The first utopia of the west is the eastern Garden of Eden. It was a site of perfect order, intersected by four rivers, rich in gold, bdellium and onyx, bursting with fruit trees and animals, governed by an immortal man. It was created by the gods, elohim, only to be lost by accident, mistake, the unaccountable malice of a snake or the gullibility of a woman. Across centuries and latitudes, men have tirelessly attempted to recover the original Garden or at least reconstruct it through mythology or technology.

In 1980, the archaeologist Juris Zarins finally found the Garden, or what was left of it, at the tip of the Persian Gulf. On the basis of textual evidence, ancient language patterns, geological and hydrological research as well as satellite survey photographs, he concluded that Euphrates and Tigris were once met by two other rivers, one of which is now dammed and the other a dry bed. Additional support for the identification of the site with the Paradise was provided by the findings that seven to eight thousand years ago the area was fertile, covered with dense forests and also rich with gold and bdellium, an aromatic gum resin, just as the Bible reports. Zarins was not content with merely pointing out the location but also proposed an interpretation of the Fall which he said represented the farmers taking over the land from the foragers.

To interpret the Fall as the invention of agriculture and the loss of nomadic innocence is not unreasonable: many of the characteristics of nomadic social organization resemble the Biblical account of Paradise or other varieties of Golden Age mythology which can be found in many cultures all over the world. Porphyry, for one, characterizes the Golden Age thus: “the men of that time themselves produced nothing, having invented neither agriculture nor any other art. It was for this reason that they lived a life of leisure, without care or toil, and also—if the doctrine of the most eminent medical men is to be accepted—without disease. — And there were no wars or feuds between them; for there existed among them no objects of competition of such value as to give anyone a motive to seek to obtain them by those means. Thus it was that their whole life was one of leisure, of freedom from care about the satisfaction of their needs, of health and peace and friendship.”

The life of contemporary hunter-gatherers, such as Kung Bushmen, matches this account to a surprising degree: women (who are usually responsible for most of the food) often need anywhere from 5 to 20 hours a week to gather enough for the whole family. In addition to that, they may use a few hours to construct simple shelters. The diet is healthy and balanced, based on approximately 75 different wild plants. Paleopathologists agree that the skeletons of ancient hunter-gatherer tend to be larger and more robust and show fewer signs of degenerative disease than do those of agriculturists. Serious conflict is extremely rare—if though a Bushman tradition has been reported by Laurens Van der Post according to which there once was a war so terrible that eventually one man was killed. The involved parties were so appalled by their own Ypres that they drew a line in the desert never to be crossed.

Noteworthy are also the nomadic conceptions of self, kinship and property. The social composition of the band is fluid: individuals and hearth-holds come and go. The mobility of nomadism allows for a constantly shifting locus of authority, a constant realignment of friendships and work units, and for the dissipation of latent disputes. The concept of territory is vague; instead of boundaries there are foci, such as water holes, to which members of the band belong. Similar fluidity characterizes social relations. Ties between spouses or between a father and a child can be very loose. Instead of biological kinship, the responsibilities of the present moment are emphasized. Social commitments are personal rather than institutionalized and fixed. There are agreed procedures for making decisions but no authority is designated by assigning precedence to age, sex, birth, expertise, or wealth. In its fluidity, nomadic society promotes non-hierarchical or in Deleuzian terms non-arboreal thought: it is characterized by an ill-defined sense of boundaries and “memorate knowledge,” unsystematic information based on focus and lacking in coherent and socially shared categories. The games of the Inuit Eskimo, for example, employ contradictory feelings that help to destroy any compartmentalization. As a result of nomadic social organization, hunter-gatherers lack a developed sense of individuality; the origin of personhood or individuality and the concomitant arboREAL thought can be situated to a time after the fall into agriculture and domestic life.

The characteristics of nomadic thought have been divined in the Genesis myth. St. Augustine insisted, for example, that Adam was not a single individual but a multiplicity: “We did not yet have individually created and apportioned forms in which to live as individuals.” In a related argument, the Gnostic Gospel of Philip explains the Fall as the adoption of logocentrically dualist, arboREAL thought, interpreting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as involving thinking in dual opposites, as a setting up of deceptive divisions between things that actually are inseparable.

Garden as architecture
The unfortunate invention of agriculture brought with it a population explosion, private property, writing in the form of grain stock inventories, hierarchical social organization, and war. The necessary condition for these effect was the architectural
technology of separating private property from the natural and ownerless environment. Jean-Jacques Rousseau writes: "The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying 'This is mine,' and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows: 'Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.'" \(^8\)

Listening instead to Rousseau, we realize that the Paradise marked a turning point, at once the end of the natural state of humankind and original communism and the beginning of unnatural establishment of private property. Surrounded by a wall, the gates of which were guarded by cherubims with flameing swords, the Paradise was the first private space, isolated from the natural world of Eden.\(^9\)

The word 'paradise' comes from the Avestan pairi-daiza, which means 'a walled enclosure'; the word 'garden' has a similar origin. It comes from the vulgar Latin phrase hortus gardinus or 'enclosed garden' where the adjective *gardinus, 'enclosed', derives from prehistoric German *garden – whence also comes the English word 'yard.' Garden comes from Indo-European *ghorto- which also produced Latin cohors 'court,' and hortus, 'garden,' and ultimately from *ghar which means 'to seize, to enclose.' This is also the root for several architectural words, such as the Indo-European grhär, 'house,' the Old Slavic grad, 'castle, city, garden,' the Russian gorod, 'town,' as in Petrograd, and the Czech hrad, 'castle.' A garden is the embodiment of the basic architectural gesture of spatial separation and the root of all later architecture, from ornament to urban design. Vitruvius derived the Ionic capital from the leaves of a tree and attempted to return the Doric order to the simple botany of Arcadia on the Peloponnesos. Analogously, Goethe, Schlegel, Coleridge and Chateaubriand likened the Gothic cathedral to a petrified forest, a conjecture spectacularly demonstrated to the Royal Society of Edinburgh by Sir James Hall who in 1792 planted sixteen trees in his garden in the form of a Latin cross pavilion. In merely six years, the branches (which had been tied together) had grown to form a characteristic Gothic vaulting. Even larger architectural ensembles have been traced back to a vegetative paradigm. Laugier not only subscribed to the Vitruvian notion of the primitive hut but also insisted that the city be modeled after a forest. An alternative vision permeates the Encyclopédie which defines the city as "an enclosure surrounded by walls," containing several districts, streets, public squares and other buildings, like an enclosed garden. The suggestion is of course of Biblical origin. As Abraham Cowley wrote, "God the first garden made, and the first city, Cain", after His example.\(^10\)

No less than a building or a city, a garden is a quintessentially technological artefact, "a deviation from nature," in the words of Sir Joshua Reynolds.\(^11\)

The Persian paradise was separated from the exterior or natural world through the use of architectural technology. The wall protected the flora and the fauna from the erosive effects of farming as well as the merciless hooves of ungulate herds. Without technology, the unnaturally heightened garden landscape would disappear; with the wall, nature survived, if only in effigy or simulacrum. Later manifestations of paradise throughout the Mediterranean were even more graphically ars factual, as elaborate technologies of irrigation and cultivation were required. A garden represents architecture when seen against nature and nature when understood in relation to architecture.\(^12\)

**Garden as heterotopia**

Considering how gardens conflate the opposites of nature and city and simultaneously provide us with a paradigmatic reading of both, it is only natural to expect an unsystematic heterogeneity and an ill-defined sense of boundary in the categorization of gardens. Theoreticians of horticulture seem eager to comply with this expectation. Summarizing the remote pages of Pierre Boitard's once celebrated treatise Traité de la composition et de l'ornement des jardins, Gustave Flaubert divides all gardens into

(a) those distinguished by everlasting ruins, tombs, and an 'ex-voto to the Virgin, indicating the spot where a cavalier has fallen under an assassin's dagger' (the Melancholy);

(b) those constructed with overhanging rocks, shattered trees and burnt-out cabins (the Terrible);

(c) those with Peruvian torch-thistles which 'bring back memories to a settler or traveller' (the Exotic);

(d) those featuring a temple to modern philosophy (the Pensive);

(e) those populated by obelisks and triumphal arches (the Majestic);

(f) those with moss and grottoes (the Mysterious);

(g) those centered around a lake (the Poetic); and finally

(h) those where the visitor, after encountering a wild boar, a hermit and a number of tombs, is transported by a boat into a drawing-room only to be drenched by jets of water (the Fantastic).\(^13\)

Flaubert's categories map a site streaked with aporias and ruptures. In this sense, they adequately portray the heterogeneous and paranoid logic of gardens. The classification also exemplifies Michel
Foucault's concept of heterotopia, as characterized in the Order of Things. As applied to thinking, heterotopia refers to such fundamentally contradictory conceptual schemes which make it impossible to name this or that thing because they tangle common names and destroy syntax in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things hold together. In their madness, however, heterotopias also have the more positive function of exposing the equal relativity and arbitrariness of every alternative classification.14

In the essay "Of Other Spaces," Foucault approaches the term 'heterotopia' from another angle. Instead of conceptual schemes, he is actually addressing the real physical environment. Heterotopias are described as real existing places that are "formed in the very founding of society," as part of the presuppositions of social life. They are "counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted." Heterotopias must therefore be contrasted with the ordinary, dominating, real sites but also distinguished from utopias, places which also represent society in perfected or inverted form but do not actually exist. Furthermore, heterotopias have the curious property of being in relation of all the other sites in such a way as to suspect, neutralize or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, reflect or mirror.15

The mirror is Foucault's simplest example of a physical heterotopia. It opens into a world which is three-dimensional, complete and as much alive as the one we inhabit but which is nonetheless other. In fact, the word 'mirror' derives from the Latin mirari, 'to wonder, stare' at the mirus, 'strange', the Other. Strictly speaking, however, the space of the mirror does not exist and therefore has to be understood in Foucauldian terms as a utopia. Like other utopias, mirrors contain a critique of the present reality and a proposal for improvement. This potential of mirrors was well understood by Baroque poets and artists, such as Velázquez whose Las Meninas uses the conceit of the mirror to distill and perfect the image of the royal couple as the ideal for the young princess to emulate. Even more transparently the utopian potential of mirrors was exploited in the eighteenth-century fashion for 'Claude's mirror,' a concave mirror made of brownish-grey glass which would turn any banal landscape into a delightful symphony, comparable to a Claude Lorrain painting, of solemn and ancient colors. In addition to utopian visions, the virtual space of the mirror also allows insight into the real. Through a mirror I can view a part of the world otherwise hidden from my eyes, my own body, even if that body is situated in a space where I am not. Hence, Seneca, while admitting the illusory nature of mirrors, insisted they were invented so that man might know himself.16

However, Foucault does not limit himself to a discussion of mirrors but gives six general characteristics of heterotopias:

1. Heterotopias are found in all cultures. There are two categories in particular which seem to be almost universal: first, crisis heterotopias, the sacred or forbidden spaces for individuals in transition (rites of passage etc.), such as boarding schools, military barracks, honeymoon hotels; second, heterotopias of deviation, such as rest homes, psychiatric hospitals and prisons.

2. Heterotopias change over time. The most striking example is the cemetery which has taken on different roles and different locations in European cities.

3. Heterotopias juxtapose in one real place several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Foucault mentions the oriental garden that represents that world in a restricted site.

4. Heterotopias are linked to heterochronies, slices of time. Museums and libraries are heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time while the Disney World is temporary and permanent, its collapse of time, history and place or style both abolishes and preserves time and space.

5. Heterotopias are controlled by systems of opening and closing: they are both isolated and penetrable.

6. Heterotopias either create a space of illusion that exposes every real space as still more illusory (heterotopia of illusion) or produce a space that is real but at the same time as perfect, meticulous, well arranged as our world is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled (heterotopias of compensation).

Any one of Foucault's characterizations could be contested; take number four as an example. The idea that heterotopias are also heterochronies is curious: there is no place that would exist in a metaphysical present moment, ergo, everything is a heterochrony and by that token a heterotopia, ergo, there are no homotopias, ergo, the concept of heterotopia is meaningless or incoherent. Or consider the possibility, proposed by the third statement, that there are in a real place several mutually inconsistent sites. What could such an theoretical inconsistency mean in the face of their actual, empirically verifiable co-existence? The apparent continuity of a homotopia (as opposed to the apparent disjunctiveness of a heterotopia) is either a distortion induced by Parmenidean totalization or the result of a pragmatically focused, partial analysis.

Heterotopias can hardly be as absolutely other as Foucault maintains: i.e. not absolutely other but only other within a discourse or an argument. Panopticon may constitute a heterotopia in relation to the rest of society but in itself, it is an absolute spa-
tial homotopia because its pervasive visuality prevents and excludes otherness. Better examples of heterotopia are provided by the conflation of architectural and natural spaces through the art of gardening.

Heterotopias

Since the Renaissance, the heterotopic tendencies of gardens have been symbolically cultivated in topiary. In the garden of Villa Garzoni at Collodi, for example, cypresses "twisted and stretched, now jesting, now serious," taking the form of a tower, a ship, a pear, or an angel. The intersections of Platonic forms with ephemeral nature, animals with plants, eternity with transience, figurality with abstraction allow for no totalizing discourse.

However, similar undecidable transgression of conceptual categories pervades gardens at all levels of analysis: the culture of gardens is one of inversions and Saturnalian carnevals. Romantic concoctions such as Le Rouge's giant cypresses and the probable extravagances in the Sacro Bosco at Bomarzo equal or surpass those dreamed up by the Imagineers of the Disney theme parks. Simultaneously, they function as critique of the conventions of what might otherwise be understood as serious architecture. By building a kitchen in the form of a ruined Roman temple and an ice cellar as an Egyptian pyramid in the New Garden at Holy See in Potsdam, Carl von Gottard and Carl Gotthard Langhans were not only being sacrilegious but also revealed the fragility of architectural theory, of assignments of program, of typological categories and of fictions about functional form. Such questioning results in a heterotopic universe which exists in another place and time than ours. Stowe, with its thirty-eight monumets ranging from a temple of Bacchus to Gothic churches, inspired one visitor to state that "the owner and the creator of this superb solitude have even had ruins, temples and ancient buildings built here, and times as well as places are brought together in the splendor that is more than human."

However, horticultural heterotopias are not limited to the preposterous assortments of oddities in Romantic gardens. In Vaux-le-Vicomte, Le Vau and Le Nôtre have achieved the astounding feat of destabilizing the very image of stability, the castle, which apparently changes location as new terraces are gradually revealed to the visitor. Renaissance gardens, which also often employ a formal geometrical layout, occasionally question temporal divisions. The Villa Lante at Bagnaia, for example, can be read as a narrative which relates the carefully orchestrated transformation of trees into columns and the materialization of voids as columns. Simultaneously old and new, originary and derivative, the elements in the garden assert and deny their own rhetorical mode.

Such incoherence is never clearer than in garden labyrinths, the popularity of which transcends historical periods. A labyrinth eternalizes the sordid origin of architecture as a container and a veil of sin but when constructed out of greenery, it also represents anti-architecture. As a geometrical structure, a labyrinth subverts the purest of human creations, mathematics, for perverse ends: instead of a means to enlightenment, geometry is used to confuse and mislead. Hence, a labyrinth stands for counter-reason and untamed nature as the opposite of human rationality.

The contradictions, or more exactly the impossible and yet explicit and undeniable overlay of two or more mutually exclusive categories, undoubtedly constitutes a part of the pleasure in gardens, as it also informs the morbid aesthetic of wax cabinets. In formal gardens, natural materials are forced into shapes and states they would not naturally take. In addition to topiary, the most poignant example are fountains where water is made to flow against gravity: the most primitive of all natural elements is harnessed to deny the most basic fact of earthly existence. Elaborate hydraulic contrivances at the Villa d’Este achieve the opposite by transforming water into music, the highest and most unnatural of all cultural creations of man. Every garden, nor matter whether formal or informal, no matter how conventional or unspectacular, is of course ultimately an artefact and as man-made nature an implicit criticism of the role of the creative subject itself, man as natura naturans collapsed with natura naturata.

Contradiction as theory

In such incoherent exercises, garden designers have often followed the suggestion of Antoine de Ville who argued in 1666 that the gardener must work like God, "who has ordered and arranged things quite contrary to their qualities in such proportion that they continue without destroying each other." This way, gardens also reveal and celebrate the essential nature of the world, composed as it is "of opposing parts, without which nothing can survive." According to de Ville, trees and plants are jealous one of the other, as are rational and animal creatures, in the same way as the parts of a machine or of a system of fortification. This vital principle of 'contrariety' or 'discord' must not be suppressed but rather regulated by art. Contrariety is the essence of garden design. At the most basic level, this applies to the relationship between the garden and its surroundings. As a utopian ideal, paradise has always been represented by that which was scarce or absent, the other. In the south, the paradise was a grove or an oasis, while in the north, where forested landscapes still existed,
the exceptional scene was the absence of trees, as evidenced by the fact that the Anglo-Saxon word for paradise meant meadow. Thus, as J. B. Jackson has pointed out, there are in the west two distinct garden traditions, that of the enclosure and the artificial forest and that of the clearing and architectural forays. If the former is reflected in the Edenic myths of Adam and Gilgamesh, the latter is portrayed in the creation myths of the north, such as the Finnish Kalevala. In the north, the void of the clearing is often opposed by the solid of the hut which occupies it. In the south, the artificial forest is compounded with its own oppositional version of the clearing, a well as the central void. Hence, the essential contradictions in a garden are also matched on the formal level of the phenotype.

Most alarmingly, the theory of garden architecture is equally contradictory and heterogeneous. In the third part of Aesthetics, Hegel declared that the art of garden design, like dancing, is an ‘incomplete art.’ The incompleteness of gardening derives from its effortless and devastating combination of various arts and sciences, such as botanics, engineering, architecture, zoology, hydraulics and musical theory, resulting in the multiplicity and irregularity of mazes and bosques, bridges over stagnant water, surprises with Gothic chapels, temples, Chinese houses, hermitages and so on. Hegel compares such hybrid assemblages to hermaphrodites, cross-breeding and amphibians which only manifest the impotence of nature to maintain essential border lines. He insists that while gardening can deliver pleasant, graceful and commendable effects it will always fall short of actual perfection.20

Furthermore, it is not only that the sources of garden theory are heterogeneous, to say the least, but its objectives are subversive or outright negative. Pope advised English gardeners:

He gains all ends who pleasingly confounds, surpises, varies, and conceals the bounds.

However, not only was illusion the preferred medium of the horticulturists but the principle was applied to the art of gardening itself: it was to vanish together with the natural boundaries of the site. Thus, the Duke of Harcourt opened his essay on the informal landscape with the paradoxical epigraph: Ars est celare artem, “art lies in the concealment of art.”21

Others took this doctrine, despite its classical origins, as involving not so much a paradox as an actual contradiction. Antoine Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy argued that all arts, including architecture and the art of gardening, are based on Aristotelian imitation which does not mean a simple production of a formal likeness. Rather, “to imitate – is to produce a resemblance of a thing, but in some other thing which becomes the image of it. It is precisely the fictitious and incomplete within each of the arts that constitutes them as arts.”22 However, he observed that in the informal or English garden, the desired image of nature is simply nature itself – which is contradictory: “The medium of this art is reality... Now, nothing can pretend to be at the same time reality and imitation.”23 Nothing can be at the same time reality and its image unless it is simultaneously the origin of the opposition and capable of arbitrarily occupying either side of the equation. This is exactly the conceptual role of the garden as the nomadic diagram of memorate knowledge.

Machine

Together with the cave, the garden can be understood as chora, the unnamable container existing before categories such as truth/illusion and reality/imitation, or the separatrix between city and nature. Through the separation, it constitutes our physical environment either as ‘nature’ or as ‘culture,’ in both cases through opposition. Hence, gardens are not only constructed through the architectural act of building a wall but they themselves enact an analogous separation on a conceptual level. In this sense, the garden is a fluid signifier without a signified or itself an abstract machine that can take on different roles in different contexts, constituting the perpetual other. Its matter (from Latin mater or ‘mother,’ hence Mother Nature) is dependent on its haecceitas; its function is neither semiotic nor physical, neither expression nor content, but a pure function that informs both the expression-form of the discourse on architecture and the content-form of the city. Walpole said that while Mahomet imagined an Elysium, William Kent created many of them.24 Actually, every garden is a relocation of the Garden of Eden and a deterriorization of nature but also a reterritorialization within the regime of signs, the necessary counterpart to architectural signifiers.

The rest of the argument can only be related in allegories since we have already entered the hortus clausus of a-signifying rhizomes. The Marquis of Girardin, a student and friend of Rousseau’s, had begun in the 1760s to transform his estate north of Paris, Ermenonville, into a picturesque garden since the philosopher had proposed natural landscape as the place for man to begin his regeneration. Ermenonville reached its ultimate success with the visit and inexplicable death of Rousseau who was buried on the Isle of Poplars on 4 July, 1778 in a sarcophagus bearing the inscription: ‘ici repose l’homme de la nature et de la vérité, “here rests the man of nature and of truth.” The tomb is now empty.

Verfasser:

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Kari Jormakka
Bauhaus-Universität Weimar

Notes


2 "A river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates." Genesis, 2:10-14.
As quoted by Barton, 20 Hegel, 23 Teyssot, 22 Quatremere.


Genesis 3: 6–24.


Not only the city but also the garden could be defined, in the words of Le Corbusier, as “the grip of man on nature. It is a human operation directed against nature.” Le Corbusier, The City of To-Morrow and its Planning. Tr. Frederick Etchells. London: The Architectural Press, 1971.


Seneca, Naturales quaestiones, 1.17.4. As quoted by Barton, Carlin A., The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans. The Gladiator and the Monster. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, 176. From perhaps this idea, Jacques Lacan developed a whole theory claiming that identity derives from an error of recognition, a child’s misreading of the self in the mirror as the other. Jacques Lacan claims that initially the child identifies no separation between the self or the body and the external world, in particular the mother. There is not yet any coherent body-image, only a discontinuous experience of events. Between 6 and 8 months the child enters the mirror stage. Looking at itself in the mirror, the child perceives another human being with which it merges. In the “Imaginary Order”, the self is alienated in the Other. The mirror stage only allows for dual relationships. To effectuate a complete separation of the self from the other, the child needs to enter the “Symbolic Order”, which happens when the father intervenes. Even this further elaboration of selfhood comes from outside the self, from the father and from language.

In a poem called Le Pompe di Colliodi of 1652, Francesco Sbarra describes the Garden of Villa Garzoni at Colliodi, including the following verses:

In mille guise so conorde e stende
Il bel cipresso hora scherzande, hor grave,
Hor esprime una Torre, hor una Nave.
Hor di Pera, Hor d'angle sembianza prende.
(In a thousands guises the fair cypress twists and stretches, now jesting, now serious.
Now it forms a tower, now a ship, now it takes the semblance of a pear, now that of an angel.) As quoted in Ponte, Alessandra, „The Garden of Villa Garzoni at Colliodi,” in Mosser, Monique and Teyssot, Georges (ed.) The Architecture of Western Gardens. A Design History from the Renaissance to the Present Day. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1991, 182.


Quatremère de Quincy, Antoine, „Type,” Oppositions 8, Spring 1977: 8, pp. 149, 120.


As quoted by Baltrusaitis, „Jardins et pays d’illusion.” 207.