pebbled surfaces, and so his grotto multiplied both sounds and sights, the murmur and splash of the stream and the flash of flames and lamps. From the grotto, a view extended in two directions. Visitors glancing up into the garden could see the shell temple, while turning the other way, they could glimpse boats sailing on the Thames. In a letter to Martha Blunt, Pope explicitly mentions how the grotto functioned like a camera obscura once its doors were shut: "on the Walls... the River, Hills, Woods, and Boats, are forming a moving Picture in their visible Radiations."

Grottos are associated with creativity and contemplation. Inhabited by nymphs, oracles, divinities, and muses, the grottos described in classical literature are loci of poetic inspiration. Maynard Mack links Pope's grotto to caves described by Homer and Ovid; he also situates Pope's move to Twickenham and his creation there of garden and grotto against the tradition of retirement stemming from Virgil's *Georgics*.

Though Pope's entire garden is allusive, recalling both literature and ideals from the classical past, one section of his estate bore an even stronger likeness to a poem. This was a plan for a series of monuments to adorn the riverfront. The sculptural ensemble, as described by Pope's friend Joseph Spence, combined a swan flying into the river, two reclining river gods holding inscribed urns, and busts of Homer, Virgil, Marcus Aurelius, and Cicero. Explaining the significance of this ensemble, Mack states that it is "a more elaborate work of the associative instinct than at first appears. Like some of the allusions in Pope's verse, it spreads in circles of analogy that one hardly knows how to follow." One of the inscriptions is from Politian's *Ambra*. It reads: "Here softly flows the Meles, and silent in its deep grottos listens to its singing swans." As Mack explains, this alludes to the poetic enterprise (the singing swans), as well as to the preeminent poet associated with the river Meles, namely, Homer. The second inscription—"Where the Mincius wanders with great windings"—is drawn from a passage in Virgil's *Georgics* where the poet writes of taking home spoils and trophies from conquered Greece to his Italian home. In using this quotation, Pope alludes to his own career. He too has brought home artistic "spoils," namely, the poetry and learning of the ancient world which, through his imitations and translations, he has secured for Augustan England. Hunt writes "This elaborate contrivance, properly decyphered, would lead the spectator to recall the birth of Homer from Politian and the poetic conquest of Greece from Virgil and so to identify Pope's own role in rededicating this classical literary heritage to his own age."

To "read" Pope's garden ensemble requires the very same skills as reading a poem. The viewer must recognize the quotations, recall the context from which they are drawn, and realize their relevance to Pope's situation. Considerable background knowledge is required, not only about *Ambra* and the *Georgics* but also about conventions in the various arts—for example, the fact that in classical times rivers were often personified by reclining figures pouring forth water from urns. Viewers must also understand that the meaning to be extracted from the riverside ensemble is cumulative—that is, that the busts of Homer and Virgil reinforce and complement the meaning to be teased out of the statues and inscriptions. How such meaning is conveyed by ensembles of the sort just described is a problem for art in general, not one newly raised by gardens and by the claim that gardens must be read. Paintings and poems are allusive in similar ways—thus the doctrine of the sister arts—and the example of Twickenham shows that gardens can

function in just the same manner.

I said earlier that Pope's garden combined innovative and traditional elements. If the sculptural ensemble placed on the banks of the Thames must be unpacked much like Pope's denser poems, the meaning of Pope's grotto can be viewed differently. The shells and minerals affixed to the ceiling and walls evoke personal rather than emblematic associations, while the implicit connection between the flowing spring and the poet's (and viewer's) mind anticipates later romantic conceptions of artistic creativity. John Dixon Hunt argues that the varied aquatic effects in Pope's grotto-pools, rills, torrents, fountains-"provide a machinery of meditation, various landscapes where the expressive character of water determines mental activity."

#### 4. STOWE

I have been arguing that portions of Pope's small landscape at Twickenham give striking support to Walpole's claim that poetry and gardening are sister arts. One of the most famous of all eighteenth-century gardens, Richard Temple, Lord Cobham's estate at Stowe, is another that is frequently cited in support of Walpole's claim. Like Pope's garden, Stowe cannot be easily forced into a single stylistic category. A succession of gardeners worked there in the course of the century, among them Charles Bridgeman, Richard Kent, and Capability Brown, and different parts of the garden exhibit quite different styles. I would like to start, however, by briefly recounting the features to be found in the Elysian Fields, an area of the garden designed by William Kent in the 1730s.

The Elysian Fields occupies a wooded glade fed by a small stream known as the River Styx. Three structures are crucial to the overall meaning of this area: The Temple of Ancient Virtue, the Temple of Modern Virtue, and the Temple of British Worthies. The first of these is (color plate 2A) a round classical building modeled after the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli. The Ionic structure houses statues of Socrates, Homer, Lycurgus, and Epaminondas-the most famous philosopher, poet, lawmaker, and soldier, respectively, of the classical world. Next to this was the Temple of Modern Virtue, which no longer stands. It was built in the Gothic style and was, moreover, built as a ruin. Downhill and across from these stands the *Temple of British Worthies* (color plate 2B), a semicircular building with *sixteen niches*, each containing the bust of a British notable. Included are philosophers, poets, scientists, and statesmen.<sup>37</sup> Architecture carries much of the meaning in Stowe's comparison of ancient and modern virtue. The juxtaposition of Gothic and classical styles *creates the* visual pun between a ruined temple and ruined virtue. But the very topography of the garden contributes to the meaning as well, for the British worthies are placed downhill, looking up to their ancient *predecessors*. The *three temples of the Elysian Fields* make a moral statement, but Kent and Cobham added *further layers* of subtlety to give the ensemble political and religious dimensions as well. John Dixon Hunt *declares the* Temple of British Worthies to be an "ideological building." He states that "the message of these figures is anti-Stuart, anti-Catholic, pro-British."<sup>38</sup> Lord Cobham had been dismissed from *Queen Anne's* army and was among those Whigs who came to oppose Sir Robert Walpole's ministry. The choice of figures for the *temple-in particular*, the omission of Queen Anne-underscores this point. In addition, a quotation from Virgil is presented with a crucial line omitted. Hunt explains: "This particular religious hostility is reinforced by a quotation from the sixth book of the *Aeneid*. . . in which a line praising priesthood is omitted .... Such is the learned subtlety of [this building] that we must not only identify our Virgil but *recognize how and why it is incomplete*."<sup>39</sup>

Note that the Elysian Fields are as demanding *intellectually as* the section of Pope's garden described above. Hunt and Willis sum up the challenges this section of the

garden presents to its "reader":

The Elysian Fields present a much more ambitious scheme of associations; they require a visitor to compare ancient virtue with its modern counterpart... to register the political significance of the British Worthies, which in turn required noticing that a line was missing from a Virgilian quotation, and to appreciate that the Temple of Ancient Virtue called to mind the Roman Temple of Vesta... at Tivoli, and the Temple of British Worthies some other modern Italian *examples*.

'While writers discussing *the poetic* powers of eighteenth-century gardens tend to fix ate on the small sector of Stowe containing *these three temples* with their political and religious connotations, other iconographical programs could be found in other parts of the garden. Ronald Paulson writes that the rotondo was the focal point of the garden, since it could be seen from all parts of the estate. This structure originally held a gilded statue of Venus; later this was replaced by a statue of Bacchus. Since the grounds also boasted a Temple of Venus (which, the current Stowe guidebook reports, contained "indelicate murals") and a Temple of Bacchus, Paulson argues that the overall theme of the garden was love in all its varieties. He states, "The temples thus tell of wives running away from their jealous husbands to consort with satyrs, Dido seducing Aeneas, and even a saint who finds it hard to resist sexual temptation in his grotto. 1141

One further argument that is supported by the gardens at Stowe is John Dixon Hunt's claim that eighteenth-century English gardens progressed from the emblematic to the expressive. In his book *Observations on Modern Gardening (1770)*, published some **fifty years after Pope began laying out his Twickenham estate and some thirty-five years after Bridgeman and Kent commenced the creation of Stowe's Elysian fields, Thomas Whately rails against the demands of emblematic gardens. He writes:**

Statues, inscriptions, and even paintings, history and mythology, and a variety of devices have been introduced [into gardens] .... All these devices are rather *emblematical* than expressive; they may be ingenious contrivances, and recall absent ideas to the recollection; but they make no immediate impression, for they must be examined, compared, perhaps explained, before the whole design of them is well understood; and though an allusion to a favourite or well-known subject of history, of poetry, or of tradition, may now and then animate or dignify a scene, yet as the subject does not naturally belong to a garden, the allusion should not be principle; it should seem to have been suggested by the scene: a transitory image, which irresistibly occurred; not sought for, not laboured; and have the force of a metaphor, free from the detail of an allegory.

A section of Stowe which answers to this new antiemblematic taste is the Grecian Valley, the last of the areas created during Lord Cobham's lifetime. The Grecian Valley was a rolling green expanse surrounded by thick woods but lacking the denotative apparatus temples, statues, inscriptions, and so on-so common elsewhere at Stowe. Hunt suggests that the emblematic garden from the first half of the eighteenth century went out of favor in part because garden owners and designers wanted to create landscapes which would answer to the new Lockean theory of the mind, that is, landscapes that would support and promote a train of private associations, answer to viewers' changing moods. He says of Stowe's Grecian Valley: "The subtle varieties of the valley afford a landscape that seems to answer our moods, that allows a unique and individual response by each visitor to its unobtrusive character. It expresses us and our



changing moods, or such is the illusion that it encourages."<sup>43</sup>

I am not convinced that designers consciously sought to make gardens compatible with so-called Lockean epistemology; it is not clear what might establish such a claim. It is beyond question, however, that the passage from Whately expresses impatience with the demands emblematic gardens made upon their viewers. It is also the case that there was a convergence in the middle of the eighteenth century. Epistemologists, moralists, scientists, and aestheticians were all of them focusing in one way or another on individuals' responses to their surroundings. I cannot say why such an interest should have arisen at this moment, though it may have involved a reaction against authoritarian and rationalist strains in both politics and philosophy.

That Stowe was the most famous English eighteenth-century garden is evidenced by the flurry of guidebooks which were published to help visitors appreciate (read) it. Guide books were offered by the Buckingham bookseller Seeley beginning in 1744, and were revised and reissued for the next one hundred years.<sup>44</sup> Other descriptions and guides include Gilbert West's *Stowe: The Gardens of the Right Honourable Richard Viscount Cobham* (1732), William Gilpin's anonymous *A Dialogue on the Gardens at Stow* (1748), and George Bickham's *The Beauties of Stowe* (1750). The very fact that these guides were so popular says something about the way eighteenth-century viewers construed the task of visiting a garden: they sought help, a book or lexicon which would unpack the garden's meaning.

## 5. STOURH FAD

I would like to briefly describe two more mid-eighteenth-century gardens which further support the claim that a garden can be like a poem. Stourhead, in Wiltshire, is one of the most beautiful of all landscape gardens. It differs from Stowe in that it was designed by its owner, the banker Henry Hoare, rather than by a troop of hired garden designers. It therefore exhibits more stylistic unity than does Stowe, and it expresses a more personal content. (In this respect, it recalls Pope's estate at Twickenham.)

Stourhead is laid out as a circuit. A path descends from the house and circles a lake, passing by temples, a grotto, a hermitage, a Palladian bridge, a rusticated cottage, a medieval cross, and more. Inscriptions give some clue to the iconographic program, which Kenneth Woodbridge has argued is based on Virgil's *Aeneid*. The words "Procul, o procul este profani" (Begone, you who are uninitiated! Begone!) are carved over the door of the first temple passed, the Temple of Flora. These words are uttered by the Cumaean sibyl as Aeneas is about to descend into the underworld and be told of the founding of Rome.<sup>41</sup> Perfectly paralleling Aeneas's experience, the path descends to a grotto containing statues of a sleeping nymph and a bearded river god. Inscriptions provide a further link to Virgil's epic. A quotation from book 1 over the grotto's entrance refers to a cave where Aeneas took refuge.<sup>46</sup> Paulson points out that the river god alludes to Aeneas's encounter with Father Tiber, who told him "Here is your home assured. Here as at Stowe the very topography of the garden contributes to the iconography, for the steep path out of the grotto marks Aeneas's difficult journey back to the upper regions.

Further layers of meaning enrich the Stourhead circuit. Woodbridge writes that "Stourhead is dedicated to the pagan deities of rivers and springs; and to heroes-Aeneas, Hercules, and King **Alfred**. A statue of Hercules stood in the Pantheon (which was originally known as the Temple of Hercules), while a crenellated Gothic tower dedicated to King Alfred was placed two miles northwest of the Stourhead House. In his description of Stourhead, Ronald Paulson notes that "The basic elements, besides the

long journey through the wilderness, are temples of tillage and harvest, of fame, and of wisdom, in that ascending order."<sup>5</sup> He suggests that the ultimate destination of the circuit around the lake is the Temple of Apollo, which functions as the Temple of Wisdom. Finally, Max F. Schultz, in a fascinating paper "The Circuit Walk of the 18th-Century Landscape Garden and the Pilgrim's Circuitous Progress"<sup>5</sup> points out the multiple Christian and pagan associations which attach to any circuit walk like that at Stourhead. The circular path round a garden inevitably recalls certain archetypes-patterns of ritual repetition and eternal return-which characterize not only Aeneas's journey but also more primitive fertility cycles and later Christian parables of the pilgrim's progress, which in turn model the soul's journey through life. Schultz speculates that "it would have been extraordinary if the religious associations of the circuit walk had not occurred to visitors. 1112

The final gloss added by readers of Stourhead is a personal one. Henry Hoare's garden refers not only to well-known literary and religious figures; it also tells us something about Henry himself. That is, Stourhead is a highly personal poem as well as an allusive one. Again quoting first Paulson, then Woodbridge: "[Henry Hoare] makes his garden almost literally a poem, creating a series of emblems whose statement at its most general is about the course of man's life on earth and ultimately about his choice between a life of duty and a life of retirement and contemplation." 13 "Henry, in his garden, celebrated the founding of Rome, just as he, like Aeneas, was establishing a family in a place. 1154

## 6. WEST WYCOMBE

To end my description of emblematic or poetic gardens on a lighter note, I would like to close with an account of a ribald garden, Sir Francis Dashwood's estate West Wycombe. Sir Francis was a cultivated man, one of the founders of the Society of Dilettanti, a member of parliament **for twenty-two** years, and chancellor of the exchequer under Lord Bute. He had, however, a darker side. His youthful escapades on the grand tour were notorious. In Russia he masqueraded as the deceased Charles XII of Sweden in order to woo Tsarevna Anne; in Italy he was expelled from the dominions of the church." Upon returning to England, he and a group of fellow rakes founded a club which met in an old Cistercian abbey in Medmenham. The group, known variously as the Knights of St. Francis of Wycombe, the Mad Monks of Medmenham, and, later, the Hell-Fire Club, reputedly engaged in obscene parodies of religious rites and in the deflowering of local virgins. The club's motto was "Love and Friendship," and the Rabelaisian inscription "Fay Ce Qu Voudras" was carved above the abbey door.

When public interest in the group's activities made their meetings at the abbey untenable, Dashwood decided to create a setting at his own home, West Wycombe. A set of caves was dug beneath the parish church, which sits on chalky hills overlooking the house. Some say the caves themselves were designed to mimic the female anatomy.<sup>56</sup> In any case, Dashwood designed other parts of his West Wycombe estate in keeping with his club's endeavors. His was clearly an X-rated garden.

Scholarly studies of this aspect of West Wycombe are hard to come by. But the following features are acknowledged in various popular accounts of the gardens. First, there was a central lake shaped like a swan, possibly intended to recall Leda and her fate. A number of islands dotted the lake. On one of them, reachable only by boat, stood a Temple of Music designed by Nicholas Revert. Another of the garden features in keeping with the overall theme was the temple of Venus, which stood on a belly-like mound. An anatomically shaped Venus chamber was dug into the mound. Dashwood's friend John Wilkes said of the temple that "the entrance to it is the same entrance by which we all

come into the world and the door is what some idle wits have called the Door of Life. "57 In Dash wood's time the temple mound was adorned with forty-two erotic statues.<sup>58</sup> Lord Bute, who particularly admired this temple, advised Dashwood to "lay out 500 pounds to erect a Paphian column to stand by the entrance."<sup>59</sup> Finally, in his *History of Gardens*, Christopher Thacker quotes a volume of *Victoria County History* to the effect that Dashwood's lake and gardens were "laid out by a curious arrangement of streams, bushes and plantation to represent the female form."<sup>60</sup> Donald Mannix in his book *The Hell Fire Club is much more explicit. He tells how two mounds each topped with a circle of red flowering plants were lined up at a certain distance from a triangle of dark shrubbery. Sir Francis reputedly took a local priest up into a nearby tower, asked him "What do you think of my gardens?" then arranged to have three fountains turned on. Two of them spouted a milky white fluid from the top of each red-flowered mound while the third gushed from the area of the shrubbery.*

While Lord Cobham's gardens at Stowe generated a spate of guidebooks to help visitors read the gardens, no such industry was spawned by Sir Francis's creations. Arthur Young wrote of the park in 1767 that "The situation is very agreeable on an eminence rising from a most elegant river which meanders through the park and gardens, with the happiest effect, 1162 while Brayley and Britton's tour book *The Beauties of England and Wales (1801)* speaks of "the variety of fascinating scenery, which results from the harmonious intermixture and disposition of its woods and water." *The authors add that "The character of the place is animated and beautiful; and the late removal of various insignificant and unmeaning buildings, has restored the appearance of the ground to its genuine simplicity and nature. 1163*

As I said at the outset, I have not been able to find scholarly confirmation for the more extravagant claims made about Sir Francis's garden at West Wycombe. William Hannan painted four scenes of the estate during Dashwood's time. William Woollett's engravings of Hannan's landscapes show no traces of recumbant female forms hidden in the undulating lawns. (But let me note in passing that there is such a female form in a contempo-rary garden, the TurRvoman in James Pierce's Pratt Farm in Clinton, Maine.) Nevertheless, rumors about Sir Francis's personal excesses and about the erotic aspects of his garden have persisted from his time on. I take this, in and of itself, to be sufficient confirmation for my claim. The mere fact that people for generations have continued to *think* that Dashwood created an erotic garden as a site for debauched adventures shows they believe that a garden can have a sexually explicit design or program. Thus even the persistence of ungrounded rumors about the iconography of West Wycombe attests to the rich symbolic powers we willingly attribute to gardens.

## 7. INTENTION

I have described four eighteenth-century gardens, each of which resembles a poem. Twickenham, Stowe, Stourhead, and West Wycombe are learned and allusive. They present complex iconographical programs for their viewers to read, discourses about literature, politics, morality, and religion. In the following sections, I would like to give a more general argument for the similarity of gardens and poems. Rather than presenting further examples of gardens which must be read, I shall turn to some of the controversies now cur rent in the field of literary criticism and show that these apply to gardens as well.

In his introduction to the anthology *Against Theory*, W.J. T. Mitchell lists over ten varieties of theory (structuralism, semiotics, hermeneutics, deconstruction, speech-act theory, reception theory, psychoanalytic theory, feminism, Marxism, and various philosophical approaches such as antifoundationalism),<sup>64</sup> while Adena Rosmarin, in the same volume, lists six possible sorts of poetics (affective, intentional, semiological, ideological, formalist, psychoanalytic, and so on).<sup>65</sup> Each of these positions supports a different account of the nature of a text and different accounts of the enterprises of reading, interpretation, and evaluation. If gardens, too, can constitute texts, then gardens can partake in the debates now raging about theory. In what follows, I shall consider the application to gardens of three topics: (1) artistic intention, (2) multiple interpretation, and (3) style.

In their famous article "The Intentional Fallacy" (1954), Monroe Beardsley and William Wimsatt argued that authorial intention is both unavailable and inappropriate for critical practice.<sup>66</sup> This New Critical tenet has since then been abandoned. In fact, Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels have recently argued in their controversial article "Against Theory" that meaning and intention are inseparable. Their goal is not to revive the sort of intentionalism that Beardsley and Wimsatt attacked, but rather to use this example in an argument that would deflate all literary theory. In any case, there are certainly interpretive claims which turn on evidence about authorial intent. And such claims arise with gardens as well as with poems.

Here is one example. Resemblances are often cited between particular gardens and particular landscape paintings. For instance, a number of writers have noted the similarity between a certain vista at Stourhead and Claude Lorrain's painting *Coast View of Delos with Aeneas*. Both feature similar structures similarly disposed. Thus Kenneth Woodbridge writes that the painting "has a Doric portico in the foreground with the Pantheon facing it, and a bridge to the left, in the same relative positions in which these features are seen on entering the gardens at Stourhead."<sup>67</sup> But what, if anything, follows from this? The similarity between garden and painting is compatible with a number of different situations. (1) Henry Hoare designed Stourhead as a copy of the painting. (2) The garden merely alludes to the painting. (3) In designing Stourhead, Henry Hoare was unknowingly influenced by the painting. (4) The garden and painting are linked by a longer chain of influence. (5) The resemblance is entirely accidental.

Which of these five suggestions is correct depends in part on facts about the garden's creation. If Henry Hoare never saw or knew of *Coast View of Delos with Aeneas*, then either (4) or (5) is the case. If Henry knew the painting but sincerely disavowed any direct connection, then (3) or (4) is the correct explanation. And, the choice between (1) and (2) turns on Henry's actual intentions in designing that segment of the garden. Evidence of those intentions may not exist now, and Stourhead's interpreters will have to mount more roundabout arguments to justify one or another account of that vista.

The example I have just sketched is not an idle riddle but an actual problem of garden interpretation. The complexities of such cases are immense. In his book *Influence in Art and Literature*,<sup>68</sup> Goran Hermeren lists thirteen different requirements for genuine artistic influence and six different sorts of reasons that can be offered to support the claim that one work influenced another! I shall return to the question of resemblance between a garden and a painting in chapter 4 and call into question the very notion that a garden might copy a painting. And, I shall say more about particular interpretations of Stourhead later in this chapter. For now, however, consider another problem about intention, this one concerning gardens and poems. How are we to interpret the following poem which occurs on the back of Stowe's Temple of British Worthies?

To the memory of Signor Fido  
 an *Italian* of good Extraction;  
     who came into England  
 not to bite us, like most of his Countrymen,  
     but to gain an honest Livelihood.  
 He hunted not after Fame,  
     yet acquired it,  
 regardless of the Praise of Friends  
     but most sensible of their Love.  
 Tho' he lived amongst the Great  
 he neither learnt nor flatter'd any Vice.  
     He was no Bigot,  
 Tho' he doubted of none of the 39 Articles.  
     And, if to follow Nature,  
 and to respect the Laws of Society,  
     be Philosophy,  
 he was a perfect Philosopher;  
     a faithful Friend,  
 an agreeable companion,  
     a loving Husband,  
 distinguish'd by a numerous Offspring,  
 all which he lived to see take good Courses.  
     In his old Age he retired  
 to the House of a Clergyman in the Country,  
     where he finished his earthly Race,  
 And died an Honour and an Example to the whole  
 Species.<sup>69</sup>

Hunt explains that these lines addressed to Signor Fido in fact commemorate one of Lord Cobham's greyhounds. The lines therefore contribute to the satiric tone of the entire ensemble, but their interpretation remains problematic. Were viewers really meant to circle around behind the temple and read the poem to Fido, or was it merely a hidden, private joke? If the poem was meant to be seen and added in the total effect of the Elysian Fields, then doesn't a problem of decorum arise? The serious political points made by the one concerning gardens and poems. How are we to interpret the following poem which occurs on the back of Stowe's Temple of British Worthies?

To the memory of Signor Fido an Italian of good Extraction; who came into England not to bite us, like most of his Countrymen, but to gain an honest Livelihood. He hunted not after Fame, yet acquired it, regardless of the Praise of Friends but most sensible of their Love. Tho' he lived amongst the Great he neither learnt nor flatter'd any Vice. He was no Bigot, Tho' he doubted of none of the 39 Articles. And, if to follow Nature, and to respect the Laws of Society, be Philosophy, he was a perfect Philosopher; a faithful Friend, n agreeable companion, a loving Husband, distinguish'd by a numerous Offspring, all which he lived to see take good Courses. In his old Age he retired to the House of a Clergyman in the Country, where he finished his earthly Race, And died an Honour and an Example to the whole Species. 69

Hunt explains that these lines addressed to Signor Fido in fact commemorate one of Lord Cobham's greyhounds. The lines therefore contribute to the satiric tone of the entire ensemble, but their interpretation remains problematic. Were viewers really

meant to circle around behind the temple and read the poem to Fido, or was it merely a hidden, private joke? If the poem was meant to be seen and added in the total effect of the Elysian Fields, then doesn't a problem of decorum arise? The serious political points made by the figures and inscriptions of the Temple of British Worthies seem in danger of being under cut by the broad satire describing a dog's moral and intellectual virtues in human terms. In sum, our understanding of Stowe's Elysian Fields depends in part on how we settle certain questions about intent—on whether we assume we are meant to see the poem about Signor Fido, and whether we assume we are meant to read it as an integral part of the Elysian Fields, one which contributes to the meaning of the whole. As in the previous example about Claudian influence at Stourhead, it is possible *in principle* to settle such questions about intent, but the requisite evidence might be lacking in particular cases.

## 8. MULTIPLE INTERPRETATION

The second interpretive issue I would like to raise is that of multiple interpretations. It has become a commonplace in recent critical theory that texts do not have a fixed, determinate meaning. Deconstructionists maintain that every reading creates a new text, and that intertextuality links each text to every other in a web of signification. Stanley Fish's account undercuts this radical permissiveness by relativizing interpretation to interpretive communities. Within each community, shared beliefs, assumptions, norms, and values guarantee that a certain interpretive strategy prevails. But since Fish places no limit on the number of interpretive communities that can coexist, texts remain polysemous in principle. I shall argue that the same is true of gardens. A given garden can sustain conflicting, incompatible interpretations, and over time we reread (reinterpret) gardens in incompatible ways. I shall make my point by considering several interpretations of Henry Hoare's garden at Stourhead.

Recall Stourhead's circuit walk. The account of it presented above was drawn from the writings of Kenneth Woodbridge and Ronald Paulson. Both authors argue that the walk around the lake mirrors Aeneas's adventures in book 6 of the *Aeneid*. But others disagree. For example, Kimerly Rorshach, in her catalog for an exhibition at the Yale University Center for British Art, endorses the Woodbridge/Paulson view that "the lake at Stourhead represents Lake Avernus, the lake outside Naples near which was the legendary entrance to the underworld, 1170 then notes that "This interpretation has been challenged by [James] Turner, who believes that the lake at Stourhead is meant to evoke the sea described in Book I of *The Aeneid*. "7' It may seem that not that much turns on this particular dispute, since both parties agree that the iconography of Stourhead's circuit walk is meant to represent Aeneas's journey. Yet Turner rails against his fellow exegetes, declaring that Woodbridge and Paulson "have confused the garden's chronological development, misrepresented its allusions, and underestimated its unity. '172

Turner's disagreement is not just about the identification of the central body of water. Although he follows Woodbridge and Paulson and keys the garden's overall iconographic program to the *Aeneid*, Turner maintains that they read the circuit in such a way that many of its features are neglected. In particular, he claims their interpretation neglects the many nonclassical elements at Stourhead: Stourton church, the Bristol cross, Peter's pump, Alfred's tower, which crowns the western horizon, and Stourton village itself, which forms part of the eastern vista. Turner argues that from the very start of the circuit, Stourhead presents visitors with a counterpoint in styles: "[At] the first

viewpoint, the Temple of Apollo reared up unexpectedly in front and Stourton Church appeared almost immediately to the left, far below, giving the visitor a curious feeling of disembodied height. The Gothic and the Classical are dramatically juxtaposed. (71)... From the Pantheon a composite scene is revealed-the Temple of Ceres close to the English village with its Gothic cross, the Temple of Apollo, the Hermitage, ruin, and cascade. The counterpart of Gothic and Classical is thus maintained, and continues throughout the journey. 1173

Turner identifies two structures at Stourhead, one physical, the other textual.<sup>74</sup> The latter is based on five inscriptions visitors encounter in walking around the garden. Turner argues that the textual structure supports his reading of the garden. He notes that the inscription on which Woodbridge and Paulson place so much weight-the phrase from book 6 of the *Aeneid* inscribed over the Temple of Flora-was never mentioned in Henry Hoare's time. Moreover, he argues that the route around the garden was changed by Henry's grandson, and that originally the first inscription visitors would have encountered is the passage from book 1 of the *Aeneid* carved over the entrance to the grotto.<sup>75</sup> As the final piece of evidence for his interpretation, Turner argues that the feature referred to in Henry's letter quoting from the *Aeneid*, book 6, was not the grotto but an underpass at the southwest corner of the garden. Turner explains:

An allusion to the sixth book of the *Aeneid* may be intended at Stourhead, but it is as faint and nonchalant as Hoare's "facilis descensus Averno," an amusing ad hoc parallel between the Zeals road underpass (a minor feature of the garden) and the descent to Hades. To take the [Temple of Flora] description as a key, and to interpret the lake's circuit as a sibylline voyage is to distort the garden's sequence and emphasis; to assert that the allusions of Stourhead are "almost exclusively to Book VI" is patently wrong. A far more cogent and plausible program is provided by the first book of the *Aeneid*, the immediate context of the first inscription.<sup>76</sup>

Turner's quarrel with Woodbridge and Paulson, then, turns on three crucial claims: (1) that their interpretation fails to take into account many of the garden's features, (2) that they accord the inscription from book 6 a wrongful prominence because they misidentify the original route of the garden circuit, and (3) that the letter from Henry Hoare alluding to the descent to the underworld does not describe the Stourhead grotto, but a quite different underground passage. Turner completes his argument by showing how the garden can be read in the context of book 1 of the *Aeneid*.

The inscription which Turner believes is crucial for our understanding of Stourhead is the phrase "Intus aquae dulces, vivoque sedilia saxo, nympharum domus" [Inside are sweet waters and seats of living rock-a house of nymphs] carved over the entrance to the grotto. Turner suggests that the Stourhead landscape corresponds topographically to the calm harbor described in book 1 of the *Aeneid*,<sup>77</sup> and he relates the overall message of the garden to the literary tradition of rural retirement. If storms represent political strife, then a calm harbor-and by extension the entire Stourhead landscape-stands for shelter, respite, and moral integrity.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, the *Aeneid* opens with a storm at sea; Neptune then appears in a horse-drawn chariot and calms the waves. Turner deduces from drawings and contemporary reports that a statue of "Neptune and his 4 Nags" graced the lake in front of the Temple of Flora.<sup>79</sup> The statue formed part of the scene visible from the viewing hole of the grotto. Turner concludes that "The controlling text in [the circuit at Stourhead] is the first one to be encountered, the lines from the first book of the *Aeneid*."<sup>80</sup>

In the closing section of his paper, Turner shows how one **final nonclassical** element, Alfred's tower, can be integrated into Stourhead's iconographical program. The

inscription on the tower commemorates Alfred as a giver of peace and of law. Turner writes,

Alfred, at the far western point of the garden's axis, acts historically as Neptune does mythically: he quells violence, "gives peace and rest to Earth," and protects the good land. The twin guardians of the estate are representatives of two elements that had already been embodied in the Elysian Fields at Stowe, Ancient Virtue and the British Worthies. The interweaving of the Gothic and Classical modes is thus brought to a significant conclusion.<sup>81</sup>

I cannot adjudicate all of Turner's differences with Woodbridge and Paulson. In particular, I am not in a position to decide their claims about the Stourhead circuit in Henry Hoare's time and which of the monuments and inscriptions would be encountered first. It is a strength of Turner's account that it encompasses all of the garden's features, not just those classical structures easily tied to episodes from the *Aeneid*. On the other hand, some of the charm of the earlier interpretations is lost, since, on Turner's view, the garden no longer has a narrative structure, and visitors' progress along the path no longer corresponds to Aeneas's progress in Virgil's epic.

Imagine a "metric" imposed on competing interpretations of a given work of art. It ranges them according to overlap and inclusion, on the one hand, and incompatibility and contradiction, on the other. Though Turner and Woodbridge/Paulson offer competing accounts of Stourhead's iconography, their interpretations don't seem all that "distant," since all three make reference to the *Aeneid*. I would like to turn to two other accounts of Stourhead which are quite different from those already considered. The first proposes a second reading which coexists with the Virgilian one; the second denies the Virgilian theme altogether.

Recall Max Schulz's claim that the walk around the Stourhead circuit has Christian as well as classical significance. While not denying that the sequence from temple to grotto to temple parallels Aeneas's journey from Troy, his descent into the underworld, and the founding of Rome, Schulz maintains that Aeneas's adventures were seen as prefiguring the life of Christ, and so Stourhead also represents the Christian cycle of sin and redemption, the story of paradise lost and regained. On this view, any garden is automatically associated with that first garden, Eden, and any circular path recalls the Christian paradigm—"the circuitous pilgrimage of the soul back to its spiritual home. **1182** Thus Schulz claims that visitors attending to Stourhead's Virgilian associations, "to be found in Book VI of *Aeneid*, would know they had not only duplicated symbolically Aeneas's journey from Troy by way of Delos sacred to Apollo, his descent into Hades, and his founding of Rome, but had encapsulated in that walk the archetypal patterns of life and death informing Aeneas's journey. **1183**

Schulz traces these archetypal patterns to a variety of sources—Judaic, Neoplatonic, and Christian—and he argues that they evolved into a romantic topos of paradise given, lost, and regained.<sup>84</sup> It does indeed seem natural to associate a garden with Eden. Earlier I quoted Schulz's claim that "it would have been extraordinary if the religious associations of the walk had not occurred to visitors." <sup>85</sup> Elsewhere he remarks that "it represented no extreme exercise of mind to experience the eighteenth-century landscape garden as a new scene of human bliss, where Eden could be ritualistically renewed, and in that symbolic action the original earthly paradise rediscovered as prelude to the final celestial paradise." <sup>86</sup>

'What seems troubling about Schulz's account is that it appears so little tied to Stout head's actual features and topography. On his view, any scenic garden circuit is equally a



candidate for the Christian interpretation just presented and the archetypal patterns it overlays. Perhaps the Stourhead circuit could be identified more closely with details of the soul's or pilgrim's progress. But at least one interpreter of Stourhead denies Schulz's reading because he denies that the *Aeneid* had the Christian significance Schulz claims for it in the eighteenth century. In his article "The Iconography of Stourhead," Malcolm Kelsall denies the claim, quoted from Paulson, that the *Aeneid* "was generally interpreted by the Christian exegetes as a parable of the Christian soul's journey through life, echoed in the *Tabula celeris* and other classical texts and in the metaphors of Puritan devotional literature." 87

Kelsall finds further fault with the Woodbridge/Paulson reading of Stourhead. He notes that "concentration upon a supposed sequence of Virgilian allusions in a circuit walk has led to the suppression of the clear visual counterpoint between the classical vistas within the garden and the Christian and Gothic images without." 88 Yet Kelsall rejects Turner's method of integrating Stourhead's classical and Gothic references, and he criticizes Schulz and others for failing to read the *Aeneid* as its eighteenth-century readers did, that is, as a political poem rather than as a piece of Christian exegesis. 89 Insisting that Stourhead "lacks... any clear reference, visual or verbal, to the founding of Rome," 90 Kelsall also denies any relation between the garden landscape and Claude's *Coast View of Delos with Aeneas*. Claiming that "such recondite allusion would be unusual in eighteenth-century gardens," 91 he proposes that the obvious allusion in the Stourhead vista that resembles Claude's painting is to the Pantheon, "a temple built... by Augustus's marshal Agrippa, and now seen, as if by magic, within the green world of the English countryside .... Everyone would perceive the reference to the Augustan temple. The primary association, therefore, is with the natural religion of the ancients." 93

Kelsall identifies natural religion as one of the garden's central motifs; 93 he deems chastity the other. Unlike others who take the inscription "Procul, o procul este profani" to refer to book 6 of the *Aeneid*, Kelsall interprets these lines in relation to natural religion: "The profane are those who see nature in terms of sensuality or libertinism." 94 To reinforce this reading, he points out that inscriptions identify the river god in the grotto not as Father Tiber from *Aeneid 8* but as Daphne's father Peneus from *Metamorphoses 1*. 91 Viewers are thus invited to recall a tale which underlines the garden's theme of chastity, Apollo's attempted rape of Daphne and her transformation into a laurel tree counterpoints the Apolline temple just as the church and market cross are set in juxtaposition to the Pantheon. They too are acknowledgements of 'Divine Providence'. "99

Since I know little about eighteenth-century constructions of Virgil's *Aeneid*, I cannot weigh the merits of Kelsall's arguments against those of Woodbridge, Paulson, and Turner. But what I want to emphasize in this section, apart from the intrinsic interest of these competing accounts, is the interpretive demands placed on Stourhead's viewers. Arcane facts must be known in order to read this garden. And the competing accounts must be judged like scientific theories, compared with respect to inclusiveness, simplicity; adequacy, coherence, and so on. All this in order to understand a garden!

The interpretations of Stourhead canvassed so far all have one thing in common. Each tries to uncover the meaning intended by the garden's designer. Yet not all critical theories accord such power and autonomy to the creators of works of art. Marxist, psychoanalytic, and feminist interpretations, for example, often uncover significance of which the artist was unaware.

Two writers who offer such approaches to landscape are James Turner and Carole Fabricant. In his paper "The Sexual Politics of Landscape: Images of Venus in Eighteenth Century English Poetry and Landscape Gardening," O' Turner notes two traits that have been associated with Venus from the Renaissance on—sexuality and modesty. These two

traits are often combined in one and the same image: Venus's beauty invites, yet her posture and her surroundings (say, a shady bower) fend off, the viewer. Turner argues that this attitude toward sexuality and possession was extended to landscape when the serpentine line championed by Hogarth was utilized as a principle of landscape design. "The Venus de Medici played a crucial role in establishing this mutuality of landscape and sexual gesture .... Her form and posture reconciled two contrary motions, just as her gesture combined concealment and display, modesty and availability." 101 Writing of Twickenham and Rousham, two gardens each of which housed a statue of Venus de Medici in what Turner describes as "tubular structures formed by sinuous expansion and contraction of woods," 102 he says "Both places embody a dialectic of privacy and sociability, self-concealment and self-display; landscape and owners both 'assemble' and 'retire' in Walpole's words. This contrary motion is both social and sexual." 103 And later, discussing Pope's *Epistle to Burlington*, Turner speaks of the poet's "aesthetic of sexualized topography." 104 Turner thus sees a hidden sexual agenda in all of the landscape gardens in the first half of the eighteenth century. He reads the smooth and undulating designs at Twickenham, Rousham, and the Leasowes as ciphers for sexuality and desire.

In her paper "Binding and Dressing Nature's Loose Tresses: The Ideology of Augustan Landscape Design," 105 Carole Fabricant gives a feminist reading of the eighteenth century garden aesthetic which is compatible with many of Turner's claims. Fabricant sees a convergence among aesthetic, economic, and sexual forms of possession. 106 She argues that nature was viewed as a wife or mistress. Like a woman, nature was a source of pleasure; like a woman, she was to be used and improved; and, like a woman, she was to be available to her master yet chastely screened from the view of others.

Analyzing Addison's *Spectator* essays, Fabricant points out that women "are continually judged for their ability to gratify the eye and the senses. Moreover, women, like landscapes, are converted into paintings, into framed-hence ownable and 'possessable' objects designed specifically for male scrutiny." 107 Turning to Thomson's poem *The Seasons*, Fabricant points out that "Nature is continually described here in terms of a total visual (as well as implicitly sexual) yielding of herself." 108 Fabricant argues that an owner's relation to the gardens of his estate was similarly sexualized: "The male owner's 'penetration' into the 'inner spaces' of his garden was a journey into and through a variety of enclosures and structures deliberately designed as parts of a feminine landscape: e.g., the Vale of Venus at Rousham, the Temple of Flora at Stourhead, and the Lady's Temple, the Temple of Venus, and the Queen's Valley at Stowe." 9 Thus Fabricant maintains that the iconographic program which Sir Francis Dashwood explicitly incorporated into his garden at West Wycombe was present implicitly in many other eighteenth-century landscape gardens.

Fabricant's account of landscape aesthetics thus finds sexism and patriarchy rampant even in those gardens not consciously designed to be erotic. We might ask whether gardens designed by eighteenth-century women would be open to similar charges. Unfortunately, I don't know of any major landscapes created by women in that era. 11° If eighteenth-century women were not, in general, allowed to engage in garden design on any large scale, this very fact might confirm Fabricant's claim that the role of landscape improver was identified with pervasive patriarchal and sexist attitudes. 11'

Fabricant's reappraisal extends even to the quotation from Walpole which I have taken as my organizing theme, the claim that painting, poetry, and landscape are the three sisters, for she notes "It need hardly be pointed out that these 'sisters' remained under the constant guidance and supervision of their loving but strong-willed 'fathers'-of men like Brown." 12 'While these articles by Turner and Fabricant do not present

additional interpretations of the Stourhead circuit to compete with those already described, they introduce considerations that the garden's interpreters must either challenge or incorporate. Thus with gardens, as with poetry, a new and radical constituency is forcing a reevaluation of critical canons and critical procedures.

## 9. STYLE

The last issue I would like to take up in this chapter is that of style. In his essay "The Status of Style," reprinted in *Ways of Worldmaking*, Nelson Goodman criticizes hasty accounts of style based on a facile distinction between form and content. He points out that "style comprises certain characteristic features both of what is said and of how it is said, both of subject and of wording, both of content and of form."<sup>3</sup> He elaborates: "What is said, how it is said, what is expressed, and how it is expressed are all intimately interrelated and involved in style."<sup>4</sup> Exemplification is added to the mix as well, and Goodman eventually concludes that "Basically, . . . style consists of those features of the symbolic functioning of a work that are characteristic of author, period, place, or school."<sup>5</sup>

Richard Wollheim discriminates more finely among such features when he distinguishes general from individual style.<sup>6</sup> General style, he suggests, comes in three varieties: (1) universal style (classicism, the geometrical style, naturalism), (2) historical or period style (neoclassicism, art nouveau, social realism), and (3) school style (the style of Giotto, Verona, or the court of Rudolf II). Individual style is "what we characteristically refer to when we use the phrase 'the style of a'-where a stands in for the name of a painter-to refer to something in the work of a."<sup>8</sup>

Wollheim's goal is to defend a generative conception of style in which individual style has psychological reality.<sup>9</sup> On this view, accurate individual style descriptions of an artist's work pick out features generated by his interests, preferences, choices, procedures, and skills, <sup>120</sup> what Wollheim calls his mental store. <sup>'2'</sup> General style, by contrast, is identified "taxonomically."<sup>122</sup> That is, while general style descriptions refer to interesting or distinctive features apparent in a work, there is no presumption that these features are tied in an essential way to the artist's creative process. It follows from these definitions that general style can be learned, but individual style must be formed.<sup>123</sup>

Wollheim warns that the claims he makes pertain to the art of painting and cannot be extended to other arts without distortion. <sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, Jenefer Robinson has extended Wollheim's distinction between general and individual style to the literary arts. <sup>125</sup> Consider a further extension to the art of gardening.

Gardens which, like those of eighteenth-century England, aspire to be high art can sustain a distinction between general and individual style. But the distinction remains problematic, and general style terms from the other arts do not transfer readily to gardens. Consider one example Wollheim offered of historical style in painting, that of neoclassicism. Neoclassical paintings like those of Ingres and David emulate the classical world in their choice of subject matter and moral outlook as well as through such formal and expressive components as balance, restraint, rationality; and repose. While gardens like Stowe and Stourhead are equally indebted to the classical world, borrowing both architecture and iconography from antiquity; no one deems them neoclassical gardens. And since they are so eclectic, stylistic labels cannot be derived from their architectural elements alone. Recall the many comments about Stourhead's mix of classical and Gothic elements. The eighteenth century's enthusiasm for chinoiserie generated even randier mixes. Kew Gardens, for example, had a mosque, a Chinese pagoda, and a Roman triumphal arch alongside the more familiar classical temples and Palladian

bridge. The relevant general style term remains "English landscape garden," or perhaps one of the neologisms Hunt and Paulson propose: poetic garden or emblematic garden.

In a brief article "The Nomenclature of Style in Garden History," 126 Richard Woodbridge discusses some other art-historical terms that have been applied to gardens. These include "Mannerist," "Baroque," "Rococo," and "Picturesque." Roy Strong, for example, in *The Renaissance Garden in England*, classes as Mannerist certain sixteenth-century Italian gardens as well as various seventeenth-century English gardens which they influenced. 127 These gardens are distinguished by terracing, grottos, geometric parterres, ambitious iconographic programs, elaborate waterworks, and, most distinctive of all, automata like those described by Hero of Alexandria in his work *Pneumatica*-for instance, statues that move and birds that sing, all due to water pressure. This general style classification is, therefore, based on external features as Woliheim demands. Woodbridge notes, however, that such style classifications are useful to "suitably programmed minds," 128 and that the terms must always be either stretched or restricted, sharpened or extended, when applied to new arts.

One further difficulty in singling out general style terms that apply to gardens is the fact that poetry and painting do, while gardening does not, support the notion of genre in addition to that of style. As Jenefer Robinson points out, poems within a given genre can be marked by different period styles. Thus she contrasts the Renaissance with the Augustan pastoral. 129 We can think of many genres in eighteenth-century poetry (the mock epic, the epistle, the pastoral, the ode) and painting (the history painting, the conversation piece, the allegorical portrait). Comparable garden genres are hard to think of. Following Schultz's essay, discussed above, we might propose the circuit garden as one garden genre. The water garden is another, the terraced garden perhaps a third, though neither was common in eighteenth-century England. It is tempting in this context to propose the poetic garden as a garden genre rather than a (general) garden style. Since gardens with iconographic programs that had to be read were indeed created in Renaissance Italy and in seventeenth-century France, among other places, we might hope to identify this genre, the poetic garden, across different period and national styles. But rather than the Renaissance poetic garden and the French poetic garden, garden historians write of the Italian Mannerist garden and the French formal garden. These difficulties might simply reflect the nascent stage of garden history and criticism, as opposed to the study of literature and painting, but I suspect there are further factors which account for gardens' recalcitrance in the face of critical taxonomies. It may be that an art form, in order to sustain the distinction between style and genre, has to sustain the notion of content more robustly than does the garden. Robinson suggests that a genre "usually specifies both a certain sort of subject matter and a certain universal style category; for example, tragedy, comedy, epic, lyric, pastoral, and elegy." 130 All the gardens discussed in this chapter had subjects in a literary sense, but the same is not true of those eighteenth-century gardens assimilated to painting rather than to poetry. Thus only a few gardens function symbolically in such a way that a genre designation could take hold. The variations that we tend to notice among gardens exist not because they tell different types of stories, but because they present different sorts of scenes and express different sorts of moods.

Note that the candidate garden genres I proposed-circuit garden, water garden, terraced garden-all classify gardens according to structural features rather than subject matter or content. In fact, most gardens are compared and differentiated on the basis of the sorts of outward characteristics (climate, topography, setting, architectural elements, use of water, predominant plant types, etc.) that contribute to style descriptions rather than to genre categories. Moreover, the general style descriptions applied to gardens tend to classify them according to nationality-the English garden, the French garden, the Italian

garden, and so on. There is a reason for this. Gardeners, unlike poets and painters, develop a site, and this involves severe restrictions. Climate, topography, soil type, available water, even such social factors as patterns of land ownership and use, affect garden design. Together, these constraints limit the extent to which, say, an English garden can resemble a French, Moorish, or Japanese garden, and they make it difficult for garden styles to travel across cultures. There is likely to be more similarity among the different period styles of the gardens of a given culture- e.g., in Strong's division of Italian gardens into three periods: Humanist, High Renaissance, and Mannerist (13-14)- than similarity across cultures that would permit us to identify a single garden genre common to Italy, France, and England.

Granted, certain garden styles were in vogue throughout Europe at various times. Thus Patrick Goode writes in the *Oxford Companion to Gardens* that Bernardo Buontalenti's sixteenth-century gardens at Pratolino, near Florence, were destroyed in 1819 to make a *giardino inglese*. The nineteenth-century vogue for the "English garden," like the eighteenth-century vogue for Chinoiserie, involved borrowing certain obvious stylistic features-naturalized plantings and ponds, on the one hand, pagodas and arched wooden bridges, on the other-rather than adapting the unfamiliar art form to the native situation and arriving at a new stylistic synthesis. In sum, gardens can sustain the notion of (general) style, though style terms from the arts of painting and poetry do not switch over smoothly to apply to gardens, nor does the concept of genre play as important a role as with gardening's two sisters.

Turning to individual style, we see that gardens again present special problems. To identify the style of a given artist, a number of his works must be compared in order to distinguish characteristic traits from adventitious ones. Yet very few eighteenth-century gardens survive, and those that do were often worked successively by a number of garden designers. In fact, discussions of early eighteenth-century gardens are often taken up with disputes about just who had a hand in them. The careers of Charles Bridgeman, Stephen Switzer, and William Kent are hard to track. Moreover, many amateurs had a hand in designing their own and one another's estates. The circle comprising Pope and his friends-Vanbrugh, Lord Cobham, the Earl of Bathurst, Ralph Allen, and so on-contained many amateur gardeners. Perhaps we can never get clear on their tangled contributions to various estates.

Think how different our concept of literary style would be if poems were more like gardens. Suppose poets tended to rewrite their predecessors' compositions rather than create original works, or at the very least felt free to append new verses in a different style to other poets' poems. Suppose, too, that poems tended to alter once written. That is, suppose that poems, once penned, were not fixed, but rather the words on the page gradually changed and new words often appeared. If poetry resembled gardening in these respects, then we would be much less able to track a poet's individual style. A change comes with the advent of Capability Brown; here we have a gardenist who developed a distinctive style, so much so, in fact, that he was maligned as unimaginative, but also widely imitated. I shall discuss his career and the responses his gardens evoked in chapter 6. Humphry Repton, whose gardens were associated with Brown's and subsumed under the label "picturesque," may not have created designs as immediately recognizable as Brown's. But his famous Red Books-volumes he prepared while consulting about each estate, each containing drawings of the estate as it looked at the start and transparent over leaves showing proposed improvements-give him a signature of sorts as well.