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The Reflection of Humanity in Flowers, Plants and Gardens From Medieval Times to Victorian England

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The Reflection of Humanity in Flowers, Plants and Gardens

From Medieval Times to Victorian England

Par Stella Rofi

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Sous la direction de Madame le Professeur Lawrence Gasquet

Picture: Redouté, Pierre-Joseph. *Rose centifolia folicea*, or *Rosier à cent feuilles foliacé*. 1824.

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Finally, I also wish to thank the person who introduced me to George Sand, the novels of whom inspired me the appreciation of nature.

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INTRODUCTION

Il y a des heures où je m'échappe de moi, où je vis dans une plante, où je me sens herbe, oiseau, cime d'arbre, nuage, eau courante, horizon, couleur, formes et sensations changeantes, mobiles, indéfinies ; des heures où je cours, où je vole, [...], où je brille avec les étoiles et les vers luisants, où je vis enfin dans tout ce qui est le milieu qui est comme une dilatation de mon être.[1]

- *George Sand*

Avid for conquest, humanity has always felt the need to domesticate and to dompt nature in order to draw the maximum profit of it since Antique Times. The first benefit from nature was of course related to the biological needs of surviving, drinking and eating; however the time came when the belligerent spirits of men used nature for their own pleasure only. Overtime, nature's power and immensity have fascinated and scared men at the same time, inspiring feelings they tried to recreate through human artefacts all along the course of history: gardens and representations of nature.

First created for utilitarian purposes during medieval times, gardens became in a long process a place of pleasure and contemplation where Men could transpose their character and their ideas. Thus, as Sylvie Hubac puts so well, as a "Miroir du monde, le jardin rend compte d'une manière de voir la nature, de la mettre en scène et de la penser." The mode of functioning of human thinking is indeed reflected in gardens as well as the different possible approaches towards nature:

> Du jardin des délices au jardin ouvrier, du jardin réel au jardin rêvé, cette parcelle de terre semble résumer l'histoire et l'univers, se posant comme le lieu de la vie par excellence où tout se mêle : la science et l'art, l'utile et l'agréable, l'infiniment petit et l'infiniment grand, le bien et le mal, l'ordre et le désordre, la vie et la mort. C'est surtout un espace qui dit beaucoup de nous.[2]

[1] Sand, George. *Impression et souvenirs*. Paris : Michel Lévy Frères, 1873, 8-9.
[2] Hubac, Sylvie in *« Jardins », Catalogue d'exposition*. Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2017, 9.

The *Oxford Dictionary of English* gives the two following definitions for the 'garden' entry: "A piece of ground adjoining a house, in which grass, flowers, and shrubs may be grown" and "Ornamental grounds laid out for public enjoyment and recreation". These definitions may seem reducing as the intention behind the representation of nature in the natural elements of the garden has deeply changed over the course of time. The evolution of the human representation of nature, on the aesthetic level as well as the ideological one, lined up with societal changes, progress of knowledge and the development of human sensibility and psychology.

Consequently, we can wonder how Men, seeking their lost humanity in nature, have found a way through the building of gardens and the symbolization of their natural elements such as flowers and plants to create a microcosm of nature at their image and at the image of the contemporary concerns of their society. European societies articulated around several cultural domains they managed to compare to the natural environment in which they were evolving. Man has managed to reflect the main poles of our humanity in a domesticated nature, such as the domains of political ideas, human sensibility and emotions and of course science and art which will be related to this natural context.

The first part of this master thesis will first give an overview of the historical evolution of approaches to nature and of gardens from medieval times to the Age of Enlightenment in Europe. Gardens will have to be considered in relation to the contemporary ideas of the era they belong to. This is through gardens – this miniature recreation of global flora – that we can notice the evolution of the relation between human beings and nature. Each society's way of thinking influences how gardens are conceived and is to be evidently found in landscape architecture, structure and organization. Thus, while medieval gardens were food stocks, the gardens that followed during the Renaissance took a different turn and became dedicated to pleasure and contemplation. Indeed, the first medieval enclosed gardens were rather built for utilitarian purposes at a time of difficult living conditions whereas the apparition of Renaissance Italian gardens marked the beginning of gardens as vehicles for the expression of power – mirroring a shift in concerns. The geometry designing the Italian gardens was articulated for the first time in *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, a book written by Francesco Colonna in 1499. In the book, he described a garden dedicated to Venus

– on the island of Cythera – entirely dominated by geometry: "Au milieu du parc, qui est circulaire, des buis taillés figuraient des géants casqués dont chaque main supportait une tour, également en buis." It seems that gardens have evolved overtime in parallel with the change of the conception of the world. For that matter, this relation between gardens and thoughts is recounted in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790), explaining the transmission of certain ideas made through the observation of the architecture of a garden:

> This latter [the garden] is nothing else than the ornamentation of the soil with a variety of those things (grasses, flowers, shrubs, trees, even ponds, hillocks, and dells) which nature presents to an observer, only arranged differently and in conformity with certain Ideas.[3]

Through the transition from the ordered nature of the lines of geometrical gardens to a picturesque landscape seemingly free from linear constraints, we notice the scientific and philosophical upheavals of the passage from medieval "obscurantism" to Renaissance refinement, from Humanism to the rational ideas of the Enlightenment and finally from a geometrical conception of the world to the celebration of the curved line.

The "de-geometrisation" of gardens culminated during the eighteenth century with the new aesthetics of the English garden. Although England obviously went through a time when the geometrising of nature was considered as the beauty ideal, the country rapidly distinguished itself by introducing natural elements and irregularities in the design of its gardens during the eighteenth century. Amongst the partisans of natural gardens, Edmund Burke was one of the first authors to bring about a critic of geometrical gardens and praise natural gardens. We will see that multiple factors are at the origin of this epistemological upheaval. When William Kent came back from his travel to Italy, he brought back an expertise and inspirations from ancient Italy and gardens in ruins. English landscape architects thus unexpectedly started to build fake ruins, temples and antique statues, the English landscape becoming consequently a true living painting inspiring painters and writers. This situation is at the origin of the creation of the famous expression of the "picturesque garden", a highly characteristic genre influenced by the paintings of Le Lorrain and Poussin, and defined for the first

[3] Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement* (1790). New York: Dover Philosophical Classics, 2005, 125.

time in 1748 by William Gilpin in his *Dialogue upon the gardens of the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Cobham, at Stowe in Buckinghamshire* as "that kind of beauty which would look well in a picture". Not only English gardens constituted a pictorial inspiration, as we will see, but they also became a place for poetic inspiration for poets such as Joseph Addison and Alexander Pope, who firmly defended the English style for its respect of the *genius loci* – the "spirit of the place". Pope turned the respect of the *genius loci* of gardens into one of the main characteristics of natural gardens and of the English landscape, as he wrote in his epistle:

To build, to plant, whatever you intend,
To rear the column, or the arch to bend,
To swell the terrace, or to sink the grot;
In all, let Nature never be forgot.
But treat the goddess like a modest fair,
Nor overdress, nor leave her wholly bare;
Let not each beauty ev'rywhere be spied,
Where half the skill is decently to hide.
He gains all points, who pleasingly confounds,
Surprises, varies, and conceals the bounds.

Consult the genius of the place in all;
That tells the waters or to rise, or fall;
Or helps th' ambitious hill the heav'ns to scale,
Or scoops in circling theatres the vale;
Calls in the country, catches opening glades,
Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades,
Now breaks, or now directs, th' intending lines;
Paints as you plant, and, as you work, designs.[4]

- Alexander Pope's Epistle IV to Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington

Here Alexander Pope explains that without respecting the *genius loci*, the creation of gardens becomes a matter of pride and ambition only. Respecting the environment onto which Men project their conception of the world is essential. The English garden becomes a theatre where scenes of human life take place and this is precisely the place where political concerns ingratiate themselves.

[4] Quoted in *The Genius of the Place: the English Landscape Garden 1620-1820*, anthology of texts first edited by John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988.

The association between the realisations of landscape design and political achievements is essentially rather traditional. Landscape architects and their clients – ruling classes and notably royalty – managed to seize the occasion of conveying their political ideas, and particularly for aristocrats, to settle the legitimacy of their power implicitly and explicitly. Through different instances of garden styles, we will study in this part how gardens reflected humanity in the sense that they were used as mirrors for political ideologies, thinking and display of nationalist tendencies. During the Renaissance, the Medici dynasty was particularly known for using their Italian gardens to display a show of their power and grandeur. This part will look at how this transposition of thoughts from Man to nature was perpetuated in the creation of geometrical French gardens, taking the epitome of the style – the gardens at Versailles. Far from being a trivial action, the building of adjoining gardens to the castle under the supervision of André Le Nôtre aligned perfectly with the absolute order ruling the Kingdom of France. Like the French court, formal gardens were organized around a central axis, the King and his power, and the entire domain became the recreation of a miniaturized kingdom of France. As Jean-Pierre Le Dantec explains, gardens in general are microcosms and Versailles was no exception to the rule: "Le domaine de Versailles ? Le microcosme d'un univers centré autour du Roi-Soleil.[5]" British gardens also revealed much about the politics of the country and the thinking of the eighteenth-century English man. We will question the role of the collapse of absolutism in favour of a more liberal regime, reflected in the progressive "de-geometrising" of the English garden. At a time when the French revolution had resulted in the decapitation of the King, the English authorities did not wish such tragic events in their own country. As a consequence, we may wonder whether the progressive introduction of "wild" elements in the English garden could have been then a means, through the beauty of a liberated nature, to prevent possible demands of more freedom. Additionally, the creation of landscape gardens based on the need to take distance from the French style constituted a highly politicized gesture. This distance put even more emphasis on the differences between French and British histories. This highly politicized move translated indeed a long-anchored rivalry between England and Great-Britain, as well as the race for progress reflected in multiple domains and particularly in the domestication of nature.

[5] Le Dantec, Jean-Pierre. *La Poétique des jardins*. Actes Sud, 2011, 15.

Therefore, gardens went as far as becoming the place for the expression of nationalist claims and national pride.

Beyond the political aspect of nature and gardens, the latter constituted also, since the Christianization of Europe, an evocation of a lost paradise that Man has endeavored to recreate. The allegorization of gardens and their natural elements such as plants and flowers has always allowed human beings to project their own emotions. In that sense, this part will study how the domain of emotions is reflected into gardens and nature in general. Thus we have to study first the transformation of the enclosed medieval garden from a utilitarian space to a highly symbolical place and progressively a real *topos* in painting and literature of the medieval era and of the following centuries. The enclosed garden is arranged to respond to a Christian world avid for symbols. Thus, the *hortus conclusus* is depicted as sheltering the Virgin Mary surrounded with different types of flowers symbolizing her admirable virtues. During the thirteenth century, a distinction is made between the Virgin Mary's *hortus conclusus* and the *hortus deliciarum*, its secular homologue, both of them remaining nonetheless suitable subjects for representation and allegorization. Medieval gardens evolve therefore on a dual symbolism of religion and profanity, pursuing two quests at the heart of human aspirations – the nostalgia of the paradise lost and the quest for the beloved one. The themes of the *hortus conclusus* and the *hortus deliciarum* have been very present in the history of painting as they allowed the use of natural and floral symbols to make the transient beauty of plants last eternally. The garden is in itself ephemeral but artists, with material means, make it eternal. As a propitious theme for interpretation, the garden of pleasure, or the orchard of lovers, and its representations in medieval literature turns into a web of symbolic natural elements which is up for the spectator to decipher. At that time, major works such as Guillaume De Lorris's long poem the *Romaunt of the Rose* (1225-1230) added even more to the symbolical dimension of gardens of flowers via a process of allegorization of human feelings. A symbolical web of nature, and more precisely of flowers, has been developing in the course of painting history, to the extent that each artist uses his or her own floral lexicon. The use of a floral language to communicate additional information to spectators goes through a period of high popularity during the nineteenth century, notably in Pre-Raphaelite art. This English art current, created in 1848 in response to Victorian rigid artistic

conventions, made great use of flowers as symbols, symbols that are to be found especially in the Pre-Raphaelite representations of the *hortus conclusus* and the *hortus deliciarum*, although the artists do not use any determined floral lexicon. It is only from beliefs, traditions and associations that the significations given to flowers form in art and in minds.

Celebrated all around the world, the cult of flowers reflects the quest for delicate beauty undertook by humanity. The flower represents a transience that makes it highly valuable as it mirrors the shortness of human life. In England, during the nineteenth century, a true floral culture develops and the flower turns into a motif used profusely in daily life, interior design, hair accessories and jewels, etc. The fascination for nature is expressed in multiple forms and particularly by the growing popularity of the Victorian language of flowers. In an era advocating good manners and politeness, ladies but also gentlemen started to send messages via bouquets in order to express their feelings to a specific person.

The domains articulating around flowers remain nonetheless much feminized, and this goes not without reason when we consider the long-lasting association Man has kept on establishing between women and flowers. As a traditional and centuries-anchored personification of presupposed feminine qualities, the association between women and flowers gives rise to a floral anthropomorphism which goes far beyond language expressions only but also spreads to art, literature and science. While floral metaphors in social domains have a tendency to compare women only to flowers, we find in the scientific domain lots of theories expanding this floral anthropomorphism to all human beings in general, men and women. Physiognomic theories such as the *signatura plantarum*, now considered as pseudo-sciences, reigned supreme on biology and medicine, based on the observation of a similar morphologies of plants and human limbs.Eighteenth-century scientific progress and discoveries come to nuance this kind of pseudo-scientific theories.

Human scientific and artistic production is reflected into nature, in the sense that nature is at the origin of both of them. Since they have a common origin, it will be interesting in this last part to explore the relationship between art and science in the study of nature. During the eighteenth and nineteenth, the science of botany began to progressively dissociate from medicine to become a fully-fledged science, which was formerly not the case. The creation of botanical gardens during the Renaissance came

from a need to gather plants and organize them, first for medicinal purposes and second to grasp a better understanding of the natural world. What seem to matter most in botanical gardens is obviously the ordering of plants for a better understanding of nature and its display to the public. Contrary to medieval physic gardens and their lack of classification, the first botanical gardens of the Renaissance adjoining universities tried to organise nature in a way that could facilitate first the transmission of knowledge and secondly to respond to the human need of classification which originates in the rationalization of thinking during the Renaissance. Botanical gardens also align, over the course of progress, with the opening onto the world and the European colonial frenzy. Botanical gardens fit particularly the category of the "hétérotopie foucaldienne[6]" which gather in a single place several places incompatible with each other. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, not only colonization brings in English botanical gardens more unknown plant species but gardens, such as Kew's, become an opened window onto the world. These are the places where the human desire for absolute knowledge is translated. It is in botanical gardens that Man tries to recreate an "idealized miniature cosmos"[7] , bringing together specimens from all corners of the world, and we may observe in this need an attempt at recreating a new Eden where every plants would be reunited again, inscribing human beings in Noah's lineage.

Before Carl von Linné popularizes his sexual classification of plants which will remain long in use in England, the science of botany was then mostly excluded from rigorous sciences because of its lack of coherence due to too many different classifications and because it was additionally considered as a feminine activity. Linné's analogies between the roles of male and female plants and human beings then only reflect the attribution of roles to men and women in society. This is how Sharon R. Bird described Linné's analogies in her book:

[6] « L'hétérotopie a le pouvoir de juxtaposer en un seul lieu réel plusieurs espaces, plusieurs emplacements contradictoires, qui sont en eux-même incompatibles […] ; l'exemple le plus ancien de ces hétérotopies, en fore d'emplacements contradictoires, c'est peut-être le jardin. » from a lecture by Foucauld, Michel. Des Espaces autres (1967). Quoted in Le Dantec, Jean-Pierre. *La Poétique des jardins*. Actes Sud, 2011, 13.

[7] Id., 15, "cosmos ideal miniaturisé".

> […] the inappropriate creep of human gender roles into the supposedly scientific description of plant species, and the spurious primacy placed in male reproductive organs over female reproductive organs.[8]

This kind of analogies will have us notice to what extent science at that time was a reflection of societal customs. Yet, the study of botany, particularly from 1750 to 1850, could hardly be dissociated from botanical illustration, a domain in which the most thorough works had been made by female artists, or scientists. For that matter, in which category botanical illustrations of plants would fit better: art or science? Through the botanical plates of artists such as Elizabeth Blackwell and Marianne North, the traditional dichotomy between art and science will be questioned with, as a background, the different types of botanical arts and representations coming from the evolution of the conceptions of nature. This last part will aim at exploring the reflection of human artistic and scientific production into nature. Thanks to his interest and his fascination for nature, Man has progressed in both domains of art and science and numerous philosophers undertook to question what was at the origin of scientific and artistic creation. While many of them, such as Ernst Haeckel, arrived at the conclusion that it was nature that provided a background for both domains, which made it even harder for Man to find the limit between art and science.

[8] Bird, Sharon and Jill M. Bystydzienski. *Removing Barriers: Women in Academic Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics*. Indiana University Press, 2006, 219.

I) Gardens and Nature as Expressions of Thinking and Power

1) On the "De-geometrisation" of European Gardens: from Medieval Times to Eighteenth-Century England

During the eighteenth century, the English garden was created in response to the long-lasting historical geometrical representation of Nature, dating back from Medieval Times. In order to understand this change of direction in terms of organization, we have to go back earlier in the creation of gardens and follow their evolution during several centuries. In *Le Jardin paysager anglais au dix-huitième siècle*[9], Michel Baridon reminds us that the changing aspect of gardens is to be linked with the society in which they are imagined:

> […] l'imaginaire paysager change sans cesse historiquement et géographiquement. Les jardins de la Renaissance sont différents des jardins médiévaux, les jardins « à la française » différents des jardins « à l'anglaise ». Les jardins de l'Islam correspondent à une certaine forme de beauté, les jardins chinois à une autre. Autant de peuples, dira-t'on (mais quelles sottises ne dit-on pas en généralisant trop vite ?) autant d'images de la nature. Mieux vaut dire autant de grandes civilisations, autant d'images de la nature. Autant de phases dans l'histoire de ces civilisations, autant de mutations de ces images.[10]

Each civilization possessed its own conception of nature and found a way to express it in the conception of gardens. Thus, during the Medieval Era, a distinct form of garden developed in Europe notably under the influence of monastic expansion and the *hortus conclusus* which literally means "enclosed garden". The medieval garden was indeed an enclosed space, most of the time square-shaped or rectangular, and served to provide food in a time of difficult living conditions. This type of garden differed from the typical medieval representation of the Garden of Eden as a circular space – the circle being a symbol for the Divine. Circular forms symbolized thus a celestial dimension whereas square shapes could symbolize Earth. The number four was symbolically connoted in

[9] Baridon, Michel. *Le Jardin paysager anglais au dix-huitième siècle*. Dijon : Editions Universitaires, 2000, 9.
[10] *Ibid*., 10-11.

the Medieval imagination as it corresponded to the four rivers of paradise and to the four gospels but also – from a human point of view – to the four humors of Hippocrates' medicine, to the four seasons ordering the rhythm of life and to the four elements.[11] Following this model, Pythagoras divided life into four parts of twenty years each. The four ages model perfectly conveyed the idea according to which Man is a microcosm, that is to say a miniature of the cosmos. Because they carried a religious symbolism during Medieval Times, the number four and the square shape were thus a perfect basis for the building of gardens. The plantations themselves were organized in small square plans which can be observed on period representations such as *Liber Rurarium Commodorum* written by Pietro De Crescenzi (Fig.1). This work is at the origin of the vision of medieval gardens in common knowledge.

Figure 1 – Master of Fitzwilliam 268. Illumination for Piero de' Crescenzi, *Liber ruralium commodorum* (c.1470)

Besides providing food, medieval gardens included cloisters which served as places of contemplation for monks. The expression *hortus conclusus* designated the enclosed garden and was associated to the religious figure of the Virgin Mary during Medieval

[11]Le Goff, Jacques. *Une Histoire du corps au Moyen-Age*. Paris: Editions Liana Levi, 2017.

Times and during the Renaissance. Historically, the *hortus conclusus* has often been a preserved and isolated space, a kind of small paradise, in keeping of Persian influences[12]. The representations of the *hortus conclusus* in medieval art often depicted the Virgin Mary as a rose without thorns and inside a rose garden, in pictures such as *Madonna of the Rose Bower* by Stefan Lochner (c. 1450) (Fig.2).

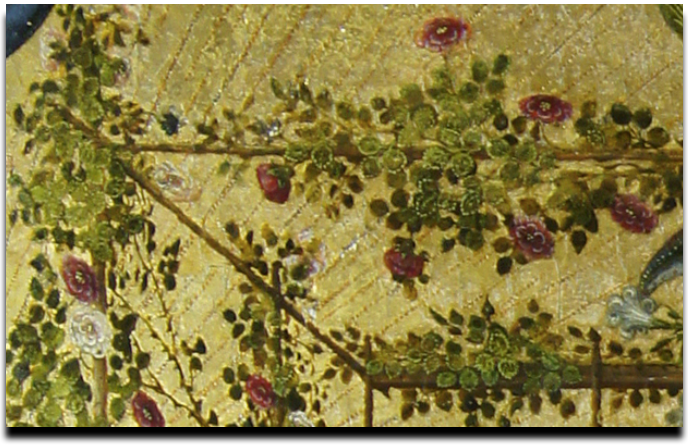
Figure 2 – Stefan Lochner, *Madonna im Rosenhag* (1450)

If we follow the interpretation of this painting by Julien Chapuis in *Stefan Lochner: Image Making in Fifteenth-Century Cologne*[13], the Virgin Mary is depicted as a queen surrounded by her angels who are playing music and bringing gifts. Wearing a crown symbolizing her purity, she is sitting with child Jesus on her lap. We can notice that the

[12] In *La Poétique des jardins*, Jean-Pierre Le Dantec explains that Persian gardens were the first gardens with a superposition of significations: « Le jardin des Persans était un espace sacré qui devait réunir à l'intérieur de son rectangle quatre parties représentant les quatre parties du monde, avec un espace plus sacré encore que les autres qui était comme l'ombilic, le nombril du monde en son milieu ; et toute la végétation du jardin devait se repartir dans cet espace, dans cette sorte de microcosme. Quant aux tapis [persans], ils étaient à l'origine des reproductions de jardins (le jardin, c'est un tapis où le monde entier vient accomplir sa perfection symbolique, et le tapis, c'est une sorte de jardin mobile à travers l'espace). » in Le Dantec, Jean-Pierre. *La Poétique des jardins*. Actes Sud, 2011, p.13-14.

[13] Chapuis, Julien. *Stefan Lochner: Image Making in Fifteenth-Century Cologne*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2004, 288.

pair is also surrounded by white and red roses with no thorns, and of course white lilies, which typically represent the Virgin's qualities of purity and innocence.



The Virgin Mary is presented in a scale that makes her look taller than the rest of the characters in the painting, underlining her royal status.

Medieval gardens were mainly utilitarian gardens, providing for food and medicine before being a source of pleasure. The Medieval Era seemed to be more turned to usefulness than pleasure. During ten centuries, gardens have been deeply changing, from the *hortus castral*[14] - the garden of castles – to the *hortus deliciarum*, the garden of delight foreshadowing the Renaissance garden. Mentalities were evolving during those centuries under the influence of knights coming back from the crusades, bringing back with them the image of the magnificent Oriental gardens with their exotic plants and bright colours, opened onto the countryside. It influenced the creation of larger gardens in larger estates and were freely inspired by *Le Roman de la Rose* (Fig.3). The *hortus deliciarum*, also known as the garden of delight, was the expression of the love of God for humans and represented the garden of earthly pleasure - a place full of flowers – in which the theme of courtly love (we will see later details about this matter) had its place along with walking, resting and reading. The evolution became more perceptible during the fifteenth century: fences became more and more discreet and sophisticated, the main fountain seemed more detailed. Gardens were decorated with

[14] As they were first of all defensive places, feudal castles had not much space to implant great gardens. Thus they gave priority to small enclosed gardens, located in internal yards. The gardens provided plants used in the daily cooking of meals. Only a few bigger estates could afford to have a *herbularius*, or *hortus medicus*, where medicinal plants could be grown. The other types of plantations like cereals were usually outside the fortification.

pergolas, aviaries, and water effects, thus opening onto the Renaissance garden. The orchard with its diverse fruit trees and varieties of flowers became a suitable environment for walking, creating a blend between usefulness and pleasure, beauty and good.

Figure 3 – Guillaume De Lorris, *Le Roman de la Rose* (c.1490)

During the Italian Renaissance, the creation of gardens changed but still kept medieval themes such as lawns, climbing vines, arbors and fountains decorated with statues.[15] However, the composition of Renaissance gardens was achieved on wider spaces, composed of levelled patios opening onto a larger perspective. The Italian Renaissance garden was characterized for its use of the surrounding landscape. The arrangement of horizontal plans in patios and the use of the vegetation created views that frame and glorify the Italian countryside. The Renaissance garden differentiated itself from its predecessor on a structural level. Indeed, we have explained earlier that Medieval gardens were enclosed spaces without animation nor variety. On the contrary, during the Italian Renaissance, landscape architects were trying to create dynamism by

[15] Molinier, Jean-Christophe. *Coup d'œil sur les jardins de l'histoire du XVème au XXème siècle*. Paris : Association Henri et Achille Duchêne, 1989, 4.

choosing to favour sloping grounds allowing to create optical effects. To achieve this, they used an element that was already anchored in the fifteenth century Italian countryside: the patio. Before this, gardens were still organized as to adapt subtly to the slopes. Later, the aesthetical possibilities of landscape arrangement were discovered. In terms of gardens, patios were placed before houses and the garden itself was organized in several floors the lowest of which was carried by a wall that distinctly contrasted with the surrounding landscape. These floors became typical of the Italian style and were often called *giardini pensili* in reference to the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. As gardens were placed higher than the ground, they were seen in a new spatial context and were still separated from the outside by low walls and hedges though they were no longer isolated from the world like Medieval gardens had been. Without fences, the Renaissance garden could thus expand and melt into the landscape. This discrepancy between ordered and wild nature is represented for example in the gardens of the Villa Lante of Bagnaia in Italy (Fig.4). From the patios, people could admire the garden and then the eye would get lost in the distance. A multiplicity of panoramas and views is proposed to visitors.

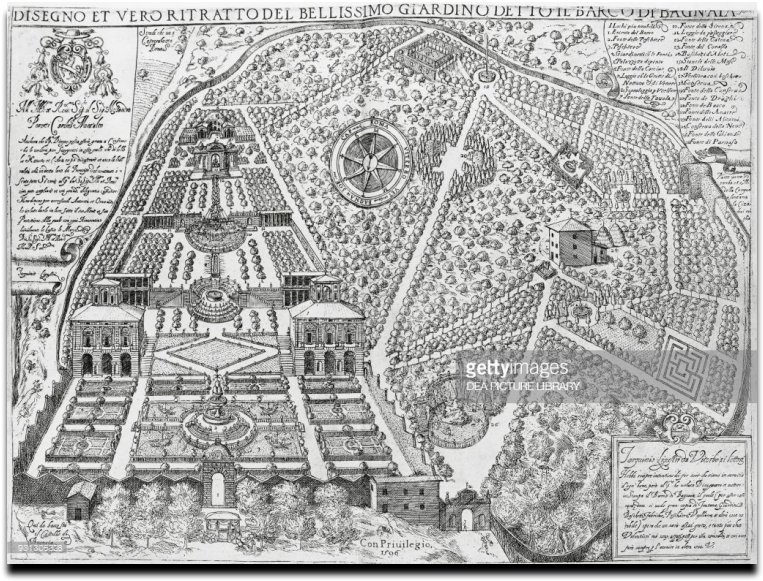


Figure 4 – *View of the Villa Lante gardens in Bagnaia*, Lazio, Italy (1596)

In 1485, Leon Battista Alberti wrote in *De Re Aedificatoria* that a villa should be built high up to have a panoramic view on its garden below:

> The construction will give pleasure to the visitor if, when they leave the city, they see the villa in all its charm, as if to seduce and welcome the new arrivals. Toward this end, I would place it on a slightly elevated place. I would also have the road climb so gently that it fools those who take it to the point that they do not realize how high they have climbed until they discover the countryside below.[16]

This type of composition – that can also be found in the paintings of the Italian Renaissance – reflected the ideal of mind-opening of Humanist philosophy. Another striking feature of the Italian garden were the beddings of flowers. Amongst the elements of the Renaissance garden, beddings played the greatest role in terms of formal decorative criteria. The other main elements were antique-looking statues, fountains, and plants, all of them organized according to the mathematical division of a space dominated by geometry and symmetry. In the discourse of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, a book published in 1499, Francesco Colonna described "a garden dedicated to Venus, on the island of Cythera, and this garden is entirely dominated by geometry". Geometry set order and order highlighted the idea of harmony. Man was in search of perfection to become closer to the Divine[17]. The Renaissance gardens revealed human vicissitudes, the difficult search for truth (symbolized for instance by the motif of the maze[18]) and humans losing hold of their destiny through the statues inspired by Antique times. Finally, the model of a house higher than its garden and the landscape symbolically corresponded to the will of the Medici to demonstrate their power but also to the general idea that Man should show his superiority over nature.

Conjointly in France, gardens were also built according to a geometrical model thus making the adjective "Italian" appear more linked to style than a country as Michel Baridon explains:

> Les jardins dessinés en France ne perdent rien de tout ceci et se placent dans le droit fil de la géométrisation. Au XVIème siècle, de nombreux artistes savant et

[16] Alberti, Leon Battista. *Édifices destinés aux catégories particulières de citoyens, in L'art d'édifier*, translated from the Latin by Pierre Caye and Françoise Choay, Book I, Paris, 2004, p. 429.
[17] Aben, Rob. *The Enclosed Garden: History and Development of the Hortus Conclusus and Its Reintroduction in the Present-Day Urban Landscape*. NAI Publishers, 1999, p.83.
[18] Amongst the forms of bedding, the maze was particularly popular in France and notably in the patios of the garden of Montargis (designed by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau in 1561 for Renée de France, widow of Hercule II d'Este).

> architectes italiens passent les Alpes et il ne faut donc pas s'étonner que les jardins de la vallée de la Loire, Chenonceaux par exemple, aient le type italien. D'où l'ambiguïté « jardin Renaissance » / « jardin à l'italienne » qui résulte de ce qu'un adjectif de nationalité simplifie plus les choses qu'une étiquette historique.[19]

Moreover, he writes that the geometry of Italian gardens serves as a model for the gardens created in France during the sixteenth century, leading the way for the creation of the style known as "jardins à la française"[20]. The French formal gardens were constructed by architects such as Mansart or Le Nôtre and were organized as to give – thanks to water effects and long canals – the impression of an infinite space which reflected scientific progress concerning the revolutionary discoveries of the time about the Universe. The English garden, with its irregular forms, is often opposed to the French formal garden from which it differs on aesthetical and symbolical matters. Up to the eighteenth century, the French influence spread to architecture and to the art of gardens in England. Nature in France was extremely structured, with geometrical huge flowerbeds, symmetrical and perspective effects. The aim was to domesticate nature and show human power[21]. For instance, the beautiful beddings of Versailles could not be entirely enjoyed by visitors. To grasp the full beauty of the beddings, a view from above was necessary, whether it be from a high floor of the castle or directly from the sky (Fig.5), two places only accessible to the King and to God.

Figure 5 – Aerial view of Versailles (20 August 2014)

[19] *Ibid*. 12.
[20] They may also be called « jardins réguliers » or « jardins classiques ».
[21] Commemorative gardens of military victories elaborated based in this classical model epxand on a massive scale.

The garden was then not only intended to give pleasure to visitors but also to give power to the one that already had a high position - literally or figuratively – the King and God. One could have a walk in the gardens of Versailles, with a restricted liberty though, as strolling could only be effected according to strict constraints. Louis XIV himself described the twenty-five different ways to discover the gardens of Versailles by imposing to walkers a compulsory itinerary. The French garden was a controlled space where the walker was enthralled but not surprised and thus was also held back in his possible urge of personal appropriation of the place, dream and poetry. Pleasure was consequently reduced: this constituted the paradox of the French garden. Because the geometrical garden imposes too much constraint on the visitor, he feels a desire to distance himself from it. The geometrical garden arouses the desire for a wilder nature in the same way tyranny arouses the desire for freedom. Pierre de Nolhac writes in *Histoire de Versailles : Versailles au XVIIIè siècle*[22] that the more nature will be constricted, the more the desire to seek a free nature will be aroused:

> Un second « défaut », c'est la régularité trop méthodique de ces jardins. Ce grand air de symétrie ne convient point à la belle nature. […] Ce défaut est encore assez universel dans nos jardins, et en diminue tellement le plaisir, que pour faire de jolies promenades, on est obligé de sortir de ces bocages, où l'art est trop marqué, pour aller chercher la belle nature au milieu d'une campagne parée naïvement et sans artifice.

With this assumption, De Nolhac argues against the displeasure elating from too much geometry in gardens, an argument that was advanced precisely by the partisans of the English landscape garden.

In England, the creation of this type of gardens in England stopped under the influence of an aesthetic inspired by the rediscovery of the poetic and wild aspect of nature. The aim was no longer to dominate nature but to take pleasure in rediscovering it. From the middle of the eighteenth century, at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, the "irregular" garden came as an intended backlash against the development of industries. This type of garden was about to spread throughout Europe but also went as

[22] De Nolhac, Pierre. *Histoire de Versailles : Versailles au XVIIIè siècle*. https://archive.org/details/histoireduchte00nolh, 1918, 162.

far as to influence Russian and American gardens. For instance in Versailles, an English garden was created for the queen Marie-Antoinette in the Petit Trianon, comprising artificial hills, a small lake and a cave. It also had many paths made for walking which offer a multiplicity of very calculated points of view giving on the main elements of the gardens.[23] In opposition to the geometrical French garden, the English garden no longer aimed at controlling nature but rather imitate it and erase the limit between garden and landscape. Hence the English garden was a landscape but also a piece of art. Lancelot "Capability" Brown and William Kent were the two main landscape architects that initiated this naturalist movement. They took inspiration in the landscapes painted by artists such as Nicolas Poussin for the conception of their landscape gardens. The sinuous alleys were meant to provoke surprise and thinking in the visitor. The composition of English gardens may look simple at first sight as they aimed at giving the impression that nature is free from the hand of Man and growing by itself in a given environment. In Rousseau's *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*, we stumble upon a perfectly fitting definition of English gardens in the description of the "jardin de Clarens":

> Il y a pourtant ici, continuai-je, une chose que je ne puis comprendre ; c'est qu'un lieu si différent de ce qu'il était ne peut être devenu ce qu'il est qu'avec de la culture et du soin : cependant je ne vois nulle part la moindre trace de culture ; tout est verdoyant, frais, vigoureux, et la main du jardinier ne se montre point ; rien ne dément l'idée d'une île déserte qui m'est venue en entrant, et je n'aperçois aucuns pas d'hommes. […] Vous ne voyez rien d'aligné, rien de nivelé ; jamais le cordeau n'entra dans ce lieu; la nature ne plante rien au cordeau; les sinuosités dans leur feinte irrégularité sont ménagées avec art pour prolonger la promenade, cacher les bords de l'île, et en agrandir l'étendue apparente sans faire des détours incommodes et trop fréquents.[24]

However, the underlying composition is obviously more complex than that. The art of the English landscape garden consisted in building a natural space. The main elements composing it were hills and slopes artificially built, shaping a relief that would give the impression to the walker that he was seeing an untouched space. As in every garden, the visitor followed an itinerary yet here unconsciously thanks to the tortuous

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[24] Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1762). Paris : Classiques Garnier, 1988, 461.

alleys that maintain the impression of an untamed nature. However all of these were artifices as the underlying composition of the English landscape gardens was extremely complex and designed in a precise manner as Rousseau also explained later in the novel: "C'est un compose de lieux très beaux et pittoresques don't les aspects on été choisis en différents pays, et dont tout paraît naturel, sauf l'assemblage.[25]" There were no linear alleys leading the steps of the visitor but rather a kind of poetic wandering in undistinguishable paths, still present though. In order to reinforce the impression of naturalness, plants (herbaceous and climbing plants, lavender, roses, etc.) were chosen and placed as to make visitors believe that everything that grew in the garden was already present. The forms and colours were also chosen to attract unconsciously the visitor's eyes – basically nothing was left to chance in the composition of this new paradigm of the eighteenth-century conception of the world.

Another characteristic of the English garden was its link with bucolic themes and Romanticism. In that sense, it is important to mention the creation of numerous shrubs and thickets as well as rocks and artificial ponds to convey an impression of mystery and calm. The aesthetics of the English garden was deeply influenced by the will of the architects to reproduce the paintings of landscapes. Natural sceneries were recreated for architectural purposes as well as artistic ones. Besides, the choice of forms and colours was meant to create a "living painting" where the visitors could encounter several elements provoking surprise. In *Le Jardin paysager anglais au dix-huitième siècle*[26], Michel Baridon mentions how Joseph Addison raised the qualities of the English « wild » garden:

> Le poète Joseph Addison nous donne une bonne idée de l'impression recherchée lorsqu'il affirme qu'il « préfère contempler un arbre dans toute la luxuriance de ses branches et de ses rameaux plutôt que lorsqu'il est […] coupé et taillé en figure géométrique » et l'écrivain Alexander Pope met ces idées en pratique dans son jardin de Twickenham.[27]

[25] Id., 245.
[26] Baridon, Michel. *Le Jardin paysager anglais au dix-huitième siècle*. Dijon: Editions Universitaires, 2000.
[27] Ibid, p.46.

Moreover, Michel Baridon explains that according to Addison, refusing a geometrical aesthetics allows a renewal. As the English garden followed the rhythm of seasons and moments of the day, it offered several different feelings and views. The changing elements allowed the garden to be constantly renewed. Consequently, the link between nature and the world was, thanks to the English garden, in perpetual rewriting by English landscape architects.

2) The Parallel Between the English Garden and the Eighteenth-Century Conception of the World

The creation of the English garden marked the culmination of the disappearance of geometrical lines in the representations of nature. From the beginning of the eighteenth century to the nineteenth century, the English garden underwent multiple evolutions. Before that, during the seventeenth century, the debate between the formal garden and the "natural" garden was already in the air.[28] Partisans of the formal garden such as Jacques Boyceau de la Barauderie, who had theorized the Baroque garden and served as an inspiration for André Le Nôtre, considered that nature necessarily imposed geometry:

> Toutes lesquelles choses, si belles que les puissions choisir seront défectueuses, et moins agréables, si elles ne sont ordonnées et placées avec symétrie, et bonne correspondance : car Nature l'observe aussi en ses formes si parfaites, les arbres élargissent, ou montent en pointe leurs branches de pareille proportion, leurs feuilles ont les côtés semblables, et les fleurs ordonnées d'une ou plusieurs pièces, ont si bonne convenance, que nous ne pouvons mieux faire que de tâcher d'ensuivre cette grand maitresse en ceci […][29]

[28] However we could consider that this opposition was theoretically irrelevant since landscape gardens were as unnatural as Baroque gardens.

[29] Boyceau, Jacques. *Traité du jardinage selon les raisons de la Nature de l'Art*. http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k85648g/f17.double, 1638.

The dominance of geometry was effective in general in the Baroque world and even on the English side, partisans of an ordered nature wrote essays dealing with the beauty of geometry such as architect Christopher Wren (1632-1723) in the appendix of *Parentalia*, written in 1750: "geometrical figures are naturally more beautiful than irregular, in this all consent as to a Law of Nature.[30]" However as England wanted to take more and more distance from France, a new style of manipulation of nature had to be created. The liberation of nature from geometry emerged as an idea that grew more and more popular. English philosopher Edmund Burke wrote in 1757 his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* that a separation from geometry was necessary since geometrical gardens were a synonym for the submission to architectural diktat, whereas more natural gardens would allow to take distance from the theory of proportions. In *La Poétique des jardins*, Jean-Pierre Le Dantec tries to explain the reasons for the mutation of the aesthetics of gardens, which originate in a profound epistemological upheaval:

> Or, pour une multitude de raisons – le choc esthétique reçu par William Kent en découvrant les jardins ruinés et les paysages d'Italie ; le développement en Angleterre, à la suite de la révolution de 1688, d'une *gentry* fortunée, campagnarde et libérale ; la mutation de l'éthos dominant au sein des élites qui fait céder la « gloire » baroque devant la « sensibilité » romantique ; la transformation de la science elle-même, la géométrie se voyant supplantée par l'observation et l'expérimentation […] le couple physis/thesis a subi, entre l'époque de Boyceau et celle de Burke, une mutation profonde.[31]

The idea of the garden as the representation of an ideal nature progressed during the Enlightenment, which prompted a theoretical change - partly due to the popularization of Lockean philosophy - in the three different fields. In the field of aesthetics, the tastes in painting and literature were beginning to change. In the scientific domain, natural history began to develop and acquired more popularity than geometry. As for politics, ideas such as a liberal government instead of despotism came as a novelty in the aristocratic circle. In the early eighteenth century, the landscape compositions inspired

[30] Quoted in Benett J.A. *The Mathematical Science of Christopher Wren*. Cambridge Universtity Press, 1982, 121.
[31] Le Dantec, Jean-Pierre. *La Poétique des jardins*. Actes Sud, 2011, 54.

by bucolic Antique motifs were redesigned according to contemporary ideas. An instance of the evolution of English gardens was the house of Stowe, designed by William Kent, a painter and an architect, who brought back the Palladian style from his journey in Italy and applied it to Stowe. The Palladian style architecture was characterized, according to the editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, by "rationality in its clarity, order, and symmetry, while it also pays homage to antiquity in its use of classical forms and decorative motifs."[32] Kent included therefore in his design of Stowe gardens Antique ruins (Fig.6) inspired by the surroundings of Rome.

Figure 6 – Stowe gardens' crumbling ruins

The introduction of ruins in gardens was typical of the picturesque style during the eighteenth century. For John Dixon Hunt, ruins were efficient means for breaking regularity, which was banished from picturesque nature: "in ruins, even of the most regular edifices, the lines are so softened by decay or interrupted by demolition; the stiffness of design is so relieved by the accidental intrusion of springing shrubs and pendant weeds[33]".

Definitions of types of English landscapes or views, seen from an aesthetic or artistic point of view, followed. On one side, we found the sublime with its impressive mountains and vastness and on the other was the beautiful, which gave to the eye peacefulness and an impression of serene beauty. Half-way between the two was the picturesque, the views of which were inspired by art, and more precisely painting,

[32] See more at *Palladianism* entry, article from *Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/art/Palladianism.
[33] Hunt, John Dixon. *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992, 179.

while containing some "wild" and irregular elements. At the end of the century, uneven ground with vales, hills and slopes were indispensable to the English garden in order to play on the contrast between the regular elements and the "wilder" ones. Most parks built in the eighteenth century involved a heightened naturalness, rendered through their free outlines, slopes, and if possible a river or stream and a lake in the distance with trees and shrubs creating shadow and contrast as black paint on a picture. There was a great variety of plant species, many conifers and dark-leaved plant such as laurels and rhododendrons. It resulted in new forms and colours shaping the landscape[34].

The most celebrated landscape architects, like William Kent and Lancelot "Capability" Brown, were inspired by the allegorical landscape paintings of European artists such as Claude le Lorrain and Poussin. Morever, Picturesque nature was often looked at by visitors through a "Claude glass" which added a frame to the landscape. Claude glasses were small convex mirrors that rendered a picture in the fashion of Claude Le Lorrain's paintings in terms of color tonalities. As the Claude glass gave a distorted vision of nature, by looking at nature through this tool, Man saw nature through a layer of culture, adjusting the landscape to reflect his own conception of art, and thus of life. The landscapes that were designed by Brown were characterized by their simplicity and neatness. They were composed of large meadows enclosed by tree borders, invisible delimitations and gatherings of trees. The design of Brown's gardens was perfectly suitable for activities of the time, such as hunting, horse-riding and promenade in carriages. He came to be known as 'Capability' Brown because of his ability to describe the 'capability' of landscapes, and was considered as one of the most talented eighteenth-century landscape architect.[35] As such, Brown was inspired by the precursor of the landscape garden, theorist William Gilpin, who was also an artist who painted naturalist pictures of Nature. He favoured more "natural" gardens over the geometrical style that was prevailing in England at the beginning of the century. Gilpin thought that Picturesque nature possessed qualities that were absent in the trimmed formal gardens: beauty in wildness and liberty for imagination – thus he theorized the

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[34] James Louis. *Landscape in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, in *The Victorian Countryside*. London: Routledge, 1981, 167.

[35] "The landscape gardens designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and his followers were considered to be quintessentially picturesque. It was Brown's famous landscape at Stowe that originally helped to inspire Gilpin; but following ideas developed in Gilpin's essays and guidebooks, some picturesque theorists began to criticize to the uniform transformation of English domains into "Brownian" compositions." In Fay, Jessica. *"What is the picturesque?"*, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/what-is-the-picturesque-.

Picturesque landscape. He described the Picturesque beauty as 'that peculiar kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture'.[36]

While studying at Oxford, Gilpin published *Dialogue upon the gardens of the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Cobham, at Stowe in Buckinghamshire* in 1748, a work that both dealt with Stowe gardens and aesthetics and in which Gilpin exposed his first thoughts on the picturesque:

> Unusually for the time, Gilpin showed an appreciation of wild and rugged mountain scenery, perhaps rooted in his Cumbrian upbringing; even more unusually, he expressed ideas about the perception of beauty which were purely aesthetic and often divorced from other qualities of the object viewed, such as morality or utility.[37]

At the time when geometry was still very present, Gilpin's conception of beauty and landscape were unusual. The word "picturesque" was a borrowing from the Italian *pittore* which meant "painter". John Dixon Hunt was one the greatest specialists in the subject landscape architecture: In *The Picturesque Garden in Europe*[38], he gave his definition of the picturesque and linked it with painting:

> Picturesque is the story that concerns the application of painterly art to the formation of gardens and landscapes; but understanding, presentation and augmentation of 'nature' in designed landscapes, and about their reception by all sorts of visitors, topics just as important in the annals of landscape architecture as a debt to painting.

On that matter, poets such as Joseph Addison or Alexander Pope had already praised painting and were amongst the first ones to consider painting as a perfect model for the architecture of garden. In his work, Addison explained that by paying careful attention details in nature, a beautiful *landskip*[39] could be created[40]. Pope imagined gardens as

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[36] Fay, Jessica. *"What is the picturesque?"*, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/what-is-the-picturesque-.
[37]https://www.abebooks.fr/edition-originale/Trois-essais-beau-pittoresque-voyages-pittoresques/20386638050/bd
[38] Dixon Hunt, John. *The Picturesque Garden in Europe*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2002.
[39] *Landskip* is the Dutch word for the painting of a landscape.
[40] Addison, Joseph. *The Works*. Londres, 1720. III, p.497.

theaters composed of a series of scenes. What first linked gardens and theaters was also that they both served as the background for the proceeding of an action[41] before the word picturesque was used in the context of English gardens:

> When Dryden or Pope used picturesque, they did not use it at first in the context of garden aesthetics or landscape painting; they meant fit and proper for dramatic effect. When Pope went on using it for his Twickenham garden, he meant apt setting for human action.[42]

The particularity of Twickenham gardens (Fig. 7) relied in its relationship with poetry. Like poetry, these gardens were to be read and their elements such as the grotto, statues and inscriptions were to be interpreted and woke up the visitors' mind. This is what Stephanie Ross explains in her essay about gardens:

> Grottos are associated with creativity and contemplation. Inhabited by nymphs, oracles, divinities, and muses, the grottos described in classical literature or loci of poetic inspiration. […] 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.[43]

Pope's gardens, and English gardens in general, were meant to be read and decipher like a poem and not only seen. First compared to painting, then to theater and poetry, gardens seemed to constitute a true form of art in itself, a revolutionary means of artistic expression. Additionally, gardens became a fully-fledged language – a code with its own linguistic signs. In that sense, we may say that the Picturesque garden thus placed itself at the junction between art and nature. Nonetheless, controversy between the

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[41] Dixon Hunt, John. *'Ut Pictura Poesis: The Garden and the Picturesque in England (1710-1750)',* in Monique Mosser and Georges Teyssot*, The Architecture of Western Gardens: A Design History from the Renaissance to the Present Day*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991, 231–242.
[42] Châtel, Laurent. *« Getting the Picture » of the Picturesque: Some Thoughts on the Greatest British Aesthetic Muddle of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century.* XVII-XVIII. Revue de la Société d'études anglo-américaines des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, 2000, 231.
[43] Ross, Stephanie. *What Gardens Mean*. Chicago: University Press, 1998, 55-70.

picturesque school and partisans of the more ordered garden raged during the nineteenth century.

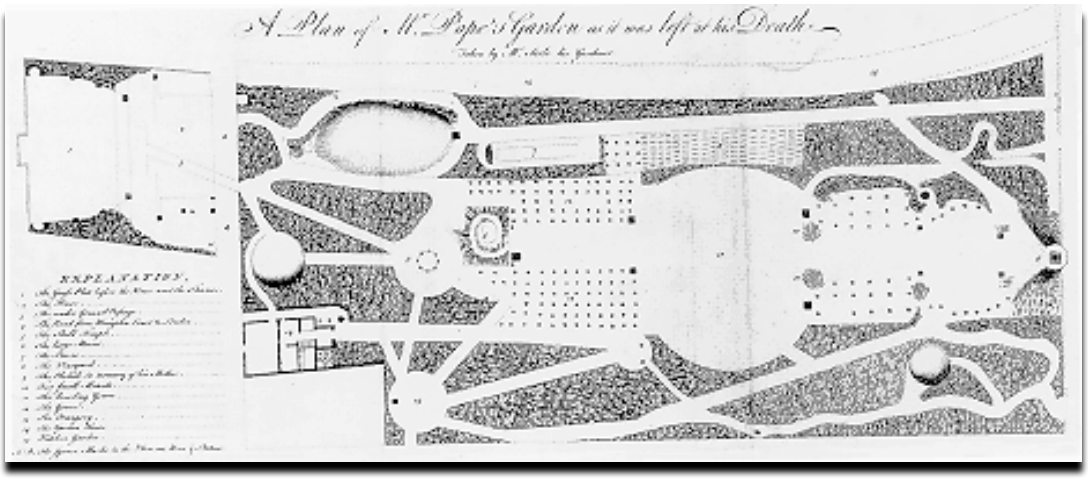

Figure 7 – John Searle's plan of Alexander Pope's garden at Twickenham (1745)

Gilpin's theory was discussed later at the dawn of the nineteenth century by three landscape theorists: Humphry Repton, Richard Payne Knight and Sir Uvedale Price. Landscape designer Humphry Repton supported Gilpin's ideas, particularly that of the garden harmonizing with surrounding landforms and was one of the first designers to write practical books on the art of gardening. Repton was considered as the rightful heir of Brown, although their style of landscape design was very much criticized for their monotony and superficiality. Repton nonetheless continued to defend his own work and the one of his inspiration even though he was attacked in the press by two rival theorists, Richard Payne Knight[44] and Uvedale Price[45]. Richard Payne Knight wrote *The Landscape* in 1794, a poem in which he criticized the 'smoothness' of Capability Brown's landscapes. Repton countered by highlighting the differences between painting and landscape gardening. Unlike a painting, the viewer moves through a garden, constantly shifting viewpoints. Richard Payne Knight wrote *The Landscape* in 1794, a poem in which he criticized the 'smoothness' of Capability Brown's landscapes. In his 1794 essay, Price established that the definition of the Picturesque was half-way between the Beautiful and the Sublime. In other words, Price favoured to keep old trees,

[44] Payne Knight, Richard. *The Landscape, a Didactic Poem*. London: W. Bulmer & Company, 1794.
[45] Price, Sir Uvedale. *An Essay on the Picturesque as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful*. London: J.Robson, 1796.

uneven pathways and hilly grounds than cleaning all of this away, as Brown did. It was the natural order of the Beautiful that was criticized by Price, who preferred an asymmetrical vision of landscape.[46]

During the Victorian Era, gardening reached a peak of popularity partly because of technological advances, a wider choice of plants and the rise of the middle-classes. In addition to that, middle-class men and women had more time devoted to leisure hence the spread of gardening during the 1800s. As most elements of the Victorian society, the underlying theme of the Victorian garden was still the conquest of Man over Nature. We can find a relevant example of this in the huge perfectly cut lawns of parks which required much time and constant attention. By the end of the 19th century, there were several elements that would typically be found in the Victorian garden. Trees were first planted to shadow rooms that were exposed to the sun like the dining room or the veranda. They were also used to decorate the path that led to the entrance of a mansion. Cities had their trees located along the streets and buildings to reinforce intimacy. In order to catch the eye, morphologically interesting trees like weeping willows were strategically displayed as well as those with colourful leaves or original in their forms. Shrubberies were mainly useful to delimit alleys or separate houses but also for the more aesthetic purpose of hiding unwanted details, barriers and building foundations. Everything was designed to be perfectly neat and following the aesthetics of the Victorian era. Plants and flowers were of course indispensable to the Victorian garden and were planted as carpet bedding with different patterns. Everything was well organised. However, towards the end of the Victorian Era, natural and wild gardens and parks slowly replace the trend for patterned gardens.

In the 1870s, Irish gardener William Robinson encouraged what he called "wild gardening", his ideas popularising the English cottage garden – a movement that linked to the British Arts and Crafts Movement in its search for honesty.[47] Cottage gardens differed in several points from the patterned gardens that were made before. They were characterised by informal design giving a sense of security and a welcoming and warm house. Cottage gardens already existed during Medieval times and provided vegetables

[46] "*Sir Uvedale Price, 1st Baronet*". Encyclopaedia Britannica Online. Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc. 2012.
[47] Clayton, Virginia. *The Once and Future Gardener*. David R. Godine, 2000.

and herbs for people living in the country. In an interview[48], Professor Phil Lusby, a horticultural lecturer at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh tells: "There is a tradition of gardening going back to medieval times and in Victorian times there was great interest in looking back to that history." Even though the Victorian era was characterized by both modernity and industrialization, it was an age of worry and doubt – it was then all the more natural for Victorian people to turn back towards the past. Jerome Hamilton Buckley has suggested that the "great polar ideas of the Victorian period" were consisted in the idea of progress and the idea of decadence, "twin aspects of an all-encompassing history[49]". As such the design of gardens were the perfect artefacts to express this nostalgia of the past, and especially here, with the cottage garden, the almost reassuring honesty and simplicity found in the medieval spirit.

Designing cottage gardens did not follow strict rules, compared to the previous styles of garden. English cottages had a small garden seemingly informal, natural with a mix of flowers, vegetables and shrubs. If they were indeed casual-looking, their design comprised all necessary elements – paths, fence, hedges – which brought a singular charm to these gardens. There were neither geometrical lines or forms, as it was the case with flower bedding, nor classification by colours. Plants were growing close to each other to prevent weeds and facilitate watering, although weeds were not strictly forbidden. William Robinson was considered as one of the first gardeners to use herbaceous borders with perennial plants[50] and he later published his ideas of gardening which gained recognition thanks to his magazines and his books: *The Wild Garden* (1870) and *The English Flower Garden* (1883). Additionally, Robinson's approach to nature advocated a return to naturalness and simplicity as a reaction to the Victorian patterned gardening which used plants made inside greenhouses, and to Victorian rigidity in general. In 1875, he met Gertrude Jekyll for the first time, even though she had contributed to the writing of some sections of Morrison's two essays before they physically met. They happened to be in accord in their design principles, in the sense

[48] Interview for *The Scotsman*: http://www.scotsman.com/news/gardens-the-victorian-era-is-a-very-rich-period-to-discuss-1-2043019.
[49] Buckley, Jerome Hamilton. *The Triumph of Time: A Study of the Victorian Concepts of Time, History, Progress, and Decadence*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967. Quoted in Wagner, Tamara. *Nostalgia and the Victorian Novel*. http://www.victorianweb.org/genre/wagner/, 2002.
[50] Perennial plants are plants that live for more than two years contrary to annual plants which only grow during a season.

that Jekyll also advocated a return to wild gardening and wild flowers in reaction to the newly returning formality in gardens at that time. They maintained a close friendship and professional association for over fifty years. He helped her on her garden at Munstead Wood; she provided plants for his garden at Gravetye Manor. She was inspired by Robinson's work for her detachment from the typical Victorian style of flower bedding:

> ...when English gardening was mostly represented by the innate futilities of the "bedding" system, with its wearisome repetitions and garish colouring, Mr William Robinson chose as his work in live to make better known the treasures that were lying neglected, and at the same time to overthrow the feeble follies of the "bedding" system. It is mainly owing to his unremitting labours that a clear knowledge of the world of hardy-plant beauty is now placed within easy reach of all who care to acquire it, and that the "bedding mania" is virtually dead.[51]

At that time, the English garden became a place of artistic experimentation. Gertrude Jekyll advocated the use of perennial plants in cottage gardens and with her radiant colours, claiming her approach to gardening as a form of art. In *Le Jardin*, Philippe Collignon explains how the use of radiant colors creates a style almost instantly recognizable:

> Ce type de jardin est qualifié de « jardin bourgeois », car il accorde une place importante à la « fragmentation maniériste » (comprendre l'organisation structurée selon une certaine manière) des espaces ; et à l'exaltation de la virtuosité dans le maniement des espèces naturalistes pour produire des effets de couleurs.[52]

As a follower of the ideas of John Ruskin and William Morris, Gertrude Jekyll applied artistic rules, notably principles of the Arts and Crafts Movement, to gardening. According to Jekyll, gardens had to be in accord with the house they surrounded. Each plant was carefully chosen for its blooming time, color and form to create a beautiful result. In *The Wild Garden*, Robinson had advocated a separation from the traditional Victorian garden. He had advocated a larger choice of plants and way of planting, in

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[51] Gertrude Jekyll quoted in Massingham, Betty. *"William Robinson: A Portrait": Garden History.* The Garden History Society. 6, Number 1 (Spring, 1968): 61–85.).
[52] Collignon, Philippe. *Le Jardin*. Paris : Micro Application, 2007, 49.

order to give a wild and picturesque impression. Gertrude Jekyll agreed to his ideas and contributed to the writing of *The English Flower Garden*. In the first chapter of the book, William Robinson happened to compare gardening to art:

> The gardener must follow the true artist, however modestly, in his respect for things as they are, in delight in natural form and beauty of flower and tree, if we are to be free from barren geometry, and if our gardens are ever to be true pictures... And as the artist's work is to see for us and preserve in pictures some of the beauty of landscape, tree, or flower, so the gardener should be to keep for us as far as may be, in the fullness of their natural beauty, the living things themselves.[53]

We may say that Robinson followed the footsteps of men such as Alexander Pope in his will to respect the environment where he intended to build his gardens. Of course, gardens connected to art and were a pleasure to the eye but they came to get a deeper meaning and a way to transmit certain ideas. The English Garden underwent multiple evolutions in its design and significance, aligning on the evolution of the English mind, noticeable from the separation with French gardens in the eighteenth century to the creation of the modest cottage garden in the late nineteenth century.

3) The Garden as a Mirror of Political Ideas and Emblem of National Identity

While gardens were firstly created for sight pleasure and resting, they were also used to convey a certain idea of power. For instance, the early Italian Renaissance gardens, with their beautiful terraces, grottos and *giardini segreti*, served for the Medici, the ruling dynasty of Florence, as a way to demonstrate their own power and magnificence. In *Italian Gardens – A Cultural History*, Helena Atlee writes that Italian gardens were complex realizations that required different classes of artists:

> During the first half of the sixteenth century, magnificence came to be perceived as a princely virtue, and all over the Italian peninsula architects, sculptors, painters,

[53] Robinson, William. *The English Flower Garden: Design, Arrangement, and Plans (4th Edition)*. John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1895, 8.

> poets, historians and humanist scholars were commissioned to concoct a magnificent image for their powerful patrons. [54]

The central fountain at Villa di Castello featured a statue of Hercules defeating Antaeus, alluding to the triumph of the garden's builder, Cosimo de' Medici, over a group of Florentine nobles who had tried to rebel against him. The garden was a form of political theater, presenting the power, knowledge, stability, beauty and grandeur the Medici had brought to Florence.

In England, the monarchical institution, reestablished under its absolute form, denoted once again the same vision of world as this of the continent. When Charles II had returned from his exile to the French court in 1660, he wanted to imitate what he had admired at the Tuileries. In the gardens of the royal palace of Hampton Court, he made three large alleys which parted from a vast semicircle planted with lime trees, thus reproducing – with the advice and help of French landscape architects – a model with converging lines joining towards a center, symbol of an authoritarian conception of power. During the eighteenth century, long after absolutism had vanished from England, gardens displayed a complex relationship with politics, especially during the second half of the century, when the picturesque style started to spread to France. Although gardens are considered as an ideal version of nature which goes beyond historicizing, they are the image of a certain type of political organization. According to Sophie Lefay, the Picturesque style came to France as a reaction to the formal garden, which was sometimes criticized by French intellectuals although it aimed at expressing the greatness of France:

> Comme on le sait, le jardin pittoresque en France s'élabore en réaction au style classique. La critique très virulente du modèle régulier constitue le même dénominateur commun à tous les textes – et ils sont nombreux – qui paraissent sur ce sujet à partir des années 1760. On peut penser que la réaction française est d'autant plus vive qu'il s'agit, en récusant un style perçu comme exprimant véritablement le génie français, de montrer que la France est cependant tout à fait

[54] Attlee, Helena. *Italian Gardens - A Cultural History*. Francis Lincoln Limited Publishers, 2006, 28.

> accessible au pittoresque. Tout suggère qu'il faut expier cette faute qu'a constitué le modèle régulier et en particulier là où il s'est établi.[55]

The English garden imposed itself in France during the pre- and post-revolutionary era. Many historians believed this was a cry for liberty, through a landscape with free outlines, in comparison with the constriction of formal gardens and absolute monarchy.

The grandeur of the French formal garden was nowhere more apparent than in Versailles, which Sophie Lefay describes as "the place where absolutism fully expresse[d] itself"[56]. The gardens of Versailles had already begun to be criticized even before the Picturesque style came to France. Saint-Simon[57] described Versailles as the most lonely and repulsive place and said about Louis XIV: « Il se plut à tyranniser la nature, à la dompter à force d'art et de trésors. […] La violence qui y a été faite partout à la nature repousse et dégoûte malgré soi. »[58] As such, geometry and straight lines, whether it be in France or England, were commonly associated with political tyranny. In *Le Jardin paysager anglais au dix-huitième siècle*, Michel Baridon explains this link between absolutism and geometry:

> Les éléments de ces jardins semblent fixes pour l'éternité parce que la géométrie est sans âge. Elle prescrit un ordre aussi immuable que la monarchie telle que la conçoivent les théoriciens de l'absolutisme, car si l'autorité de droit divin échoit au roi par un ordre fixé dès le premier chapitre de la Genèse, le temps n'a pas de prise sur la continuité dynastique. Versailles naît donc d'une volonté politique […][59]

The stability and immutability of geometry was to be found in absolute monarchism, at the time considered as an order decided by God and thus as immutable as geometrical theorems. Prior to Versailles, André Le Nôtre had designed the wonderful gardens of

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[55] Lefay Sophie. « Girardin et la politique du jardin pittoresque », in Tivisani-Moreau Isabelle, *Paysage politique*. Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016, 57.
[56] « Le lieu où s'exprime pleinement l'absolutisme », 57.
[57] Louis de Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon, gave in his memoirs a very accurate account of the life at the court of Versailles under Louis XIV.
[58] De Rouvroy Louis, duc de Saint-Simon. *Mémoires*. A. de Boislisle (éd.), Paris, Hachette, 1916, t. XXVIII, 159.
[59] Baridon, Michel. *Le Jardin paysager anglais au dix-huitième siècle*. Dijon : Editions Universitaires, 2000, 79.

Vaux-le-Vicomte. During a visit at Vaux-le-Vicomte, Louis XIV, hurt in his pride, wished for even more beautiful gardens. The building of the gardens at Versailles lasted for about a half-century and the King looked after every details. Organised around a central axis that seemed endless, the gardens, expressions of the uncontested power of the King, were a theater, the actors of which were no other than the aristocrats. Between 1689 and 1705, Louis XIV wrote several versions of *Manière de montrer les jardins de Versailles*. We can find below some passages of the different manners to visit the gardens, written by the hand of the King himself:

> 1. En sortant du chasteau par le vestibule de la Cour de marbre, on ira sur la terrasse ; il faut s'arrester sur le haut des degrez pour considérer la situation des parterres des pièces d'eau et les fontaines des Cabinets.
>
> 2. Il faut ensuite aller droit sur le haut de Latonne et faire une pause pour considérer Latonne les lésars, les rampes, les statües, l'allée royalle, l'Apollon, le canal, et puis se tourner pour voir le parterre et le Chasteau.
>
> 3. Il faut après tourner à gauche pour aller passer entre les Sfinx ; en marchant il faut faire une pause devant le cabinet pour considérer la gerbe et la nappe ; en arrivant aux Sfinx on fera une pause pour voir le parterre du midy, et après on ira droit sur le haut de l'Orangerie d'où l'on verra le parterre des orangers et le lac des Suisses.
>
> 4. On tournera à droit, on montera entre l'Apollon de bronze et le Lantin et l'on fera une pause au corps advancé d'où l'on voit Bacchus et Saturne.
>
> 5. On descendra par la rampe droite de l'Orangerie et l'on passera dans le jardin des orangers, on ira droit à la fontaine d'où l'on considérera l'Orangerie, on passera dans les allées des grands orangers, puis dans l'Orangerie couverte, et l'on sortira par le vestibule du costé du Labirinte.
>
> 6. On entrera dans le Labirinte , et après avoir descendu jusques aux canes et au chien, on remontera pour en sortir du costé de Bachus. […][60]

The design of the gardens of Versailles by André Le Nôtre was perhaps as important as the architecture of the castle, as it mirrored seventeenth-century French royalty. They showed both the dominance of Man over nature and a new conception of the world based on mechanics, a branch of science governed by geometry and optics. A multitude of statues could be found in the gardens, often alluding to Roman mythology and divinities such as Apollon to show the glory of Louis XIV and remind his title as the Sun King and place him as the equal of gods. In terms of composition, the gardens at Versailles displayed flower beds imitating embroidered fabrics into complex forms, that earned them the name of *parterres de broderie*. The presence of

[60] Barozzi, Jacques. *Le Goût des jardins*. Paris: Le Petit Mercure, 2006, 93-94.

axis through the canal and its adjoining avenues, geometrical lines, and the complex use of colors altogether gave the impression of these gardens as being "gardens of intelligence"[61]. For Robert Barris, the gardens of Versailles had been influenced by baroque gardens and their symbolism:

> As rational, ordered, intellectual experiences of nature, the gardens maintain a tie to the classical Renaissance spirit. The more dramatic and "irrational" areas of the garden reflect the baroque interest in creating emotional and theatrical experiences. These gardens [were] a series of planned and unplanned encounters with symbols of the king, with nature, and with infinity.[62]

He goes on with writing that the baroque influence upon the gardens turned them into a theater which staged the dramas and intrigues of the French royal court. The gardens were also the place for actual theatre plays and spectacles intended by Louis XIV to impress aristocrats and turn Versailles into a recreation of heaven.

Nevertheless, Michel Baridon recommends to carefully take into consideration the common association between geometrical gardens and absolutism:

> La “grande manière” ménage jusqu’aux lointains de percées majeures ; elle ouvre à l’œil un espace organisé par la géométrie et balisé par des symboles culturels. Cette emprise de la pensée sur l’espace, le roi et tous les laudateurs de son système de gouvernement y trouvent une transposition par l’image du rayonnement de la monarchie. Versailles n’est donc pas « l’illustration » d’une pensée politique : c’est sa convergence avec une pensée esthétique.[63]

Thus we can find the expression of tyranny through symmetry as an integrant part of the new aesthetics of the century. The Picturesque garden, as the antithesis of the classical model, seemed to have a priori the opposite ideological significance. Although lines and regular forms were erased, the English garden was extremely organized. It

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[61] Barris, Robert. *Versailles: A Landscape of Politics*. http://www.radford.edu/~rbarris/art216upd2012/Versailles.html, 2010.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Baridon, Michel. *Le Jardin paysager anglais au dix-huitième siècle*. Dijon : Editions Universitaires, 2000, 63-64.

aimed at giving the impression of liberty for the visitors having a walk, but they would always arrive at a Romantic kind of viewing point. The English garden was born as an artistic object in a country which had freed itself from absolutism and in which landlords built this type of gardens to show their independence from any central power during the eighteenth century. While the French formal garden was an assertion of a central power organized geometrically, the English garden belonged to an aristocracy embellishing its estates throughout the country – showing how two different nations applied their power organization to nature. Landscape gardens such as Chiswick, Twickenham or Stowe became quickly popular and fashionable places to visit for their Picturesque character. Moreover, the gardens of Stowe for instance were not only a matter of taste, aesthetics and spirituality but also a sort of "allegorical theatre"[64] serving as showing the progress of the nation. The gardens were also used as a symbol by the landlord, Lord Cobham, to show his political ideas and his feelings of the day through different paths. The Path of Vice and the Path of Virtue were inspired by Greek mythology and represented the two choices for Hercules. The Path of Vice led to a garden which alluded to dangerous women, seduction and excess. On the contrary the Path of Virtue led to gardens representing the Eden Garden on earth and good values. It was made up of many bridges that visitors had to cross to overcome the difficulties of taking the path of virtue. The third path was the Path of Liberty: it represented the political beliefs of Lord Cobham. As a simple metaphor it is the longest and hardest of all three walks, showing the complexity of the field of politics. Temples were built all along the path to show the grandeur of Great Britain during the eighteenth century.[65]

More generally, Laurent Châtel writes for the *Revue des Deux Mondes* that the English garden was indeed dedicated to the pleasure of the individual but constituted also an effective device to display the ideology of the nation's progress:

> La conception du jardin comme promenade ou déambulation se prêtait idéalement au *progress*, cette appréhension sérielle du sensible et du mental si typique de la Grande-Bretagne. En laissant le promeneur « progresser » d'une étape à une autre, le jardin anglais invite à la réflexion, et le développement personnel de l'individu

[64] Châtel, Laurent. *Le Jardin anglais: espace poli ou politique ?* in *Le Jardin, reflets des cultures et de l'histoire*. *Revue des Deux Mondes*, April 2017, 122.
[65] "Hence the Temple of Concord and Victory celebrates Britain's victory in the Seven Years' War and Lord Cobham's Pillar shows Cobham as a mighty Roman warrior." In *The Gardens at Stowe*, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/stowe/features/the-garden-at-stowe.

> s'accompagne d'une méditation personne sur le progrès idéal de la nation. Individu et nation sont donc particulièrement imbriqués dans la réception de certains jardins anglais comme si le jardin voulait être le carrefour d'un microcosme et d'un macrocosme.[66]

The statues of King George I or Queen Caroline in addition to the temples built in honor of British monarchs and more generally the investment of aristocratic figures in the landscape came from a desire to show a "patriotic progress". England claimed the ownership over the invention of landscape gardens and turned it into a tool to exhibit their good taste and power, especially in comparison to the splendor of the French formal garden. English intellectuals such as Joseph Addison and Lord Cobham thought that the landscape garden could only developed in a liberal country and to them, England was this country – the epitome of liberalism. Political ideas about liberalism were therefore to correspond with the aesthetics of the landscape garden.[67] The influence of foreign country on this new style of ordering nature was often not mentioned, "thereby creating the very myth of the Enlighness of the landscape garden.". In Gilpin's *Dialogue Upon the Gardens of the Right Honourable Lord Viscount Cobham at Stowe in Buckinghamshire*, two fictional characters are visiting Stowe and its gardens. Through their visit we get to see the elements of the gardens and how they connected with Lord Cobham's political ideas. The gardens are described by one of the characters as a way to instigate good taste, educate the nation and erase other models of gardens:

> Our Gardens for the most Part were laid out in so formal, awkward, and wretched a Manner, that they were really a Scandal to the very Genius of the Nation […]. But Stowe, it is to be hoped, may work some Reformation: I would have our Country Squires flock hither two or three times in a Year, by way of improvement, and after they have looked about them a little, return Home with new Notions, and begin to see the Absurdity of their clipped Yews, their Box-wood Borders, their flourished Parterres, and their lofty Brick-walls. (*Dialogue 48*)[68]

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[66] Châtel, Laurent. *Le Jardin anglais : espace poli ou politique ?* in *Le Jardin, reflets des cultures et de l'histoire*. Revue des Deux Mondes, Avril 2017, 122-123.
[67] Egbert, Marie-Luise. *Patriotic Islands: The Politics of the English Landscape Garden*. http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/edoc/ia/eese/artic22/egbert/egbert.html, 2002.
[68] Egbert, Marie-Luise. *Ibid*.

In that sense, the idea of education suited particularly to the French philosopher that contributed to popularize the English garden in France during the second half of the eighteenth century: Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Jean- Jacques Rousseau spent the last years before his death at the castle of Ermenonville. The landscape garden at Ermenonville (1765-1776) had been created by Marquis René de Girardin who took inspiration in the philosophy of Rousseau enunciated in *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), a novel in which there was a garden entirely made up by nature in contrast to French formal gardens. As a defender of the state of nature, Rousseau did not find satisfaction in gardens where everything was too organized and geometrical, as it was the case in French formal gardens. Gardens where nature was dominated and altered were the mirror of the French aristocratic world of the time, that implied all the social conventions a philosopher like Rousseau, advocating liberty, would reject. On the contrary, the English garden, as a place for walking, rambling and resting, corresponded more to his philosophy of meditation. Moreover, as the word "educate" was for Rousseau the literal equivalent of the word "cultivate", the English garden took on the role of a symbolical place for education. In the same way the gardener could alter nature with grafting, trimming and organizing, society corrupted Man and forced him to give up on his own identity to fit in. Thus Rousseau's ideal for the education of an individual could be find in the English garden, that is to say in an environment where the individual could blossom without being corrupted. Even though the gardens of Ermenonville gained recognition thanks to Rousseau's stay, René de Girardin conceived them slightly more in a Romantic approach than a philosophical one by displaying some picturesque features such as counterfeit ruins. In 1777, Girardin published his ideas in *De la Composition des paysages sur le terrain ou des moyens d'embellir la nature près des habitations en y joignant l'utile à l'agréable*, ideas that were inspired by the works of Joseph Addison and Alexander Pope about the origins of the English garden. He explicitly mentioned the rupture with the classical French garden through a sharp critic of André Le Nôtre's design:

> Le fameux Le Nôtre, qui fleurissoit au dernier siècle, acheva de massacrer la Nature en asujettissant tout au compas de l'Architecte; il ne fallut pas d'autre esprit que celui de tirer des lignes, & d'étendre le long d'une règle, celle des croisées du

> bâtiment; aussitôt la plantation suivit le cordeau de la froide simétrie[69] [...], les arbres furent mutilés de toute manière (...), la vue fut emprisonnée par de tristes massifs (...), aussitôt la porte la plus voisine pour sortir de ce triste lieu, fut-elle bientôt le chemin le plus fréquenté.[70]

Girardin thought that a landscape garden should not have any fence or apparent smaller gardens inside for the reason that it could restrain the Picturesque effect that was intended. Instead, he advocated the embellishment of nature by letting natural disorder and chaos settle in: "Si la nature mutilée et circonscrite, est triste & ennuyeuse, la nature vague & confuse n'offre qu'un pays insipide, & la nature difforme, n'est qu'un monstre."[71] In the late eighteenth century, after the fall of absolute monarchy, the landscape garden in France did not develop as much as in England, however; the French formal garden was to decline, without completely disappearing and leaving influence on a new type of garden known as the mixed garden, which combined Rococo elements, Chinese inspiration and exotic decorations at the image of the growing exchanges with colonies.

[69] All spelling mistakes in this quotation have been kept.
[70] De Girardin, René-Louis. *De la composition des paysages : ou Des moyens d'embellir la nature autour des habitations*. http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k85712r.r=Girardin+René-Louis.langFR, 1777, 9.
[71] Id., 10.

II) The Allegorization of Nature: Plants and Flowers Reflecting Human Emotions

1) The Medieval Garden: A Religious and Literary Allegory

Besides its part as a mirror of society's political ideology, the garden conveys once again another aspect of humanity by transmitting human feelings and emotions through effective symbolism. Today authentic medieval gardens have completely disappeared and only reconstitutions of them exist, based on the numerous written sources and representations in paintings, engravings and tapestries. Yet the symbolization of medieval gardens was certainly not a priority at the beginning of the medieval Era[72] until the ninth century, as gardens were before all utilitarian and designed to provide food and medicinal plants. After the fall of the last Roman emperor in 476, Europe went through a dark period, during which the art of garden almost effected a regression and lost a great part of its Antique splendor. Yet, the assumption of power by the Carolingian dynasty during the ninth century brought the art of garden up to date when Charlemagne established a list of eighty-nine species of trees and plants that were to be grown throughout the gardens of the whole empire. This happened along with economic progress, a new political order and the rise of culture thanks to the works of artists, all of which allowing the medieval mind to explore the allegorical representation of nature instead of considering it only for purposes of usefulness.

The building of religious edifices, such as Saint-Gall Abbey, contributed to expand the practice of gardening, which became widespread in monasteries and abbeys, where monks grew their own vegetables, plants and flowers. Abbeys were keen on taking good care of their garden as abbeys were at the heart of the preservation of arts and science including those linked to gardens of vegetables and medicinal plants. The most common garden was then the *hortulus*, or kitchen garden, dedicated to the growing of food, in which plants were placed into four geometrical spaces according to their modes of cooking. There was, for instance, a square reserved to plants such as cabbage, onions and parsnips that had to be cooked inside big pots. The composition of the

[72] The beginning of the medieval era is still debated but is commonly said to have taken place during the fifth century in Europe.

hortulus was simple: square-shaped or often rectangular, framed by walls or wattle fences to prevent the intrusion of animals, with narrow paths between the plans to ease the collection of plants. Besides food, the other preoccupation and science at the time that was medicine favoured the culture of medicinal gardens in abbeys and monasteries. The *hortus medicus* was also simple in structure. For example, we can see on Saint-Gall Abbey plan the simplicity of the *hortus medicus* (Fig. 8), with its two rows of four patches of plants where fennel, sage, cumin, poppies and wormwood were grown, the whole garden framed by fences covered with roses and lilies.

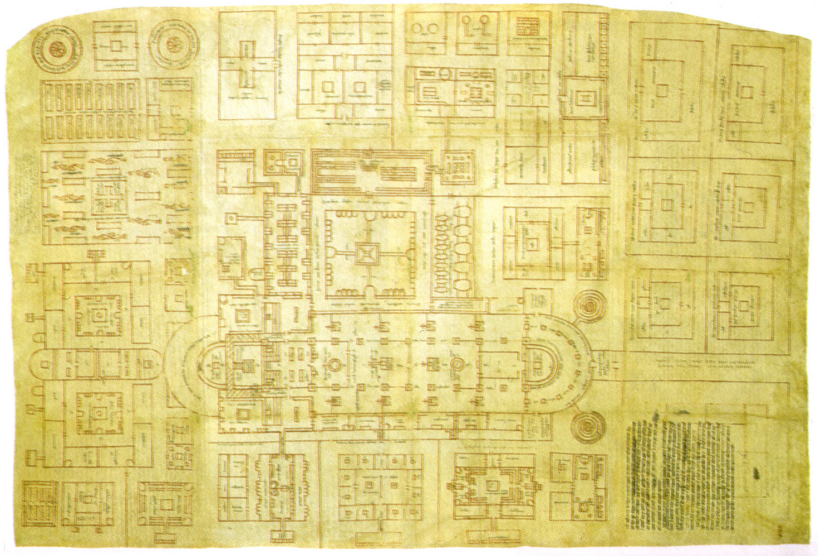

Figure 8 – *Plan of the Abbey of St-Gall* (1092)

Thus, even in medicinal gardens, the presence of flowers was noticeable. It was a reminder of the religious spirit and of the Virgin Mary and was in no case an obstacle to the utilitarian aspect of this garden. On the contrary, the coexistence of medicinal plants and of symbolical flowers constituted an overview of the aesthetical, religious and medical aspects of the medieval era and was coherent as the healing process depended on the will of God. On that matter, Walafrid Stabo, a Swiss monk, wrote a poem entitled *Liber de Cultura Hortum* (c. 840), known as *Hortulus*, in which he described the labour of the gardener and the method of culture of many plants. In this work, he gave a general history of horticulture at that time and may have used the Saint-Gall Abbey's plan to describe the species used in medicinal gardens.[73] In the later

[73] Kluckert, Ehrenfried. *Gartenkunst in Europa – von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*. Könemann Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2000, 24.

Middle Ages, texts, art and literary works provided a picture of developments in garden design. Pietro Di Crescenzi, a lawyer from Bologna, described through the twelve books he wrote about farming in the thirteenth century the practices in vigor during medieval times. His texts anchored the vision that came to be the reference when we think about medieval gardens, that is to say gardens enclosed by stonewalls and organized in small squares of plants. The form of these gardens was inspired by the rectangular shape of cloisters.

For Michel Baridon, Man's admiration for nature was not yet represented through outdoor gardens during the High Middle Ages but rather in churches and notably in stained-glass windows engraved with trees and flowers.[74] Light would go through the glass and reflect the forms of nature on the insides of the church, conferring to those motifs a sacred and ethereal dimension. Furthermore, Christianism used Man's love of nature rooted in Pagan religions precisely to prevent the possible risks of the propagation of non-Christian beliefs:

> Faire des plantes des emblèmes, c'était les associer à la religion chrétienne en conjurant tout risque de les voir divinisées. C'est ainsi que le lis, à cause de sa blancheur, en vint à figurer la pureté et à être associé au Christ ou au culte marital. […] La rose, sans doute parce qu'on voyait en elle la plus belle des fleurs, servit souvent aux mêmes fins édificatrices. Elle avait un parfum suave, des fleurs parfaites mais aussi des épines, ce qui permettait de l'associer à la sainteté de Marie et à la passion du Christ.[75]

The symbolism of medieval gardens was thus first a reflection of religious matter and this characteristic could be found in the late representations of the *hortus conclusus* from the 13th century.[76] The medieval garden, as is pictured in our collective imagination and which was the subject of numerous tapestries, paintings and poems, indeed came into existence two or three centuries only before the beginning of the Renaissance.[77] The *hortus conclusus* carried a highly religious symbolism as it

[74] Baridon, Michel. *Les Jardins : paysagistes, jardiniers, poètes*. Paris : Robert Laffont, 1998, 519.
[75] Id, 518-519.
[76] Par ailleurs, comme nous le dit Michel Baridon, le jardin à la symbolique chrétienne, symbole du façonnage de la nature par l'Homme, s'oppose à la nature sauvage des forêts qui à l'époque sont en cours de défrichement, et par extension aux restes de religions païennes.
[77] Id, 513.

represented Man's attempt to recreate the lost Eden after the Fall. The garden has historically been an unspoiled place, standing apart of the rest, a sort of miniature paradise recreated by Man.

The *hortus conclusus* was commonly associated to the religious figure of the Virgin Mary during medieval Times and the Renaissance – her purity proving as unspoiled as the enclosed garden. One reason and influence could probably be these lines found in the religious text of *The Song of Songs* (4:12):

"You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride;
you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain."

There is obviously a "mystical" dimension in the act of linking a figure of the New Testimony to a passage of the Old Testimony as the Virgin Mary is here assimilated to purity and the Eden. Historically, the garden has often been a preserved and isolated space, a kind of small paradise, in keeping of Persian influences[78]. In the enclosed garden, the Virgin Mary was often symbolised by the white lily, image of her purity, or by the white rose for her chaste love while the other typical flowers such the iris, the lily of the valley and the violet would also represent symbolically her other virtues. This theme was often used for paintings of the Annunciation where the enclosed garden was used as a background. The religious association of the garden with the virginity of Mary became a source of inspiration for Medieval artists: as such we found numerous representations of the *hortus conclusus* between the ninth and fifteenth century.

Between 1410 and 1420, the Upper Rhenish Master[79] painted the *Paradiesgärtlein* (Fig. 9), a Gothic masterpiece, which invites us in a sort of enchanted garden and its luxuriant nature. The characters are engaged in different activities in a peaceful atmosphere, far from the realities of the time such as war, disease and famines.

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[78] In *La Poétique des jardins*, Jean-Pierre Le Dantec explains that Persian gardens were the first gardens with a superposition of meanings: « Le jardin des Persans était un espace sacré qui devait réunir à l'intérieur de son rectangle quatre parties représentant les quatre parties du monde, avec un espace plus sacré encore que les autres qui était comme l'ombilic, le nombril du monde en son milieu ; et toute la végétation du jardin devait se repartir dans cet espace, dans cette sorte de microcosme. Quant aux tapis [persans], ils étaient à l'origine des reproductions de jardins (le jardin, c'est un tapis où le monde entier vient accomplir sa perfection symbolique, et le tapis, c'est une sorte de jardin mobile à travers l'espace). » in Le Dantec, Jean-Pierre. *La Poétique des jardins*. Actes Sud, 2011, p.13-14.

[79] The "Upper Rhenish Master" referred to an anonymous artist native of the current region of Strasbourg.

As such, the *Paradiesgärtlein* may constitute a way to escape terrestrial evils and miseries through the illustration of an idyllic place. The Virgin Mary is reading the Bible while Jesus is playing the psaltery, a medieval stringed instrument. The identity of the other characters is unsure although we can guess that one of the three figures on the right could be Saint-Georges because of the presence of the dragon lying behind him.

Figure 9 – Upper Rhenish Master, *Paradiesgärtlein* (1410)

The archangel Saint-Michel can be identified thanks to his wings and the black monkey sitting next to him, symbolizing a nature which has been domesticated. Even though the characters evolve in a dreamily fertile garden, the way nature is represented is not only a product of the artist's imagination as Nicole Chambon tells us in her article: "Les fleurs dessinées sont celles qui fleurissaient dans les jardins médiévaux: roses, lys, pâquerettes, marguerites, violettes etc."[80] The painting includes indeed at least eighteenth different varieties of flowers. She adds that some plants can be associated to a certain meaning mentioned in the Bible: « L'arbre à tronc double rappelle le serpent biblique, mais aussi l'arbre de la vie. » However the realistic details such as food, books and instruments show that this garden is not totally set apart from human pleasures. The

[80] Chambon, Nicole. *Les fleurs et les oiseaux du Jardin du Paradis de Francfort (1410-1420)*. *Revue de l'IFHA*, 2012, 218-220.

idyllic setting of the *hortus conclusus*, unspoiled by the evils of Earth, reunites the religious and profane world, as well as spirituality and sensuality. This small painting had to please the person it was destined to by evoking a feeling of peacefulness in contrast to the difficult living conditions of the era: "La mort omniprésente suscite une fascination pour le paradis, lieu d'où la mort est évacuée."[81]

In late Medieval paintings, the Virgin Mary was often represented as a rose without thorns. The Bible mentioned that before the original sin, the Garden of Eden sheltered roses with no thorns which appeared only after the Fall and as such, the Virgin Mary became associated to this original rose and uncorrupted beauty of the world.[82] In that manner, she was depicted inside rose gardens in pictures such as *Madonna of the Rose Bower* by Stefan Lochner (c. 1450), but also in Boticelli's *La Madonna del Roseto* (c. 1469-1470) and in *Madonna of the Strawberries*, painted by the Upper Rhenish Master (c.1420) (Fig. 10) amongst many others.

Figure 10 – Upper Rhenish Master, *Madonna of the Strawberries* (c.1420-1430)

[81] Ibid.
[82] Koehler, S.M., Rev. Theodore A. "The Christian Symbolism of the Rose", in *Roses and the Arts: A Cultural and Horticultural Engagement.* Wilberforce, Ohio: Central State University Press, 1986.

In *Madonna of the Strawberries*, the Virgin Mary is sitting with Jesus on a bed of different flowers all symbolizing her virtues, with violets at the centre, lilies of the valley on the left and snowdrops on the right. Behind her, three rose bushes are climbing on the wall, reminders of the Holy Trinity. The details of the depiction of the surroundings nature seem to bring this artwork closer to more modern paintings that would be found at the beginning of the Renaissance.[83] Consequently the *hortus conclusus* carried a Christian allegorical vision of the world for religious matters and existed in parallel with the *hortus delicarium*, a garden dedicated to rest, walking, reading and arts such as music and poetry.

A famous description of the leisure garden appeared in *De Vegetabilibus et Plantis* by the Domenican monk Albertus Magnus written around 1260 and is said have been an inspiration for the later representations of the *hortus deliciarum*. Besides the *hortus deliciarum* was before all the stage for the scenes of a new medieval literary theme – courtly love. Courtly love, known as *l'amour courtois* in French, became a major theme of Medieval literature during the twelfth century. The Enclyclopaedia Britannica defines courtly love as "a highly conventionalized code that prescribed the behaviour of ladies and their lovers."[84] Romantic relationships following courtly love were built through several stages. Courtly love originated from the South of France and spread throughout Europe during Medieval Times. It often implied an adulterous romantic relationship between a knight and a noble lady, or a noble lady and a man of inferior status, and never the contrary. The expression of amorous sentiments was at the heart of this literary theme by contrast to actual medieval life, where love marriages did not exist. It was characterized by a series chivalric codes such as honor, duty and courage and by rules that dictated the conduct of the lovers.

Written between 1186 and 1190, Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore*[85] described in details the rules of courtly love amongst which were: love is not confined to marriage, jealousy is the manifestation of love, embrace only your beloved, etc[86]. The lovers were

[83] Wolf, Laurent. *La Madone aux fraisiers de Soleure : Trésors inattendus des musées suisses*. Le Temps, 9 juillet 2011.
[84] Definition of courtly love at: https://www.britannica.com/art/courtly-love.
[85] This treatise is also known as *De arte honeste amandi* which is translated by *The Art of Courtly Love*.
[86] For more examples, see Le Chapelain, André. *Traité de l'amour courtois*. Librairie Klincksieck, 2002, 182-183.

not considered truly in love if they did not go through all the stages. First, the two lovers delicately showed their attraction through eye contacts. Then the knight had to keep silent about his love for the lady before giving her a passionate declaration. Respecting good manners, the lady would reject the knight who nonetheless would continue pursuing her to show his virtues and loyalty. He also had to accomplish heroic actions to gain the lady's affection. Once they were in love, the consummation of romance happened through a declaration of mutual love and later, several secret meetings, often taking place in an orchard or in an enclosed garden. The secret nature of the enclosed garden constituted a perfect reflection of the part of secrecy in courtly love adulterous relationships. Moreover *De Amore* was supposedly written to set the rules of social life at the court of Eleanor of Aquitaine between 1170 and 1174. In the introduction of *The Art of Courtly Love by Andreas Capellanus*, John Parry described the book as "one of those capital works which reflect the thought of a great epoch, which explain the secret of a civilization"[87]. This kind of "platonic" relationships and their codes became a major theme in the literature of the time and took part in shaping the popular romances and knight tales. However, the term "courtly love" did not exist at the time and was coined in 1883 by Gaston Paris, a specialist of Medieval studies. Before that, during the Middle-Ages, the equivalent term *fin'amor* was used, a word which came from the French *langue d'oïl*. Gaston Paris' term helped to understand Lancelot and Guinevere's love affair that was first dealt in Chretien De Troyes' poem *The Knight of the Cart*, written most likely in 1177 and which contributed to widespread the theme of courtly love in medieval literature. In the poem, Lancelot is thus entirely devoted to Guinevere who exerts a control over him as he obeys her order. He becomes the epitome of the brave knight that we found in the imaginary of courtly love as he is ready to die in order to defend her honour when their adulterous relationship is discussed by Meleagant.

In the same vein, in his *Canterbury Tales*, English Medieval poet Geoffrey Chaucer wrote about the story of a courtly love for a married woman taking place in *The Miller's Tale*. In many instances, the setting for stories of courtly love happened to be the typical enclosed Medieval garden. The garden in medieval literature was present as a symbol and a character of courtly love. More precisely, the evocation of the garden and of nature represented both a place fashioned by Man, which referred to the hierarchy

[87] Parry, John. *The Art of Courtly Love by Andreas Capellanus*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, 20.

of feelings and to social rules but also a natural space allowing, through its "wild" character, to express an irrepressible and impossible love and the will to reach the romantic ideal. The vegetable kingdom could be a metaphor for courtly love or for a text where the garden is the place where the amorous discourse is liberated. For example, in the famous scene of the *rendez-vous* in the legend of *Tristan and Iseult*, King Mark observes the lovers who secretly meets at night underneath a tree in the castle's orchard. The garden as a place of romantic secret meeting raises Tristan and Iseult to a perfect example of courtly lovers and is highly symbolical as the scene presents similarities with the representations of the Fall of Man from the garden of Eden, with Adam and Eve standing near the Tree of Knowledge, the snake lurking behind them[88]. The passage evokes not only a highly symbolical place because it is located inside the castle of King Mark, but also because it is a place of freedom and good manners which highlights even more the characteristics of courtly love. Marie de France's version of the orchard scene mentions the presence of a hazel tree and a honeysuckle flower which represent respectively Tristan and Iseult. The hazel tree and the honeysuckle are inseparable. When the honeysuckle winds around the hazel tree, they can live together but if they are separated, they both die.

At that time, gardens became meaningful backgrounds for well-known literary masterpieces such as Guillaume De Lorris's *Romaunt of the Rose*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and the German epic, *King Laurin*, which all joined the group of medieval works named the "Rosengarten group". Even though these poems were purely imaginative and allegorical, they defined the rose garden as a luxuriant place propitious to romance.

The *Romaunt of the Rose* by Guillaume De Lorris was written around 1230 and completed by Jean De Meung in 1278. The first part of the poem deals with the knight's quest to get the Rose, which represents symbolically his lover. The story of the quest for the rose is told by the lover and seemed to take place in a dreamy world. While he walks along a river on a spring morning, the lover arrives to an orchard enclosed by

[88]Besides, the legend of *Tristan and Iseult* mentions that Tristan, not in love with Iseult at first, is given a love potion by the queen. In that sense, Iseult's control over Tristan may be compared to Eve's seduction of Adam. For more, see: Fouquet-Plümacher, Doris. *Die Baumgartenszene des Tristan in der mittelalterlichen Kunst und Literatur*. In Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie 92, 1973, 360-70.

high walls[89] and saw a beautiful rose behind a hedge. The orchard is actually the propriety of Deduit which means "pleasure" in Old French. The lover must reach the rose inside the orchard but to achieve this goal, he first has to learn the art of courtly love with the God of love. During his quest, he meets several characters appearing on the garden walls, some of which personifications of vices strictly condemned by the rules of courtly love such as Felony, Jealousy and Peor. In this poem, the plot and the actions of the protagonists revolve exclusively around the quest for the lady's love, represented by the most beautiful roses in the enclosed garden. The garden is the femininity of the Rose and even her virginity which is seized as soon as the knight manages to enter. The rose has always given rise to strong symbolical association and is a sign for the expression of femininity since the sanctification of the Virgin Mary. This symbolism would last overtime in historical ages and still, nowadays, the rose and flowers in general are synonymous for delicateness and frailty, both considered as feminine qualities.

2) Flower Symbolism in Painting: The Pre-Raphaelite's Symbolical Gardens

The medieval themes of the *hortus conclusus* and *hortus deliciarum*, respectively a sacred and a profane place propitious to love discourse, remained highly inspirational themes throughout the history of painting. The return to medieval religious painting started at the beginning of the nineteenth century in several European countries after some artists and critics noticed the decline of contemporary art and wanted a return to a less formal art. This desire was put into practice by artistic brotherhoods such as the Guild of Saint-Luc (1809-1819) better known under the name of the Nazarenes[90] in Germany.

However, this was in nineteenth-century England that these medieval themes came to a new age of prosperity. Indeed, during the Victorian era, a new artistic current of painting emerged and came to be known as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The Royal Academy of London imposed rigid conventions to art students. In order to escape these constraints, a group of seven students founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in

[89] « Si vi un vergier grant et lé / Tout clos de haut mur batallié. » (vv. 130-131)
[90] Laurent, Béatrice, « Existe-t-il un style préraphaélite ? » *Cercles*, revue électronique de l'Université de Rouen, May 2005, 22.

1848. The three first initiators of the movement, respectively Sir John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt and Dante Gabriel Rossetti[91], were themselves students at the Royal Academy, with Millais entering the Academy aged eleven only. Millais' talent was quickly noticed by Hunt, who himself could paint only during his free time, when he was not working as an office worker. Hunt met Millais in 1843 and from then on they forged strong links based on their discussions about paintings and poetry and about their singular ideas on art.[92] Later, they befriended with Dante Gabriel Rossetti and all together formed the first Brotherhood. The other founders of the brotherhood were James Collison, Thomas Woolner, William Michael Rossetti and Frederick Georges Stephens but numerous artists outside the seven artists became associated to the Pre-Raphaelites such as William Morris, Charles Allston Collins, Arthur Hughes or Edward Burne-Jones. During the 1830s-1840s in England, more and more artists took an interest in art differing from the ideals of Renaissance painting and had a taste for 'primitive' or Medieval works. This trend established a link of continuity between late Romantic art and the Pre-Raphaelite style, a link remarkably noticeable in the works of the Nazarenes, a nineteenth-century German Romantic movement, founded in 1809 by six students at the Vienna Academy, who aimed at returning to the honesty of Medieval religious art. The Nazarenes' style was brought back to England by William Dyce (1806-1864) and Ford Maddox Brown (1821-1843), who himself had befriended with Rossetti, an admirer of his Christian style.[93] The Pre-Raphaelites appreciated qualities such as simplicity and rich colours which differed from the Royal Academy's teachings of contrasts and dark colours. Another influence on the Brotherhood was the Victorian art critic John Ruskin with his famous advice in *Modern Painters* to "go to nature in all singleness of heart […] rejecting nothing, selecting nothing and scorning nothing"[94]. All these influences led the Pre-Raphaelite artists to their "near-photographic reproduction of minute details"[95] and their "truth to nature": they even sometimes painted outdoors to copy nature as truthfully as possible.

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[91] Rossetti's first name came from his father's love for the work of fourteenth-century Italian poet Dante.
[92] Birchall, Heather. *Les Préraphaélites*. Editions Taschen, 2016, 8.
[93] Des Cars, Laurence. *The Pre-Raphaelites: Romance and Realism*. Thames & Hudson, 2000, 19-20.
[94] Ruskin, John. *Modern Painters, Volume I*. London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1857, 417.
[95] "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online Academic Edition, 2012.

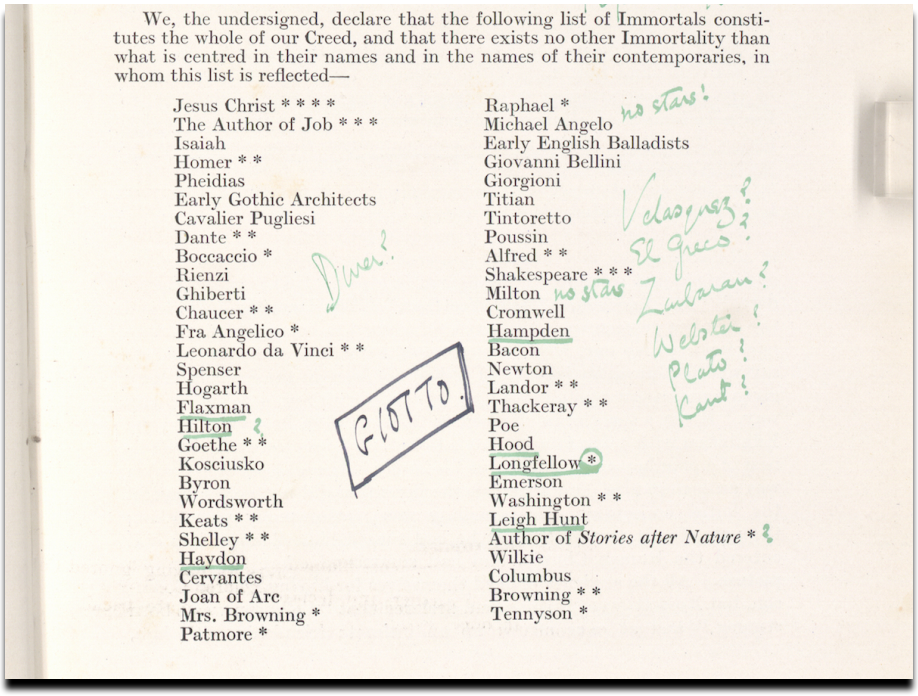
By 1850, the creation of a secret brotherhood was not a secret anymore as the artists had begun to expose their ideas in a magazine called *The Germ*. When Millais first exhibited *Christ in the House of his Parents*, the Victorian public was scandalized by the banalization of such a religious subject and the painting was famously criticized by Charles Dickens. Yet, Millais and Hunt kept on exhibiting their works, following the evolution of the Pre-Raphaelite style. Thanks to the support of famous critic John Ruskin in two letters he wrote for *The Times*, the Pre-Raphaelites came to be appreciated. In these letters, Ruskin shared his appreciation for the Pre-Raphaelite relation to early Italian art and he particularly praised the details and colours used by the Pre-Raphaelite artists. The Brotherhood of young artists was thus brought into light. Yet, during the 1850s, the Brotherhood gradually dissolved as Woolner decided to go to Australia in 1852. In 1854, Hunt decided to travel to Israel to get inspiration for his religious paintings. Moreover, in 1853, Millais became associate of the Royal Academy, the very same institution at the origin of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and their rebellious statements, marking thus the 'formal end' of the Brotherhood, as Rossetti coined it.

After the dissolution of the Brotherhood, the main characteristics of their style were more or less kept in the artists' future works but some of them turned towards a more symbolic approach. While John Everett Millais chose to stay close to realism, Dante Gabriel Rossetti favored chivalric themes and Medieval poetry and William Holman Hunt continued to work on religious themes, making several trips to Egypt and Palestine to paint Bible episodes.[96] Despite the separation of the group, Pre-Raphaelitism continued to influence Victorian art during the second half of the nineteenth century and it did not take a long time for the Brotherhood to reassemble with a line of direction more turned to aesthetics than naturalism. The second wave of Pre-Raphaelitism was represented by Rossetti, Burne-Jones (1833-1898) and William Morris (1834-1896); although they all shared a passion for Medieval themes and Arthurian legends, the Brotherhood effected a gradual shift to Italian art and Botticelli, taking as muses Jane Burden and Elisabeth Siddall respectively the wives of Morris and Rossetti who were to become the faces of the renowned Pre-Raphaelite *femme fatale* with her long hair, vivid eyes and gracious neck.

[96] Birchall, Heather. *Les Préraphaélites*. Editions Taschen, 2016, 20.

The Pre-Raphaelites had established a famous 'List of Immortals', a list of subjects worth painting and classified in order of importance (Fig. 11), which they said was "the whole of [their] creed". The artists solemnly mentioned the undeniable inspirations of their works just before listing the names of the 'Immortals':

> We, the undersigned, declare that the following list of Immortals constitutes the whole of our Creed, and there exists no other immortality than what is centered in their names and in the names of their contemporaries, in whom this list is reflected.



We, the undersigned, declare that the following list of Immortals constitutes the whole of our Creed, and that there exists no other Immortality than what is centred in their names and in the names of their contemporaries, in whom this list is reflected—

Jesus Christ * * * *
The Author of Job * * *
Isaiah
Homer * *
Pheidias
Early Gothic Architects
Cavalier Pugliesi
Dante * *
Boccaccio *
Rienzi
Ghiberti
Chaucer * *
Fra Angelico *
Leonardo da Vinci * *
Spenser
Hogarth
Flaxman
Hilton
Goethe * *
Kosciusko
Byron
Wordsworth
Keats * *
Shelley * *
Haydon
Cervantes
Joan of Arc
Mrs. Browning *
Patmore *

Raphael *
Michael Angelo
Early English Balladists
Giovanni Bellini
Giorgioni
Titian
Tintoretto
Poussin
Alfred * *
Shakespeare * * *
Milton
Cromwell
Hampden
Bacon
Newton
Landor * *
Thackeray * *
Poe
Hood
Longfellow *
Emerson
Washington * *
Leigh Hunt
Author of *Stories after Nature* *
Wilkie
Columbus
Browning * *
Tennyson *

Figure 11 – Hunt, William Holt. *The Pre-Raphaelite 'List of Immortals'* (1848)

Helen Roberts quotes the words of Millais in order to explain the importance of the subjects and the criteria of selection for this list:

> The "immortality" of those on the list, Rossetti hastened to explain, resided in "the perennial influence exercised by great thinkers and workers". […] It was a curious list. It included not only artists, but writers, philosophers, religious figures and national heroes.[97]

[97] Roberts, Helen. "The Medieval Spirit of Pre-Raphaelitism", in *Pre-Raphaelitism and Medievalism in the Arts*. Edwin Mellen Press, 1992, 15.

The classification of the list was based on a system of stars, giving four stars to characters whom they considered at the highest degree of immortality. The list featured indeed characters ranging from religious figures such as Jesus or Isaiah to authors from all times (Chaucer, Keats, Poe, etc.), including scientists and other categories (Washington, Newton, Columbus, etc.). It included twenty-nine poets and authors and seventeen figures of the visual arts of painting, sculpture and architecture. Jesus was classified first in the list as the only subject reaching four stars followed by William Shakespeare and the author of Job with three stars. This list was revealing of the ideas of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: with the absence of English painters, we can sense a rejection of the native art which, for them, had kept on declining since Rafael, and more generally their fascination for the medieval may reflect nineteenth-century society's rejection of industrialization via an idealization of the past. On this matter, Beatrice Laurent tells us about the modernity of the Pre-Raphaelites and their adherence to the Medieval spirit of the Victorian times:

> Ce qui explique le succès durable des préraphaélites anglais, c'est leur adéquation parfaite avec l'esprit de leur temps, jusque dans ses paradoxes. Un âge fier et critique de lui-même, épris d'un passé mythique et pourtant tourné vers l'avenir, ardent dans sa recherche de la vérité mais privilégiant toujours le compromis conciliateur, ne pouvait qu'enfanter des artistes à son image.[98]

Amongst the numerous themes tackled in their paintings, the Pre-Raphaelite enthusiasm for religious Medieval art was expressed through a nineteenth-century version of the theme of the *hortus conclusus*, used as a background for several richly symbolical paintings of the Brotherhood. In parallel, Pre-Raphaelite art, by the inclusion of natural beautiful depicted elements, matched the floral culture that was developing during Victorian times. The use of highly symbolical flowers and gardens by the artists served to inject additional layers of understandings to their subject and could become – as we will see with the following examples – the central element of the work.

For instance, Pre-Raphaelite painter Charles Alston Collins used the theme of the *hortus conclusus* in his *Convent Thoughts* in 1850 (Fig. 12), inspired by the medieval representations of the Virgin Mary in the enclosed garden. A line from the *Book of*

[98] Laurent, Béatrice, « Existe-t-il un style préraphaélite ? » *Cercles*, revue électronique de l'Université de Rouen, May 2005, 23.

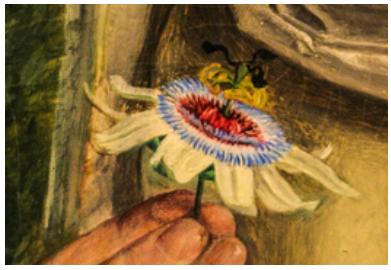
Psalms "I meditate on all Thy works; I muse on the work of Thy hands" (143:5) was presented with the work when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy. On this painting, we can see a young nun standing inside a *hortus conclusus* and holding a Book of Hours. Collins transmitted the idea of the purity of the Virgin Mary and of female virginity via a system of symbols[99] including floral imagery. The latter is here meant to mirror the attributes of the subject of the painting: the novice. We can see that the novice has her book opened on the page of the crucifixion and on another page that is harder to recognize, and which is sometimes said to be the depiction of the Annunciation in accordance with the appearance of lilies in the painting. However her attention is distracted by the beauty of the surrounding nature. On the left, roses and white lilies are standing beside the novice as traditional emblems of the Virgin Mary. According to Debra Mancoff, they symbolize here the piety and chastity of the young nun as well as the purity of her heart with the water lilies.[100] Collins also painted lilies on the golden frame of the painting, bringing even more symbolism to the picture.

Figure 12 – Collins, Charles Alston. *Convent Thoughts* (1850)

[99] https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=art_honors
[100] Mancoff, Debra. *The Pre-Raphaelite Language of Flowers*. New York & London: Prestel, 2002, 12.

The Latin inscription written at the top of the frame "Sicut lilium" is taken from the Song of Solomon: "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."[101]

In this passage, Christ speaks about the church ("my love") and Collins' use of this quotation adds another dimension to the use of the lily in this work. The lily represents both the Virgin (and by extension the nun) and the church. Further blurring the distinction between the nun and the church, the high walls of *hortus conclusus* symbolize her virginity and the untouched Virgin. In her right hand, the novice holds a passionflower, or as it was usually called a "floral apostle" because of its association with the Passion of Jesus. The flower's corona represented the crown of thorns, the ten petals were the ten faithful apostles, the five anthers were the wounds, the three stigmas stood as the nails and the tendrils recalled the whips used during the flagellation.



The profane equivalent of the *hortus conclusus*, the *hortus deliciarum* also found its way in Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics as we will study in Calderon's *Broken Vows* and Burne-Jones' *Heart of the Rose*.

Broken Vows (Fig. 13) was finished in 1856 during the second wave of Pre-Raphaelitism which accorded a fair part to symbolism. Philip Hermogenes Calderon[102] depicts a rather tragic scene as we can guess from the title of the painting. The lady is physically separated from her lover by the garden wall, but also mentally as she caught him courting another lady. She has her hand on her heart evoking her despair. Floral symbolism is interesting here as it helps us to better understand the scene. The man

[101] "*Sicut lilium inter spinas, sic amica mea inter filias*."
[102] Philip Hermogenes Calderon (1833-1898) was an English painter of Spanish descent. He was little known in his early years when he adopted the Pre-Raphaelite style, a style he abandoned later to specialize in historical paintings.

gives to his lover a pink rosebud which has not completely hatched out, symbolizing a new love blooming and thus also the inconstancy of the man. The ivy climbing on the walls and surrounding the betrayed woman may symbolize the eternal love she believed in. At her feet lies a bracelet, probably given by her former lover. We can notice that the iris on the left is withered: in ancient Greek mythology, the iris was associated to lost love and grief and its presence here adds even more to the dramatic atmosphere. Debra Mancoff notices for that matter that the withered iris is linked to a passage from Longfellow's poem – *The Spanish Student*, Act II, scene iv, spoken by Preciosa – that was presented with the painting at the exhibition:

> The dry petals recall the lines of poetry by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow that accompanied the painting when it was first exhibited: "More hearts are breaking in this world of ours/Than I could say… Who hears the falling of a forest leaf?/Or who takes note of every flower that dies?'[103]

The garden, a "haven for lovers" in the Medieval tradition, becomes here a place of treachery and infidelity.

Figure 13 – Calderon, Philip Hermogenes. *Broken Vows* (1856)

[103] Id, 16.

In Edward Burne-Jones' works, the part of medieval imagery was at least as important as the part of Arthurian legends. In 1891, Burne-Jones finished a series of three paintings inspired by *The Romaunt of the Rose* (c.1360), a medieval poem written by Geoffrey Chaucer who had been granted three stars in the Pre-Raphaelite List of 'Immortals', himself inspired by Guillaume De Lorris' *The Romaunt of the Rose* (c.1230). Prior to the accomplishment of these paintings, Burne-Jones and his friend William Morris had worked together to create several tapestries also based on *The Romaunt of the Rose* in 1872, which thus served as models for Burne-Jones' trilogy. The three paintings were conceived as a logical series. The first one was entitled *The Pilgrim at the Gate of Idleness* and depicted the meeting between the Pilgrim and Idleness, personified in the appearance of a seducing young lady. The second one, *Love and the Pilgrim*, took place after the Pilgrim resisted to the temptation and was led by the god of love through a briar shrub. In the third and last painting, *The Heart of the Rose*, the Pilgrim led by the God of love finally arrives inside the garden where the Rose, a personification of the lady, is waiting (Fig. 14).

Figure 14 – Burne-Jones, Edward. *The Heart of the Rose* (1889)

We will focus on this final painting for the interesting natural symbolism it displays and the garden serving as its background. Additionally, this final painting was

accompanied by verses written by William Morris, both setting a context for the painting and reflecting upon the accomplishment of the Pilgrim's quest:

'The ending of the tale ye see;
The Lover draws anigh the tree,
And takes the branch, and takes the rose,
That love and he so dearly chose.'

– William Morris

The lady with her dress matching the colour of nature is waiting inside a rosebush, a colour making her melt into the bush and part of the vegetation. The lilies growing on the right symbolize undoubtedly the purity of their love. According to Bill Waters, although the rose is a personification of ideal love, the painting also brings about the complexity of this romantic relationship:

> They [briar roses] came to symbolize his experience [Edward Burne-Jones' experience] of love which brought both pleasure and pain -- the pleasure in an idealised loved one which simultaneously brought about feelings of despair and ultimate loss.[104]

It is indeed via a symbolical floral web that we can better decipher the story behind the painting and understand the emotions at stake. Even though the Pilgrim and the lady are put into connection by the God of Love, the Rose still keeps her mysterious aura and her printing in the vegetation makes her presence almost imperceptible, turning her into an ethereal figure only visible thanks to her beauty.[105] She looks at the Pilgrim with what seems to be pity as he is in a position that suggests his tiredness, still relying upon the hand of the God of Love.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, when the influence of late Pre-Raphaelitism was still very present, John William Waterhouse made one of the most renown representations of garden in Pre-Raphaelitism. He finished *The Soul of the Rose*,

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[104] Waters, Bill. *Burne-Jones, A Quest for Love: Works by Sir Edward Burne-Jones Bt and Related Works by Contemporary Artists*. London: Peter Nahum, 1993.
[105] Ringel, Meredith. *The Unattainable Rose in Love and the Pilgrim*. http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/bj/paintings/ringel7.html, 2004.

also known as *My Sweet Rose*, in 1908. Waterhouse was particularly known for the associations he made between women and flowers. On this painting, he depicted a red-hair woman smelling a blooming rose against the wall of a garden (Fig. 15).

Figure 15 – Waterhouse, John William. *The Soul of the Rose* (1908)

Debra Mancoff explains that the link established by Waterhouse between roses and women emphasized "the transitory state of young womanhood that parallels the beauty of the budding and blooming of the traditional flower of love."[106]

In general, flowers in Pre-Raphaelite works were associated with feminine virtues and the artists of the Brotherhood took symbolical meanings in a popular yet untheorized floral lexicon.

Pre-Raphaelite artists focused on female beauty and the Pre-Raphaelite woman was often depicted on a flowery background or at least accompanied by different types of flowers, that were chosen for their symbolical meanings. For instance, Millais, one of the prominent figures of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, depicted the death of

[106] Mancoff, Debra. *The Pre-Raphaelite Language of Flowers*. New York & London: Prestel, 2002, 50.

Ophelia from Shakespeare's Hamlet and includes in his painting a variety of different flowers constituting a rich symbolical web of flowers (Fig. 16).

Figure 16 – Millais, Sir John Everett. *Ophelia* (1851-1852)

Ophelia goes mad after the death of her father and Hamlet's change of mind about their romance and commits suicide by drowning herself into the water. The vegetation in the picture was painted outside with nature as model contrary to the character who was painted in Millais' painting workshop[107]. There are many flowers represented in this picture, some that were mentioned in this passage of Act IV scene 5[108] and others that were added by Millais for their meaning. The weeping willow painted beneath Ophelia is a symbol of forsaken love. On the foreground, the buttercups symbolize ungratefulness and childishness. Pain is represented by the stinging nettles that grow around the branches of the willow. The daisies floating near Ophelia's right hand represent innocence. There are several roses of different colours: the pink roses have, amongst their multiple significations, the meanings of grace and gentle love and the white ones often represent virginity and innocence. Roses hold many symbolic meanings such as youth, love and beauty. Ophelia is wearing a necklace made of violets

[107] Elizabeth Sidall served as a model and posed inside a bathtub in Millais' workshop.
[108] The appearance of symbolical flowers in Shakespearian plays became so renown that "Shakespeare" gardens were created, especially in the US, where plants and flowers mentioned in Shakespeare's poems and plays were displayed.

that echo directly to the play itself and represent fidelity, chastity and sometimes death for young people. The blue forget-me-nots (Myosotis) on the right carry the meaning suggested by their name. The red poppy refers to the general theme of the painting since it represents death, or sleep sometimes. The symbolical web of flowers is almost sufficient here to tell a whole story by itself.

In Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix* (Fig. 17), floral imagery is also used in a central element of the picture with the white poppy. Beatrix is not dead yet but she is on her way to death as a bird is carrying a poppy, whose meanings are death but also often chastity.

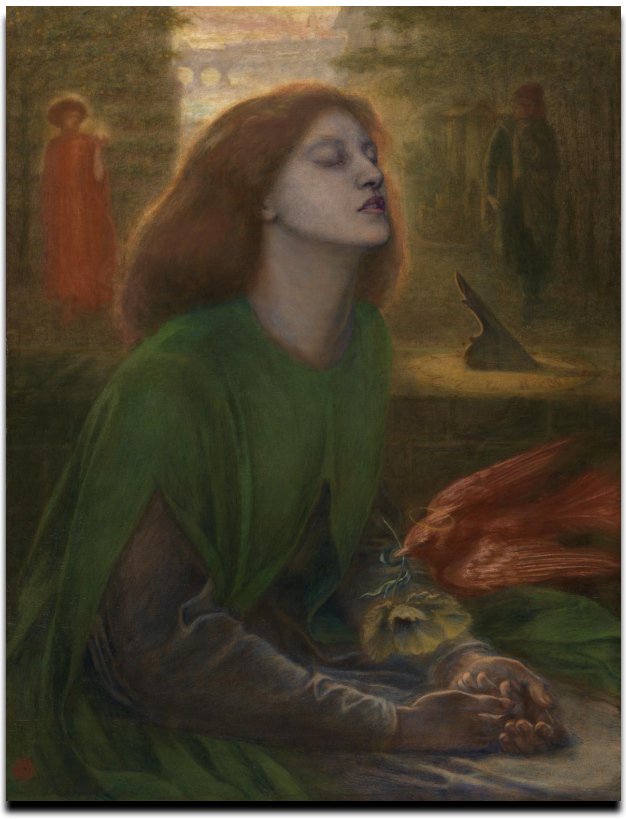

Figure 17– Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Beata Beatrix* (c. 1864-1870)

Her posture (parted lips, closed eyes, head up), the colours, the background and the light give to the picture a dream-like atmosphere and even an impression of serenity or epiphany before death. In a letter to William Graham of March 1873, Rossetti confirmed the significance of this poppy: "*in sign of the supreme change, the radiant bird, a messenger of death, drops the white poppy between her open hands*."

Beauty has always been the prime drive of paintings, so it is no wonder that the marvelous, natural, diverse subject of flowers often appeared repeatedly in paintings.

These painted flowers, however, often served more a precise purpose than a decorative display. Flowers can be extremely symbolic of various concepts and attribute different meanings to a painting depending on a variety of factors. Throughout the history of visual arts, flowers were associated to multiple different meanings. Flowers were often considered as a representation of nature and life as they were seen as the most beautiful livings of the natural world. Most of the time, artists would place flowers at the centre of their work to instill a dimension of serenity, prettiness and simplicity of nature. Flowers were also a symbol for fertility. For instance, when lilies were added in a painting, they could symbolize fertility – yet, they sometimes also serve as a sign for death and mourning (this meaning of the lily was very much present in some paintings by Claude Monet). Besides fertility, flower terms were used to mean sexuality. The roses of Salvador Dali, for instance, represented women sexuality. Many additional meanings could be cited for flowers – naivety, childhood, love, luck, lust, happiness, sorrow, death and life itself. As such, for Jack Goody, a culture of flowers really developed during the nineteenth century, becoming an integrant part of society not only in England but throughout Europe:

> A picture of the nineteenth century would be incomplete without an acknowledgement of the role of flowers, and of the expansion and democratization of their culture in so many ways. In art, there was the middle-class lady with her easel, the classical subjects of Alma-Tadema, the medieval romances of Pre-Raphaelites, the perfection of late Victorian English water colourists and above all the vigorous sensations of the Impressionists. This was the era of horticultural societies, the flower shows and competitive displays, of the universal gardener and of the literary garden into which Tennyson invited Maude. So much took place with flowers and gardens that for Baudelaire flowers became evil symbols of a world he had rejected.[109]

In literature all around the world, flowers have been the subject for arts, with poetic floral metaphors and, as Stephen Buchmann underlines, "subjects for symbolical imagery of people and their environments". Flowers were the means to inject colour in

[109] Goody, Jack. *The Culture of Flowers*. Cambridge University Press, 1993, 232.

the representation of nature and constituted a metaphor for the shortness of beauty, love and existence.[110]

3) The Part of Humanity Reflected in Floral Language and Metaphors

Either for utilitarian or enjoyable purposes, Man uses nature to its own interest. While growing vegetables and plants belongs to the first category, flowers are definitely part of the pleasure we can draw from nature. Even if we may see a part of superficiality in growing flowers for decorative purposes, flowers seem to instil an additional share of humanity in Man. As Delphine Lauritzen explains, ancient traditions of wearing flowers on festivities such as weddings or funerals, or during Antiquity to pay tribute to divinities, would attribute to these same festivities a unique character.[111] Man's vision of the world seems to be at the image of the ephemeral nature of a flower, which becomes a symbol for Man's own grandeur as well as his fragility.[112]

In Victorian England, flowers were found nearly everywhere – in hair, clothing, jewelry, home decor, stationery, tapestries, furniture and more. In the introduction for *Flora Symbolica*, John Henry Ingram explains that the culture of flowers distinguished itself by its universal character as it was traditionally present in many civilisations throughout the world:

> The love of flowers is felt and acknowledged by everybody, and in every land: it is a theme for everyone, a feeling in which all can coincide […] So universal a feeling – a feeling doubtless coeval with Man's existence upon this globe – could not fail to be taken advantage of, and made subservient to, the passions of mortality; and to us it appears the most natural thing in the world that flowers should have been made emblematic and communicative agents of our ideas. In all countries of this globe, and in all ages, flowers are seen employed for symbolic and decorative purposes.[113]

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[110] Buchmann, Stephen. *The Reason for Flowers: their History, Culture, Biology, and How They Change our Lives*. Scribner, 2015, 221.
[111] Lauritzen, Delphine. *Flora, les fleurs dans l'Antiquité*. Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 2017, 177.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ingram, John Henry. *Flora symbolica; or, The language and sentiment of flower*s. https://archive.org/details/florasymbolica, 1869, 6.

The love for flowers was thus shared by a sheer majority of cultures, flowers becoming inevitably mirrors of life and taking on different significations. In nineteenth-century England for instance, the fascination for nature was such that the Victorians tried to capture the very essence of flowers by bringing nature indoors through the practice of flower wax modelling, among other things. Not only this was an attempt at distorting nature by bringing it indoors but also a way to capture everlastingly the beauty of short-lived flowers. Ann B. Shteir describes the 'cultural phenomenon' of wax flower modelling as mostly feminine and as one of the accomplishments required for ladies. This activity consisted in shaping wax to make realistic flowers by following the instructions of specialized books. Shteir adds that this phenomenon was in perfect concordance with the Victorian mind: "Wax flower modeling combined the era's obsession with nature with its fixation on the uncanny, lifelike qualities of wax."[114]

However, the Victorians' love for flower meanings came especially from the Ottoman Empire and from Oriental traditions in which attributing precise meanings to flowers was an ancient tradition. Passing on symbolical meanings into flowers was thus a common practice in many different cultures but in England, the legend had it that the trend of sending messages via flowers was brought to the country by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, as we can see in the letters she wrote between 1716 and 1718, when she was living in Turkey:

> The notion that a language of flowers existed in the Orient became known to Europe largely through the letters that Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, friend of Alexander Pope, wrote from Turkey early in the eighteenth century. Previous travelers had referred to the use of flowers and other objects as a 'mysterious

[114]Shteir, Ann B. *"Fac-Similes of Nature": Victorian Wax Flower Modelling*. Cambridge University Press, Victorian Literature and Culture, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2007, 649-661. In her article, Shteir explains the origin of the wax phenomenon and how it translated the complexity of the Victorian mind, a heterogeneous blend of a fascination for nature, a drive in scientific progress and a quest for all things past and unattainable: "It [wax modelling] became its own industry, spurring technological advancements in wax production and creating a business in ready-made flower parts that could be combined by crafty women. The floral models that ensued were so spectacular, they were even featured at the seminal 1851 Great Exhibition, where art and industry coexisted and were showcased to all of England. But why were the Victorians *so* obsessed with this practice? It was linked to the popularity of wax in both scientific and pop culture applications of the day. Wax models were used to teach anatomy and prepare doctors for research; they were also used to titillate and scare Victorian audiences through waxworks like Madame Tussaud's. In wax flower modeling, these fascinations were combined with the era's obsession with both nature and naturalism—the *culture of the copy*."

> language of love and gallantry…to express the most tender and delicate of sentiments'. But it was the Lady Mary who brought it forcibly to people's attention in 1718.[115]

In her letters, Lady Montagu marveled at the complexity of this mode of communication:

> There is no colour, no flower that has not a verse belonging to it; and you may quarrel, reproach, or send Letters of passion, friendship, or Civility, or even of news, without ever inking your fingers.[116]

Lady Montagu learnt the *sélam* which was an art of flower arrangement known by many Turkish women living in harems. This art was very complex, it was not only the type of flowers used that was taken into account but also the number of flowers, their flowering stage, their colors and the possible associations that could be made between them. Thus complex emotions and feelings were expressed through bouquets, positive messages as well as negative ones.

The Victorian Era was the period when the class system was at its height, leading to a social stratification and a supremacy of decorum and good manners which restricted exchanges to polite conversations. This era was also marked by a certain refinement and sophistication. Thus it is commonly admitted that offering small bouquets hiding secret messages in the language of flowers was a way to tell what was considered as inappropriate. Victorian bouquets of symbolical flowers were called "nosegays" and "tussie-mussies". A ribbon could be attached to a bouquet of roses and myosotis (commonly called "forget-me-not") to express both love and affection when given to someone, without having to use words. On the other hand, to show disinterest and contempt, an hortensia could be worn on a hat or as an accessory. These bouquets were thus easily transportable when people visited foul-smelling places or simply to smell good (hygiene being less important than today even if baths were growing more and more popular at the time). Nowadays, the term "tussie-mussie" is used to designate a

[115] Goody, Jack. *The Culture of Flowers*. Cambridge University Press, 1993, 233.
[116]Montagu Wortley, Mary. *Turkish Embassy Letters*. https://books.google.fr/books?id=Q6SzCwAAQBAJ&pg=PT119&lpg=PT119&dq

small vase rather than a type of bouquet. It was also included in the English May Day[117] during which girls delivered anonymously tussie-mussies on the threshold of their lover. In the late Victorian era, messages were also conveyed via representations of flowers in postcards, sometimes with the sketch of a flower as the only way to understand the message or sometimes accompanied by an explanatory poem. Additional meanings were given to flowers also according to their colours and their state of blooming. As a consequence, a red rose and a red rosebud did not have the same signification, the first one meaning 'passionate love' and the second 'purity and loveliness'[118]. Seaton advances the importance of colours in symbolization and sums up the color symbolism used in the creation of flower emblems[119]:

COLOUR	SIGNIFICANCE
Red	Love, Passion, Shame
Yellow	Infidelity and other unfavorable qualities
Green	Hope
Blue	Elevated spiritual qualities (colour of heaven)
Purple	Power, Royalty
White	Purity, Innocence, Candor
Black	Death, Sadness, Mourning

Thus, referring to colours was helpful for the composition of flower messages. In addition to that, the meanings attributed to flowers was more or less unconsciously determined by the scent of the flower. As Beverly Seaton states, "A flower's scent – invisible yet real – has long been a standard emblem of the human soul."[120] As a result, the attribution of a human quality to a flower depended on whether it had a nice scent.

[117] A public holiday celebrated on May 1 deriving from pagan Anglo-Saxon customs. Traditionally, a May Queen was designated to walk in front of the parade and wore a white gown and crown of white flowers to symbolize her purity.
[118] Greenaway, Kate. *The Language of Flowers* (1884). Dover Publications Inc., 2003, 37.
[119] Seaton, Beverly. *The Language of Flowers: A History*. University Press of Virginia, 1995, 119.
[120] Id., 118.

If a flower was beautiful but had no scent – Seaton gives the examples of the camellia and the dahlia – it was more likely to symbolize bad aspects of humanity. Contrariwise, if a flower had a nice scent but was plain-looking, it would often symbolize moral qualities. Of course, scent, colours and types were only a part of the influences for the attribution of significations to flowers and Seaton establishes a recapitulative chart for the 'metaphoric and metonymic bases for floral symbols'[121]:

Metaphor	
Qualities of the plant	Color, odor, shape, growth habit, natural habitat
Metonymy	
Tradition	Classical legends, major emblematic flowers (lily, rose, violet)
Use	Food, medicine, other
Allusion	Plant name, story or anecdote, quotation from literature

In the early nineteenth century in France, Aimé Martin and his wife Louise Cortambert published several books under the pseudonym of Charlotte de la Tour. The last one, *Le Langage des fleurs*[122], became a best-seller which is still considered as the main reference for flower arrangement in France. On the English side, reference sources for the language of flowers varied with several important works amongst which we find Kate Greenaway's *Language of Flowers* (1884), Frederic Shoberl's *Language of Flowers* (1834) and Henry Phillip's *Floral Emblems* (1825). The Victorian Era was deeply marked by this concern with flowers. During this time, the term *floriography* (or *florigraphy*) was created, showing that the language of flowers took such an importance that the creation of a word to qualify the phenomenon was needed and demanded by language. In late Victorian years, it was Kate Greenaway's illustrated book *The Language of Flowers*[123] that became known as one of the main references in flower arrangement though some modifications were brought to this English equivalent of De La Tour's book because of the cultural differences between France and England. These

[121] Id., 118.
[122] De la Tour, Charlotte. *Le langage des fleurs*. Paris : Garnier Frères, 1858.
[123] Greenaway, Kate. *The Language of Flowers* (1884). Dover Publications Inc., 2003.

language of flowers books included several indexes. One was dedicated to composition with the possibility to choose the right flowers or herbs according to the feeling that was to be expressed and another helped to understand and decipher the hidden message thanks to the type of flower present in the bouquet.

When the florigraphy culture came at its peak, John Ingram published *Flora Symbolica*, a very thorough guide to the meanings of flowers and to the proper way of assembling them. Unfortunately all the language of flowers books that were published at the time gave sometimes different meanings to certain flowers and could not agree upon a universal code. The attribution of significances to flowers depended on a combination of traditions, folklore, medical use and the subjectivity and personal background of the author. Consequently, many differences existed and an agreement on which reference to use had to be made if the language was used in a private sphere of people. These differences in significance also questioned the coherence of the code and whether it could really be considered as an actual "language". In *En son jardin : Une ethnologie de fleurissement*[124], Martine Bergues quotes the research in that field of Jack Goody, a British anthropologist, who wrote in 1994:

> La connaissance qu'il [the language of flowers] véhicule ne correspond à aucune donnée d'expérience, ni au registre symbolique d'aucun autre champ littéraire ni encore moins au savoir "objectif" des traités de botanique. C'est un langage presque entièrement construit en marge de toute référence extérieure, un système de connaissance en apesanteur.[125]

Martine Bergues generally explains that the numerous works about the language of flowers, whether they have scientific or moral purposes, were one of the reasons for the development of a floral culture in big cities during the 19th century[126] – along with the rising popularity of botany and decorative plants markets. However, in her study of the history of language of flowers, Beverly Seaton expresses reserve about the common

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[124] Bergues, Martine. *En son jardin. Une ethnologie du fleurisssement.* Maison des Sciences et de l'Homme, coll. « Ethnologie de la France », 2011.
[125] Martine Bergues adds that the numerous works at the origin of the language of flowers, by involving scientific, pedagogical and moral themes, took part in the development of the love for botany and the flower market as well as "l'épanouissement d'une culture florale dans les grandes villes du dix-neuvième siècle."
[126] "L'épanouissement d'une culture florale dans les grandes villes du 19ème siècle."

assumption of an actual usage of the language of flowers: "There is almost no evidence that people actually used these symbolic lists [language of flower books] to communicate, even if the parties agreed upon what book to use for their meanings."[127]

The actual use of this language may be questioned but its popularity was nonetheless real and the phenomenon went along with the publications of numerous language of flowers dictionaries and indexes, belonging to a wider category of literature Beverly Seaton calls the "sentimental flower books". Besides the language of flower books, this category of literature included works with religious and moral Victorian themes and poetry anthologies, often accompanied by charming illustrations. Illustrating sentimental flower books was a profession that spread mainly in the female sphere, matching the public these books were destined too. Seaton further explains that these books were mostly directed towards a feminine audience:

> The Language of Flowers found its eventual home in the broad category of sentimental flower books so popular in the century, some of which were focused on the language of flowers, collections of flower poems, various literary studies of flowers, and sentimental botanies. All of these books were mainly intended for female readers, the 'fair readers' of so many prefaces like this one from the most popular of all English language of flower books, Frederic Shoberl's *The Language of Flowers; With Illustrative Poetry* (1834): 'We shall do no more than rove through the European Garden, to arrange them into odoriferous significance, and to teach our refined and purifying science to those fair beings; the symbols of whose mortal beauty are but inadequately found in the most glorious flowers […]".[128]

These types of prefaces were commonly followed by a long explanation about the simplicity of the text as to make the book not too difficult to read for a woman. The female audience was thought to need simple explanations, and were also often associated to children.

As such, the Victorians perpetuated the long-lasting tradition associating flowers to women and of the projection of femininity onto flowers.[129] Whether be it in

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[127] Seaton, Beverly. *The Language of Flowers: A History*. University Press of Virginia, 1995, 2.
[128] Id, 16.
[129] Nunn, Pamela. *Problem Pictures: Women and Men in Victorian Painting*. New York: Routledge, 1995, 30.

religion and folklore, culture with flower names given to women or language with expression such as the "blooming" of a woman, this popular association went back to Antique Times and lasted until modern times in Western cultures.[130] The structure of flowers was considered as similar as the body of a woman and this idea was often demonstrated through a conceit that compared their thin corpulence and frailty as well as their short-lived beauty. This theory was notably developed in John Ruskin's 1864 lecture *Of Queen's Gardens*:

> She grows as a flower does, - she will wither without sun; she will decay in her sheath, as the narcissus does, if you do not give her air enough; she may fall, and defile her head in dust, if you leave her without help at some moments of her life; but you cannot fetter her; she must take her own fair form and way, if she take any…[131]

In Ruskin's conceit, we can notice how the words typically used for plants such as "grows" and "wither" were applied to women. Furthermore, Delphine Lauritzen explains that the flower was also a metaphor for female genitalia, something to be loved when not already withered and forgotten when its "beauty" had faded:

> La fleur est aussi une métaphore du sexe féminin. Considérée dans son aspect juvénile et innocent, c'est un tendre bouton ; qu'on le cueille, et ce n'est plus qu'une corolle fanée dont tous se désintéressent après l'avoir pendant si longtemps adulée.[132]

More generally, in Victorian artworks, the beauty and freshness of young women were rendered through instinctive comparisons of body parts or face elements with flowers. According to Charlotte Ribeyrol, flowers are an element engendering a phenomenon of synaesthesia.[133] Numerous floral references are present in Victorian culture, not only in the language of flowers and its symbolism but also in the Aesthetes' poetry and pictorial art. The flowers that invade the Aesthetes' world were the same that were found in

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[130] In Islam traditions, men often wore garlands of roses to symbolize manly qualities such as virility.
[131] Ruskin, John. *Sesame and Lillies: Three Lectures* (1865). New York: Cosimo Classics, 2006, 125.
[132] Lauritzen, Delphine. *Flora, les fleurs dans l'Antiquité*. Les Belles Lettres, 2017, 241.
[133] Ribeyrol, Charlotte. "Homeric Colour", in *L'Antiquité en couleurs : catégories, pratiques, représentations*. Grenoble : Editions Jerôme Million, 2009, 57.

poetry of Greek inspiration: hyacinth, narcissus, lily and rose. Critics would associate these decadent flowers to Aesthetes like dandy Oscar Wilde. In poetry especially, in the work of Algernon Swinburne for instance, we can find the name of a flower instead of a colour in poems such as *Hymn to Proserpine*: « *Her deep hair heavily laden with odour and colour of flowers/White rose of the rose-white water, a silver splendour, a flame* », and « *Where the poppies are sweet as the rose in our world, and the red rose is white/And the wind falls faint as it blows with the fume of the flowers of the night* ». Colours are blurred and supplanted by poetic devices.[134] Flowers refer to touch and the sense of smell as well as several colours and can take on an allegorical meaning since they often tell a story (ancient myths or transformations (narcissus, hyacynth). Ribeyrol tells us that flowers are at the same time a symbol of beauty and the one of cruelty. All of this present flowers as rightful mirror of humanity, and more precisely of femininity; flowers as themes in poetry, painting and literature stimulate the human experience of the physical realm.

The projection of women onto flowers went as far as inspiring the development of an actual floral anthropomorphism. The anthropomorphic flower was also depicted in sketches, often designed to illustrate flower books of all kinds. One of the most significant instances of this is to be found in France, with the success of Jean-Jacques Grandville and his illustrations representing women with floral attributes in his work *Les Fleurs Animées*. Completed in 1847, *Les Fleurs Animées* included Grandville's illustrations, accompanied by texts written by par Taxile Delord (1815-1877) and an introduction by Alphonse Karr (1808-1890), a writer fond of horticulture who had criticised not without humour the defects of botanists and plant collectors:

> Il y a plusieurs façons d'aimer les fleurs. Les savants les aplatissent, les dessèchent et les enterrent dans des cimetières nommés herbiers, puis ils mettent au-dessous de prétentieuses épitaphes en langage barbare. Les amateurs aiment les fleurs rares. Leurs jouissances consistent beaucoup moins à avoir certaines fleurs qu'à savoir que d'autres ne les ont pas…[135]

[134] Id., « Les sonorités poétiques prennent le pas sur le référent chromatique. »
[135] Grandville, Jean-Jacques. *Les Fleurs animées*. Paris : Garnier Frères, 1867. https://archive.org/details/lesfleursanime01gran, 1.

In *Les Fleurs animées*, Grandville put aside his well-known social and political caricatures and breathed life into flowers. Each 'woman-flower' was represented with precision by Grandville and the stories linked to flowers were entitled in a similar way than that of fairy tales: *Histoire d'une bergère blonde*, *d'une bergère brune et d'une reine de France*, *Narcissa, A propos de la violette , Sœur nénuphar, La Sultane Tulipia* (Fig. 18), etc. For each story, the flower in question was depicted with a female appearance, its species nonetheless recognizable thanks to the representation of the main typical elements of the flower. For instance, the sketch of the woman-flower in *Chevrette la chevrière de la chevrette* was accompanied by the word *chèvrefeuille* at the bottom of the page and readers could recognize the red and yellow hanging flowers of the plant. Similarly, *Les Regrets du Camélia* was accompanied by the illustration of an anthropomorphic camelia, instantly recognizable thanks to its colour, petals and round shape (Fig. 18).

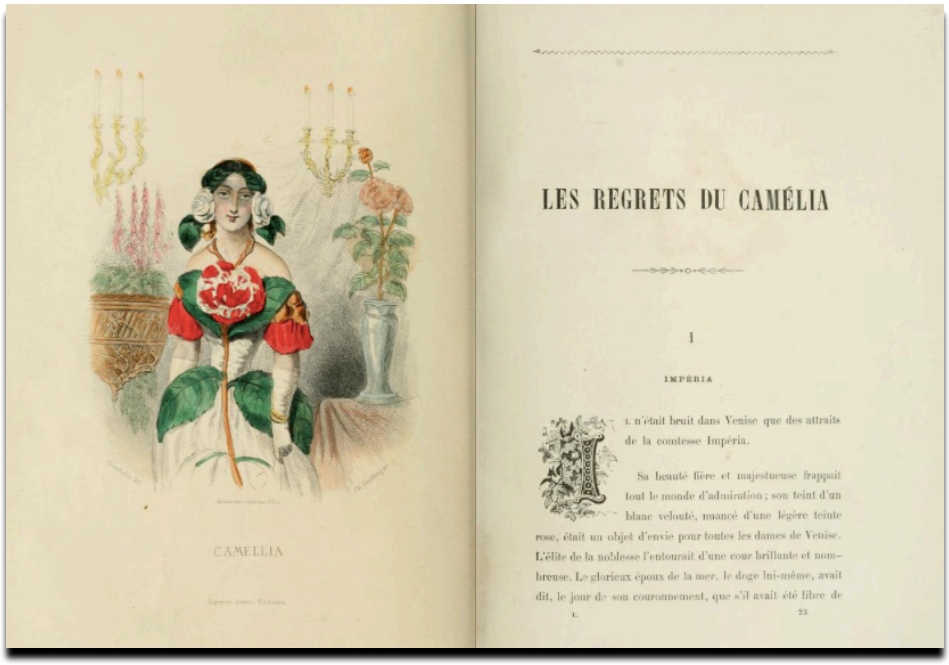

Figure 18 – *Les Regrets du Camélia* (1847)

Before the publication of *Les Fleurs animées*, Grandville had first met success thanks to his remarkable caricaturing skills in *Les Métamorphoses du jour* (1828-29), a series of sketches depicting human characters with animal heads in the roles of several characters from Balzac's *La Comédie humaine*. His sketches stood out for Grandville's incredible capacity of transposing human expressions on animal figures. Inspired by the

works of scientists such as Lavater, Cuvier, Saint-Hilaire and Gall, physiognomy was a highly topical pseudoscience during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. It theorized the analogy between facial features, complexion and one's personality or character. Physiognomy and similar currents such as phrenology and craniology had an impact on Grandville's ideas and consequently on its work. His work became so successful that he was asked to be features in several periodicals (*L'Artiste*, *La Caricature*, *Le Charivari)*.[136] The zoomorphic style of Grandville's style (transformations of humans, animals and plants) would have him to be later associated with the Surrealist current.

More generally at the time, a concordance between the functioning and the shape of the human body, male or female, and the flower could be put forward. Already during the eighteenth century, German Romantic painter and theoretician Philipp Otto Runge had discussed the similitudes between Man and plants: "En regardant les fleurs et les arbres, je saisis de façon particulièrement nette et je me convaincs de plus en plus que dans chacun d'entre eux se cache une forme d'esprit […]"[137]. He thought that since nature came from God and that Man had been created at the image of God, then a part of humanity was to be found in landscapes and plants as Elisabeth Décultot quotes in her essay:

> [Le paysage] est précisément ce que l'on peut encore trouver de plus pur dans le monde et ce dans quoi nous pouvons reconnaître Dieu ou son reflet — c'est-à-dire ce que Dieu appela homme au moment où il créa les hommes.[138]

In an 1802 letter to his father Daniel, Phillip Otto Runge wrote:

> Tous les artistes se sont, me semble-t-il, toujours efforcés tout au long de l'histoire ancienne de voir et d'exprimer dans l'homme le mouvement des éléments et des forces de la nature [...] Le paysage consisterait désormais dans la proposition inverse, à savoir que **dans toutes les fleurs, dans tous les végétaux et dans tous les phénomènes naturels, les hommes verraient leur propre personne, leurs attributs et leurs passions**.[139] (emphasis ours)

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[136] Lejeune, Daniel. "Les fleurs animées". *Revue Jardins de France*, no. 643, September-October 2016.
[137] Quotation taken from Décultot, Elisabeth. *« Philipp Otto Runge et le paysage. La notion de « Landschaft » dans les textes de 1802 »*. Revue germanique internationale, 1994, 49.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid., translated by Décultot.

The underlined idea advanced by Runge emphasizes once again the importance for Man to reflect himself in nature and natural elements such as flowers. Décultot adds that the delight Man takes in flowers simply comes from God according to Runge. A signification is always unconsciously given to a flower, thus attributed along with human characteristics. For Runge, each flower held human attributes and the physical absence of Man in a given landscape, was nonetheless indirectly compensated by its projection onto nature. Runge finished by placing flowers at the heart of the world, as a key elements into the functioning of the human world:

> Passant par des phases successives de germination, d'éclosion et d'anéantissement, elle concentre et résume tous les mouvements de l'univers : la fleur est l'incarnation du principe moteur du monde.[140]

Décultot concludes that this approach to nature implied necessarily the creation of a new symbolical language: "seul le symbole autorise le passage de la forme végétale à sa signification humaine."

Some had already been as far to infer medicinal uses of plants with their external appearance. This was for instance the case of Giambattista Della Porta, a renown sixteenth-century Italian polymath, who was interested in the similarities between plants parts and human body parts, and between the diseases hitting plants and Man.

Giambattista della Porta, « Dents, grenade et pomme de pin », gravure sur bois, in *Phytognomonica*, Naples, 1588.

Figure 19 – *Teeth, Pomegranates and Fir Cones* (1588)

[140] Ibid.

In 1586, Della Porta wrote *De humana physiognomonia*[141] which spread consequently the Paracelsus' theory of the *signatura plantarum* – himself inspired by Aristotle's ideas – based on an analogy between the appearance of plants and the disease they cured. Della Porta found for instance similarities of plant roots and hair, of some flowers with butterflies or of teeth and pomegranate or fir cones[142] (Fig. 19). Another instance was the celandine's yellow latex that was supposed to cure jaundice. Plants constituted a system of visual signs allowing scientists and doctors to find cures. This theory would later fall out of usage and classified as a "pseudo-science" with the rise of the scientific progress in medicine and botany during the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

[141] Della Porta, G. B. *De humana physiognomonia*. Naples : Vico Esquense, 1586.
[142] Bossi, Laura. *Histoire naturelle de l'âme*. Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 2015.

III) Nature in Botany: The Origin of Human Scientific and Artistic Creation

> L'art se mêlant à la nature, on ne saurait discerner si elle est l'œuvre de celui-ci ou de celle-là ; et même tantôt il [le jardin] apparaît à autrui comme un artifice naturel, tantôt comme une nature artificielle.[143]
>
> CLAUDIO TOLOMEI
> To Gianbattisto Grimaldi, 26 July 1543.

1) Botanical Gardens: A Representation of the World Via the Inventory of Global Flora

When we look up for a definition of what a botanical garden is, it is often defined as place where a wide variety of plants are collected and displayed. Britannica proposes this definition for botanical gardens:

> Botanical garden, also called botanic garden, originally, a collection of living plants designed chiefly to illustrate relationships within plant groups. In modern times, most botanical gardens are concerned primarily with exhibiting ornamental plants, insofar as possible in a scheme that emphasizes natural relationships. Thus, the two functions are blended: eye appeal and taxonomic order.[144]

Most of the definitions of the botanical garden seems to accentuate two main ideas: sight and order. Yet we will see that botanical gardens had many other purposes and constituted also an artefact designed to express ideas of their time and reflect the historical events that were taking place. This last part will show how gardens are precisely the mirror of two other main poles of our humanity: science and art.

The ancestors of botanical gardens as we know them today were the medieval physic gardens and their square beds of plants. They had no real scientific classification; the only organization being the doctrine of the *signatura planetarium* that dictated which plant cured a certain body part according to criteria of physical resemblance. Before being a place dedicated to pleasure, gardens had always had as a primary

[143] Quoted in Le Danted, Jean Pierre. Poétique des Jardins. Actes Sud, 2011, 47.
[144] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. *Botanical Gardens*. https://www.britannica.com/science/botanical-garden-study-and-exhibition-garden, 19 January 2015.

function of auxiliaries to human beings. Built for utilitarian reasons, the gardens were the main suppliers for food products during medieval times, with a structure allowing to protect plantations from external aggressions. At that time, people were already building gardens of modest size dedicated to the culture of medicinal plants that were used in cures and decoctions. Botany did not really exist as an independent science during the medieval era and at the beginning of modern times, a period during which the books dealing with plants were essentially medical books, or *materia medica*. It was only later, at the beginning of the Renaissance, that the gardens destined to provide medicinal plants started to be on the rise and enlarge their walls, notably thanks to Italian scientists' growing interest for botany. The massive development of botanical gardens was linked to several factors.

First of all, the Renaissance was the time when old works from Greek and Roman antiquity were dug out, such as the works of Theophrastus, Pedanius Dioscorides and Pliny the Elder whose books were precursors of natural sciences. Considered as the father of botany in the western world, Theophrastus wrote *De historia plantarum* (Histoire des plantes) and *De causis plantarum* in the fourth century BC. He presented botany as a fully-fledged study rather than just a branch of medicine and before all he established the distinction between the animal and the vegetable kingdoms. This disciple of Plato and Aristotle described vegetables based on their form or morphology and their natural environment.

The other major turning point for the science botany during the Renaissance was of course the invention of printing which allowed the quick propagation of knowledge throughout Europe and consistency of scientific and botanic treatises. Besides, sixteenth-century explorations implied the discovery of an unexpected vegetation, wondrous and worrying at the same time. The early concern with medicinal plants changed in the 17th century to an interest in the new plant imports from explorations outside Europe as botany gradually established its independence from medicine:

> L'élargissement des horizons outre-mer ouvre des perspectives : les puissances engagées dans le processus de domination coloniale entendent bien profiter des savoirs thérapeutiques indigènes, dans un contexte géopolitique très concurrentiel […]. Les dictionnaires de botanique médicale témoignent d'un incontestable

> élargissement de la panoplie thérapeutique, par exemple dans le domaine des remèdes fébrifuges (bois de gaïac, ipécacuanha, quinquina...).[145]

The first Italian botanical gardens were the gardens of Pisa, built in 1543, followed by the garden of Padua in 1545 and Florence in 1550. Scientists tried to get a better understanding of the functioning of plants and their uses by meditating on their way of growing, the varieties and their country of origin. The creation of the botanical garden of Padua (*Orto botanico di Padova*) at the instigation of Pierandrea Matthioli (1501-1577) constituted, according to Jean-Pierre Le Dantec: « une rupture d'ordre épistémologique (par rapport aux jardins de simples médiévaux) »[146] and was the beginning of the building of a multitude of botanical gardens throughout Europe: Zurich in 1561, Montpellier in 1598, later in Paris in 1640 and at Oxford University in 1621.

When it came to the structure of these gardens, it happened to be in concordance with the Italian gardens of the Renaissance, as Nuala C. Johnson indicates in her analysis:

> These early botanical gardens shared many of the same characteristics of their princely Renaissance counterparts. They deployed geometric shapes with squares enclosing circular beds or squares enclosing square beds being the most popular forms. They were also, like their princely cousins, inspired by the works of the ancient philosophers and the latter's insights into the relationships between plants and medicine.[147]

The first botanical gardens were composed of rectangular or square forms, which may be explained by the pragmatic aspect of such structures, and were encircled by walls, in the same fashion as medieval gardens. If we consider the founding garden of Padua, it distinguished itself with its circular form which, at the time, was not randomly chosen (Fig. 20). Choosing to build a circular garden was first due to the nature of the ground and soil of the place, but also to the strong symbolism that had been associated to the circle for centuries. The circular form was indeed synonymous with infinity and

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[145] Pépy, Emilie-Anne. *Décrire, nommer, ordonner : Enjeux et pratiques de l'inventaire botanique au XVIIIème siècle*. Etudes rurales 195, 2015, 27-42.
[146] Le Dantec, Jean-Pierre. *La Poétique des jardins*. Actes Sud, 2011, 77-78.
[147] Johnson, Nuala C. Nature Displaced, Nature Displayed: Order and Beauty in Botanical Gardens. I.B. Tauris, 2011, 3.

represented thus the realm of the divine whereas square forms represented the terrestrial world. In addition to that, since all vegetal beings were considered as creations of God, bringing all the different species in one place was considered as reuniting the entirety of God. Botanical gardens were also said to be a recreated Eden where all the plants that had been scattered away after the original sin were gathered in the same fashion animals were saved on Noah's Ark.

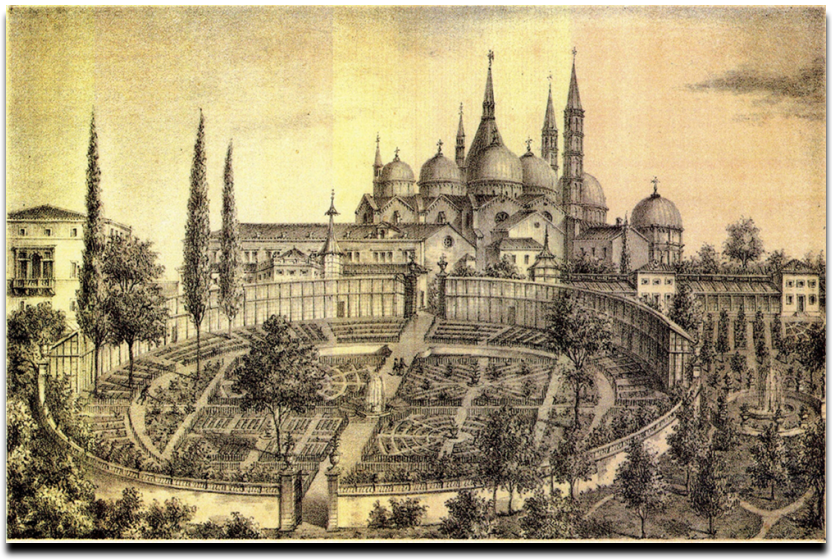

Figure 20 – Orto Botanico Di Padova

This mirrors the human will of gathering, collecting and rationalizing. By creating botanical gardens where plants from all around the world would be gathered, Man tried to recreate through the garden an actual miniature world – a microcosm.

The enthusiasm for botanical gardens and the progress in the knowledge of plants during the sixteenth and seventeenth century were also accompanied by the creation of herbaria[148], aiming at accumulating, collecting and preserving specimens. The first herbarium and the best-known was created around the same time as *l'Orto botanico di Padova* by Luca Ghini (1490-1556), an Italian doctor and botanist, who developed a revolutionary conservation technique making dry plants almost imperishable. For Marc Jeanson, botanical gardens and herbaria appeared at the same

[148] Also known as *hortus siccus*, or *dry garden*.

time.[149] However, herbaria undertook the task of making an inventory of flora and consequently was helpful to the botanical science purely speaking, which was at first only also an inventory of the vegetable kingdom as well as the enumeration and the classification of its genres and its species. This will be the main guiding thread of botany from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. If the botanical garden is a microcosm of the global flora, the herbarium is also a microcosm of the vegetable kingdom at an even smaller scale. The invention of herbaria shows once again the will of human beings to recreate and keep unchanged the totality of the world within easy reach, even if this means going contrary to nature. Herbaria constitute a true miniature representation of nature.

Even though the result remained unchanged – that is to say the gathering and ordering of numerous plants for study – we can concede that a majority of gardens built after the one in Padua took a different direction of their leading figure in terms of architecture and almost all adopted a structure with straight lines. These gardens kept however a quadripartite internal organization like the one in Padua. They tended to give more prominence to the utilitarian purposes than to beauty as Yves-Marie Allain tells us:

> Leurs dessins relèvent plus souvent du pragmatisme que d'une pensée philosophique liée aux symbolismes des formes ou de concepts esthétiques empruntés à l'art des jardins. Beaucoup d'entre eux sont très simples et peuvent être comparés à des jardins utilitaires […][150]

The first botanical gardens, like the one in Padua, were first of all associated to universities dispensing medical teaching. Botanists as an integrant profession did not really exist at the time, the botanists of the professors who taught medicine. In 1533, in the city of Padua, appeared the first professor of botany Francesco Bonafede (1474-1558), and the first chair of botany dedicated to a course on simples – *Lectura Simplicium*. With the creation of chairs of botany in Italian universities in the middle of the sixteenth century, the level of academic teaching demanded the creation of the first

[149] Jeanson, Marc. In *Marc Jeanson : l'herbier peut être une œuvre*. Emission France Culture, 18 Mars 2017.
[150] Allain, Yves-Marie. *Une histoire des jardins botaniques : entre science et art paysage*r. Paris : Editions Quae, 2012, 34.

botanical university gardens. Thus gardens participated in the concretization of knowledge by allowing the study of plants *in situ* – via smell, touch and direct contact with nature – instead of a study only focused on books and drawings.

On the French side, the botanical garden of Montpellier had been the first to be built in the country in 1593 at the instigation of king Henry IV, with the aim of competing with the power that was being acquired by the Italian universities and their adjoining gardens. Interestingly enough, this garden gives a separation between plants destined to medicinal use and plants which possible uses were unknown; these two parts of the garden were respectively called *la montagne* and the *seminarium*. This distinction seemed to reflect the scientific mind of Man at a time when medicine and botany – the study of plants strictly speaking – began to take distinctively separate directions. Yves-Marie Allain explains that Paris, notwithstanding the fact of being the French capital city, still did not possess its own botanical garden at the beginning of the seventeenth century.[151] He notices that it was only in 1640 that a 'garden of the plants' was opened to the public in the city, after many a demand on the part of Parisian scientists. At the time, the style of French formal gardens was in vogue, but this botanical garden did not use the geometrical codes characteristic to this style for its structure, favouring once again more utilitarian ends than aesthetics. In England, the first university gardens created was the one at Oxford.

At the end of the eighteenth century and the dawn of the Victorian Era, the British society was marked by the building of botanical gardens in colonized countries, gardens becoming thus auxiliaries to the imperialist frenzy.[152] Arthur Hill puts forwards the parallel between the expansion of the British society overseas, its impressive colonial history and the popularity of botanical gardens during the eighteenth and nineteenth century:

> With the increase in maritime trade, ever more plants were being brought back to Europe as trophies from distant lands, and these were triumphantly displayed in the private estates of the wealthy, in commercial nurseries, and in the public botanical gardens. Heated conservatories called "orangeries", such as the one at Kew, became a feature of many botanical gardens. Industrial expansion in Europe resulted in new building skills, so plants sensitive to cold were kept over

[151] Id., 31.
[152] Heywood, Vernon H. "The changing role of the botanic gardens". In Bramwell, David. *Botanic Gardens and the World Conservation Strategy*. London: Academic Press, 1987, 9.

> winter in progressively elaborate and expensive heated conservatories and glasshouses.[153]

Eighteenth-century English botanical gardens were thus designed to display "the beautiful, strange, new and sometimes economically important plant trophies being returned from the European colonies and other distant lands"[154], Hill adds. As a consequence, botanical gardens were more and more numerous and became a window onto the colonial world. The botanical gardens of Kew were created in 1759. The visiting hours for the public were only in the afternoon. William Hooker, a botanist in charge of Kew Gardens, was reluctant to open to "non-scientists" what he considered as a place for scientific research. The separation between the opening hours for scientists and for the public complicated the question of the nature of Kew Gardens which were at the same time scientific gardens and public gardens. This question can put into parallel with the long-lasting question of whether botany was a serious science or a hobby accessible to everyone.[155] At the end of the century, botanical gardens acquired a didactic function, showing the different systems that were created by botanists to classify plants and integrate the new ones coming from colonies into herbaria.

The Age of the Enlightenment was characterized by a need for classification and rationalization, that was to continue during the following century. Ann B. Shteir notices in her study about the history of natural science that botany was no exception to classification:

> Botany manifested the same classifying and ordering impulse that was evident in areas such as physics in linguistics, where scholars during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries searched for universal laws. Botanists believed there were discoverable patterns in nature and that a natural and rational classification of plants was discernible.[156]

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[153] Hill, Arthur W. *The History and Functions of Botanic Gardens*. Annals of the Missouri Botanical Garden, 1915, 200.
[154] Id.
[155] Endersby, Jim. *Classification in Victorian Botany*. http://www.victorianweb.org/science/botany/4.html, 8 March 2008.
[156] Shteir, Ann B. *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860*. The John Hopkins University Press, 1996, 11-12.

The need for classification reflected well the spirit of the time. Numerous types of different classifications were used in university botanical gardens and in herbaria. A fortiori, the desire for a unique nomenclature and organization became then inevitable for a better cohesion and transmission of knowledge. The easy access to knowledge was an ideal during the Age of Enlightenment and this applied as well to botany as Stephen Forbes explains in his article about botanical gardens:

> While the first botanic gardens were focused on medicinal plants, the Age of Enlightenment provided an environment in which a search for a universal system for the classification of plants and animals could be made. The Age of Enlightenment's pursuit of principles governing nature, man and society provided the context for the emergence and eventual acceptance of the Linnaean system of taxonomy as a universal truth that overcame the bias of cultural systems of taxonomy.[157]

However the difficulty was to find an agreement on which classification model was to be followed. Several models were proposed, with classifications by size, colour, growth cycle, etc. and even according to one part of the plant. The existence of too many different systems gave an impression of chaos leading to botany perceived as shallow science without real bases. Many rival systems coexisted and claimed to be the right one and the debate gave rise to many a dispute during the 1840s and 1850s. For instance, amongst all the classifications, Antoine de Jussieu established a system of natural classification taking into account all the morphological characters of plants that were organised hierarchically according to their stability or variability between species and inside families.[158] It was finally the Linnaean system of classification, now called binomial nomenclature, that grew out to be the system unifying botanical studies. Carl Linnaeus[159] (1707-1778) was a Swedish botanist and naturalist who classified thousands of different plant and animal species with a descriptive, rational and universal system. Considered as the 'father of modern taxonomy', he developed the Linnaean

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[157] Forbes, Stephen. *Conference: How Botanic Garden Changed the World*. http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.493.6840&rep=rep1&type=pdf, 2008, 2.

[158] Binary and quinary systems also existed and classified plants according to mathematical organisations.

[159] Carl Linnaeus was also called Carl von Linné after his ennoblement, granted by Swedish king Adolf Frederick in 1757.

classification system, a system working for plants as well as animals and rocks. He took the sexual organs of living beings as criteria for his classification. He studied the number, the appearance and the position of stamens and brought together plants in twenty-three groups which were divided into orders according to the thorough study of the combination of stamens and pistils. He determined the sexual genre of a plant by observing the stamens and gave each species a first name and a surname. All these ideas were written down in his *Systema naturæ regnum vegetabile*, published in 1735. Besides, he invented a new nomenclature for plants that became international and universal, and which he extended to animals – a binomial system with names composed of the genre and the name of the species, either in Latin, in the Latin form of the plant's vernacular name or the Latin form of the person's name discovering the plant. The first occurrence of the binomial system was mentioned in Linné's *Species Plantarum* (1753) and nowadays constitutes a basis for our system of nomenclature:

> Linnaeus is commemorated as the person who popularised the system of nomenclature which we have inherited today. It is interesting to note that the drive towards this simplicity was not the result of scientific clarity, but in order to economise on paper. Linnaeus felt that too much space was devoted to the lengthy Latinised descriptions of plants which were then current. By reducing the description to genus and species (one word for each) he reduced his printing costs. His work gave a considerable impetus to the development of illustrated botanical books.[160]

As for the Linnaean sexual system of classification, it remained in use in Great-Britain during the entire Victorian Era, contrary to other European countries as Jim Endersby explained:

> These disputes centred on the Linnaean or sexual system of classification, which, despite claims to the contrary, remained in use in Britain well into the second half of the century. Its survival, long after the rest of Europe had abandoned it,

[160] Ford, Brian J. *Scientific Illustration in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Roy Porter, 6 October 2006, 7.

> contributed to the perception that British botany was backward and unfit to take its place alongside the physical sciences.[161]

The Linnaean classification had nonetheless an impact on European botany and had many supporters in several countries such as France, with for instance George Sand praising this system in a letter to her daughter[162].
All the rival systems and the disputes led thus to the impression that botany was lacking serious guiding principles. Moreover, since it was associated to women, it was even more seen as a light study.

The Linnaean system of classification corresponded to the Victorian society's aim at vulgarizing science and making scientific knowledge accessible to everyone, despite the social inequalities between strata and especially between men and women. What Ann B. Shteir also notices as something remarkable about the Linnaean sexual classification is the parallel established between animal reproduction and plant reproduction.[163] She mentions that in Linné's *Praeludia Sponsaliorum* (1729), an analogy is being made via an anthropomorphization of plants, more precisely "anthropomorphized account of brides and bride grooms, of marriage and conjugal coupling"[164].

> Linnaeus presents as "natural" what we should read as his discourse about sexuality, a discourse he shared with other proponents of the theory that the reproductive system of plants is directly analogous to human sexuality. **Linnaeus's assumptions about sexual functions in reproduction reflect**

[161] Endersby, Jim. "Classifying Science: Systematics and Status in mid-Victorian Natural History". In Dauton, Martin. *The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain*. Oxford University Press, 2005, 66.
[162] "La nature ne classe pas, mais elle est *classifiable*. Elle suit une ligne d'intervention que nous pouvons constater et qui est toujours d'une admirable logique dans sa fécondité originale. Si de lourds savants ont marché sur elle avec de gros sabots, des génies de 1er ordre ont su la comprendre. Linné est un grand philosophe et un grand poète. Il a eu le coup d'œil de l'aigle avec la méthode austère du savant. Ses noms sont presque tous beaux. On peut encore suivre sa méthode dans ses grands aperçus et garder ses aphorismes comme de hautes vérités. La botanique est une étude charmante qui ouvre les yeux de l'artiste et le rend plus artiste. » *Letter from Aurore Dupin to Solange Clésinger*, Nohant, 1871. Quoted from Barozzi, Jacques. *Le Goût des jardins*. Paris: Le Petit Mercure, 2006, 78.
[163] Shteir, Ann B. *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860*. The John Hopkins University Press, 1996, 16.
[164] Id.

> **traditional gender concepts** […] He also represented the male part in plant reproduction as active and the female part as receptive. At the least we can say that **he naturalized sex and gender ideologies of his day**, folding into his botanical system ideas of his own that also replicated beliefs of his day. The Linnaean taxonomy, in other words, mirrored Linnaeus's own beliefs as well as the world of social relations of early and mid-eighteenth-century Europe.[165] (emphasis ours)

The botanical analogies presented by Linnaeus were, as Shteir manages to explain, a mirror of the eighteenth century and Victorian society. Here we have again an occurrence of what may be the attribution of human characteristics to plants and vice-versa, relaying women to a lower status. Man transposed his own social organisation onto every domain and here, onto the botanical phenomenon and more broadly scientific knowledge.

Nature became an integrant part of Victorian daily life and the study of natural history grew in popularity amongst the middle classes; amongst the numerous branches of natural science, botany was at first more considered as a feminine hobby than a serious science and grew more and more popular during the nineteenth century. For women interested in science in the nineteenth century, it was one of the most accessible scientific hobbies despite the patriarchal order of society, restraining women in their role in the household and keeping them away from any scientific distraction. However, the study of plants was nonetheless seen as a suitable activity for Victorian women. Many women took a passion in this hobby and started making herbaria at home and teaching their children about botany, and some were even part of botanical associations and wrote books in this field. In the 1830s, as botany was evolving towards being considered as a more serious and professionalized science, it became increasingly male-dominated.[166] Because women were less likely to receive a formal education, they had a difficult time gaining professional employment and recognition.

The list of following elements below that made botany popular were in fact the same that caused its relegation to a feminine occupation[167], and not a real science strictly speaking. Jim Endersby defined these five main explanations for the popularity of

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[165] Id. 16-17.
[166] Id.
[167] Endersby, Jim. *Victorian Botany: An Introduction*. http://www.victorianweb.org/victorian/science/botany/1.html, 8 March 2008.

botany during the Victorian Era. Botany was easily accessible since the choice of Linnaean classification which simplified the recognition of plants. It was affordable as it required little material. It connected with a subject of importance in the nineteenth century: religion – as such studying nature was the equivalent as studying the work of God and was thus a moral occupation. Botany did not imply the killing of animals and was associated with flower arrangement and flower painting so it was qualifiable as feminine. Finally, botany provided a good reason for exercising and going outdoors. The wide-spread of botany amongst masses and especially amongst women caused difficulties for this science to be qualified as a serious. As the 1840s approached, men that were professionalizing in botany tried to make their domain look more like a 'real' science and to make a distinction between the female hobbyists and male professionals. The 'professionalization' of botany was notably encouraged by British botanist John Lindley. For that purpose, special books of vulgarized botany were published at the attention of a female audience. Ann B. Shteir argues that the professionalization of botany in the Victorian era took part in an even clearer exclusion of women from the scientific world. This exclusion relegated female scientists' research and contributions to progress to the area of amateurism.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth century, books of vulgarized botany were written addressed to a female audience. Nicole Bagioli explains that the authors of vulgarized botanies for ladies instaured a sort of familiarity with the female reader by the means of trops and rhetoric. Yet, this pretended easiness with metaphors associated women to flowers, they only reminded even more women of their place in the Victorian society:

> Avec leurs flatteries, les vulgarisateurs cherchent à s'attirer les bonnes grâces des lectrices tout en recréant les conditions de l'échange oral. Le badinage fait donc partie du dispositif pédagogique. Renouant avec la rhétorique précieuse, il associe (par métonymie), et assimile (par métaphore, comparaison, ou métaplasme), les femmes aux fleurs. Or l'analogie et le rationalisme sont deux conceptions incompatibles des rapports de l'homme et du monde . L'une associe les êtres au hasard des ressemblances, dans un univers où les classifications universelles n'existent pas, un univers dont précisément la botanique a eu beaucoup de mal à émerger. L'autre distingue l'homme sujet ontologique, de l'homme partie de l'univers et, à ce titre, objet de science.

> Comparer les femmes aux fleurs non seulement les confine dans un rôle social, mais compromet leur éducation scientifique.[168]

Yet, Nicole Bagioli adds that the authors did not try to establish themselves as professors. For instance, she quotes the introduction to Edmond Audouit's treatise *Les Plantes curieuses* (1865), who tries not to use too many scientific terms in order not to alarm his female readers.[169] Firstly he explained that he had no intention of doing a botany lecture but, as we go along with the reading, it becomes evident that the contrary is happening. This is obviously only a stylistic device as he went on to write « je vais consacrer quelques lignes à de simples notions élémentaires », and conclude on an actual botany lesson: « Afin de suivre aisément ce que je vais vous dire, détachez, mesdemoiselles, une fleur de vos bouquets ; soit un œillet par exemple ». Nevertheless, the apophasis expressed for Bagioli an uneasiness originating in the reluctance of authors to disturb the social order: « la prétérition exprime un authentique malaise, causé moins par les réticences supposées des lectrices que par les réticences des auteurs à enfreindre le sur-moi social ».[170] By introducing young ladies to science, they feared they could be accused of compromising the purposes of this scientific education : keeping women in the domestic sphere.

Besides, female botanists could either practice their science as botanical wives or botanical daughters, that is to say as assistants to men as Shteir explains[171]. This was the case for Linnaeus's own daughter, Elisabeth Christina Linnea, who helped him in his research and for the constitution of an herbarium.

These were the two only places they could occupy in botany, mirroring the confinement of the roles of women in society. Despite the multiple attempts at relegating female botanists to amateurs, many of them were often excellent scientists and professors. As a consequence, since women botanists were seen as hobbyists only, their contributions

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[168] Biagioli, Nicole. *Les botaniques des dames, badinage précieux ou initiation scientifique* ?. Women in French Studies, 2010, 4-5.

[169] « Si je devais suivre à la lettre le titre de plantes curieuses que je donne à ce volume, il me faudrait traiter de tous les végétaux qui sont sur le globe [...] Mais alors ce serait tout simplement un cours de botanique, et ce n'est point là ce que j'ai l'intention de faire. » quoted by Bagioli, Nicole in *Les botaniques des dames, badinage précieux ou initiation scientifique* ?. Women in French Studies, 2010, 4.

[170] Id., 5.

[171] Shteir, Ann B. *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860*. The John Hopkins University Press, 1996, 116.

to the evolution of botany was often forgotten, not taken into account or sometimes not mentioned. Overtime women acquired professional behaviours, very different from the amateurism they should be confined to, according to the authors of botanies for ladies.

2) The Representation of Nature in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century English Botanical Art: Questioning the Origin of the Link Between Art and Science

The contributions of women to botany were thus extremely minimized during the Victorian Era, and this more generally applied to all types of activities considered as serious such as art, politics and literature. Yet, not only some of them were thorough scientists, but they were also responsible for the most celebrated and used botanical illustrations in manuals.

Martin Ryx established the golden age of botanical art between the 1750s and the 1850s.[172] He calls this span of time a "golden age" because it was an age of numerous scientific discoveries, of progress in printing and reproduction techniques, allowing the publication of many high-quality collection books of botanical illustrations, still exhibited nowadays in botanical gardens. Victorian artists specialized in botanical illustrations received a great number of commissions due to the growing demand of their participation in language of flower books and scientific books. Moreover, during the golden age of botanical art, botanical illustration became more and more practiced by women, while this activity had been reserved to men during previous centuries, female illustrators being ostracized. This can be partly explained by the revolution of thoughts that effected during the Age of Enlightenment, which ideas sought to show that each being had its proper place in the universe and to make knowledge accessible to everyone. Botanical illustration was for Victorian women a way to earn a wage as their illustrations were often of excellent quality and beauty. As such, we may say that the study of nature allowed women to gain independence. However, as more and more women began to practise botanical art, this activity came to be categorised as a feminine occupation. This is what Suzanne Le-May Sheffield argues in her study:

[172] Ryx, Martin. *The Golden Age of Botanical Art*. Chicago: University Press, 2013.

> However the fact remained that as more women moved into botanical illustration and flower painting and as the mass market for such work grew, this art work was ghettoized as feminine, kneading it to be considered as part of a "lowly genre" within academic discourses on art.[173]

Botanical illustration was then not considered as a genre belonging to the purest form of art despite its great artistic qualities and its unique style. Moreover, Sheffield adds that botany could not be entirely considered as an artistic genre but also not totally as a rigorous practice in the scientific domain precisely because of its artistic character: « […] botanical illustration, then, not only has a poor reputation as an art genre, but as an artistic endeavour cannot easily be placed within the world of science[174] ». Every botanical treatise was accompanied by detailed representations of plants for a better understanding and a reduced risk of confusion. Though they look like two completely opposite activities, science and art had begun to build a tight relation centuries before Victorian times. This bond is important because it allowed an efficient share of knowledge. New scientific discoveries were not just written down in books but also illustrated. Detailed illustrations were then necessary for the dissemination of new advancements during an era very much restless in terms of scientific research. The limits between art and science was an important issue that Men projected onto botanical science.

First of all, a definition of what botanical illustration and botanical art are has to be established; as these notions are not as simple to understand as we may think. The difference between these two similar activities may seem blurry. Half-way between a scientific tool and an artistic artefact, botanical illustrations presented the most relevant example between the ancestral relation that links science and art and the human quest of combining pleasure and serious matters. According to Katherine Tyrell's website on botanical art, we can distinguish two different branches in botanical art.[175]
The first category was the category of botanical illustration per se, which gave importance mostly to accuracy to allow a precise identification of specimens. Models

[173] Le-May Sheffield, Suzanne. *Revealing New Worlds: Three Victorian Women Naturalists*. London: Routledge, 2001, 111-112.
[174] Id.
[175] See more at https://www.botanicalartandartists.com/what-is-botanical-art.html.

for traditional botanical illustrations were taken from herbaria or living plants to accompany a scientific description. Ideally, the drawing would present all important features of the specimen: form, structure, colour, lifecycle and dissections of parts. As a matter of fact, botanical illustration was so popular during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that it constituted a type of drawing instantly recognizable with conventional codes. We will determine what were some of these artistic codes through examples of traditional botanical illustrators.

During the eighteenth, Elizabeth Blackwell (1707-1758) became known thanks to the multitude of very beautiful and professional illustrations she included in her *Curious Herbal*, published between 1737 and 1739, taking as models pants from the Chelsea Physic Garden (Fig. 21). Blackwell had no choice but starting a professional career as an illustrator in order to earn money for the release of her husband from prison. Her *Curious Herbal* contained hundreds of illustrations of plants accompanied by short descriptions and their Latin name.

Figure 21 –Illustrations of a dandelion and red poppy by Elisabeth Blackwell (1737-1739)

The illustration on the left page represents a dandelion, a wild flower that Blackwell described as an aide against urinary retention; this medicinal use has indeed been proved overtime. The latex of the dandelion also treated verrucae and foot corns.[176] The second

[176] Some parts of the dandelion were fit for eating. Crushing the root served as an alternative for coffee and the leaves, Blackwell explained, could be eaten like salad.

illustration represents a red poppy, a risk-free variation of the opium poppy.[177]

In the same vein during the nineteenth century, Margaret Rebecca Dickinson (1821-1918) became one of the most demanded botanical illustrator. Her work was characterized by the exclusive representation of plants and flowers typical of the British soil (Fig. 22). Her illustrations were extremely detailed and we find a refinement in her drawings that was typical of the Victorian times. She made more than a hundred representations of British wild plants, painted in watercolours.

Figure 22 –Watercolour drawing of Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys* by Margaret Dickinson (1846)

The conventions of scientific botanical illustration are perfectly recognizable in the works of both artists. Sketches of plants found in scientific books had a precise purpose and the majority of artists would follow the established conventions of the genre in order to facilitate the apprehension of the text. The first remarkable convention of the genre was the format of the plate. The artists had to represent the specimen in its entirety on one page only, if possible on full-size scale, even including the roots. If the specimen's size was inappropriate, the artists could simply include a branch

[177] Blackwell noted the positive effects on sleep and fevers of the red poppy, by turning petals into a syrup.

representative of the plant. Illustrators could also include several sketches of smaller representations of precise parts of the plant such as fruits, flowers and seeds. The subject of the illustration had to be isolated and painted on a white background in order to catch the eye. Most of the time, the painting used was watercolour painting – very much appreciated for their transparency, luminosity and elegance. Consequently, we can notice that, as traditional "pure" art, botanical illustrations of the eighteenth and nineteenth century obeyed to strict aesthetic codes. As currents in high art, this genre constituted a unique style of painting, instantly identifiable.

The second category of botanical art was the discipline of flower painting, consisting in putting the emphasis on pleasure and not much on botanical accuracy of the elements of the flower. Colours, size and scale were not truthful as the educative scientific scope was of no importance. Besides, it was the feminine occupation *par excellence*; thus absolutely not taken into account in the world of science.

The Victorian era gave rise to painting or realization with such delicacy that it was pleasing to the eye – we found in the culture of details and refinement a reflect of the typical Victorian mind. In the introduction to *The Golden Age of Botanical Art*, Martin Ryx questions the difference between botanical art and botanical illustration:

> What is the difference between botanical art and botanical illustration? In art, the finished painting is the whole object of the artist, and it has no further purpose than to be admired. The Illustration should have a generality that ignores the imperfections of the individual specimens, and so can represent the species or particular form of a species.[178]

If we are to follow the distinction established by Martin Ryx here, how could we classify botanical artworks who did not confine themselves to one of this two genres? During the nineteenth century, botanical illustrators started to paint plants and flowers in different ways which, by according much importance to aesthetics as well as scientific purposes, blurred even more the line between art and science in the study of nature. Some artworks were characterized by their scientific and botanical accuracy although being not essentially the closest to reality. They put much highlight on the aesthetical

[178] Ryx, Martin. *The Golden Age of Botanical Art*. University of Chicago Press, 2013, 8.

aspects of the specimen without necessarily giving all the scientific details required for a detailed study. It showed that in botanical art, beauty did not necessarily suffer in the pursuit of science. Botanical accuracy was required indeed on the part of the illustrators but the perfect botanical artist also had to have a scientific knowledge about pant anatomy, Linnaean taxonomy, biology and physiology to be able to attain a perfect equilibrium between scientific truth and artistic beauty. For Le-May, the perfect botanical artists were those who had the "innate ability to give life and vitality to the image on the page[179].

In that sense, it would be interesting to mention Marianne North (1830-1890) and the colourful paintings of the global flora she made between 1870 and 1890. Marianne North was an English Victorian biologist and botanical artist who travelled a lot across the world. She began to take painting lessons at the age of twenty and over time developed a distinguishable style of painting for botanical illustrations. Her depictions of plants truly differed with what was considered as 'traditional' botanical illustrations. Indeed, instead of painting isolated species on a white background, she never plucked out plants as she considered that they could not be accurately depicted without the ecosystem it grew in (Fig. 23). Le-May explains in her chapter about Marianne North how she differed from traditional botanical painting:

> While her paintings, in many ways, convey botanical information, they not only instructed botanists about the actual plants themselves but also about the environment within which a certain plant or plants grew, thus depicting the natural world in as an interconnected whole […] In the natural world, plants did not live in that disembodied, free-floating world of 'true' botanical illustration. Plants, flowers, trees, insects, rodents, snakes, birds – North perceived nature as an interconnected whole and this is evident from her depictions.[180]

As she went to wild lands alone, despite all Victorian conventions, Marianne North took risks to achieve her art and express her stands. Besides, Le-May continues by depicting nature as a whole, she offered a new vision of the apprehension of nature:

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[179] Le-May Sheffield, Suzanne. *Revealing New Worlds: Three Victorian Women Naturalists*. London: Routledge, 2001, 113.
[180] Id., 118-119.

> North's travels were made possible by the network the British Empire had created around the world and she appreciated this fact. She nevertheless felt a responsibility to criticise imperial encroachment and advertise its affects on the natural world, re-imaging the natural world depicted by traditional botanical art, and encouraging botanists to see botanical treasures in context rather than ripped from their environment. By extension, North presented the Empire with a new vision for the relationship between nature and human beings.[181]

Besides, North did not use watercolors for her illustrations but oil painting which was uncommon in botanical art[182]. The 'thickness' of oil painting was not seen as appropriate to draw illustrations in the most accurate manner and not suitable for this artistic genre in general. Accuracy was what mattered the most for botanical illustrations and watercolours painting allowed to better depict the frailty of leaves and petals.

Figure 23 – Red Cotton Tree, *Bombax malabaricum* with a Pair of Long-Tailed Fly-Catchers, Ceylon by Marianne North (c.1877)

The gallery dedicated to Marianne North at Kew gardens shows well the extent of her work, with eight-hundred and thirty-three illustrations achieved during thirteen years of travels. By refusing to comply with the traditional codes of Victorian scientific illustration, North managed to blur the line between art and science. Thanks to her

[181] Id., 118.
[182] Oil painting was much more resistant to humid tropical climates than watercolours.

travels, she discovered unknown plants like the *Nepenthes Northiana* (Fig. 24), a carnivorous plant she came across in Borneo and which Sir Joseph Hooker gave the name of the botanist.[183]

Figure 24 – Pitcher Plant*, Nepenthes Northiana* by Marianne North (1876)

Thus we can wonder which type of plant representations were the most realist: those respecting the established conventions of botanical illustration or those which managed to skilfully combine scientific data and aesthetical pleasure? In his essay about scientific illustration, Brian J. Ford explains that scientific illustrations tried and should be the result of the depiction of scientific, thus objective reality, but he explains that any representation is anyhow subjective:

> Illustration emerges from complex and diverse motives. The portrayal of an objective reality may seem to lie at its heart, but there are other subtle factors at work. Preconception guides many an illustrator's hand. A wish to project known realities onto nascent concepts distorts reality in its own ways, and the process of transmuting the subtle realism of nature into an engraver's line imposes constraints and conventions of its own.[184]

[183] Le-May Sheffield, Suzanne. *Revealing New Worlds: Three Victorian Women Naturalists*. London: Routledge, 2001, 111-112.
[184] Ford, Brian. *Scientific Illustration in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Roy Porter, 2000, 1.

Subsequently, botanical illustration, as any other form of art, is a subjective representation of the natural word. Ford explains that the knowledge of scientists or common people influence the representation they may give of nature. He adds that all artwork, no matter the era, is subjected to the culture of the era during which it is produced as "the culture of each era dictates its own arbitrary realities".[185] In that sense, we can say that the representations of nature of that time were a reflect of contemporary concerns; here for the Victorian Era the perfect shaping of nature as a neat and smooth entity mirroring the flawless paintings of plants on an immaculate white background[186]. The botanical illustration places itself between science and art by its subjectivity influenced by Victorian criteria of the world. As Wilfrid Blunt writes, in the first chapter of *The Art of Botanical Illustration*, the best illustrators were "those who have found beauty in truth; who have understood plants scientifically, but who have yet seen and described them with the eye and hand of the artist"[187]. We can say botanical illustration was revolving around beauty as, unlike an artistic production and its durability, plants and flowers expose their beauty through impermanence and instability. This applies even better to flowers and their aesthetical appeal as they display beautiful features of grace, color and shape in a particularly short lifecycle. Unlike a majority of artworks, flora awakens several senses at the same time, becoming a source of pleasure through sight, touch and smell.

Consequently, in his essay[188], Bruno Latour develops the idea of botanical illustration as a synoptic tableau, defined as a presentation which allows the instantaneous understanding of an ensemble of information, and of the diverse parts of a whole. Concerning the link between scientific data and their representation, Latour

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[185] Id.

[186] "Our experience of this is largely intuitive, but it explains why a specific image is easier to relate to the time it was produced, than to the identity of the artist or the name of the subject. In just this way, a scientific illustration is a mirror of contemporaneous preoccupations, and a clue to current prejudice. It is more than a didactic symbol. Some illustrations create, and then perpetuate, icons which transcend reality and provide a synthesized convention which passes from one generation of books to the next. These icons are created for textbooks, and they populate their pages as decorative features which do little to reveal reality." In Ford, Brian. *Scientific Illustration in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Roy Porter, 2000, 1.

[187] Blunt, Wilfrid. *The Art of Botanical Illustration: An Illustrated Story* (1950). New York: Dover Publications, 1994, 3.

[188] Latour, Bruno. 'Circulating Reference: Sampling the Soil in the Amazon Forest.' In *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

explains that an organization of plants coming from different geological locations and times allows to consider them as a cohesive ensemble: "once classified, specimens from different locations and times become contemporaries of one another on the flat table, all visible under the same unifying gaze[189]". Then we may say that botanical illustrations during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries belonged to scientific webs of information relying on normalization and generalization.

So far, through the observation of some botanical illustrators from the Golden Age of botany, we have studied how the achievement of the era could sometimes placed themselves at the edge of science and art. Notwithstanding, botanical paintings were not only the only means to represent nature according to the Victorian mind. The study of nature went as far as inventing a new form of art. The Golden Age of botany gave rise to other less orthodox means of representations such as the technique of paper collages, invented by Mary Delany (1700-1788) during the second half of the eighteenth century. Mary Delany started her work at the age of seventy-two when she found, a she said herself in 1772, a "new way of imitating flowers". Her technique consisted in assembling pieces of finely cut and watercolour-painted silk paper and glue them on a black sheet (Fig. 25).

Figure 25 – Collage of *Pancratium Maritinum*, Sea Daffodil by Mary Delany (1778)

[189] Id., 38.

The Linnaean names were then added to the collage. Delany paid extreme attention to details, so much that some of her plates could sometimes include more than two hundred petals. Her study and representation of nature inscribed her in the Victorian tradition of flower imitation thanks to their ability of being both elegantly beautiful and scientifically accurate. Her work was notably praised by renown scientists such ad Joseph Banks, Erasmus Darwin and Daniel Solander.

The invention of new forms in representations of nature constituted a rupture with the conventions of institutionalized botanical art and more generally maybe a rupture with the conventions of the Victorian society[190]. Towards the 1850s, at the end of Ryx's Golden Age of botanical art, the progress in photography added new contributions to botanical representations of nature and permitted to observe degrees of details in plants like they had never been seen before. It became commonplace to carry out studies of nature via photographs. During the time before photography was popularized, paintings and illustrations were snapshots of the world. Botanical illustration is at the root of both art and the science of botany, and remains as vital and important today as it ever has been, despite advances in photography. By taking the observation nature as a model, the scientist turns into an artist: every form of art and science originated in nature. Nature is at the origin of creation, a model, a source of inspiration around which join scientific practices.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, biologists would question this relation between the origin of science and nature. We cannot focus on the exchange between the domains of science and art without finally mentioning German biologist, thinker and artist Ernst Haeckel (1838-1919). Haeckel wanted to undertake an artistic reproductions of natural organisms, which he considered as parts of a global aesthetics. His work *Art Forms in Nature*[191], published in ten times between 1899 and 1904 by Olaf Breidbach, presented itself at the border between art and science. Fascinated by the incongruity of shapes, colours, transparency and anatomy of submarine beings such as plankton, jellyfishes and micro-organisms, he endeavoured to highlight the regularity of their forms and the symmetry present in their structure. Haeckel underlined the fundamental symmetry of order and nature, finding organic beauty in each of the creatures he studied. His work

[190] Le-May Sheffield, Suzanne. *Revealing New Worlds: Three Victorian Women Naturalists*. London: Routledge, 2001, 116.
[191] The original German title is *Kunstformen der Natur*.

was a spectacular rendering of biologic organisms' spectacular beauty. Placing his depictions in the line of evolution, he drew and placed his specimens on plates reminding the Renaissance and Baroque studies (Fig. 26).

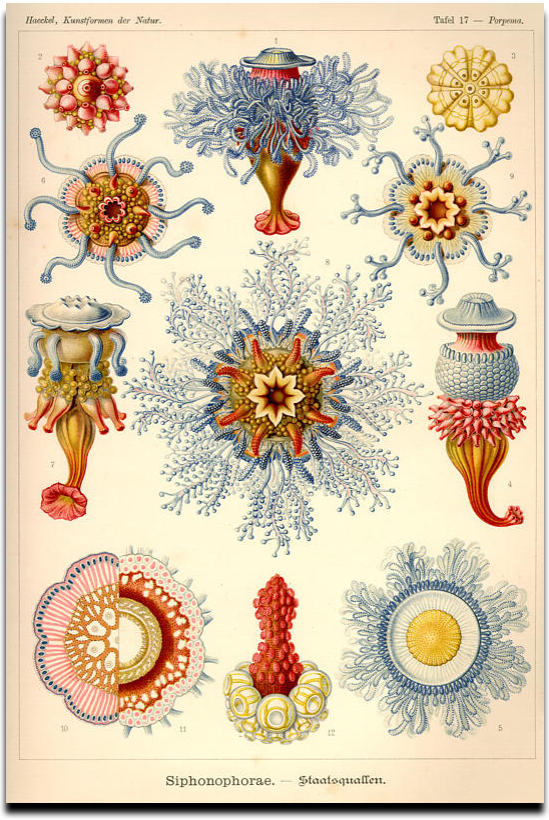

Figure 26 – Haeckel's *Siphonophorae* (1904)

In the introduction of his 1904 work, Haeckel expressed his belief about natural productions surpassing all creations coming from Man: "Nature generates in her lap an inexhaustible abundance of wonderful forms, whose beauty and diversity surpass by far all art forms produced by man"[192]. For Haeckel, biology was closely similar to art in the sense that the beauty of art came from the harmonic symmetry of living organisms. His art was deeply marked by the symmetry found in nature, and notably in unicellular beings such as radiolaria. Haeckel's artworks of plankton and jellyfishes, displaying the beauty of the biological world, became particularly popular as representations of such uncommon animals had rarely been displayed to the public before.

[192] Quotation from Bindé, Joséphine. *Les Médusantes créatures d'Ernst Haeckel*. https://www.beauxarts.com/grand-format/les-medusantes-creatures-dernst-haeckel/, 29 November 2017.

His work had a great impact on the vision of nature in modern arts and science as it did not only encourage the pursuit of scientific purposes but encouraged also generations of twentieth- century artists and architects to inspire themselves from the forms of nature. In an article, Jerôme Coignard explains that Haeckel's aesthetics inspired for instance the construction of jellyfish ceiling lights in the *Beurs van Berlage*[193]. Haeckel's house (the *Villa Medusa*) in Jena was also built in accordance with his ideas of uniting art and science, an undertaking visible in the façade decorations and indoor constructions which were inspired by jellyfishes. Haeckel's *Art Forms in Nature* definitely influenced the early twentieth-century movement of the *Art Nouveau*, one principle of which was to reintroduce natural forms in human art pieces such as curves, curls and scrolls or more complex geometrical forms, and even mathematical structures.[194] Both an artistic masterpiece and a scientific examination of the undersea world, Haeckel's work offered a meaningful reminder of the precious diversity of life and managed to abolish the frontier between art and science.

[193] « Conscient de l'intérêt de ses découvertes pour les artistes, il publia en 1904 son célèbre *Formes artistiques de la nature*, qui inspira les maîtres de l'Art Nouveau, des peintres comme Alfred Kubin et même l'architecte Berlage, qui créa pour la Bourse d'Amsterdam des lustres méduses » in Coignard, Jerôme. *Ernst Haeckel, le damné de la méduse*. https://www.connaissancedesarts.com, 2 March 2018.

[194] The geometrical application of the Fibonacci sequence, commonly known as the golden spiral, can be identified in our environment and in natural elements such as a snail's shell, the structure of ammonoids and mollusks in general. Many artworks centred around this representation of the perfect ratio – we can notably refer to the inclination of *Vitruvian Man*'s limbs. The golden ratio is the epitome for Haeckel's theory of art originating in the forms of nature – the use of nature's perfection in art.

CONCLUSION

Through nature, Men have managed to reflect the extent of their societies during all ages of history, from the political domain to the artistic and scientific creation, by way of the domain of emotions and human sensibility. In a few millenaries, human history has gone through so many changes during which humanity has always evolved through contact with one constant element: nature. It was thus all the more natural for each civilization to inscribe its own landmarks in an infinite, timeless and immemorial nature. Even though the immensity of natural elements forced Man, at his own scale, to master this immensity by creating downsized spaces representative of nature: gardens. With all the adjectives qualifying gardens – French, English, formal, natural, religious, poetic – the multiplicity of gardens happens to be at the image of the multiplicity of human representations of the natural world. Aiming at organizing nature or letting it free, gardens all give a sense of liberty which links us, consciously or not, to our humanity.

As Sylvie Hubac puts so well, as a "Miroir du monde, le jardin rend compte d'une manière de voir la nature, de la mettre en scène et de la penser." As we have observed in a first part, the shift in the representations of nature and of gardens from medieval times to the Age of Enlightenment in Europe was radical. In order to understand this shift, gardens had to be looked at in relation to the contemporary ideas of the society they were built into. Through these microcosms of the world, we have noted the evolution of the link between human beings and nature. The thinking of each society of any time had an impact on the design of gardens and in the architecture of landscape as well as its organization. While medieval gardens were indeed created to respond to utilitarian needs at a time when living conditions were difficult, Renaissance gardens were not just utilitarian but became a true place dedicated to pleasure as society had progressed in the domains of science and philosophy. With the progressive vanishing of the fence, Renaissance gardens came to mirror the opening onto the world that rose during the sixteenth century. The Renaissance gardens inspired later the geometrical alleys and parterres of the French formal garden in which the expertise in

landscape architecture came to its peak. The geometry found in French formal gardens was nothing but the image of the mathematical conception of the world at the time as Jean Ehrard explains:

> Le premier [le jardin à la française], géométrique, illustre bien la « géométrisation de l'univers » dont Yvon Belaval a analysé la « crise » : il ne représente pas la nature telle qu'on la voit, mais telle que la science la connaît, dans la rigueur et la simplicité mathématiques des lois qui gouvernent les choses […] un procès du jardin à la française se développe dans les années 1730, c'est-à-dire dans la période même où la vision cartésienne et mécaniste du monde, encore dominante, commence à être contestée.[195]

The shift from a conception of the world dominated by Euclidian geometry until the age of Enloghtenment to a Newtonian apprehension of the world is reflected in the passage from an ordered nature to a seemingly free nature. It is with no surprise that Daniel Deport tells us that "Le jardin imite par conséquent deux degrés de la nature, la nature harmonieuse et mathématique du cosmos et la nature terrestre soumise à la plus grande variété et au movement."[196] The "natural" garden appeared first in England in the eighteenth century while Romantism also appeared first in England before spreading to the rest of Europe. It shows that it is by looking at the evolution of the way of building and organizing the microcosms of nature that gardens constitute that we may effectively see the evolution of the way of thinking in a given society. In Stoppard's *Arcadia*, the passage from the ideas of the Enlightenment to Romantic philosophy is portrayed through the destruction of the geometrical lines of Sidley Park's garden at the beginning of the nineteenth century, replaced by the ruins and gathering of trees of the picturesque style. The adjustment of the garden to the standards of the nineteenth century allows the transposition of the shift in the conception of beauty ideals to the garden, a shift Hannah reflects upon in the play: "It's what happened to the Enlightenment, isn't it? A century of intellectual rigour turned in on itself… the decline from thinking to feeling.[197]"

[195] Ehrard, Jean. « Nature et jardins dans la pensée française du 18e siècle », *Dix-huitième siècle*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2013, 365-366.
[196] Duport, Daniel « Art et Nature dans le jardin de la Renaissance : la représentation du monde », in Brenot, Anne-Marie and Bernard Cottret. *Le Jardin : Figures et métamorphoses*. Dijon : Editions Universitaires, 2005, 59.
[197] Stoppard, Tom. *Arcadia*. London: Faber and Faber, 1993, 27.

The passage from geometrical French gardens to the English picturesque landscape constitutes in itself an obvious epistemological upheaval but what is interesting, as le-Danted notes remarkably, is that the finality of both types of garden remains the same in two different conceptions of nature:

> Celle-ci [nature] est tellement spectaculaire en termes de représentations que toute dispute concernant l'art de sjardins s'en est trouvée faussée : si Le Nôtre, André Mollet, Claude Desgots, Daniel Marot, Alexandre Le Blond, john Ros eou george London rectifiaient la nature pour la rendre parfaite à l'image de leur roi et des lois géométriques supposées la régir, Kent, Brown, Girardin, Morel, Hirschfeld, Repton ou Lenné transformeront des sites « naturels », souvent de fond en comble, pour les rendre parfaits à leur tour, mais à une autre image : celle d'une aracdie peinte par le Lorrain ou Salvadore Rosa […] Rien qui soit « naturel » donc, dans l'un comme dans l'autre cas. Sinon deux visées partagées par les uns et les autres : un projet de représentation, de *mimésis* d'une Nature parfaite postulée éternelle alors qu'il s'agit d'un produit historique contingent.[198]

In their finality and the understanding we have of gardens, we can say that the garden is a universal artefact reflecting humanity's trail of thoughts, making it the perfect place to express ideas and ideologies as it represents a nature understood by everyone. Nature has served as a means to reflect power and concerns of the time in which they are imagined. When we observe the geometry and instaured order in the gardens at Versailles, the projection of absolutist monarchy onto the landscape is evident. This will to control was extend to the way of visiting the gardens. In a will to differentiate from France and to show their progressist liberalism, English men and their "wild" nature also lead the visitor in a prepared itinerary through the thick forests to arouse his emotions and thinking. The French formal garden was an assertion of a central power organized geometrically whereas the English garden belonged to an aristocracy living in estates disseminated in the country – showing how two different nations applied their power organization to nature. Nature, already politicized, becomes thus a cultural emblem, a way to reflect a national identity. For English poet Alexander Pope, respecting the *genius loci*, or simply respecting the environment onto which Men project their conception of the world was necessary. The English garden became a

[198] Le Dantec 54-55

theatre where scenes of human life unwind and for that matter, this was precisely in nature that political concerns could be reflected.

In England, it was the collapse of absolutism in favour of a more liberal regime, that reflected in the progressive "de-geometrising" of the English garden. Additionally, the creation of landscape gardens based on the need to take distance from the French style constituted a highly politicized gesture. This distance put even more emphasis on the differences between French and British histories. This highly politicized move translated indeed a long-anchored rivalry between England and Great-Britain, as well as the race for progress reflected in multiple domains and particularly in the domestication of nature. Therefore, gardens went as far as becoming the place for the expression of nationalist claims and national pride.

Beyond its politicization, nature was also the place that allowed human emotions and sensibility to express themselves, as the second major pole of humanity. The pleasure we can draw in the contemplation of a garden also comes from the ability of nature to express human emotions. Through the domestication of nature, Man's quest of finding his lost humanity was accomplished with the recreation of an earthly version of the celestial garden he was born in represented by the apparition of the *hortus conclusus* during medieval times. The garden has historically been an unspoiled place, standing apart of the rest, a sort of miniature paradise recreated by Man. The enclosed medieval garden, from a utilitarian space, turned into a highly symbolical place and progressively a real *topos* in painting and literature of the medieval era and of the following centuries. Thus, the *hortus conclusus* came to be depicted as sheltering the Virgin Mary surrounded with different types of flowers symbolizing her admirable virtues. Nearing the beginning of the Renaissance, a distinction was created between the Virgin Mary's *hortus conclusus* and the *hortus deliciarum*, its secular homologue, both of them remaining nonetheless suitable subjects for representation and allegorization. Medieval gardens were therefore a creation meant for Man to pursue two quests at the heart of human aspirations – the recreation of the paradise lost and the quest for the beloved one.

The themes of the *hortus conclusus* and the *hortus deliciarum* became common in the history of painting as they allowed the use of natural and floral symbols to make the

transient beauty of plants last eternally. Leading to diverse interpretations, the garden of pleasure, or the orchard of lovers, and its representations in medieval literature turns into a web of symbolic natural elements in which all pleasure resided in the task of deciphering it. Thanks to major works such as Guillaume De Lorris's long poem the *Romaunt of the Rose* (1225-1230), the transposition of human attributes to gardens allowed a process of allegorization of human feelings. A symbolical web of nature, and more precisely of flowers, has been developing in the course of painting history, to the extent that each artist uses his or her own floral lexicon. Medieval themes of the *hortus conclusus* of *hortus deliciarum* were particularly revived in Victorian England in Pre-Raphaelite paintings, showing that the progress that had been made during the nineteenth century aroused a nostalgia for the past. Pre-Raphaelite artists added to their pieces a whole symbolical dimension based on the use of a floral lexicon influenced by traditions, religious symbolism and beliefs. This is thanks to this highly symbolical web of flowers representing diverse emotions that we can draw the quintessence of the message the artists want to convey:

> Hiding behind the superficial meanings, intelligible to an audience schooled in the language of flowers, were the private thoughts and intimate desires to be shared only with the elite and enlightened viewer. These portraits harbor secrets, and as Pater observed, it is when the Pre-Raphaelites say it with flowers that their paintings speak parables, but only to the initiated.[199]

The Pre-Raphaelite floral language comes here as a code to decipher and without an understanding of floral symbolism, we could probably not seize the entirety of the treason at stake in Collins's *Broken Vows* or the imminent death of Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix*. In general, the language of flowers having gained a certain popularity in Victorian England, allows the transmission of emotions via natural elements. By using flowers as messengers, ladies and gentlemen express without embarrassment their feelings in a society where speech is limited by an extreme decorum. The part of humanity reflected in floral language and metaphors resulted, as we have seen, in the rise of a culture of flowers during the nineteenth century in England.

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[199] Mancoff, Debra. *The Pre-Raphaelite Language of Flowers*. New York & London: Prestel, 2002, 9.

This cult of flowers came partly from Man's long-lasting quest for beauty. As flowers represented transient beauty, Man could reflect its own shortness of life in them. In Victorian England, a true floral culture really came at its peak as flowers decorated nearly everything. The Victorian fascination for nature was expressed in multiple forms and gave rise to the use of the Victorian language of flowers to express every possible emotions in an era where speech was limited by an extreme decorum. We could go as far to say that in transposing feelings to flowers, Man found a true solace for all the thoughts he could not express.

All the fields concerning flowers remained very feminized, as the long-lasting association between women and flowers was all the more emphasized in eighteenth and nineteenth-century England. As a traditional and ancient personification of "feminine" attributes, the association between women and flowers went as far to give rise to a floral anthropomorphism which went beyond language expressions only but also spread to art, literature and science. Floral anthropomorphism was the epitome of the reflection of human attributes into nature. While floral metaphors in literature and art such as in Grandville's sketches of "women-flowers" were more likely to apply this transposition of human characters to flowers for women only, we have seen that the scientific field, dor centuries, lots of theories extend to a sort of "natural anthropomorphism" to all human beings in general. Physiognomic theories such as Della Porta's *signatura plantarum*, now considered as pseudo-sciences, served as basis for medicine before the rise in scientific advancement. Starting from the observation of a common features in plants and human limbs, it was a way of apprehending medicine that once again, consciously or not, wanted to place the entirety of Man into nature. Fortunately, eighteenth-century scientific progress and discoveries came to replace this kind of pseudo-scientific theories by more thorough approaches. From Grandville's anthropomorphological illustrations, physiognomic theories and all floral metaphors we have seen so far, that Man feels a need to project every part of himself, physically and mentally onto nature, almost as if a symbiosis with nature could be the way to regain the perfection and beauty he lost when humanity was disgraced.

Thanks to his interest and his fascination for nature, Man had progressed in both domains of art and science, the origin of these fields rooted in the natural world. Every scientific and artistic creation is rooted in the vegetal kingdom, every human artefact is a reflect of nature which is at the origin of its creation. Botanical gardens were also a

means for Man to recreate a lost paradise by bringing together plant specimens from all around the world. All plants confined in a delimited space constituted both a microcosm of the global flora and a window opened onto the world, matching the ideas of exploration and rationality of the time. Human scientific and artistic production was reflected into nature, in the sense that nature is at the origin of both of them. Since these two fields at the heart of civilisation had a common origin in nature, science and art presented many parallels and were bought closer inevitably.

First, the botanical gardens of the Renaissance were built next to universities, and reflected Man's need to classify everything onto nature, in a way that could ease first the transmission of knowledge and secondly Man's attempt at creating a miniature of the natural world. Botanical gardens also reflected the course of progress with the opening onto the world that went along a period of colonisation. As such, botanical gardens gathered specimens from all around the world and became an opened window onto the world, reminding us by the way that by bringing together specimens from all corners of the world, Man became the new Noah, recreating a new Eden where every plants would be reunited again.

Before Linnaeus popularized his sexual classification of plants which would remain long in use in England, the science of botany was then mostly excluded from rigorous sciences because of its lack of coherence due to too many different classifications and additionally because it was considered as a feminine activity. Linné's analogies between the roles of male and female plants and human beings then only reflect the attribution of roles to men and women in society. This is how Sharon R. Bird described Linné's analogies in her book:

> […] the inappropriate creep of human gender roles into the supposedly scientific description of plant species, and the spurious primacy placed in male reproductive organs over female reproductive organs.[200]

This kind of analogies will have us notice to what extent science at that time was a reflection of societal customs. Yet, the study of botany, particularly from 1750 to 1850, could hardly be dissociated from botanical illustration, a domain in which the most

[200] Bird, Sharon and Jill M. Bystydzienski. *Removing Barriers: Women in Academic Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics*. Indiana University Press, 2006, 219.

thorough works had been made by female artists or scientists. Through the botanical plates of artists such as Elizabeth Blackwell and Marianne North, the traditional dichotomy between art and science, we have seen that the different types of representations of nature came from the evolution of the conceptions of the natural world. Botanical illustrations, despite its original purpose of helping scientific research, became a fully-fledged artistic genre, with its own style instantly recognizable and visual codes that classified it as a unique genre. Botanical illustration placed itself at the limit between art and science. This was explained by the fact that the most celebrated illustrations had to combine scientific precision and visual beauty, a feature that would normally had nothing to do with science. Botanical art was yet another representation of Man's concern and this time it was the long-lasting oscillation between art and science. The limits between art and science was an important issue that Men projected onto botanical science. Half-way between a scientific tool and an artistic artefact, botanical illustrations presented the most relevant example between the ancestral relation that links science and art and the human quest of combining pleasure and serious matters. It was all the more natural that philosophers started to explore the question of the origin of art.

Thanks to his interest and his fascination for nature, Man had progressed in both domains of art and science and numerous philosophers undertook to question what was at the origin of scientific and artistic creation during the nineteenth-century and in the early twentieth-century. While some, such as Ernst Haeckel, arrived at the conclusion that it was nature that provided a background for both domains, which made it even harder for Man to find the limit between art and science. In his aphorism on Nature, Goethe stated that art was inherently inspired by nature and joined in their display of beauty:

> Nature and Art, they go their separate ways,
> It seems; yet all at once they find each other.
> Even I no longer am a foe to either;
> Both equally attract me nowadays.
> Some honest toil's required; then, phase by phase,
> When diligence and wit have worked together
> To tie us fast to Art with their good tether,
> Nature again may set our hearts ablaze.
> All culture is like this; the unfettered mind,
> The boundless spirit's mere imagination,
> For pure perfection's heights will strive in vain.
> To achieve great things, we must be self-confined:

Mastery is revealed in limitation
And law alone can set us free again.[201]

Goethe established a parallel between the changing character of nature and the changing nature of Man, as well as their impermanence and was in that sense quoted by Ernst Haeckel, partisan of the theory according to which nature was at the origin of all forms of art. Haeckel produced beautiful and strangely attractive botanical plates in his *Kunstformen Der Nature*, showing the perfect natural symmetry found in micro-organisms, the same specimens that lived long before the apparition of Man.

Nowadays, as Jean-Pierre Le Dantec states, Man is still trying to recover his lost humanity by recreating nature he destroyed in modern urban societies, the evolution of which led to an "over-urbanization" Man is trying to make up by using nature and new types of gardens. Le Danted then asks: "Faut-il induire de cette oeuvre provocatrice que, dans le monde actuel, l'art des jardins ferait fonction de cache-misère ? De substitut à la dégradation esthétique et écologique de la planète par la création de petits paradis individuels ou communautaristes ?[202] » This question leads us to establish the following possible conjecture : if nature is to disappear, humanity will have to find a new medium suitable enough to become the vehicle and mirror of ideas, thoughts, emotions and artistic and scientific creation – and overall an element as universal as nature.

[201] Goethe, Johann W. *Selected Poetry*. Translated and edited by David Luke, London: Libris, 1999, 125.
[202] Le Dantec, Jean-Pierre. *La Poétique des jardins*. Actes Sud, 2011, 191.

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