

PARADISE LOST
PARADISE REVISITED
PARADISE REVISED

“Try and penetrate with our limited means, the secrets of nature and you will find that, behind all the discernible concatenations, there remains something subtle, intangible, and inexplicable. Veneration for this force beyond anything that we can comprehend is my religion.”

Albert Einstein

spirituality and landscape, awareness, understanding of nature

The spiritual has been recognised as a component in nature, over millenia, as also has nature's healing and restorative quality. "Fresh air and exercise" have long been recommended as a way for many to feel better, physically and mentally.

The word nature is originally from the Indo-European *gene*, meaning to give birth or beget and latterly, from the Latin *natura*, meaning essential qualities, or innate disposition. The word nature is also linked to the word nation which describes a people from the same land, who, as a result, might share similar characteristics. In this way, the landscape of ones birthplace has been thought to form ones geographical identity and ones being and development are tied to the effects of landscape and is the soil out of which we are formed, both materially and spiritually. We speak of "our nature" when describing our character and/or personality.

"the land and our bodies with the same root syllable.....The soil, the water, the air, and all the other life forms contribute parts to be our flesh"

Indigenous people of the Syilx Okanagan Nation

In addition, the words hail, health, hallow, and heal are all descended from Old English *hal* and *halig*, which both ultimately derive from a related Proto-Germanic root *hailaz*; while holy descends from its adjectival form *hailagaz* meaning holy and/or whole. Modern German makes the relationship is even clearer: it has *heil* meaning whole, unhurt, in one piece and *heilig* meaning holy, sacred thing and/or saint. According to Tacitus, the religion of the Germani centered closely around the practice of divination to know the will of the gods. Such ceremonies were usually accompanied by a whole, unblemished, healthy, blood sacrifice. It seems likely, then, that *hal* and its roots originated as a word referring to this oracular practice. It may be safe then to assume a close connection in the mind of early populations between the natural and supernatural. The gap between the two concepts has widened over the course of centuries, as the ideas of physical well-being and religious practice became less and less

associated with one another. However, contemporary religious usage of the phrase "to make whole", still refers in the Christian Bible, not only to physical healing, but also to spiritual salvation.

Additionally, sanctify and sanction from the Latin *sanctio* means to set apart by law or decree; this noun is related to the Latin verb *sancire* which means to render sacred or inviolable by a religious act. The word sanctuary has its roots in the Greek word *asylon*, refuge or fenced territory. The word garden has its roots in Old English word *geard* meaning a yard, or enclosure. The Norman French *gardin*, later becoming *jardin*, means enclosure and the Frankish word *gardo* means an enclosure or fenced area. Again, the *Latin* *sanus* means sound mind, sound or healthy and is the root of our sanitorium and sane. The word *psyche* originally meaning soul in Ancient Greek was used, in the twentieth century, in the word psychology at the creation or commencement of that science.

Furthermore, from Galen in Ancient Greece to late-medieval times, herbs and plants from medicinal gardens were the only source of medical treatment. Hildegard of Bingen's *Physica* describes 230 plants useful for healing purposes and the Greek word *physis* can be considered as the equivalent of the Latin *natura*.

This is more evidence that there has seemed to be a definite relationship between holiness, healing, salvation, sanctity, health, sprouting and growing - all as found in natural landscapes and gardens. The spiritual might even essentially mean, from a materialist perspective, optimum well-being and health. If health, both physical and mental, is optimum, then awareness, comprehension of and connection to the inexplicable at the foundation of nature is made more possible according to the quote by Einstein above. The word religion itself meaning to "re-link or re-tie". If physical health is lacking, then mental health could be possibly enhanced by the emotional work of overcoming physical disability; much as hearing is accentuated when visual acuity is lost.

This relationship between belief, nature and health is by no measure fanciful as placebo studies show how the body responds with real, measurable chemical change, such as the release of opioids and hormones,

to belief and expectation. As we have receptors for such drugs and hormones, these chemicals must have been endogenous, having evolved over eons and can therefore also now be produced endogenously - in response to beauty or excellence in belief and nature.

There has also, in the mythology of most cultures, often been thought a relationship between "heaven and earth". The gods were thought to reside in what were thought to be sacred environments, and these were found, often, where there existed extraordinary landscape features. These were often mountain tops, encircled with clouds, thunder and lightening, which indicated sacredness and engendered feelings of awe and wonder. Other extraordinary and supernatural forms, such as isthmuses, lagoons, atolls, arches, ox-bow lakes and spits were valued. Artificial landscape features such as hills, cursuses and mounds, were actually manufactured by neolithic communities to complement ritual and demarcate sacredness. These manufactured landscape constructions took years, sometimes centuries and many generations to complete. Other landscape features such as unusual colour and form in rock formations, for example, the dolerite bluestone found in the Preseli Hills, famously used in the construction of Stonehenge, and the haematite red stones at Skara Brae, were also deemed sufficiently unusual in landscape to have been ordained by the gods for a special and spiritual purpose. Such special rocks were included in stone circles and standing stones.

Myths developed to explain the nature and interactions, with human societies, of the inhabitants of these environments - the gods. In different cultures, sacredness in landscape and the siting of temples, initially stone circles, for religious offerings, was determined differently. The Celts, for example, valued liminal sites between water and earth; the ancient Greeks sited their temples according to the geometrical relationships of the surrounding landscape features. Religious offerings were often made at these sites, and their purpose may have been, not only to pacify the gods, but also to store, in the temples, any excess for redistribution. This redistribution satisfied the heavenly ideals of justice and provision for need in times of trouble. Sacred places have also therefore always been sanctuaries or places of safety, where one is near to and protected by the gods and their processes. Leaders in hunter gatherer societies have been,

and still are, people who had expertise in reading the environment and are therefore able to lead people to safe places or sanctuaries defined by the topology of the land, and/or extraordinary geological forms, wherein reside the gods, as previously mentioned.

These landscapes and the temples, or stone circles, associated with them, along with the rituals enacting the mythologies developed around the gods inhabiting them, worked together as an architecture of belief which has a basis in measured fact. In the present day, MRI scans show what you see, hear and experience at any moment changes not only your mood, but how your nervous, endocrine, and immune systems are working and so may even reduce mortality. Participants viewing nature scenes had the part of their brain, and oxytocin levels, associated with empathy and love, light up. It seems nature inspires feelings that connect us to each other and our environment. These real effects would have caused our ancestors to feel strengthened and supported in their endeavours by, as they understood it, their gods.



Grind o da Navir, Eshaness Coast, Unst, Shetland

This natural order existed before a very significant change occurred in our relationship with the landscape in about 12,000 BCE with the development of agriculture. A change in the availability and production of food had become necessary as a result of significant climate change in the region of Mesopotamia. This is where the Garden of Eden is thought by archeologists to have been sited - in Sumer between the rivers the Tigris and Euphrates. The development of agriculture must have originated from the desire by human beings, in the face of the climate threat, to control our own destiny - rather than rely, as had previously been done, on God's "munificent bounty". Once agriculture was producing the required excess, albeit through a very much increased workload; Eden, or an easy life in a heavenly garden, must have remained in the psyche as fulfilling all our needs, without our having to work. We might have felt expelled from this heavenly existence for our Eden-rejecting arrogance. Attempts to assuage the gods, for this arrogance and also to then ensure a good crop, meant religions were developed and in the ensuing Mesopotamian civilisations, temples were each built with the statue of a god, each pertaining to a landscape area, under each corner of the foundations. Palaces were sited along the tributaries of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates in this area, and these palaces enjoyed surrounding gardens affording safe and private places of recreation for kings and their retinues.

To the north and east of Mesopotamia, the classical Persian garden as a template developed around 550 BCE. The Persian word *paridaida* for a garden design spread to other cultures as the word *paradise*, *paradis*, *paradies* etc. These gardens must have been thought redolent of our vanished and bountiful Eden of memory, and were then deliberately designed to reproduce localised, and mythologised, ideas of heaven. The irrigating ditches - straight lines being the most economic route for water - became stone-lined water channels defining geometrically laid out space into clearly defined quarters. The gardens were a metaphor for the divine order and protection of those who do good and were planted with cypress, pomegranate, cherry trees, and flowers, including the lily and rose. Walking, eating and other social and spiritual activities would take place in garden pavilions, which caught the breezes and offered protection from the sun. A portable version of these heavens is obtained in plan in the

Persian carpet where a deliberate error is woven into the carpet to show that, although the carpet design hints at heavenly perfection, earthly perfection is, sadly, not possible.



Carpet made by Ghiyâth-ud-Din Jâmi, wool, cotton and silk, 1542–1543, Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan

daosim and zen, landscape as paradise

In the same period, around 550 BCE, that the classical Persian garden was developing, gardens in China were being designed not to bend the natural world to the human idea of order, as in Persian designs, but to create a space in which the elements of nature are brought together as a representation of the larger, natural, and irregular world. These gardens display miniaturized versions of mountains and lakeside landscapes while symbolically representing the natural order of creation. The emphasis laid upon landscape was grounded in Daoism and its traditional religious beliefs, which included love of nature and the principle of emptiness, as well as the discovery of the underlying patterns and principles that cause all social and natural phenomena.

Much of Daoist philosophy centers on the cyclical continuity of the natural world and its contrast to the linear, logical and goal-oriented actions of human beings. Dao is "the source of all being, in which life and death are the same" and is usually described as similar to the elements of nature, and in particular - water. Like water it is undifferentiated, endlessly self-replenishing, soft and quiet but immensely powerful and impassively generous. It can be thought of as the flow of the universe and is related to the idea of qi, the essential energy of action and existence. It is a non-dualistic principle - and is the greater whole from which all the individual elements of the Universe derive. It's commonly expressed in the relationship between wu (void or emptiness) and yinyang (the natural, dynamic balance between opposites), leading to its central principle of wu wei (inaction or inaction). The object of spiritual practice is to "become one with the Dao" or to harmonize one's will with nature to achieve "effortless action" (wu wei). This involves forgetfulness and self-cultivation with meditative and moral practices to purify the soul.

To better pursue Daoist belief, pilgrimages were made into specific mountains in China to seek medicinal, healing herbs and to connect to the immortals who, it was thought, lived there. Daoists believed that everything was filled with dao and that no fundamental conflict existed

between humans and nature which were both part of the same substance or spirit.

"Everything that is, is God"

George Frederick Handel



Wu Li's "Whiling Away the Summer," 1679, ink on paper

Dao's literal meanings include way, path, road, and course and the rules of natural life were understood to make human flourishing; so communing with nature was early recognised as beneficial to our health.

Daoist ideas about well-being and nature have been found, in many contemporary studies, to have significant medical validity. It has been scientifically measured that time in nature does indeed have a positive effect on physiology, affect and attention. Walking in nature decreases biological and self-perceived stress, measured by significant decrease in

heart rate, cortisol levels, blood pressure, and sympathetic nervous system activity. A significant increase in parasympathetic nervous system activity was found. In testing, reductions were found in salivary cortisol and alpha-amylase concentrations, two bio-markers of physiological stress. The effects on the olfactory senses by flower and plant scent, and on the aural senses by bird song has been shown to reduce prevalence of depression, anxiety, and stress. Well-being became significantly higher with two hours or more engagement in nature, peaking at four - five hours per week with no further gain after that time period.

In experiments called "Profile of Mood States" and "State Trait Anxiety Inventory", testing by questionnaire showed significant decrease in tension and anxiety, anger and hostility, fatigue and inertia, depression and dejection, confusion and bewilderment. An increase in vigor and activity, as well as self-reported feelings of calm, comfort, refreshment, comfort and restoration was shown as a result of exposure to nature.

Traditional Japanese forest bathing, *shinrin-yoku*, has, through recent experiments, been positively associated with human immune function. The mean values of white blood cells (which play a major role in the immune system) and white blood cell activity were higher on forest bathing days compared with control days.

Studies have shown that time in nature is not a proxy for physical activity, because various psycho-physiological benefits can be gained from merely sitting passively in natural settings. Moreover, physical activity conducted in nature may be more beneficial than in other locations.

Technical advances allow the use of smartphones equipped with ecological momentary assessment applications to track location, physical activity, and mood for consecutive days. Positive associations were found in nature contact. Increases in feeling happy, restored or relaxed were logged within ten minutes of exposure to natural outdoor environments.

A seminal study investigated recovery after surgery on patients with and without a view of a natural setting from their beds. Patients with a view of a natural setting had shorter hospital stays, received fewer negative

evaluations in their hospital charts, and took fewer analgesics than those with a view of a blank wall.

Such medical knowledge was more intuitively known in Iron Age China, and the cognicenti of that period began appreciating the rejuvenating and healing powers of both being in, and looking at, the natural landscape. Landscape painting became an art associated with the gentry class and the purpose of these monochromatic and sparse paintings was not to reproduce the appearance of nature exactly but rather to grasp an emotion or atmosphere, as if catching the "rhythm" of nature. Gardens became intimate spaces for reflective meditation and scholars, disheartened with political life, withdrew from society and spent their days there in discussion of Daoist philosophy and the arts.

Daoist philosophy in China became in Japan, Zen Buddhism. In the seventh century, Japanese gardens occupied, in a traditional palace format, approximately an acre only so that designers were forced to compress ideas within a limited space, and herein lay the form of Japanese gardens for centuries. These gardens "attempted to compress the sensory qualities of the natural world".

At the centre of these gardens was usually a large pond referred to poetically as *umi* (sea) and fed by a winding stream. The pond contained a central island reached by arched, lacquered bridges and may also have contained representations of the Isles of the Blessed. These Isles of the Blessed were located somewhere off the coast of east Asia and, according to Daoist belief, were the home of the immortals. These Zen gardens were also seen as the perfect backdrop to such refined and aristocratic pastimes as boating excursions, poetic rambles, and musical extravaganzas amid sumptuous beauty and tranquillity. They were known as *jōdo-teien* (paradise gardens).

Zen gardens are designed "to express the highest truths of religion and philosophy precisely as other civilisations have made use of the arts of literature and philosophy". As spaces for self-reflection, connection with one's inner self and reconnection with nature, Zen gardens were usually

part of a temple's grounds, supporting the monks during meditation and spiritual enhancement. These stone gardens are really only meant to be enjoyed from a particular angle, from which this view of heavenly perfection was disrupted by a single deliberate error. This error was to remind the spectator, as in the Persian carpets above, of the human inability to reproduce absolutely, a paradise on earth.

the english landscape garden, spirituality and paradise

Daoist and Zen Buddhist ideas were first transported from China and Japan, via Dutch translations of texts, to England, by the Jesuits in the sixteenth century who at the time were making an effort to "convert" the East to Christianity. Their thought was that the spiritual message of Jesus was not bound by geography but intended for all to aid discernment of the will of God. To be more effective in their mission they were instructed to make accommodation to those to whom they ministered.

"Make yourselves loved by your humility and charity, becoming all things to all men"

Letter from Saint Ignatius 1555

The effort to conform to ministered people's customs and ways of understanding became known as inculturation. Efficiency dictated that the Jesuits exert their influence on those "from whom we can expect greater fruit". This meant in practice those in "high position through learning or possession", so the Jesuits interacted mainly with the gentry or governing class. These people had access to the Emperor who was considered to be the link between heaven and earth, and to his courts with their Daoist gardens. To inculturate, the Jesuits dressed in the manner of the Chinese ruling class where every detail of dress signified status. Confucian and Daoist philosophy was studied and translated into Latin. The Jesuits became "Chinese to win China for Christ" and although linguistic and conceptual analogues to Christian doctrine were sought; inevitably,

Chinese ideas produced compelling counter arguments. For instance, the sacred and the mundane are not distinct in classical Chinese; Tian

(heaven) does not transcend the world - it encompasses the human world as well as the natural environment. When Leibniz, the German philosopher, later visited China, he professed his desire for reverse missionary work so that the West might learn from such Chinese ideas, as had done the Jesuits.

It was in this spirit that, in 1685, the English writer, formerly a diplomat at The Hague, Sir William Temple, wrote an essay "Upon the garden of Epicurus", which contrasted the principal contemporaneous European garden style of symmetrical and formal gardens, whose origins had been architectural, with asymmetrical compositions from China whose origins were from nature. For these he introduced the term *sharawadgi*, meaning irregularity. He noted that Chinese gardens avoided formal rows of trees and flower beds, and instead placed trees, plants, and other garden features in irregular ways to create beautiful and harmonious compositions. In England, as a result of these imported Daoist ideas from China, the meticulously ordered and rigidly symmetrical Tudor garden, became a more expansive and less-structured style for which French observers coined the term *Jardin Anglo-Chinois*. Temples and gazebos were placed around the gardens to allow for social pursuits and protection from rain. Respect for nature as beneficial to health encouraged country walking as a new pastime befitting the English upper classes.

These *Jardins Anglo-Chinois*, through Daoist ideas, were communicative of a natural and paradisaical existence as also existed in memory of the pre-agrarian in the Christian Eden. These Chinese imported ideas were enhanced further in England by the British aristocratic literati and illuminati of the period returning from their Grand Tour in Italy. These gentlemen had studied classical authors such as Pliny, who was a naturalist, natural philosopher and writer of *Natural History*. Also studied were Plutarch and Ovid, who wrote *The Act of Love* which featured a garden, used metaphorically. Possibly as a result of their literary journeys, the Grand Tourists became interested in collecting paintings by Claude

Lorrain and Nicholas Poussin, both painters who had lived in Rome in the early 1600s, and had also studied the ancient remains and ideas. Their paintings created populated images of paradise which had been described as Arcadia and the Elysian Fields by the ancient classical writers.

Arcadia, as described in Claude and Poussin paintings, derives from an ancient Greek province which had developed into a poetic byword for an idyllic vision of unspoiled wilderness with bountiful natural splendor; Arcadia was also sometimes referred to as *The Garden*. Feelings evoked in art about arcadia are: "vespertinal mixture of sadness and tranquility", a "sylvan realm far removed from the realities" - and now unattainable. It was one version of paradise, though only in the sense of being the abode of supernatural entities, not as an afterlife for deceased mortals. For an afterlife accessible to mortals, there existed, in classical literature, Elysium, or the Elysian Fields. This was another conception of the afterlife that



Claude Lorrain, Easter Morning 1681

developed over time and which could only be entered by those chosen by the gods - the righteous, and the heroic. They would remain in Elysium after death, to live a blessed and happy afterlife. It was the reward waiting for those living a righteous life.

"Here is the Elysian Field, the abode of the blessed, of which Homer sang".

Plutarch, Life of Sertorius, VIII, 2

Through the depiction of such allegorical settings, Claude and Poussin attempted to recreate ancient myth and history in their works. The idea of a past paradise was heightened by the actual ancient Roman Imperial ruins within the Roman Campagna, which themselves also gave the impression that there had actually existed in the past, an ideal, and lost, civilisation.

From ancient literature, and poems from the Renaissance, sprung the image that this actual past was also a place of untouched nature, where shepherds met and could rest in glades next to rippling water springs. The two painters' dreamy landscapes were often about life, death, eroticism and the meaning of existence beyond civilization. The figures in the paintings wore "pastoral dress", the seventeenth century idea of ancient dress. These classical ideal landscape paintings sought to present a view of nature more beautiful, heavenly and harmonious than nature itself. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, compositional formulae using elements like the repoussoir (spatial contrast by illusion) were evolved, notably by Poussin and Claude, and two-point perspective developed, allowing larger paintings than previously.

"It was Claude who first opened people's eyes to the sublime beauty of nature, and for nearly a century after his death people used to judge a piece of real scenery according to his standards,"

Ernst Gombrich - The Story of Art

william kent

English aristocrats returning from their Italian Grand Tour had been impressed by Claude and Poussin's paintings and the classical ideals and mythologies which had inspired them, and sought to amend and extend their estates and gardens to include these ideas. The earliest gardens in the new style of Jardins Anglo-Chinois were pioneered by William Kent (1685 - 1748). This polymath was architect, painter, sculptor, furniture designer, interior decorator, metal-worker, book illustrator, theatrical designer, costumier and landscape gardener. He had acted, when in Rome (1709 - 1719), as a "teacheroni" to The Grand Tourists, many of whom later became his patrons.

Kent's most influential patron was Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington, who was known as "Apollo of the Arts". The Earl owned a large country estate, had had a classical education, was a patron of the arts, and had taken the Grand Tour to Italy, where he had seen many Roman ruins and Italian landscapes for himself. Lord Burlington, through *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, believed that Roman and Greek gardens were largely informal affairs, with nature ruled by God. Horace and Pliny had described in their writings their own gardens, with alleys shaded by trees, parterres, topiary, and fountains, such also as at the Emperor Hadrian's Villa Adriana in Tivoli. Pliny had theorised that there was "nature unadorned, gardens made by art, and gardens made by art but looking as if made by nature". Through his classical studies, the conviction and indeed, mission, grew in Lord Burlington that the Roman period had been the high point to which England should return, and perhaps even surpass. Lord Burlington regarded the prevailing English Gothic style as barbaric in comparison and began studying drawings by Inigo Jones and Palladio to create a building in which to house his art collection at Chiswick.

There, Burlington employed Kent to design, in collaboration, the gardens with many of the ideas Kent had honed in house interiors. A key Kentian principle is "stacking" elements of ornamentation one on top of the other – chairs, sofas or beds lead on and up to gilded mirrors and picture frames, to doorcases, ceiling paintings and chandeliers. In this way, Kent

had developed the habit of drawing “elevations” of his furniture designs. As he used this idea of verticality in his exterior design, one has a sense that statues, lawns, groves of trees, buildings, seats and more distant elements are piled one on top of the other, with the view foreshortened. In the same way he used the interior spatial idea of the enfilade – a succession of connecting rooms – in garden spaces, creating visual links horizontally between them while also manipulating the visitor’s sense of rhythm. He was a master at manipulating outdoor space to create intense and distinctive garden episodes, as well as an underlying rhythm that links them together.

"He leapt the fence, and saw that all nature was a garden. Mahomet imagined an Elysium; Kent created many."

Horace Walpole

Kent also had an understanding of gardens seen as two dimensional tableaux or vignettes, making harmonious framed compositions when viewed from the house. As Kent was also a theatrical designer, having studied masque at the court of James I, he was skilled in manipulating scene flats and light effects to create two dimensional and spatial illusions of other fantastical, and seemingly paradisaical, worlds.

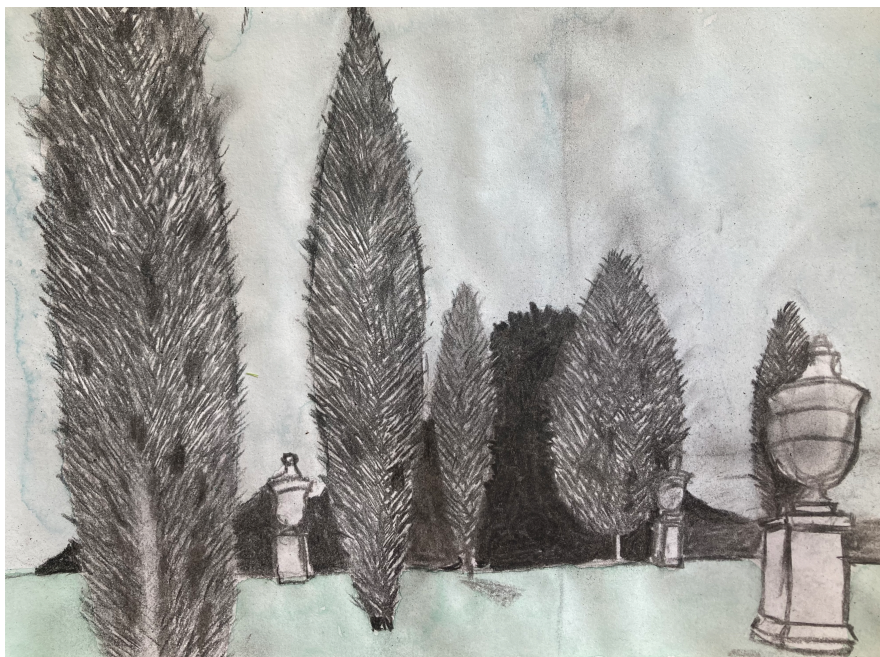
the first english landscape garden at chiswick

The gardens at Chiswick were created around the villa between 1726 and 1729; they were intended to be an idealized view of nature, beneficial to health and well-being, and representing heavenly harmony and order.

The communication of heavenly harmony and order was amplified by quite extensive statuary and fabriques employed in the sixteen acre gardens. These constructions, by the liberal display of classical references, aided the spectator in understanding and, it was hoped, experiencing the classical gods, their habitations, behaviours and powers.

In planning the gardens, Burlington and Kent were anxious that there should be vistas three ways from the villa. One was the forecourt, to the south, the northern one had required the removal of some trees from the Grove, which was, and is, a symmetrically planned arrangement of trees. The western vista from the house, sloped down to the lake. This vista was flanked on its south side by a labyrinth (now lost).

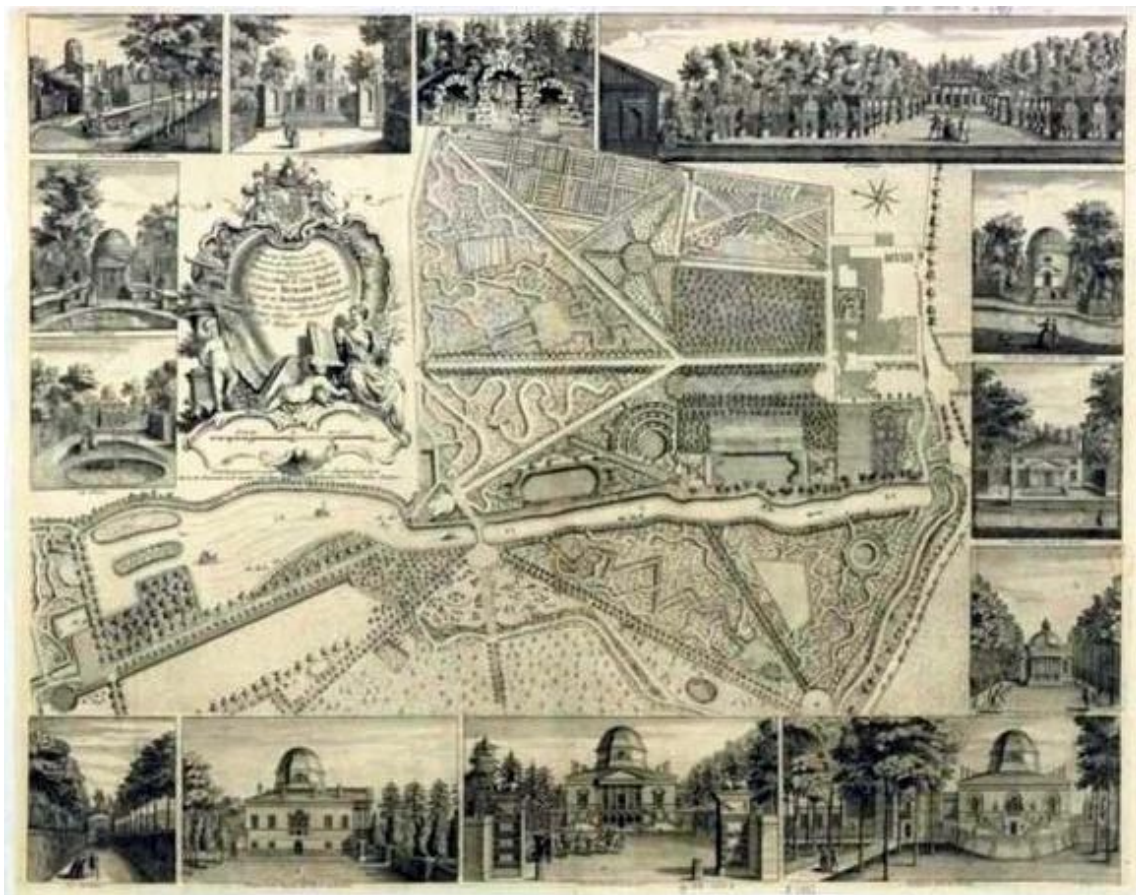
In populating the gardens, they built an Ionic Temple, circular in form and derived from either the Pantheon or possibly from the Temple of Romulus in Rome. Immediately in front of the Ionic Temple lay a circular pool of water with a small obelisk positioned in its centre, around the base of which were three concentric rings of raised grass conforming originally to a 3:4:5 ratio. Also carefully sited around the gardens were the Bagnio, a Pagan Temple, Two Deer Houses and a Rustic House. The Bagnio, was placed at the end of the left-hand alley from the patte d'oie (goose foot on plan). It no longer exists, having been demolished in 1780s, but had had a bath house in the basement. The two Deer Houses, of which one remains, featured pyramidal roofs and Vitruvian doors, coming directly from Palladio's woodcuts in his *Quattro libri dell'architettura* of 1570. Kent added a cascade inspired by the upper cascade of the gardens of the Villa Aldobrandini, and added a flower garden, an orangery, an orchard, and an aviary (with owl). There also existed a ha-ha, bowling greens, winding walks and the serpentine lake.



Sally Redway, *View towards lake from House*, Charcoal 2023

Burlington was strategic in his deployment of statues, which included those of a Borghese gladiator; a Venus de' Medici; Romulus and Remus' wolf; a goat which symbolised Capricorn, the birth sign of the Emperor Augustus. A boar was located at the rear of the villa to recall the Calydonian boar hunt in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. On the forecourt to the villa were several *term* statues that derive their forms from Terminus, the Roman god of distance and space. At the rear of the villa were positioned *herm* statues deriving from the Greek god Hermes, the patron of travellers. A semi-circular theatre of hedges known as an *exedra* featured the figures of Horace, Homer, Virgil, and Socrates. Beyond the *exedra* in the gardens lies an area known as the 'Orange Tree Garden', producing oranges as strange foreign, and colourful, fruit.

Kent's design for the cascade at the south end of the garden suggested the source of a mighty watercourse but it was a theatrical illusion, because the "river" actually flowed the other way. Kent adhered to the



John Rocque, *Map of London*, 1746

view that the canal/lake should not necessarily be absolutely straight, but should serpentinely "follow Nature". The spoil from the canal/lake was placed along the Burlington Lane boundary and is today's Terrace, which follows the route from the Cascade to the Burlington Lane gate.

In tune with the approaching Enlightenment, temporal as well as spiritual powers, were celebrated in these gardens. Present in the exedra were also statues of the leaders Lucius Verus and Lycurgus whose political message of democracy and anti-tyranny underlined the freedom made evident in the garden's rejection of rigid geometry and the allowance of unrestrained natural forms and arrangements. Chiswick House has also been linked with Freemasonry, and is believed by some scholars to have functioned as a private Masonic Lodge.

The garden at Chiswick House set the pattern for what later became known as the English Landscape Garden, which has been thought by some to be England's most valued contribution to global arts. A leisurely stroll through such a garden, encountering sculptural and architectural references to psychological, and spiritual dramas would have left the spectator spiritually refreshed by such heavenly, poetical ideas and ideals, and emotionally healed by the real health giving effects of nature. It would have been (and is) a life-enhancing experience.

the intervening english landscape gardens

Throughout the eighteenth and into the early nineteenth century, the English Landscape Garden expanded and contracted, in scale and ambition, in parallel with the increasing wealth and population of Imperial Britain.

At the zenith of the movement, heavenly realms were further alluded to in these aristocratic gardens by their seamless melting into the surrounding landscape by the prodigious use of the ha-ha. The lord's land now seemed to extend in space with no limits - into the spatial eternal.



Capability Brown, View from Terrace at Chatsworth, 1760 - 1764

humphry repton

The eventual demise of the formal English Landscape Garden began with the gardener who had first coined the phrase - this was Humphry Repton (1752 - 1818). Its final departure was due to the tripling in population and consequent diminished space, caused by the industrial revolution.

‘as a landscape designer I have never been superseded by a more successful rival. My own profession, like myself, was becoming extinct.’

Humphry Repton

Repton was a skilled artist, writer, designer, actor, musician, playwright, poet and essayist with some elementary surveying. He combined these skills to become a "landscape gardener". With his painterly and theatrical eye, he created sketches of idealised final designs which he promoted to his clients in bound Red Books.

These contained his observations on the present state of a client's property and images of how it might be improved and Repton, in these Red Books, often recalled walks and conversations with the owner of the house during his site visits. A number of watercolor illustrations would accompany the text, many of which had added hinged or sliding flaps which could be manouvred into place, making possible a comparison of before-and-after views of the same scene.

The transformation of a dull today to a potentially exciting tomorrow simply by lifting a paper flap was on a par with the lifting of a curtain on stage to reveal a new scene. Understanding as he did the conventions of theatre, Repton, as had Kent earlier, knew the power of raising a curtain or changing the scenery.

On occasions when Repton laid out grounds from scratch, it was on a more modest scale than the grand gardens of the previous decades. To compensate for reduced areas in his gardens, he contrived wiggling approach drives and lodges to enhance impressions of size and importance, and even introduced monogrammed milestones along the route, communicating prestige around some of his estates. Repton cut vistas through to distant village church towers and monuments, now borrowing them to seem part of the designed landscape rather than going to the expense of building eye-catchers anew (coincidentally a concept common in East Asian gardening).

Due to the impracticality of the now fashionable picturesque garden ideas, which introduced more intimacy and variety than had been the style in previous decades, Repton compromised between rugged scenery and convenience. However, as his career progressed Repton drew more and more on picturesque ideas and re-introduced formal terraces, parterres, balustrades, trellis work and flower gardens around the house in a way that became more common practice in the nineteenth century "gardenesque" style loved by the Victorians. Where buildings played an important part in Repton's landscapes, he worked in tandem with architects and follies were erected, 'ruins' constructed, shell-lined grottoes and caves became popular.

During Repton's lifetime the choice of garden plants grew exponentially with new introductions from around the world. Ideas about planting schemes moved on from showcasing individual specimens to massing plants and shrubs for their colours and textures.

Alongside the ideas contained within his Red Books, Repton published three books to outline his approach to landscape gardening: *Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening* (1795), *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1803) and *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1816), *An Inquiry into the Changes of Taste in Landscape Gardening, with some Observations on its Theory and Practice*, 1806.

the last english landscape garden at kenwood

The first Kenwood House was originally built in 1616, changing hands several times before becoming the seat of 1st Earl of Mansfield in 1764. In 1793 the 2nd Earl commissioned Humphry Repton to advise on changes to the land surrounding the house. Repton's first step was to have a new road built, diverting Hampstead Lane away from the forecourt, to provide the house with more privacy and to allow a longer, more impressive drive to be built between the house and road.

Repton created a series of meandering paths through the woodland estate of 112 acres to present all its aspects to their best advantage. He broke up the wide sweeping views in the parkland by planting groves of trees for variety and contrast. A walled forecourt was removed, creating a Half Moon Lawn in front of the house to show off its elegant porticoed frontage designed by Robert Adam.

He also converted the kitchen garden to the west of the house into an intricate flower garden. This "winter garden and parterre for flowers" would form the view from new rooms that he had recommended in his proposed changes to the house. Repton's other suggested changes

included new locations for the farm buildings, kitchen garden and stables. He proposed extending the pleasure ground to the rear of the house, and adding a series of walks.

The Sham Bridge was originally built in 1781, but Repton recommended its removal, believing that the use of a façade was 'beneath the dignity of Kenwood'. Instead he recommended a new bridge between two of the ponds to create the appearance of a one continuous lake but his suggestion was ignored. The changes ultimately adopted at Kenwood were mainly only those outlined in the first section of his Red Book and the sham bridge remained. As in many of Repton's Red Books, his proposals included an appraisal of the "Character and Situation" of Kenwood. He was critical of its close proximity to London, condemning it as a villa or mansion rather than a grand country estate.



Sally Redway View towards Sham Bridge at Kenwood, 2023

Repton's proposals also included planting strategically placed trees to hide the buildings at Kentish Town and also to create the impression that the valley sweeping down from Kenwood House leads directly towards the City of London, which appears as a breathtaking view.



Sally Redway View towards The Lake at Kenwood, 2023

When visiting Kenwood today, Repton's changes can clearly be seen in the design of the sweeping approach drives, the location of the kitchen garden to the north of the house, the stables, the flower garden to the west of the house and the large expanse of lawn in the pleasure grounds which is the large, grassed area at the rear of the house which slopes down to the ponds. The grounds, with their winding paths, trees and flower garden still remain today, pretty much unchanged.

the health benefits of landscaped gardens

Humans have evolved into what they are today after the passage of six to seven million years. Defining the beginning of urbanization with the rise of the industrial revolution, less than 0.01% of our species' history has been spent in modern surroundings. Humans have therefore spent over 99.99% of their time living in the natural environment for which our physiological functions are adapted. The “biophilia hypothesis” posits that humans have evolved with nature to have an affinity for nature.

The highly urbanized and artificial setting that we now inhabit is thought to be a contributing cause of the “stress state” in modern people and widespread use of computers has added the term “technostress”. Unlike “specific effects” that are typically anticipated from pharmacological treatments, nature therapy seeks to improve immune functions, prevent illnesses, and maintain and promote health through a state of relaxation.

Through experience, we are all aware of the physiologically relaxing effects of exposure to the scent of flowers, such as roses and lavender, which have been thought to promote sleep, since Elizabethan times. Olfactory stimulation by essential oils from roses and orange zest has been shown in studies to decrease oxygenated hemoglobin levels in the right prefrontal cortex, and exposure to cypress wood oils showed that white blood cell activity was increased and immune functions had improved.

Two major theories have provided insight into the mechanisms through which spending time in nature might affect human health. Attention Restoration Theory posits that the mental fatigue associated with modern life is associated with a depleted capacity to direct attention - due to its over exertion. According to this theory, spending time in natural environments enables people to overcome this mental fatigue by a relaxed and diffuse imbibing of the garden environment, which restores the capacity to direct attention. The Stress Reduction Theory describes how spending time in nature might influence feelings or emotions by activating the parasympathetic nervous system which reduces stress and autonomic arousal because of people's innate connection to the natural world through biophilia.

Garden health benefits can also be re-lived, independent of those gained in situ. Thus, an exposure in this context may be considered as the time spent in situ. Research considering the quality of the natural environment in terms of plant richness and bio-diversity has shown high quality health benefits. Alongside the calming effects of the visual, aural and olfactory sense input, the built enclosure of these gardens allows, vulnerable people and in particular women, to feel safe from physical harm and sexual harassment. Feeling safe is a very large component in relaxation.

When strolling around a beautifully landscaped garden, the aesthetic design and composition of the forms and shapes also act upon the emotions to encourage health and connection. In the classical tradition, triangular or pyramidal compositions balance and harmonise by arranging the figures into a stable overall geometric structure. In other compositions, the balancing of weight of emphasis in a composition through strength of colour and size of form is also calming. It has also been shown that the use of muted, analogous colors with just a hint of contrasting color, to add interest, has a calming effect. A landscape view of analogous greens in adjoining trees and bushes, with a dash of bright colour from flowers creates just such an effect. The value of each color and color combination can trigger an emotional response in the viewer. and when used as a foundational tool affect mood and theme in a composition. Research has found that art can activate reward pathways in the brain, reduce stress, lower anxiety levels and improve mood.

Increasing neuroscientific evidence shows that brain function is enhanced by the impact of art on brain wave patterns, emotions, and the nervous system. Serotonin levels are raised when observing art, it is this that stimulates the creation of new neural pathways and ways of thinking. In a recent study participants underwent brain scans while being shown images of paintings by major artists. It was found that when people viewed the art they thought was most beautiful, blood flow increased by as much as 10% to the region of the brain associated with pleasure — equivalent to looking at a love. It's also thought that the utilization of

intuitive analysis, expressivity, and embodied cognition in either making or viewing art affects the brain's plasticity. Furthermore, the resolution of conflict of form, colour or theme in a design or view has a cathartic effect which aids resolution in a spectator's internal psychological conflict.

As studies suggest that sustainable public health benefits can be achieved in populations exposed to the greenest environments, and increased access to green space results in the lowest levels of health inequality related to income deprivation; access to green space might be an important factor in reducing socio-economic health disparities.

Moreover, three quarters of the human population have at some point felt so stressed that they felt overwhelmed or unable to cope, so nature therapy could play an increasingly important role in preventive medicine in the future.

Additionally, at a time of devastating environmental threats, developing a stronger, mutually supportive relationship between people and the environment will be critical, and researchers have begun to discuss access to nature in a public health and epidemiology context.

the english landscape garden revisited

The ideas and aesthetic of the English Landscape Garden were recycled in the municipal park movement which began in the 1830s, around the time of Humphry Repton's death.

The industrial revolution had caused a massive influx of people from the countryside into the towns to operate new mechanical means of production. Concern grew at conditions in industrial towns and the stark contrast between the bucolic imagery of the British countryside and its impoverished, urban, factory-riddled landscapes. As a solution to the lack of opportunities afforded to the majority of urban citizens, "rational recreation" was seen as providing social, educational and moral improvement. Britain needed open spaces and public walks; if this did

not happen, then physical health and, perhaps more importantly, social morality would disintegrate.

Bringing the countryside into the city in the form of urban green spaces was seen as one solution; aristocratic and Royal land could be transformed into parks and the government spent large amounts of money in their purchase. In London, for example, the late 1830s and early 1840s, saw the creation of Hyde Park, St James's Park, Kensington Gardens, Green Park, Regent's Park and Victoria Park. This land, having been part of aristocratic estates retained some of the qualities and features of the English Landscape Garden.



Sally Redway, Queen Charlotte's Temple in Hyde Park, 2023

Public parks were to be spatial representations of an "ideal and rational society, combining the order and civility of the polite urban community with the managed beauty and spiritual resonance of the countryside". However, taking the place of the statuary and fabriques, bandstands, lidos, cafes, crazy golf and football pitches appeared as "facilities" and the spiritual experiences that had accompanied the built expressions of heavenly mythologies were somewhat lost.

the english landscape garden revived

To recapture well-being and/or spiritual nourishment, the physiological effects of three-dimensional images of nature have been studied as a convenient means to contact nature in our stress-laden society. It was found that exposure to realistic three dimensional images of nature decreased oxygenated hemoglobin levels in the right prefrontal cortex compared with two-dimensional images, showing the physiological relaxation effects of this form of visual stimulation. Using eye-tracking and wearable biomonitoring sensors to measure short-term physiological and cognitive responses to different biophilic indoor environments, consistent physiological and cognitive benefits were measured in virtual reality environments with diverse biophilic design features.

With a radical alteration in climate foreseen and beginning, it is the case that the English Landscape Garden, may not survive in its present form. However, given that psychological and physical health benefits can be shown to be obtained through nature as "built" in virtual reality; in the future, or now, everyone could be an aristocrat and own their extensive estates. They could commission designs for their land using contemporary ideas and knowledge so that it is a continuing possibility to venerate:

"The force that through the green fuse drives the flower"

Dylan Thomas