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The development of the Picturesque and the Knight-Price-Repton Controversy.

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ABSTRACT

In recent years the history of the garden has enjoyed increased attention within scholarly circles. Of particular interest is the history of the formation of the Picturesque garden. The ideas of three men, Richard Payne Knight, Uvedale Price, and Humphry Repton, are central to the evolution of Picturesque theory as related to the garden. The conflict among them has become known as the Picturesque Controversy. Due to misguided interpretations by modern scholars, however, the essence of the dispute has been obscured. Through a discussion of the development of Picturesque theory and a comparison of the actual points of difference between the above mentioned theorists, this paper proposes to expose the essential elements of the debate. It also demonstrates that, while all three participants are attempting to reach beyond the practices of their own century, it is Humphry Repton who distinguishes himself as the true herald of modern society and its attitude toward the garden.

Résumé

Dans les dernières années, l'histoire du jardin reçoit de plus en plus d'attention dans les milieux académiques. D'intérêt particulier est l'histoire de la formation du jardin pittoresque. Les idées de trois hommes, Richard Payne Knight, Uvedale Price et Humphry Repton, sont au centre de l'évolution de la théorie pittoresque en relation avec le jardin. Le conflit entre eux est connu comme étant la controverse pittoresque. Par contre, grâce aux interprétations peu judiscieuses d'érudits modernes. l'essentiel de la dispute a été obscuri. Par une discussion sur le développement de la théorie pittoresque et une comparaison des points de différence entre les théoristes nommés ci-dessus, cette thèse propose d'exposer les éléments essentiels du debat. Il sera démontré que, bien que les trois participants essaient d'aller au-delà des pratiques de leur propre siècle, c'est le théoriste Humphry Repton que se distingue comme le véritable héraut de la société moderne et de l'attitude de celle-ci envers le jardin.

Table of Contents:

INTRODUCTION

The life of the well-to-do in late-eighteenth-century England was distinguished by a major preoccupation with picturesque views. This fixation was accompanied by an interest in the transformation of the seventeenth-century formal garden into a picturesque landscape. The theory associated with this variety of improvement became a popular topic of discussion and, in 1794-5, three prominent Englishmen published essays concerning landscape-gardening and the picturesque. In celebration of the recently completed grounds at his estate of Downton in Herefordshire, Richard Payne Knight produced a didactic poem entitled The Landscape. This he dedicated to Sir Uvedale Price, who lived at the neighbouring estate of Foxley and who was engaged in similar endeavours. Price, consequently, presented in print An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful: and on the Use of Studying Pictures for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape. Both these writings attacked in varying degrees the work of "Capability" Brown and his successor, Humphry Repton. The latter was thus compelled to insert into a collection of his gardening accomplishments up to that date, a defense of his profession and a summary of his ideas on the picturesque. Repton's compilation came complete with hand-coloured drawings and was entitled Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening.

Art historians have labelled the rivalry that ensued the "Picturesque Debate." This paper represents a discussion of

the theories of Knight and Price in contrast with those of Repton, with particular attention to the respective homes of the adversaries: Knight's estate at Downton, Price's Foxley and the Castle House retreat in Aberystwyth, together with Repton's residence at Harestreet. A study of the sites at which these men chose to live, and the application of their theories to their own surroundings, identifies those differences which actually caused the eighteenth-century controversy. In conclusion, this paper assesses the contributions of these three gardening theorists as they relate to the nineteenth century. Special emphasis is placed on the achievements of Humphry Repton.

Chapter I: The DEVELOPMENT of the THEORY of the PICTURESQUE as RELATED to the ENGLISH LANDSCAPE GARDEN

The interest in the Picturesque garden at the end of the eighteenth century represents the culmination of a long current of development which sought to achieve a closer relationship to nature in garden design. The various manifestations of this ambition have been called the English landscape garden, the High Phase of which is the Picturesque garden. In order to appreciate the Picturesque Controversy and its implications, the evolution of the theory and practice involving the eighteenth-century English garden must be understood.

i. Henry Wotton, Francis Bacon and William Temple: moving toward the "natural" garden.

One of the first demands for a return to nature in the English garden comes to us from Henry Wotton (1568-1639). In his Elements of Architecture (1624) he observes: "I must note a certaine contrarietie betweene building and gardening: For as Fabriques should bee regular, so Gardens should bee irregular." Wotton goes on to give us the first description of a "natural garden," which is characterized by "a delightful confusion." He also notes features such as "Groves, and artificiall devices under ground," which "are of great expence, and little dignitie," and should be "converted." Wotton's idea of a more natural garden looks forward to the practices of the eighteenth century. But what Wotton terms irregularity is analogous to a "wilde Regularitie" and his "natural" garden is

actually "a piece not of Nature, but of Arte."[1] His views on the relation between the garden and art can be seen as foreshadowing, most likely unconsciously, the Picturesque movement. Wotton introduces the notion of the gardener who:

> Examine[s] the tinctures and seasons of his flowers, that in their setting, the inwardest of those which were to come up at the same time, should alwayes be a little darker than the outmost, and so serve them for a kinde of gentle shadow.[2]

Wotton's gardener composes a flower garden in much the same manner as a painter would his canvas. As an early precursor of the Landscape garden, Wotton demonstrates a feeling for nature that is characteristic of later garden theorists. In his invocation of pictorial imagery for the laying out of a garden, he anticipates the second half of the eighteenth century. As an early active force in the theory of gardens he may be seen as the creator of the genre of garden literature and the forerunner of writers like Pope and Addison.[3]

Francis Bacon (1561-1626), like Wotton, was an early pioneer of the natural garden. In his essay entitled "Of Gardens" (1625) Bacon suggested that:

> For the Ordering of the Ground, within the Great Hedge, I

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[1]Henry Wotton, The Elements of Architecture, (1624). Reproduced in The Genius of the Place, Peter Willis, ed., p.48-50.

[2]Wotton, The Elements....

[3]See S. Lang, "The Genesis of the English Landscape Garden," The Picturesque Garden, Nikolaus Pevsner, ed. (Dumbarton Oaks, 1974), p.10.

> leave it to Variety of Device; Advising nevertheless, that whatsoever forme you cast it into, it be not too Busie, or full of Worke. Wherein I, for my part, doe not like Images Cut out in Juniper, or other Garden stuffe: They be for Children.[4]

Bacon is thus critical of an excess of formality in the garden. He also proposes that a section of the garden should be reserved for the "Heath," a plot of "Natural wildnesse" in which the plants should be set "here and there, and not in any Order."[5]

The significance of Bacon's call for variety and irregularity in planning is matched by his interest in diversity of plant-life. He believes that "there ought to be Gardens, for all the Moneths in the Yeare," and provides a detailed list of the appropriate verdure. He concludes "Of Gardens" with an admonition to the "Great Princes" who "sometimes adde Statua's, and such Things, for State, and Magnificence, but nothing to the true Pleasure of a Garden."[6] William Mason (1725-97) proclaimed Bacon as the "prophet...of the true taste in gardening,"[7] and, indeed, his study of plant-life and his desire that it be presented in its natural state looks forward to the gardens of the eighteenth century and

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[4]Francis Bacon, "Of Gardens," (1625). Reproduced in The Genius of the Place, p.51-6.

[5]Bacon, "Of Gardens."

[6]Bacon, "Of Gardens."

[7]From the postscript to William Mason, The English Garden: A Poem in Four Books (London, 1772).

beyond.

While Wotton and Bacon were the first to provide descriptions of natural gardens, it was William Temple (1628-99) who attempted to provide a historical basis for the natural garden, looking to the beginnings of Creation in the Garden of Paradise. Temple concluded that the present garden should be modelled after that of Adam and Eve before the fall, which God saw as the best he could do for his creations, and which was certainly very close to nature since it was only after the Fall that Adam and Eve were forced into a life of husbandry and labour. The garden modelled after Paradise is best when not restrained or compelled. It should follow Nature. Temple's role model is God himself:

> And whether the greatest of Mortal Men should attempt the forcing of Nature may best be judged, by observing how seldom God Almighty does it Himself.[8]

The garden recognized by Temple as being representative of his ideas is Moor-Park in Hertfordshire (Ill.1). This formal garden could not, by twentieth-century standards, be seen as adhering to the whims of nature. However, for Temple, nature was organized and systematic, rather than irrational and uncontrollable. The First Garden was created perfectly by God and it was this garden that should be emulated. For a garden-theorist of the seventeenth century, a garden that resembled

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[8]William Temple, Upon the Gardens of Epicurus: or, Of Gardening in the Year 1685 (London, 1692).

the depths of the wilderness was not an acceptable representation of God's creation, and therefore could not be utilized as the model for a modern garden. In fact, Temple warned his readers of the danger of supposing that a beautiful garden could be constructed without great effort and without the guiding hand of art. In perceiving this caution as necessary, he was perhaps more in tune with the future of gardening than his love of formality would suggest.

Temple is undoubtedly most celebrated for his writings on the Chinese Sharawadgi, which is considered to have exercised an influence on the English landscape garden and its architecture.[9] He tells of the distaste held by the Chinese for the formal way of planting, which they say can be done by anyone:

> The Chineses...say a Boy, that can tell an Hundred, may plant Walks of Trees in straight Lines, and over against one another, and to what Length and Extent he pleases. But their greatest Reach of Imagination is employed in contriving Figures, where Beauty shall be great, and strike the Eye, but without any Order or Disposition of Parts, that shall be commonly or easily observ'd.[10]

Temple clearly admires the ability of the Chinese to create these wonders of irregularity, but again he cautions his reader:

But I should hardly advise any of these Attempts in the

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[9]See for example Edward Hyams, The English Garden (New York, 1964).

[10]Temple, Upon the Gardens....

> Figure of Gardens among us; they are Adventures of too hard Achievement for any common Hands; and though there may be more Honour if they succeed well, yet there is more Dishonour if they fail, and 'tis Twenty to One they will; whereas, in regular Figures, 'tis hard to make any great and remarkable Faults.[11]

Once more, however, in his expression of a desire to move away from Formality to a method that is more challenging and closer to nature, Temple foreshadows the course of English gardening.

ii. John Milton to Alexander Pope: painting, the theatre, and the gardens of seventeenth-century Italy.

Temple's ideas of the modern garden as a duplication of the Garden of Paradise is also seen in that most famous of poems, Paradise Lost, by John Milton (1608-74). Milton's description of the garden of Adam and Eve includes:

> Flours worthy of Paradise which not nice Art
> In Beds and curious Knots, but Nature boon
> Powrd forth profuse on Hill and Dale and Plaine.[12]

Milton undoubtedly sees the Garden of Eden as reflective of nature rather than of art. But Milton's nature, just as Temple's is still ordered and controlled.

There is, in Milton's poem, the mention of two mediums that were to prove of great importance for the English landscape garden. The first is a "woodie Theatre" which appears in the forest of Milton's Paradise:

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[11]Temple, Upon the Gardens....

[12]John Milton, Paradise Lost (1667), Book IV, l.241-43.

Insuperable highth of loftiest shade,
Cedar, and Pine, and Firr, and branching Palm.
A Silvan Scene, and as the ranks ascend
Shade above shade, a woodie Theatre
Of statliest view.[13]

The introduction of theatre imagery into a garden should not be seen as unusual. Actual theatres were common in Italian gardens, for example at the Villa Aldobrandini in Frascati,[14] and were much imitated in England by gardeners such as Charles Bridgeman at Rousham (Ill.9). But Milton's invocation of the theatre also relates more largely to the garden as a whole so that the "scenes" of a garden are understood to be similar to those that one would see as background on a theatre stage.[15] This imagery will become more obvious in later gardens.

Milton also compares his Paradise to a "Lantskip," the Dutch term for a painted scene. Although he is not using the art of painting in the "picturesque" sense of William Gilpin and later theorists, he is conscious of a relation between the setting created in a garden and that interpretation of nature which a painter might likely represent on a canvas. We see in Milton the beginnings of the close relation between painting and gardening which is found in the English landscape garden of

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[13]Milton, Paradise Lost, Book IV, l.141-45.

[14]John Dixon Hunt, "Milton and the English Landscape Garden," Milton Studies, XI (1981), p.93.

[15]This is related to the memory theatres described by Frances Yates (The Art of Memory, London, 1966). For more on Milton's "woodie Theatre" see John Dixon Hunt, "Theatres, Gardens, and Garden-Theatres," in Essays and Studies, ed. Inga-Stina Ewbank, (London, 1980), pp.95-118.

the next century.

Joseph Addison observed that "Milton would never have been able...to have laid out his Paradise, had he not seen the...gardens of Italy."[16] And though various garden theorists and historians have disagreed with Addison's conclusion, John Dixon Hunt has recently demonstrated that Milton must, indeed, have been familiar with the gardens of Italy. Hunt maintains that Milton moves through his Paradise with an ease that "he could nowhere have learned in old-fashioned Tudor gardens."[17] Milton's portrayal expresses spatial relations and variations that give the reader a great sense of "gardenist space," while the way in which the visitor is guided through the garden so as to become completely involved in it is, according to Hunt, reminiscent of the expanses at such Italian gardens as Pratolino (Ill.2). Hunt concludes that Milton could only have conceived of such a vision as he presents in his poem by studying actual Italian gardens or close imitations of them in England.[18]

The invocation of the Italian garden in the history of the English landscape garden is not unique to Milton. Henry Wotton expressed great admiration for the Italian method,[19] as did John Evelyn (1620-1706), who visited a great number of estates

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[16]Hunt, "Milton and the English Landscape Garden," p.90.

[17]Hunt, "Milton and the English Landscape Garden," p.99.

[18]Hunt, "Milton and the English Landscape Garden," p.99.

[19]Wotton, The Elements....

in Italy and commented on the delights and beauties of their gardens.[20] Obviously, the attractions of Italy included, without a doubt, visits to its gardens.[21]

Timothy Nourse (d.1699), who was especially fond of the waterworks in Italian gardens, pioneered the concept of the view in England. He saw the garden as a place from which an expanse could be appreciated, rather than an area closed in upon itself. He also defined such a vista in terms of a painted landscape:

> And at the upper end of this Wilderness, let there be a Grate-Gate, answering the Entrance to the Garden; beyond which, and without the Territory of our Garden, let there be planted Walks of Trees to adorn the Landskip; Likewise a Bowling-Green and Poddock would be suitable to this higher Ground; and thus at length the Prospect may terminate on Mountains, Woods, or such Views as the Scituation will admit of.[22]

Nourse's use of the term "Wilderness" recalls earlier demands for a garden closer to nature, while his interest in views and prospects looks forward to the next century.

Joseph Addison (1672-1719) also praised the Italian garden, which he found "much more charming than that Neatness

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[20]For a selection of his descriptions see The Genius of the Place, p.57-69.

[21]For more on the Italian garden in England, see Roy Strong, The Renaissance Garden in England (London, 1979) and John Dixon Hunt, Garden and Grove: The Italian Renaissance Garden in the English Imagination 1600-1750 (London, 1986).

[22]Timothy Nourse, Campania Foelix: or A Discourse of the Benefits and Improvements of Husbandry, (1700). Reproduced in The Genius of the Place, pp.100-05.

and Elegancy which we meet with in those of our own Country."[23] The gardens of China were likewise preferable to those of England, which he claimed were in sore need of assistance:

> Our British Gardeners, on the contrary, instead of humouring Nature, love to deviate from it as much as possible. Our Trees rise in Cones, Globes, and Pyramids. We see the marks of the Scissars upon every Plant and Bush. I do not know whether I am singular in my Opinion, but, for my own part, I would rather look upon a Tree in all its Luxuriancy and Diffusion of Boughs and Branches, than when it is thus cut and trimmed into a Mathematical Figure.[24]

Addison is interested in a garden that is less artificial and more closely related to nature. He concludes his essay on the art of gardening by attributing the cause of the profusion of "Cones, Globes, and Pyramids" to the sellers of garden products, who, desiring to empty their shops of stock, have contrived a devious plan to promote their merchandise.[25] Evidently Addison saw the need for a change.

Addison's reaction against the formal garden can also be

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[23]Joseph Addison, The Spectator, No.414 (25 June 1712).

[24]Addison, The Spectator, No. 417 (28 June 1713).

[25]Compare Pope's satire on a similar theme, printed in the Guardian (29 September 1731), wherein he invents a "Catalogue of Greens" supposedly produced by "an eminent Town-Gardiner." The items include:

> A Pair of Giants, stunted, to be sold cheap.
> A Queen Elizabeth in Phylyraea, a little inclining to Green Sickness, but of full growth.
> ANOTHER Queen Elizabeth in Myrtle, which was very forward, but Miscarried by being too near a Savine.
> AN old Maid of Honour in Wormwood.

It would appear as if the merchants of garden products were appropriate scape-goats on whom to blame the contemporary lack of taste.

seen as political. He perceived the "Wildness" found in nature as a "happy Region...inhabited by the Goddess of Liberty."[26] Therefore, for Addison, the issue is of greater compass than mere aesthetics. He is concerned about the message delivered by the garden, its significance as well as its moral character. This political view of the garden will be repeated in the theories of Horace Walpole and others, and is important for the Georgian garden of the early part of the eighteenth century.[27]

Of great significance to the garden of the second half of the eighteenth century is Addison's view of the relation between gardening and painting. He urged that estate owners take a look at their fields and meadows, where:

> ...helpt and improved by some small Additions of Art...a Man might make a pretty Landskip of his possessions.[28]

Addison is seeing the garden in terms of a painting, particularly in his promotion of the idea of the prospect or view. He goes further than Nourse or Milton, however, in proposing that the owner's estate itself might be altered to provide that view. The catalogue of what is proper to include in a garden is slowly expanding.

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[26]Addison, The Tatler, No. 161 (18-20 April 1710).

[27]See Kimberly Rorschach, The Early Georgian Landscape Garden (1983).

[28]John Dixon Hunt, "Ut Pictura Poesis, Ut Pictura Hortus, and the Picturesque," Word and Image, I (1985), p.88.

Addison understood the garden as an artificial or artistic creation, no matter how closely it resembled nature. He appreciated nature all the more if it had the appearance of art.[29] His applications of the principles of painting to garden design is clearly intended in terms of formal aspects--organization, composition, perspective. Certainly, a painter and gardener must consider similar objects in organizing the products of nature into a harmonized composition. The only obvious difference between the two is that a gardener works with nature itself, whereas the painter can only represent in an abstract manner. But Allison can also be interpreted as referring to the more important matters of painting: subject and meaning. Addison's views are most easily understood through a comparison with the works of Pope.

Alexander Pope (1688-1744), the poet with whom Milton shared the honour of originating the "enchanting art of modern gardening,"[30] was influential both in his writings and in his own garden at Twickenham. It is Pope who urged the improver to:

> ...let Nature never be forgot.
> Consult the Genius of the Place in all
> That tells the Waters or to rise, or fall,
> ...
> Now breaks, or now directs, th' intending Lines;

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[29]The Spectator, No.414 (25 June 1712).

[30]Joseph Warton, Essay on the Genius and Writings of Mr. Pope, (1772), v.II, p.21.

Paints as you plant, and as you work, Designs."[31]

This verse was to prove momentous in the history of English garden design, finding, perhaps, its culmination in the works of "Capability" Brown.[32]

Pope's use of the word "paint" in the last line is not unique in his writing. He also, in fact, employs the term "picturesque," but it is found only in his notes to his translation of Homer and not in reference to actual gardens.[33] However, Pope's usage of the word proves very informative, and helps us to comprehend not only Pope's view, but, as well, Addison's ideas concerning painting and gardening.

Pope's "picturesque" refers neither to gardens nor to landscape. It describes the dramatic attitude of Patroclus, stricken with grief after the forced retreat of the Greeks, as he addresses Achilles. It is a scene equivalent to a history painting rather than an event in which we imagine a beautiful landscape. A landscape is not, of course, incongruent, but, in his description, Pope is not concerned with background detail. He is interested in the emotional state of the characters at

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[31]Alexander Pope, "An Epistle to Lord Burlington," (1731).

[32]Thacker and others propose that Brown's talent lay in his ability to encourage the genius loci. I think that his gardens can better be seen as a precursor to the modern golf-course. Brown's indiscriminate moving of earth and damming of waters can only be seen as redirecting nature, not inspiring or stimulating her spirit. Nevertheless, it is very possible that Brown's methods were exactly what Pope had in mind.

[33]There are actually four such references. See Hunt, "Ut Pictura Poesis...," p.88+.

this dramatic moment. His invocation of the term "picturesque," therefore, as well as Addison's use of painting in relation to gardens, should be seen in the light of history painting rather than landscape or scene painting. In this context, "picturesque" has the sense of "as in a picture," though not just any depiction qualifies. A representation is "picturesque" only if the figures and emotions portrayed are worthy and noble.

The place of history painting in the hierarchy of the arts must be remembered here. The purpose of art was, in the words of Denis Diderot, "to move, to educate, to improve us and induce us to virtue."[34] The great English theoretician, Joshua Reynolds, expressed a similar belief:

> Instead of endeavouring to amuse mankind with the minute neatness of his imitations, he [the "genuine painter"] must endeavour to improve them by the grandeur of his ideas; instead of seeking prase, by deceiving the superficial sense of the spectator, he must strive for fame by captivating the imagination.[35]

The ideas of Reynolds, Diderot and others may be recognized as going back to the demands made of art by Counter-Reformation scholars and theologians. The moral function of painting was an accepted reality and would have been transferred to the sister art of garden design. Pope's garden at Twickenham is indicative of his ideas. John Dixon Hunt sees the poet's

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[34]Denis Diderot, Salon Reviews (1759-83).

[35]Joshua Reynolds, Discourses (1769-90).

creation simply as a series of "history" paintings. Hunt also suggests that Pope chose those particular scenes which would support his ideas concerning the importance of the Classical past as prototypical for modern England.[36] It is indubitable that Pope modelled his garden upon his knowledge of descriptions by Homer, Pliny and Virgil of ancient gardens. The plan published by J. Serle in 1745 (Ill.3) is similar to the portrayal of the garden of Alcinous found in Homer, while it also recalls the Italian Renaissance garden at Pratolino (Ill.2).[37]

The desire to see gardens in terms of history and the Classical past was not limited to Pope. William Shenstone communicated his reverence for the past in relation to gardens in "Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening," published in 1764, a year after his death.

> What an advantage must some Italian seats derive from the circumstances of being situated on ground mentioned in the classics! And, even in England, wherever a park or garden happens to have been the scene of any event in history.[38]

The estates of England, though independent of the Greek and Roman classics, contained their own charm and history. This allure could be emphasized with appropriate garden design and

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[36]Hunt, "Ut Pictura Poesis...," p.91.

[37]The plan of this garden had been published in 1742 by B.S. Sgrilli in Descrizione della regia villa, fontane e fabbriche di Pratolino (Florence).

[38]Reproduced in The Genius of the Place, p.289-97.

architecture. In effect, the garden became a symbol and a remembrance of the past. Visitors to the garden could, in an abstract way, participate in, or at least observe, the world of the past as presented to them by the garden architect. The scenes to which they were exposed could be interpreted as a series of paintings which were appreciated as in a gallery, or, more consistent with the three-dimensional character of the garden, as stage backgrounds. The viewers would thus become more than just spectators. They began to take part in the art of the garden itself.[39]

This connection to the theatre has already been observed in the work of Milton. Pope and Addison both had strong connections with the theatre[40] and were surely influenced by past writers like Serlio and Vitruvius, particularly by their descriptions of stage scenery.[41] Pope himself referred to the site of the Avon Gorge at Bristol as "the broken Scenes behind

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[39]This inclusion of people in the concept of the garden goes much further than the idea of the garden as a creation which provides pleasure. It can be related to the contemporary trend in painting, where even a composition with little or no subject matter, for example a landscape, was incomplete before figures were added. Humanity still needed to express its complete control.

The concept of villeggiatura--the Italian tradition of retiring to the country-side in summer, and the architecture and gardens that accompanied this retreat--must also be mentioned in this context. English estate owners began to attempt a recreation of the rural Italian landscape as outlined in classical literature. For more see Maria Lydia Brendel, Rubens and the Humanistic Garden (McGill, 1990).

[40]S. Lang, "The Genesis of the English Landscape Garden," The Picturesque Garden (Dumbarton Oaks, 1974), Nikolaus Pevsner, ed., p.19-20.

[41]See S. Lang, "The Genesis...," p.16-20.

one another in a Playhouse,"[42] and spoke of the "beautiful scenes of green and hanging wood" at Rousham.[43] In both cases, the belief in the garden as a stage or a scene from the theatre is made evident.

iii. Stephen Switzer and a new appreciation for the view.

Related to the idea of the garden as a painting or a stage was the new interest in the "view." Though Addison's exhortation that those with taste should make a garden of their fields and meadows was influential, it was the work of Stephen Switzer (1682-1745) that made Addison's ideas reality.

Today Switzer is best known for his writings. He was, however, a sought-after garden designer in the early part of the eighteenth century. His first independent commission involved the transformation of the country seat of Robert Bertie, Marquess of Lindsey, at Grimsthorpe. This house and garden were situated on a ridge, a circumstance which permitted extensive views. Switzer's plans show a desire to benefit from the surrounding territory and to take advantage of the vistas it presented (Ill.4). An axial walk was constructed, bordered with trees that were alternately very high or very low so as to provide opportunities for the visitor to take in the panorama offered. Switzer believed that this variety was necessary:

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[42]The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, 5 vols., George Sherburn, ed. (Oxford, 1956), IV, p.201.

[43]The Correspondence..., II, p.372 & 513.

> ...when one cannot see any thing on each side...the Eye is bounded to it's discontent, whilst, on the other Hand, a Traveller comes to a low Place or Gapp in a Hedge, he is pleas'd, and apt to stop, and look into the adjacent Field, with Pleasure, and Satisfaction; and 'tis thus observing the rules of Nature.[44]

The visitor was also rewarded with bastion-like viewing posts which allowed an unobstructed survey of the vista (Ill.5). Switzer's attempt at Grimsthorpe to make the encompassing countryside a functionally important part of the garden itself is of great significance to the development of the English landscape garden. The garden is expanded so the entire estate in fact becomes included in the views enjoyed by the visitor. In other words, Switzer's design makes use of the complete property. This prodigious step in garden history fosters the concept of the ferme ornée and, with the discovery of the ha-ha, makes possible a design in which the view can be physically explored and becomes a true element of the garden (Ill.6).[45]

iv. Horace Walpole and Thomas Whately: writing about gardens.

Horace Walpole (1717-97) called the ha-ha the "capital

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[44]Stephen Switzer, Ichnographia Rustica (1718), III, p.82.

[45]The ha-ha was designed to prohibit animals from wandering onto the gardens near the house and removed the need for an unsightly and vista-obstructing fence (Ill.6). The first mention of the ha-ha is found in A.J. Dézallier D'Argenville's La Théorie et la Pratique du Jardinage (Paris, 1709, trans. 1712), but it was probably in use long before that.

stroke, the leading step to all that has followed."[46] While this particular estimation must be disputed, the scope of the observations made by Walpole in The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening (1771/1780) are well indicated in this phrase. Walpole's purpose was to trace the impetus and the origins of the English landscape garden. He was not simply describing gardens and techniques, as was the principle focus of other publications during this period,[47] but was interested in discovering those innovations which had changed the course of garden history. He saw the ha-ha as one such breakthrough.

Walpole's History has proven to be the most influential of contemporary attempts to trace the progression of garden design, and continues to be an important source. It has, in fact, influenced such modern garden historians such as Christopher Hussey, H.F. Clark and David Jacques, who have accepted almost without question many of Walpole's conclusions and observations.[48]

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[46]Horace Walpole, The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening. In Isabel Chase, Horace Walpole: Gardenist (Princeton, 1943), p.25.

[47]For example: George Mason, Design in Gardening (1768), William Mason, The English Garden (1772), and Thomas Whately, Observations on Modern Gardening (1770).

[48]Note for example the controversy concerning the order of precedence of landscape gardening and Palladian architecture. Walpole indicated that it was the garden which anticipated the architecture. His opinion, though merely an echo of early theorists such as Thomas Whately, has only recently been disputed by R. Wittkower ("English Neo-Palladianism, the Landscape Garden, China and the Enlightment," Arte (1969)) and by Michael McCarthy ("Eighteenth-Century Amateur Architects and their Gardens," The Picturesque Garden (Dumbarton Oaks, 1974), Nikolaus Pevsner, ed.)

Walpole is nonetheless responsible for many significant assertions in the development of the English garde. He was, for example, the first writer to mention Claude Lorraine and Gaspard Dughet in connection with gardening.[49] As we have seen, a relationship between painting and gardening had long been encouraged, but it was Walpole who distinguished Claude and Gaspard as the painters to whom landscape gardeners of the later eighteenth century should turn for inspiration. This association had important consequences for the development of the Picturesque garden and the theories surrounding it.

The connection of the English landscape garden to literary influences was also stressed by Walpole. He especially emphasized the works of Milton and Pope since he felt that their efforts were instrumental in developing the taste for a closer imitation of nature. Walpole's observation is important. From him we learn that contemporary "improvers" were conscious of this relationship and we are assisted in our understanding of the actual dependence of garden design on the other arts.

In addition to historical concerns, Walpole was preoccupied with a political interpretation of garden history. He believed, like people such as Addison before him, that the landscape garden was an expression of liberal or "Whig" tendencies, and was a reaction to the formal autocracy of

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[49]Elizabeth Wheeler Manwaring, Italian Landscape in Eighteenth-Century England (New York, 1925), p.130.

> and then animate or dignify a scene, yet as the subject does not naturally belong to a garden, the allusion should not be principle; it should seem to have been suggested by the scene: a transitory image, which irresistibly occurred; not sought for, not laboured; and have the force of a metaphor, free from the detail of an allegory.[50]

Whately here describes a change that occurred in garden design in the middle of the eighteenth century. Early Georgian gardens had been full of symbolism and iconography.[51] With a rise in the appreciation for a "natural" form of gardening, the appearance of nature became more desirable than the contrived symbols of humanity. The Picturesque movement in the late eighteenth century can be interpreted, as we shall see, as an attempt to replace this lost iconography.

v. William Gilpin and picturesque travel.

One last figure must be mentioned in connection with the rise of the English landscape garden and the Picturesque. William Gilpin (1724-1804) was the populariser of the Picturesque, and one of the first to attempt to give a concrete definition to the term. For Gilpin, an object or view that was "picturesque" was one that possessed "that kind of beauty which would look well in a picture."[52] His first published tour, Observations on the River, Wye, and Several Parts of South

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[50]Thomas Whately, Observations on Modern Gardening (Dublin, 1770; reprinted 1982), p.119-20.

[51]See Rorschach, The Early Georgian Landscape Garden.

[52]William Gilpin, Essay on Prints (1768).

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Continental styles. This interpretation continues to be accepted among scholars of garden history.

One year before the first publication of Walpole's History, Thomas Whately (d.1772) had completed his Observations on Modern Gardening (1770). As this title indicates, Whately was less concerned than Walpole with history, and more interested in relating the ambitions, methods and accomplishments of the art of garden design. His Observations is actually a treatise on gardening, and provides us with an excellent historical source on techniques as well as objectives.

The most interesting "observation" made by Whately in terms of the scope of this paper is his distinction between emblematic and expressive gardens. His thoughts deserve to be quoted in full:

> Character is very reconcileable with beauty; and even when independent of it, has attracted so much regard, as to occasion several frivolous attempts to produce it; statues, inscriptions, and even paintings, history and mythology, and a variety of devices have been introduced for this purpose. The heathen deities and heroes have therefore had their several places assigned to them in the woods and lawns of a garde; natural cascades have been disfigured with river gods; and columns erected only to receive quotations; the compartments of a summer-house have been filled with pictures of gambols and revels, as significant of gaiety; the cypress, because it was once used in funerals, has been thought peculiarly adapted to melancholy; and the decorations, the furniture, and the environs of a building have been crowned with puerilities, under the pretence of propriety. All these devices are rather emblematical than expressive; they may be ingenious contrivances, and recall absent ideas to the recollection; but they make no immediate impression, for they must be examined, compared, perhaps explained, before the whole subject of history, of poetry, or of tradition, may now

> and then animate or dignify a scene, yet as the subject does not naturally belong to a garden, the allusion should not be principle; it should seem to have been suggested by the scene: a transitory image, which irresistibly occurred; not sought for, not laboured; and have the force of a metaphor, free from the detail of an allegory.[50]

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[51]See Rorschach, The Early Georgian Landscape Garden.

[52]William Gilpin, Essay on Prints (1768).

Wales & c. Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty (1782), was not original in the genre of travel literature, but the immense popularity of this and subsequent publications by him has placed Gilpin at the forefront of the movement. As a great admirer of nature, Gilpin spent a great deal of time appraising the English country-side and its environs. He discovered that although there was much beauty to be observed, nature was in need of assistance so as to order her elements properly. He thus encouraged the traveller in search of picturesque scenes to scrutinize nature with the eye of a painter and compose the view into a more acceptable entity.

The idea of the tour as a vehicle to appreciate nature was not new. Since the Peace of Utrecht in 1713 and the ending of the war of the Spanish Succession, the Continent had become accessible to British travellers. The current fashion for things classical led cognoscentes to Italy where the traveller on the Grand Tour could witness the Roman campagna as represented in the paintings of Claude, or the sublimity of the Alps, more akin to the work of Salvador Rosa. And, though seen as natural and untouched by man, these scenes were appreciated in just this manner. The enlightened sightseer would return from the Grand Tour with prints, copies, or even actual paintings by Italian artists. Gilpin's contribution came in the encouragement of the local Tour. He taught the English to enjoy their own country. But, of course, it was always recommended that the adventurer be certain to view nature with

the critical eye of a painter.

The purpose of the Claude-glass, a necessary instrument for the eighteenth-century traveller, was to assist the connoisseur in this endeavour. When observed through this instrument, a wilderness scene took on the muted brown tones of a Claudian landscape, and the vista was distorted so that a "proper" perspective could improve the view. The idea of seeing nature as a picture had grown to maturity.

We have traced a progression from a cautious demand for a garden which includes sections that imitate a controlled nature to a belief that nature in its natural state is greatly superior to the artifice of human creation, even though human interference is still desirable. This new appreciation for nature is manifested in poetry, the theatre, and painting and, through these mediums, gradually reaches the garden. Gardening is still very strongly dependent on the more established arts, but it is growing more and more autonomous. The gardens of expression encouraged by Whately are indicative of this tendency.

vi. The professional gardeners: Bridgeman, Kent and Brown.

As important as theorists are to the history of garden design, the discipline would be of little value without those who actually fashioned the gardens. The most important gardeners to precede Repton and his rivals in the Picturesque Controversy were Charles Bridgeman, William Kent, and Lancelot

"Capability" Brown.

Charles Bridgeman (d.1738) has been greatly neglected as a contributor to the history of the Georgian garden. This is due in part to Walpole's partiality toward the gardening of William Kent, but the propagation of such views can also be attributed to negligence of more recent scholars. Fortunately, Bridgeman's proper position in the history of the English garden has been restored through the exertions of Peter Willis.[53]

Walpole was incorrect in his assessment that it was Bridgeman who had the first thoughts with respect to the ha-ha. Credit is due, however, to Bridgeman for the realization and the development of the potential of the ha-ha. Bridgeman brought to fruition the theories of Addison and Switzer concerning the expansion of the garden into the surrounding country-side. The exploitation of the ha-ha allowed the garden visitor to view without barrier the expansive estate of the garden owner, appreciating the variety of vistas (Ill.7).

Bridgeman's work at Stowe (Ill.8), though now destroyed, can be appreciated in a description by Lord Perceval which emphasizes the spatial arrangement of the garden, wherein the visitor was able to enjoy one vista after the other:

> You think twenty times you have no more to see, and of a sudden find yourself in some new garden or walk, as

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[53]Charles Bridgeman and the English Landscape Garden, (London, 1977).

finish'd and adorn'd as that you left.[54]

The suggestions of earlier theorists that views become part of the garden has now been practically applied.

William Kent (1685-1748) was, in spite of Walpole's support, a very important gardener. He was able to take advantage of the developments that came before him and arrive at a synthesis acceptable to those of the eighteenth century who espoused good taste. The outstanding quality of his gardens is their relation to the Classical past and the Roman campagna of Italy.

It has long been assumed that Kent consciously used the works of artists like Claude Lorraine as a basis for his garden design. Walpole exclaimed over the pictures that Kent had created at Stowe, and most commentators have found his remarks irresistible. But the idea that Kent's inspiration was founded on pictures is becoming less and less accepted.[55] Gardens such as the Elysian Fields at Stowe are now seen to be related more to the gardens of Italy that Kent would have seen during his sejour there than to Italian paintings. Certainly representations of the campagna should not be dismissed--travellers who had seen the Italian country-side would be reminded of their experiences through such portrayals--but they

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[54]This letter was written in 1724. It was first published by A. Amherst in A History of Gardening in England (1895).

[55]See, for example, Kenneth Woodbridge, "William Kent as Landscape-Gardener: A Re-appraisal," Apollo (August 1974).

should not be seen as models or as instruments of direct inspiration. The actual impulse to Kent's gardens should be related not so much to a Claudian ideal as to genuine Italian gardens.

Italian gardens of the sixteenth century were distinguished by a unique blend of natural and formal elements, spatial complexity, and a great interest in symbolism and narrative, including classical mythology. The Hesperidean images assembled at the Villa d'Este in Tivoli (Ill.11), including the dragon defeated by Hercules, the patron and namesake of Cardinal Este, can be compared to Kent's Elysian Fields at Stowe, where the profusion of temples can be interpreted as a play on the name of the patron, Richard Temple, later to be named Lord Cobham. Here the gardener's interest in symbolism and intricate metaphor is displayed in full force (Ill.10). The major features are architectural: the Temple of Virtue, a classical structure of circular plan based on the temple of Vesta at Tivoli, containing statues of Homer, Socrates and other ancient notables; the Temple of Modern Virtue, a "ruin" constructed in the gothic style; and the Temple of British Worthies, a building of semi-circular design accommodating sixteen busts of distinguished English men and women, ranging from monarchs to poets. The characters represented in these temples, as well as those carefully omitted, and the accompanying inscriptions quoting a variety of authors, classical and contemporary, are meant to convey a

specific message to the viewer. Reading a Kentian garden is in reality very much like looking at an emblem book.[56]

The extreme difficulty in interpreting the gardens by Kent and his contemporaries is followed by a desire for simplicity and clarity. Gardens of this sort were provided by Lancelot "Capability" Brown (1716-83). Brown is probably one of the best known of eighteenth-century gardeners, and indeed of personalities of that period in general. He is celebrated for his competence in noticing the "capabilities" of a scene, hence his name. Three characteristics distinguish a Brownian garden and make it easily recognizable. First and most impressive is his management of water. The large expanses of water which are seemingly characteristic of the English country-side owe much to Brown and his followers. An example is his contribution to Vanbrugh's bridge at Blenheim (Ill.12). Between 1764 and 1774, Brown dammed the Glyme and excavated great amounts of earth. The water level was raised, furnishing Vanbrugh's bridge with an actual purpose, and the "river" was made to appear as though it extended far beyond the perimeters of the palace. In effect, Brown created a river where nature had seen fit to provide only a stream.

The clump and the belt are the second trademarks of Brownian gardening. Brown insisted on destroying formal avenues and replacing them with carefully scattered, natural-

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[56]John Dixon Hunt, "Sense and Sensibility in the Landscape Designs of Humphry Repton," Studies in Burke and His Times, XIX (1978), p.7.

looking, clusters of trees. The belt was a curvatious chain of trees which complimented the natural contours of the land. These belts concealed undesirable boundaries and exposed enticing views, establishing a garden that was natural yet tasteful.

His third device was the expansive lawn. The equation of formality with the autocracy of France led to a total rejection of the structured gardens of Bridgeman and Kent. These were replaced by a lawn which claimed the area right up to the border of the house. There was no terrace, no walks, no organization. The lawn, as well as the belt and clump already mentioned, can also be seen at Blenheim. A clear sweep of grass stretches up to the walls of the house, eliminating any connecting phase between home and nature beyond.

Brown's gardens are, in effect, completely unified compositions. Visitors are not led slowly from one section of the garden to the next. Once one steps out of the front door of the house, one is in the garden. Essentially the garden does not alter within one's viewing range. Brown's work at Bowood, carried out between 1762 and 1768, is an example of this unification. The garden's contours extend in a continuous flow, providing "innumerable variations on a single theme."[57]

Brownian gardens can be recognized as proponents of a politically liberal view, as a reaction to complex emblematic

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[57]Christopher Thacker, The History of Gardens (Berkeley, 1979), p.210.

gardens, and as a continuation of the desire to emulate nature more closely than had been done in the past. These gardens are as excessive in their natural simplicity as the formal gardens which preceded them in the seventeenth century were extreme in their elegant artificiality. This lavish austerity would soon foster a reaction toward the more formal garden arrangement.

vii. The amateurs and their estates.

As important, if not more so, as those who claimed gardening as their profession were the arbiters of taste, the amateur gardeners who improved their own estates and created their ideal gardens. This should come as no real surprise. Gardening is an expensive endeavour which requires constant renewal and maintenance. An estate owner with an independent source of wealth would be in an excellent position to explore the new trend in "improvement." The growing eighteenth-century interest in nature nourished a preoccupation with gardens that extended to all who desired to maintain their place in society. An anonymous contributor to the Common Sense observed in 1739 that:

> Every Man Now, be his fortune what it will, is to be doing something at his Place, as the fashionable Phrase is; and you hardly meet with any Body, who, after the first Compliments, does not inform you, that he is in Mortar and Moving of Earth; the modest terms for Building and Gardening.[58]

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[58]From Common Sense (1739). Reproduced in The Genius of the Place, p.25.

Improving one's estate was the thing to do, and done it was. Gardens created by amateurs such as that at Hagley Park, Worcestershire, owned by Lord George Lyttelton, Woburn Farm, near Chertsey, conceived by Philip Southcote and the Leasowes, designed by William Shenstone, are of outstanding significance to the history of gardening.

Hagley Park has the distinction of being the site of one of the earliest "Gothic" ruins built in the eighteenth century (Ill.14), and was admired by personalities as distinguished as Walpole and Joseph Heely. Situated on a site favoured by hills and natural vistas, Lyttelton needed to assist nature only a little to establish his garden (Ill.13). He took advantage of the proffered panorama, and in order to render his production more full of association, erected monuments to commemorate friendships past and present. The program is original in that the scenes accompanying the memorials express the depth of the friendship and the personalities of those included. Hagley continues to be an important document in the history of the English garden.

Southcote encircled his land at Woburn with a winding path. Visitors would venture along this road to experience the pleasures of a real farm: herds of cattle and sheep and flocks of chickens as well as fields of corn and hay, so appreciated by Addison. Woburn became a paradise of peaceful rurality, as ideal in its conception as the landscapes of Claude. Woburn does not seem, however, to have been interested in landscape

painting as an inspiration for his gardening. Rather, his creation is a manifestation of the ferme ornée predicted by Switzer.

The Leasowes (Ill.15) were also developed in the tradition of the ferme ornée but with an exceptional difference. Shenstone was very interested in the relation between painting and gardening, believing that the garden should "form a picture upon canvas" and that "the landskip painter is the gardener's best designer."[59] Visitors to his garden were made aware of his preoccupation by the profusion of carefully placed benches (Ill.16), which encouraged wanderers to sit in certain spots in order to contemplate the "picturesque" scenes before them. Shenstone wished to display the beauties that nature could produce when encouraged by human hands.

Each of these gardens was influential in the course of gardening history, and their contribution should be recognized. Without the originality and patronage of their owners, garden theorists and designers would have had little more to discuss than drawings on paper. Bridgeman, Kent and Brown can be positioned as the most influential professional gardeners of the eighteenth century. While Bridgeman and Kent gradually moved away from the formal gardens of the seventeenth century, it was Brown who led the way in divorcing the house from the surrounding park and finally eliminating formality altogether.

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[59]From "Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening," (1764). Reproduced in The Genius of the Place, p.289-97.

However, the contribution of amateur gardeners must not be forgotten, and it is reasonable to assume that even professional gardeners depended on the advice and discrimination of their patrons. Amateurs like Shenstone greatly encouraged the dependence of garden design on the paintings of artists working in Italy such as Claude and Salvador Rosa. We are now at the eve of the Picturesque Controversy and the theorists involved: Richard Payne Knight, Uvedale Price and Humphry Repton.

Chapter II: KNIGHT, PRICE and REPTON and the PLACES THEY CHOSE to INHABIT

i. Richard Payne Knight and Downton.

The poem which Knight called The Landscape was a promotion of the theories of the Picturesque and an attack on the fashionable gardening practices of "Capability" Brown and his followers. A short excerpt serves to illustrate the character of the work.[60]

> Yet in the picture all delusions fly,
> And nature's genuine charms we there descry;
> The composition rang'd in order true,
> Brings every object fairly to the view;
> And, as the field of vision is confin'd,
> Shows all its parts collected to the mind.
> Hence let us learn, in real scenes, to trace
> The true ingredients of the painter's grace;
> To lop redundant parts, the coarse refine,
> Open the crowded, and the scanty join.
> But, ah! in vain: -- See yon fantastic band
> With charts, pedometers, and rules in hand,
> Advance triumphant, and alike lay waste
> The forms of nature, and the works of taste!
> T'improve, adorn, and polish, they profess;
> But shave the goddess, whom they come to dress;
> Level each broken bank and shaggy mound,
> And fashion all to one unvaried round;
> One even round, that ever gently flows,
> Nor form abrupt, nor broken colours knows;
> But, wrapt all o'er in everlasting green,
> Makes one dull, vapid, smooth, and tranquil scene.[61]

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[60]An exposure to the written expression of Knight, Price and Repton, is essential to a complete understanding of the theories they advocate. I have therefore liberally quoted their writings in this paper, for the purpose of offering the reader some idea of their individual styles. For further discussion of the relevance of their written work to their theories, see below, pp.51-52.

[61]Richard Payne Knight, The Landscape, 1794, Book I, l.251-272.

Knight's abhorrence of the works of Brown is unmistakable. He strongly objects to Brown's smooth lawns, and feels the need of a remedy:

> ...to kill or cure that strange disease,
> Which gives deformity the pow'r to please;
> And shows poor Nature, shaven and defaced,
> To gratify the jaundiced eye of taste.[62]

Knight was equally unimpressed with Brown's method of planting trees, which he described as, "...the formal lump Which the improver plants, and calls a clump."[63] In two engravings published along with his poem, Knight illustrates his preferred landscape and how it differs from the creations of Brown (Ill.17). The contrast is striking and one is left without a single doubt as to the sort of scenery Knight finds desirable.

What is also obvious from the above quoted excerpt is the importance that Knight places on the role of painting in landscape-gardening. His advice for us to "learn, in real scenes, to trace the true ingredients of the painter's grace" was put into effect at his own estate of Downton in Herefordshire. The house at Downton is modelled after the structures made up of classical and Italian medieval elements found in the backgrounds of the paintings by Claude Lorraine (Ill.20). In Claude's View of La Crescenza, we see in the distance a building which could very well be Knight's residence

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[62]Knight, The Landscape, Book I, l.16-20.

[63]Knight, The Landscape, Book II, l.51-52.

at Downton (Ill.18). Knight owned this painting, as well as several others by Claude.[64] The scenery represented in La Crescenza and other works of the artist is also in many ways remarkably similar to that of Downton. In a publication of 1805, Knight expressed his admiration for Claude and Gaspard in whose works the buildings were "perfectly in harmony with the scenery."[65] Clearly Knight felt that a house that was designed according to a free plan and intended to be irregular was the finest compliment to a landscape improved by man to display similar characteristics. He found his inspiration in the paintings of Claude Lorraine.[66] Knight perched his asymmetrical castle on a hill which dropped off steeply to a narrow and apparently "treacherous" spot on the River Teme (Ill.21). A carefully constructed trail leading from the house, through "rich wood in a variety of shapes," down to the river was described by a visitor as "the most wild, rich, and solitary path I ever trod."[67] Downton had become a harmonious wilderness modelled after painted compositions of seventeenth-century artists.

Shortly after the completion of Downton, Thomas Hearne,

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[64]For more information on works by Claude in Knight's collection, see The Arrogant Connoisseur, Clarke & Penny, eds. (Oxford, 1982) p.98-100.

[65]The Arrogant Connoisseur, p.41.

[66]Nikolaus Pevsner, "Richard Payne Knight," Art Bulletin, v.31 (December 1941), p.296.

[67]The Arrogant Connoisseur, p.47.

landscape-painter, executed for Knight an entire series of views of the River Teme at Downton (Ill.19,21). These illustrations were commissioned to celebrate the recent improvements. They demonstrate clearly the wild, untamed character that Knight achieved at his estate. A comparison of these scenes with works by Claude illustrates just how much Knight depended on the old master for inspiration in improving his estate. While the scenery at Downton appears untamed, Knight's "composition" is organized just as carefully as Claude's View of La Crescenza. Harmony reigns supreme beneath an apparently wild depiction.[68]

Knight's desire for "rich" and "wild" scenery represents, of course, a reaction to the flat lawns of Brown and his followers. It can also be related to the earlier gardens of the eighteenth century which Whately called "emblematic." In introducing picturesque imagery into his estate, Knight is putting meaning back into the garden. The unified and undemanding spaces of Brown are succeeded by variation and complexity. The viewer is once again challenged by his or her surroundings, and, in this way, significance is returned to the landscape.

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[68]Knight's construction of an "Alpine Bridge" is a perfect example of this careful improvement of nature. He saw such a bridge in the Alps, formed naturally, and duplicated his recollection of that bridge upon his return. Of course, Knight's Alpine Bridge is not "natural" to Downton's River Teme, but great pains are taken to make it look that way.

ii. Uvedale Price at Foxley and Aberystwyth.

At the tender age of fourteen, Sir Uvedale Price came into possession of Foxley, an estate also in Herefordshire, and bordering on Knight's Downton. After Price had completed the studies and the travel required of a young gentleman, he set about "improving" the grounds of his inheritance. He eventually became concerned when he realized that the character of the landscape he had produced at Foxley was neither Beautiful nor Sublime in the Burkian sense of the terms. Foxley did not exhibit the vastness, terror or obscurity of the Sublime, nor could it claim to be an example of the delicacy, smoothness or regularity of the Beautiful. It was, nevertheless, very pleasing and so the purpose of Price's essay on the Picturesque became to explain why the character of the landscape at Foxley was pleasing, even though it did not fit into either of Burke's categories. Price proposed that the term Picturesque should be employed to describe those features which were neither Beautiful nor Sublime. He defined the Picturesque as being something which "by its variety, its intricacy, its partial concealments,...excites the active curiosity which gives play to the mind."[69] Price's new category of the Picturesque included all those things which expressed "variety" and "intricacy," since he recognized these

[69]Uvedale Price, On the Picturesque (London, 1842), p.69.

two features as "the most fruitful sources of human pleasure."[70] Therefore, it was only natural that his estate at Foxley should be so satisfying. Price believed that the imagination needed "irritation" or stimulation to excite it into action. A scene that was Picturesque would accomplish this.

Unfortunately, there is very little visual documentation of Price's improvements at Foxley. His house is described as a large, red-brick mansion in the Georgian baroque style.[71] Some wondered as to why he did not construct a dwelling more suitable to the picturesque character of the surrounding wooded estate.[72] However, Price worked faithfully at his grounds, armed with "hacker and saw" and constantly attended by two young boys who would cut off branches or trim edges to his discretion. His continued efforts to maintain the "intricacy" of his woods bears comparison to the way a painter perfects his canvas with carefully chosen dabs of paint. Price was evidently successful, for a contemporary travel guide described a visit to Foxley as being well worth while:

> The labour of ascending his beautiful terrace, and of penetrating his luxurious wood...[is] amply repaid, by a variety of...scenery....The house is finely situated...the grounds and plantations, which are very extensive, display the particular taste of the scientific proprietor and

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[70]Price, On the Picturesque, p.69.

[71]David Watkin, The English Vision (London, 1982), p.76.

[72]David Jacques, Georgian Gardens: The Reign of Nature (London, 1983), p.157.

attract universal admiration.[73]

No doubt Price would be pleased with the use of the word "variety" and would have agreed that the diversity he cultivated at Foxley did indeed reward the viewer.

The "beautiful terrace" at Foxley was of major concern to Price. The promenades at Foxley had been destroyed c.1780,[74] and in the words of Christopher Hussey, Price's "chief occupation for the rest of his life was remedying his initial mistake."[75] He had replaced the garden around the house with a smooth lawn in the fashion of Brown, and his displeasure with the results helps to explain his lack of sympathy for Brown's methods. He decided that there must be something:

> to mark the difference between what is close to the house, and what is at a distance from it; between the habitation of man, and that of sheep....It appears to me, that in the old gardens art was meant to be apparent, and to challenge admiration on its own account, not under the disguise of nature; that richness, effect, and agreement with the surrounding artificial objects, were what the planners and decorators of those gardens aimed at.[76]

He did not, however, see the terrace as being free of compromise.

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[73]Quoted from George Nicholson, The Cambrian Traveller's Guide, Second Edition, London, 1813, in The Picturesque Garden and Its Influence..., p.71.

[74]Denis A. Lambin, "Foxley: the Price's estate in Herefordshire," Journal of Garden History, v.7, n.3, p.247.

[75]Country Life, 15 (July 1965), p.159.

[76]Price, On the Picturesque, p.72.

> Near the house picturesque beauty...must often be sacrificed to neatness; but that is a sacrifice, and one which should not wantonly be made.[77]

Price saw the more formal garden as a sacrifice, because he felt that in the making of a picturesque garden "convenience and propriety are not the objects of consideration." [78] He regretted the necessity of a terrace garden, since it could not be as picturesque as he would like, but he realized that terraces were of undeniable convenience and comfort and therefore formed an essential part of the successful garden.

Those elements of the picturesque that Price could not have near the house, he recaptured in the woods of Foxley. A comparison of a painting by Thomas Gainsborough of Beech Trees at Foxley (Ill.22), and Thomas Hearne's vision of the River Teme at the neighbouring estate of Downton (Ill.19) tells us much. Separated by only a very short distance, the natural growth in each of these areas would be very similar, but at Downton the trees are shown in the watercolour to have a rugged and wild character that is remarkably reminiscent of the works of Salvator Rosa (Ill.23,24), and which could be described as sublime. The beech trees at Foxley appear irregular and natural, but exhibit none of the sublimity seen at Downton. Both Knight and Price have cultivated nature to their taste. Just as Hearne is sensitive to what Knight was trying to

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[77]Price, On the Picturesque, p.72.

[78]Price, On the Picturesque, p.425.

accomplish at Downton, Gainsborough is obviously sympathetic to the qualities that Price was trying to formalize at his estate. We witness motion, variety, intricacy, and just enough asymmetry to irritate the viewer in exactly the way that the Picturesque should.

Since Price, like Knight, believed that it was the painter who should guide the landscape gardener, and as the landscape of his estate was improved so as to appear very close to the scene that a painter might choose to represent, he would not have been surprised at the beauty of Gainsborough's composition. Indeed, Price expected nothing less of a painting of the landscape that he had so conscientiously cultivated at Foxley.

More of Price's preferences can be observed at Castle House in Aberystwyth, a sea side retreat designed by John Nash (Ill.25). Price spent a great amount of time deciding on not only the final location of the house, but the very disposition of its rooms. Each chamber, and not only its windows, was irregularly disposed so as to provide the finest outlook possible. The view was, after all, the primary attraction of the site. Price wrote later that:

> [We] found ourselves always on the spot, always looking at the waves breaking against the near-rocks, and at the long chain of distant mountains...and we thought how charming it would be [to] look at it comfortably from our own window....Lady Caroline [his wife] and I consulted day after day about the exact position of the principal windows so that the composition might be precisely what we

liked.[79]

The form of the house is dictated by the composition of the exterior view. Rather than the area surrounding the house being landscaped to set off the building, the house is, instead, positioned so as to maximize the potential of the surrounding terrain. This is Switzer's suggestion taken to the extreme. There was no need at this cottage residence for Price to sacrifice the Picturesque to human comfort, and Castle House can therefore be seen as the embodiment of his ideas as outlined in his Essay on the Picturesque.

iii. Humphry Repton and the cottage at Hare Street.

In the year 1788, after several unsuccessful business investments, an Englishman from Bury named Humphry Repton had a number of cards printed up advertising his services as a "landscape-gardener." He was the first to claim this title and, as we shall see, suffered for his choice. His Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening appeared shortly after the publications of Knight and Price and caused considerable uproar. Included in this collection of practical advice was a response to the works of his adversaries. Repton's caustic remarks with regard to Price are especially noteworthy:

There is no exercise so pleasing to the inquisitive mind,

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[79]From a letter written by Price found in the unpublished "Coleorton Papers," this passage dated June 26, 1804. Quoted in Pevsner, The Picturesque Garden and Its Influence..., p.70.

> as that of deducing theories and systems from favourite opinions. I was, therefore, particularly interested and gratified by your ingenious distinction betwixt the beautiful and the picturesque; but cannot admit the propriety of its application to landscape gardening, because beauty and not "picturesqueness," is the chief object of modern improvement.[80]

Repton explained that the picturesque was only preferred in landscape-gardening by those who failed to distinguish between landscape-painter and landscape-gardener. Whereas the painter considered foreground, middleground and background, the landscape-gardener could only consider the first, since the second was often under the control of others, and the third was dependent on powers upon which neither the landscape-gardener, nor anyone else, could improve.[81] Repton also maintained that the point of view, the field of vision and the quality of light differed in such quantity from landscape-painting to landscape-gardening that the latter art-form could in no way be seen as dependent on the former.[82]

Knight's disregard of the purpose of a house was addressed with delight. Repton mourned the fact that Knight, "appears...to forget that a dwelling-house is an object of comfort and convenience, for the purposes of habitation; and

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[80]Letter from Humphry Repton to Uvedale Price, published in Price, Essay on the Picturesque, p.413.

[81]J.C. Loudon, The Landscape Gardening and Landscape Architecture of Humphry Repton (A collection of the writings of Humphry Repton; Westmead, 1969), p.98.

[82]Loudon, The Landscape...of Humphry Repton, p.356.

not merely the frame to a landscape."[83] As a landscape-gardener, Repton had discovered that "utility must often take the lead of beauty, and convenience be preferred to picturesque effect."[84] In other words, practical concerns were of more importance than aesthetic ones. How different from Price's observation that formality around the house is a sacrifice which should not be made easily. For Repton, the conveniently terraced garden was a source of happiness, and in no way a compromise. In order to demonstrate this opinion in his hints on landscape-gardening, he quoted an excerpt from the letter of a satisfied client:

> I have always thought that the sort of taste which you have eminently contributed to form and diffuse, has a peculiar tendency to soothe, refine, and improve the mind; and consequently to promote most essentially the true and rational enjoyment of life.[85]

Without question this was the highest praise Repton could ever have desired.

Repton's own residence was a cottage in the village of Harestreet, Herefordshire (Ill.26), where he "anxiously retreated from the pomp of palaces, the elegances of fashion,...[and] the allurements of dissipation."[86] A view from the front window of this dwelling, before and after

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[83]Loudon, The Landscape...of Humphry Repton, p.99.

[84]Loudon, The Landscape...of Humphry Repton, p.99.

[85]Loudon, The Landscape...of Humphry Repton, p.606.

[86]Loudon, The Landscape...of Humphry Repton, p.603.

improvement, reveals much about what Repton considered important qualities in landscape-gardening (Ill.28). The scene is tranquil, but never boring, and anything but wild or untamed. Repton's principle concern is the convenience of the visitor, and he frames the vista so as to make it pleasant and comfortable.

iv. Summary.

On the basis of a comparison between these three residences it is fairly easy to see why a controversy might develop. Knight's estate exhibits a rugged and untamed quality. We are given the impression of nature at its wildest, untouched by human hands, and yet exhibiting remarkable similarities to the contrived landscapes of Claude Lorraine. Price's grounds at Foxley appear to have been irregular and varied. The object here was to create a painterly scene. His Castle House demonstrates his love of views and the importance of the art of landscape-painting in their formation. Repton's cottage at Harestreet is comfortable and safe. It is neither wild nor rugged, and, when compared to the View of the River Teme at Downton, or the Beech Trees at Foxley, looks very formal. The estates of Knight and Price are examples of the natural, picturesque garden where nature is carefully improved to exhibit the appearance of being virtually untouched by humanity. The cottage garden of Repton is an attempt to make the dweller as comfortable as possible, to protect him from the

wilderness outside the bounds of its hedges. The purposes of these gardens are violently opposed.

There are those scholars, however, that feel that the differences between Knight and Price and Repton were minor, and unworthy of such a public debate.[87] Indeed, the antagonists themselves attempted to undermine their disagreements. In his response to Price's criticisms Repton wrote:

> In the general principles and theory of the art, which you have considered with so much attention, I flatter myself that we agree; and that our differences of opinions relates only to the propriety, or, perhaps, possibility, of reducing them to practice.[88]

Repton also suggested that, "the candid reader will perhaps discover that there is no real difference between us," and classifies those disagreements that might be detected as "trifling."[89] Price wrote of Knight that he "appears somewhat inclined to make the same sort of distinction between the beautiful and the picturesque which I have made," in what Hipple calls "a lamentable inability to grasp Knight's point."[90] It would seem that even the participants in the controversy were unclear as to what their differences actually were, an attitude favoured by Derek Clifford in his study of English

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[87]Tom Turner, English Garden Design (Suffolk, 1986), p.114.

[88]Humphry Repton, An Enquiry into the Changes of Taste in Landscape Gardening (London, 1806), p.141.

[89]Repton, Enquiry, p.118.

[90]Walter John Hipple, The Beautiful, the Sublime, & the Picturesque (Illinois University Press, 1957), p.283.

gardens in which he dismisses the entire controversy as "a good deal of confusion, such as is common when two or three persons are determined to disagree but have not as yet fully determined the grounds of their disagreement."[91] And, although the debate on picturesque gardening had in its time drawn involvement as highly placed as the Prince Regent,[92] only thirty years later George W. Johnson declared that the three rivals "differed in no one point of importance, that I have been able to discover."[93]

Critics more contemporary to our own era have also shown reluctance to see the quarrel as noteworthy. In his study, The Rule of Taste from George I to George IV, John Steegmann dismisses the controversy and asserts that "the points of disagreement seem to us, a century and a half removed, comparatively unimportant."[94] David Watkin takes a similar position and writes:

> The differences between Repton, Price and Knight seem to us today comparatively trifling, especially in comparison with the range of important matters on which they were in complete agreement.[95]

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[91]Derek Clifford, A History of Garden Design (London, 1962), p.168.

[92]See Dorothy Shroud, Humphry Repton (London, 1962) for more on Repton's involvement with British royalty.

[93]Miles Hadfield, Gardening in Britain (London, 1960), p.248.

[94]John Steegmann, The Rule of Taste (London, 1936), p.56.

[95]David Watkin, The English Vision (London, 1982), p.80.

Nikolaus Pevsner maintains that the entire controversy seems "futile ...for Repton is quite at one with Price and Knight on a good many points."[96] Tom Turner, in a study of English garden design, proposes that "a modern textbook editor might have persuaded them to put their names to a single treatise."[97] It certainly cannot be denied that there was some agreement between Repton and his adversaries, but the differences they expressed are fundamentally important ones which, apart from confusing a student of Turner's proposed text, are of extreme consequence to the history of garden design.

As well as being apparent in the manner in which each chose to improve his own property, the very different approaches of the three garden theorists can be observed in the respectively unique styles with which they expressed their ideas. Knight's didactic poem was meant to be a work of art in itself, and was surely enjoyed as such. The somewhat exaggerated portrayal of the tragedy of Brown's "improvements" entertains the reader much more than a simple clarification of ideas. The expressive quality of the poem, labelled by some as "straggling" and "obtusely archaic,"[98] is an indication of Knight's unwillingness to confine himself within practical limitations. It is not his intent to communicate merely his

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[96]Nikolaus Pevsner, "Humphry Repton," Studies in Art, Architecture and Design (London, 1968), v.I, p.142.

[97]Turner, English Garden Design, p.114.

[98]Edward Malins, English Landscaping and Literature (London, 1966), p.150.

ideas; he desires to do so with a flourish that will be remembered. The terse prose of Price is in stark contrast to Knight's poem. Price's approach is philosophical. His method illustrates his careful treatment of the problem of landscape gardening and the theory of the Picturesque. Repton's Hints and Sketches is just what the title indicates: sensible advice for the gardener. His advice to those interested in garden theory is practical and serviceable. His purpose of relating his experiences as a landscape-gardener so that others might profit is never lost in eloquent phrasing or theoretical tangents. With approaches as different as these to the problem of landscape gardening, differences of opinion should not come as a surprise.

Chapter III: An EXPLANATION of the CAUSES of the CONTROVERSY

i. Landscape gardening and painting.

Of all the disagreements between Price, Knight and Repton, the majority of the ink spilt concerned the question of the degree of affinity between landscape-gardening and painting. In response to Price's advice that anyone desiring to improve his estate should consult a painter rather than a gardener,[99] Repton attempted to show that painting really had very little in common with landscape-gardening, while both Knight and Price made it their duty to show just how much the people of Repton's profession depended, or should depend, on this art-form.

Much of the controversy concerned Repton's adopted title of "landscape-gardener." Price expresses surprise at the fact that Repton, "a landscape-gardener,...should set out by giving up...the picturesque, and by endeavouring to weaken the affinity between painting and landscape-gardening," and goes so far as to say that Repton "must abdicate the first part of...[his] title."[100] Price reiterates his view that the gardens close to the house must be treated differently than the landscape beyond, and charges Repton of being interested only in that area which immediately surrounds the house. He supports this accusation by referring to Repton's concern with

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[99]Watkin, The English Vision, p.ix.

[100]From a letter by Uvedale Price to Humphry Repton, published in Price, Essay on the Picturesque, p.435.

convenience and comfort, while concluding:

> One might therefore suppose that all the talents of a landscape-gardener were to be displayed within a few hundred yards of the house, where (as I observed towards the beginning of my Essay) the picturesque must often be sacrificed to neatness, and to things of comfort, as gravel walks with regular borders.[101]

Price is not really very far off the mark here, for Repton himself admitted, in 1816, that "the improvement of houses and gardens is more delightful to me than that of parks or forests, landscapes or distant prospects."[102] Repton tried to promote the importance of the garden or park as separate from the forest or wilderness, and cautioned that we should not forget that, "a park is the habitation of men, and not solely devoted to beasts of the forest."[103] Repton was forever preoccupied with the human element.

Knight was even less sure than Price of the propriety of Repton's self-appointed title of "landscape-gardener." He pointed out that those features of which Repton made use in his gardens--shrubs, paths, and green turf--were in no way concerned with the art of landscape, since they were not visually pleasing. Repton could use these features, but:

> All I beg of him is, that if he takes any professional title, it may be one really descriptive of his profession, such as that of walk-maker, shrub-planter, turf-cleaner,

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[101]Price, Essay on the Picturesque, p.433.

[102]Loudon, The Landscape...of Humphry Repton, p.605.

[103]Loudon, The Landscape...of Humphry Repton, p.78.

> or rural-perfumer; for if landscapes are not what he means to produce, that of landscape gardener is not only of no mean, but of no true pretension.[104]

Clearly Knight does not see Repton's interpretation of the profession of landscape-gardening as being particularly enlightened.

The Oxford English Dictionary identifies the year 1763 as the date of the first occurrence of the word "landscape-gardener." At this time William Shenstone wrote:

> Gardening may be divided into three species--kitchen-gardening--parterre gardening--and landskip, or picture-gardening: which latter...consists in pleasing the imagination by scenes of grandeur, beauty, or variety....I have used the word landskip-gardiners; because in pursuance of our present taste in gardening, every good painter of landskip appears to me the most proper designer.

It is not until 1827 that the word takes on its present meaning of "one skilled in the development and decorative planting of gardens and grounds." (Webster's) It seems rather curious that Repton would choose the title of landscape-gardener, which meant landscape-painter and garden-designer combined, when he so strongly believed that there existed little affinity between the art of painting and the art of gardening. We can only speculate at his adoption of the title. In preparation for his new profession, Repton had read Burgh's The English Garden, Gilpin's guides to picturesque views, and Whately's

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[104]From the prefix to the second edition of Knight's poem, The Landscape. Quoted in Hussey, The Picturesque, p.172.

Observations on Modern Gardening.[105] All saw the art of improvement in picturesque terms, and no doubt the title of landscape-gardener reflected the thoughts of the men whose books Repton had read, more than his own ideas on improvement. He had little practical experience in the profession he was entering, and landscape-gardener sounded appropriate to that rung on the professional ladder which Repton felt certain the career of landscape-gardening should be positioned.[106] Certainly it was more attractive than the suggestions proffered by Knight. It is very probable that Repton was thinking as much of the artistic connotations of the term he chose as its actual meaning.

ii. The follower of "Capability" Brown?

This is unfortunately not the only contradiction we see in the ideas of Repton. The publications of Knight and Price were both severe attacks on the methods of "Capability" Brown. Repton was very sensitive to the fact that landscape-gardening was as yet not well established as a metier in England, and, after being subjected to the criticisms of his contemporaries, he felt it was his "duty to support its respectability, since you [here referring to both Knight and Price] attack the very

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[105]Jacques, Georgian Gardens, p.134.

[106]From a letter by Humphry Repton to Uvedale Price, published in Price, Essay on the Picturesque, p.413.

existence of that profession."[107] The defense of his profession included, it seems, the defense of his predecessor, "Capability" Brown. But lest we should wrongly assume that he is declaring himself to be a disciple of that infamous shaver of lawns, he clarifies his position.

> I hope I shall not be deemed an advocate for that bare and bald system of gardening which has been so justly ridiculed. I do not profess to follow either Le Notre or Brown, but, selecting beauties from the style of each, to adopt so much of the grandeur of the former as may accord with a palace, and so much of the grace of the latter as may call forth the charms of natural landscape.[108]

Repton can now safely defend Brown, and proceeds to blame the current distaste for Brownian lawns on "his illiterate followers."

> Brown copied Nature, his illiterate followers copied him; and, in such hands, without intending to injure his fame, or to depart from his principles, the fashion of English gardening was in danger of becoming more tiresome, insipid, and unnatural, than the worst style of Italian or Dutch examples.[109]

His case is presented clearly. It is not the principles of Brown that have made English gardens "insipid and unnatural," but rather the misinterpretation of these principles by unknowing disciples. However, Repton somehow fails to understand that it was not just the followers of Brown that

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[107]Letter by Humphry Repton to Uvedale Price, published in Price, Essay on the Picturesque, p.413.

[108]Loudon, The Landscape...of Humphry Repton, p.234.

[109]Loudon, The Landscape...of Humphry Repton, p.328.

Knight and Price were attacking, but the very master himself and his principles.

The Picturesque garden was largely a reaction against the Dutch or Italian gardens of the seventeenth century, which were characterized by formality. The way in which "Capability" Brown brought the lawn right up to the front door of the house was a first step in the resistance against this convention. But though Brown's methods did indeed do away with the formal aspects of terraces, his gardens were relatively boring and too "smooth" for the taste of Knight and his contemporaries. The best remedy for the destruction Brown had caused was seen in the reinstatement of the Italian terrace. Knight wrote in his poem, The Landscape:

> Oft when I've seen some lonely mansion stand
> Fresh from th' improver's desolating hand,
> 'Midst shaven lawns that far around it creep
> In one eternal undulating sweep;
> And scattered clumps, that nod at one another,
> Each stiffly waving to its formal brother;
> Tired with th' extensive scene, so dull and bare,
> To Heav'n devoutly I've addressed my prayer:
> Again the moss grown terraces to raise,
> And spread the labyrinth's perplexing maze--
> Replace in even lines the ductile yew,
> And plant again the ancient avenue.[110]

The "desolating hand" of Brown had created a scene "so dull and bare" that Knight felt the need for heavenly intervention to save the countryside of his nation. His last hope was that terraces would again grace the English landscape.

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[110]Knight, The Landscape, Book II, l.1-12.

Price can also be understood as a proponent of the terrace, although a rather reluctant one. Repton, on the other hand, was a very vocal champion of the device:

> My taste may, perhaps, be arraigned for asserting that the straight terrace...ought not to be disturbed: although it is a remnant of geometric gardening of the last century, yet it is an object of such comfort and convenience, that it would be unpardonable to destroy it, for no other reason than because a straight walk is out of fashion.[111]

Though he realized that the terrace did not comply with contemporary theory and taste, he saw it as "convenient" and therefore could not possibly advocate its destruction. Like Knight and Price he also saw the terrace as "a foreground, or frame, to a pleasing picture,"[112] and suggested that "fastidious indeed" was the person who turned away from a beautiful view simply because it was seen from a terrace with trimmed hedges. We come back, then, to the inconsistency of Repton's views. How could someone who promotes the desirability of the terrace defend its destroyer, "Capability" Brown? This question seems as difficult to answer as our initial one regarding Repton's title of landscape-gardener.

iii. <u>The solution</u>.

A search through his writings does little, at first glance, to clarify the issue. Repton advocates different

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[111]Loudon, <u>The Landscape...of Humphry Repton</u>, p.235.

[112]Loudon, <u>The Landscape...of Humphry Repton</u>, p.235.

solutions for different situations with no discernable system. But herein lies the key. Unlike Knight and Price, Repton did not set out to define a term or defend a theory; the purpose of his Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening was to provide practical advice to those interested in his chosen profession. Seen in this light, the contradictions presented to us by his writings do not seem so serious. He was a follower of Brown in the sense that both he and Brown were members of the same profession, but Repton saw in practice that Brown's sloped lawns were not as successful as formal terraces and, so, he promoted terraces.

Chapter IV: REPTON'S INFLUENCE and LASTING CONTRIBUTION to GARDEN HISTORY

Edward Malins asserts that Repton's effort "accounts for much of the splendid planting throughout the England that we see today."[113] It is, however, due more to the practical recommendations that he promoted than to his actual gardens to which his influence must be attributed. Many of Repton's gardens were never completed, and a majority of those that were have long since fallen into disrepair.[114] But intelligent innovation and sagacious creativity can influence the future as long as there are those perceptive enough to recognize them. Repton's ideas as outlined in his Red Books and the Sketches and Hints represent such lasting contributions.

i. The garden as independent of painting and literature.

Repton's methods have survived well into the twentieth century[115] partly because they were made according to a system which refused to treat the garden as a blank canvas and which made allowances for the fact that each commission had different

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[113]Malins, Repton's Red Books, p.16.

[114]There are still a number of Reptonian gardens in existence: Welbeck in Nottinghamshire, Cobham in Kent, Uppark in Sussex and Sheringham Hall in Norfolk. For information on Sheringham Hall, past and present, see E. Malins edition of The Red Books of Humphry Repton, which includes a reproduction of the original Red Book as well as documentation of the present state of the park.

[115]Carter, G. etc., Humphry Repton: Landscape Gardener (London, 1982), p.128+.

natural resources at its base. This attitude was quite new, for the basis of the eighteenth-century garden is, as we have seen, to be found in the written words of poets and theorists[116] and in the landscapes of artists such as Claude Lorraine. Indeed, H.F. Clark gives Repton sole credit for the diminished dependence of gardening on the visual and literary arts:

> The consequence of Repton's teachings was that garden design passed from the influence of the painter and poet into the hands of the gardener-horticulturalist.[117]

In his insistence that painting did not really have all that much to do with the art of landscape gardening, Repton was moving ahead of his adversaries and their inability to separate the two mediums. Both Knight and Price must be seen as belonging to the eighteenth century; Repton's theories lead him forward into the nineteenth, when gardening was promoted as a fine art, separate from painting or sculpture and a discipline in its own right.[118]

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[116]For further discussion of landscape gardening and the written word, see Malins, English Landscaping and Literature.

[117]H.F. Clark, "Parks and Pelargoniums," Architectural Review, v.99 (February 1946), p.51.

[118]See A.A. Tait's discussion of Loudon in John Claudius Loudon and the Early Nineteenth Century in Great Britain, Elisabeth B. MacDougall, ed. (Dumbarton Oaks, 1980).

ii. The natural character of the garden.

Repton's approach is based on his interest in the actual raw materials of the garden. One only need think of Brown and his wanton destruction of the existing topography to realize that the prevailing geography was far from being a major consideration. Repton "improved" over 200 estates throughout the whole of England, and therefore could conceivably have conformed a large portion of the British landscape to a single, personal ideal. But he treated each of these projects as a separate entity, attempting to make full use of the resources presented to him. In his Sketches and Hints he insisted that:

> All rational improvement of grounds is, necessarily, founded on a due attention to the character and situation of the place to be improved:...In deciding the character of any place, some attention must be given to its situation with respect to other places; to the natural shape of the ground on which the house is, or may be, built.[119]

Repton's method of suggesting improvements is clearly based on the importance of "character" and "situation." Repton would visit the estate of a proposed client, make maps and sketches of the area in question, and then produce elaborate watercolour illustrations of the grounds as they existed presently and as they would appear after the recommended alterations. These remarkable creations alone have assured Repton a solid status in the history of garden design. This intimate attention to

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[119]Loudon, The Landscape...of Humphry Repton, p.39.

every detail of the natural topography also separates Repton from Knight and Price. His adversaries were wrong to accuse Repton of being an opponent of the Picturesque simply because he did not transpose each of his commissions into a picturesque vista. Repton was an open admirer of Picturesque views, and said of Knight's estate:

> Downton Vale near Ludlow, [is] one of the most beautiful and romantic valleys that the imagination can conceive. It is impossible by description to convey an idea of its natural charms.[120]

Repton proceeds to do just that, however, and provides us with a vivid inventory of the resources that Knight had to work with at Downton: an awful precipice, a mountain stream with roaring, foaming water, caves and hovels, and natural ledges of rock.[121] The attributes possessed by Knight at his estate were almost effortlessly encouraged to become a wild representation of the Picturesque. As was pointed out by Repton, however, not all landowners were blessed with such superior features, and their gardens would appear "absurd, incongruous, and out of character"[122] if improved in the Picturesque manner. Although able to see the merit and beauty of a picturesque scene, Repton could not advocate a system that did not take into account the

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[120]Repton, Enquiry, p.138.

[121]Repton, Enquiry, p.138.

[122]Repton, Enquiry, p.138.

varying characteristics of different geographic locations.[123]

iii. The terrace.

Repton is commonly applauded for his re-introduction of the terrace garden, or formality in close proximity to the house. He was able to perceive that the human creature needs a sense of enclosure to feel secure, but that this in no way excluded the appreciation of a good "view."[124] Repton understood that privacy is essential to the enjoyment of beauty.

Repton's interest in formality also looked forward to the development of the "Gardenesque." Although John Claudius

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[123]Jay Appleton has proposed that "geology can be said quite literally to be the basis of all landscape design." He feels that Repton might well have been identified as an improver of the Picturesque school, had he been offered commissions that would have allowed him to create picturesque landscape. He compares those parts of the country described by Gilpin as having the greatest picturesque potential to the areas where Repton worked and finds a near perfect inverse relationship. Still, Repton continues to be concerned with the comfort of his client, and, even at Mulgrave Castle, near Whitby in North Yorkshire, which Appleton considers a successful example of Picturesque improvement, suggests that "paths should be formed in the wildest manner, yet leading without difficulty to the most interesting point of view...and must occasionally be cut through the rock or a descent made by easy steps down the precipice." See "Some thoughts on the geology of the picturesque," (Journal of Garden History, v.6 (July 1986), pp.270-91).

[124]This view has been more recently proffered in Appleton's The Experience of Landscape, where the ethological approach of Konrad Lorenz is used to explain "the satisfaction which results from the perception of a biologically favourable environment without uncomfortably exposing ourselves to the hazards...[of] our surroundings." (p.70.) The re-discovery of the need for privacy can be observed in the fate of the Miesian glass-house, rejected by owners who felt uncomfortably exposed.

Loudon, the primary proponent of the school, long denied his debt to the work of Repton, he finally recognized the value of his predecessor in an illustrated collection of his garden theory. After Repton's death in 1818, Loudon was more willing to see merit in the work of his rival. His early refutation of Repton's influence can be attributed to the formidable fame of the latter. In order to obtain an equal reputation for himself, Loudon believed that he would have to in some way discredit the principles of his progenitor. His attempt to do so, however, only succeeded in positioning Loudon as a successor to the celebrated Repton.[125] In his introduction to the collection of Repton's writings he wrote:

> In short, the aim of the Gardenesque is to add, to the acknowledged charms of the Repton school, all those which the sciences of gardening and botany, in their present advanced state, are capable of producing.[126]

Loudon went so far as to admit that Repton's work at Ashridge (Ill.27,29) was in fact ideal:

> No arrangement can be better, in our opinion, than to connect the whole of the botanic houses with the mansion as an introductory scene to the flower garden.[127]

Clearly Loudon came to recognize Repton's theories as a solid

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[125]See A.A. Tait's essay in John Claudius Loudon (1980), E. MacDougall, ed., p.70.

[126]Loudon, The Landscape...Humphry Repton, p.ix.

[127]MacDougall, Loudon, p.50.

base for the new innovations of his own age.

iv. New technology and the green-house.

Repton himself was by no means indifferent to the use of modern resources to add to the appeal of his gardens. He became especially devoted to one particular technological advancement: cast iron. He was very aware of the possibilities of the medium which, when used to construct glazed conservatories and corridors made it possible to cultivate an increased variety of sub-tropical plants.[128] Repton is here again moving away from the practices of the eighteenth century and looking toward the nineteenth century fashion for diversity of plant species as well as ferro-vitreous architecture. Repton's conservatories are also important for the vogue they created for passages linking interior with exterior (Ill.30). Repton's beautifully drawn Designs for the Pavillon at Brighton, published in 1808, made his idea for a garden that would not be affected by the yearly change of season (Ill.31). Writing in the nineteenth century, William Cobbet recognized the moral implications of the conservatory in an industrial society:

> It is the moral effects naturally attending a green house that I set most value upon. There must be amusement in every family. Children observe and follow their parents in almost everything. How much better during the long and dreary winter for daughters and even sons to assist their mothers in a green house than to be seated with her at

[128]Malins, English Landscaping and Literature, p.26.

> cards or in the blubberings over a stupid novel or at any other amusement that can possibly be conceived.[129]

Repton would have been happy indeed with such an assessment of his conservatories. He had succeeded in improving the comfort and quality not only of the lives of his own generation, but those of the future as well.

v. Conclusion.

In his concern for the individual topography of each of the estates that he improved, in his insistence upon a distinction between the art of painting and gardening, and in his ability to look forward to the needs of the nineteenth century rather than remain locked into the ideologies of his own era, Repton has greatly influenced the course of garden history. His constant consideration for the well-being and security of those who were to enjoy his gardens gives his theories an accessibility that cannot be discerned in the theories of Knight and Price. Repton's opponents in the Picturesque Debate were captives in a world of theory and ideas. It was Repton himself who actively furthered the development of garden history.

While it lies outside the scope of this paper, it is interesting to note the parallels between the concerns we are dealing with presently and the issues which disturbed theorists of the late-eighteenth century. The estate of the English

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[129]William Cobbet, The English Gardener (1829).

nobleman has little relevance in twentieth-century North America, but a comparison can be made with the buildings of private corporations in urban settings and the mediating area between office and street. Current developments in urban landscape architecture have been interpreted as a search for meaning and content which was so long denied by the barren plazas of the Modern era (Ill.32). In this sense, the sweeping lawns of "Capability" Brown are not that different, for example, from the original expansive concrete entrance to the famous Seagram Building in New York. The limited success of the impeccable products of Modernism demonstrates just how much we could learn from Repton's insistence that the human element be a part of the design.[130] A recent article in the Architectural Record referred to the fact that:

> ...many people are calling for design that responds to the individual needs of users and not the generic building formulas of developers or the stylistic prejudices of architects.[131]

Clearly, this is Repton's declaration that "utility must often take the lead of beauty, and convenience be preferred to picturesque effect"[132] restated for a new generation. We

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[130]Note for example the fate of the Erieview Tower in Cleveland, designed by Harrison & Abramovitz in 1964. Recently, Kober/Belluschi Associates proposed a plan to convert the sterile concrete plaza into a two-level complex featuring shops, restaurants and terrace.

[131]Clifford A. Pearson, "Future Talk," Architectural Record (July 1991), p.176.

[132]See above, pp.46-48.

continue to re-learn Repton's judgment that successful design is created first and foremost for people.

At the end of his life Repton wrote that the most valuable lesson he had learned in life was the importance of gardens to happiness. It is perhaps therefore appropriate here to close with the words used by Repton for the same purpose in his last publication:

> Allons mes amis, il faut cultiver nos jardins.[133]

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[133]Loudon, The Landscape...of Humphry Repton, p.606.

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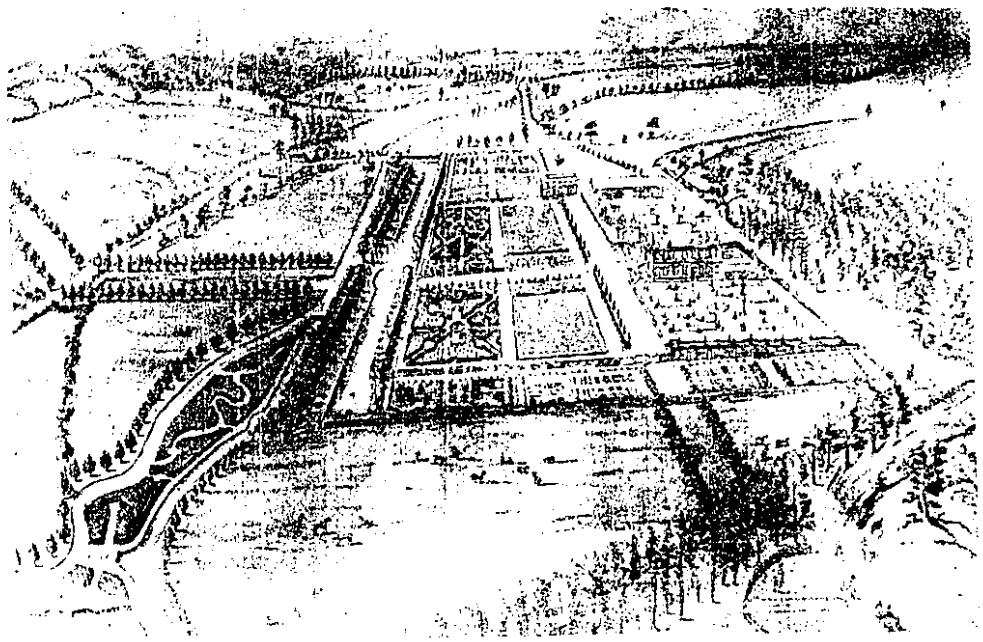
ILLUSTRATIONS

ABSTRACT

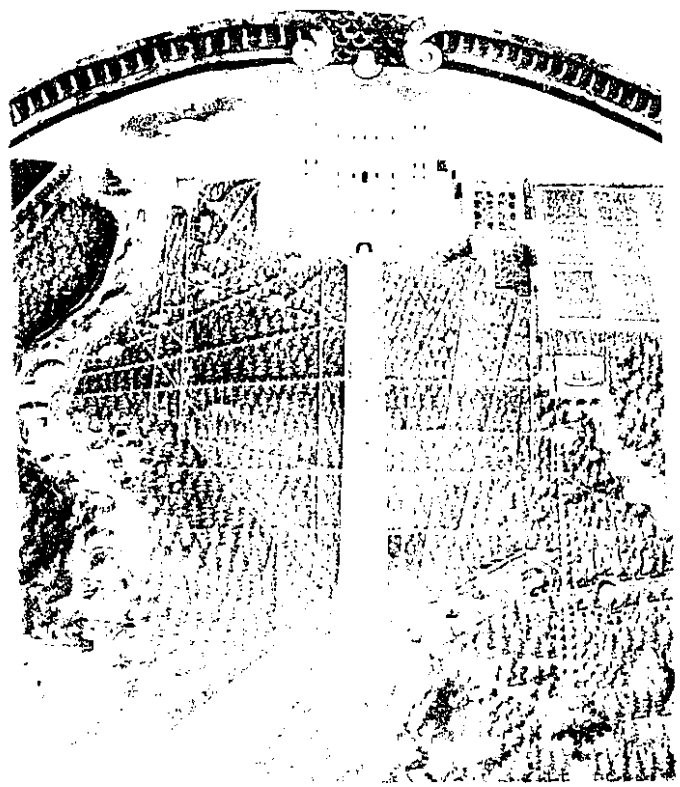
In recent years the history of the garden has enjoyed increased attention within scholarly circles. Of particular interest is the history of the formation of the Picturesque garden. The ideas of three men, Richard Payne Knight, Uvedale Price, and Humphry Repton, are central to the evolution of Picturesque theory as related to the garden. The conflict among them has become known as the Picturesque Controversy. Due to misguided interpretations by modern scholars, however, the essence of the dispute has been obscured. Through a discussion of the development of Picturesque theory and a comparison of the actual points of difference between the above mentioned theorists, this paper proposes to expose the essential elements of the debate. It also demonstrates that, while all three participants are attempting to reach beyond the practices of their own century, it is Humphry Repton who distinguishes himself as the true herald of modern society and its attitude toward the garden.

Résumé

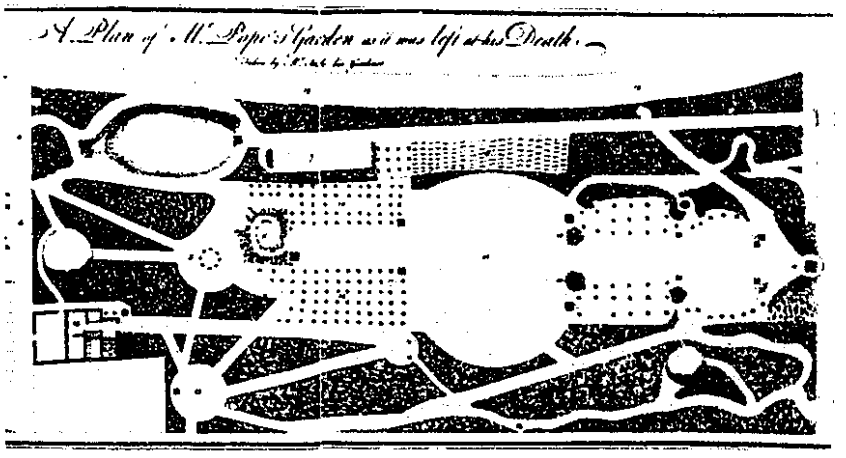
Dans les dernières années, l'histoire du jardin reçoit de plus en plus d'attention dans les milieux académiques. D'intérêt particulier est l'histoire de la formation du jardin pittoresque. Les idées de trois hommes, Richard Payne Knight, Uvedale Price et Humphry Repton, sont au centre de l'évolution de la théorie pittoresque en relation avec le jardin. Le conflit entre eux est connu comme étant la controverse pittoresque. Par contre, grâce aux interprétations peu judiscieuses d'érudits modernes. l'essentiel de la dispute a été obscuri. Par une discussion sur le développement de la théorie pittoresque et une comparaison des points de différence entre les théoristes nommés ci-dessus, cette thèse propose d'exposer les éléments essentiels du debat. Il sera démontré que, bien que les trois participants essaient d'aller au-delà des pratiques de leur propre siècle, c'est le théoriste Humphry Repton que se distingue comme le véritable héraut de la société moderne et de l'attitude de celle-ci envers le jardin.



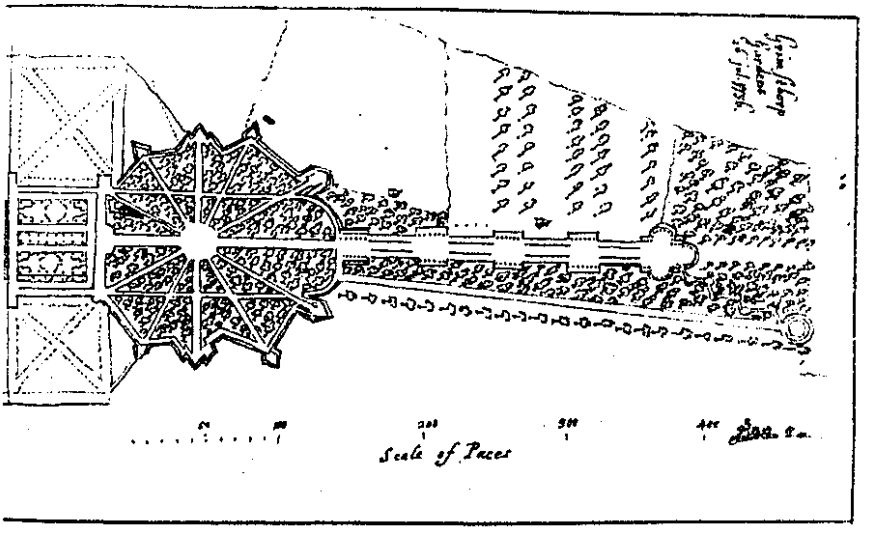
1. Anonymous, Drawing of Sir William Temple's garden at Moor Park, Surrey, c.1690.



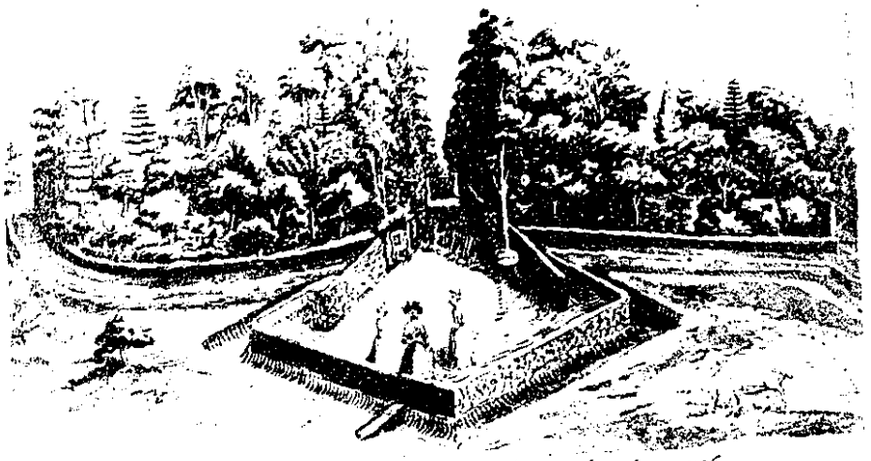
2. Giusto Utens, Lunette of Pratolino, detail, 1599.



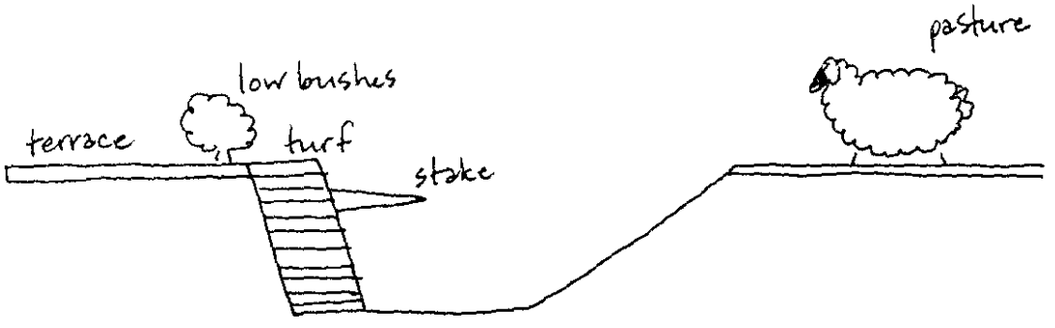
3. J. Serle, Plan of Pope's garden, Twickenham, 1745.



4. William Stuckeley, Plan of Grimsthorpe, Lincolnshire, 1736.

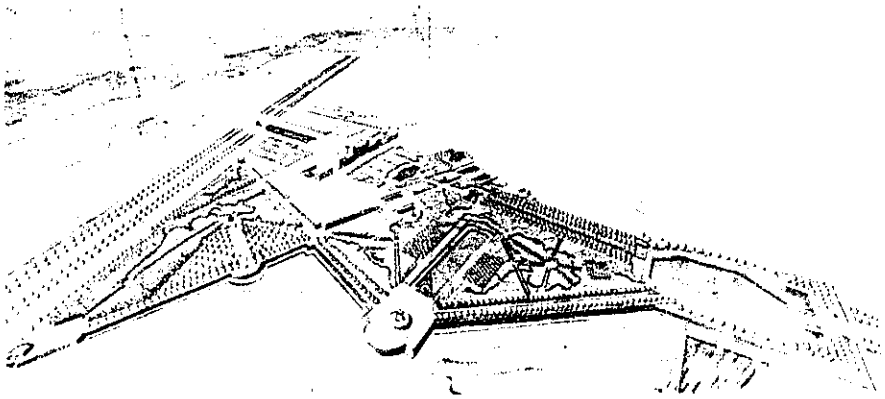


5. William Stuckeley, The Duchesses' Bastion, Grimsthorpe, 1736.

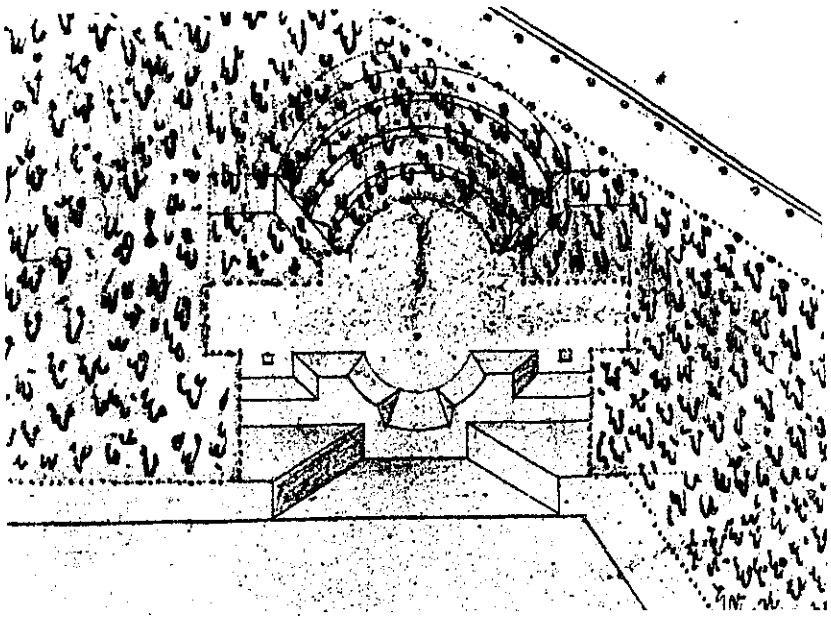


6. Drawing of a ha-ha.

7. Jacques Rigaud after Bernard Baron,
A Ha-Ha at Stowe, detail, 1739.

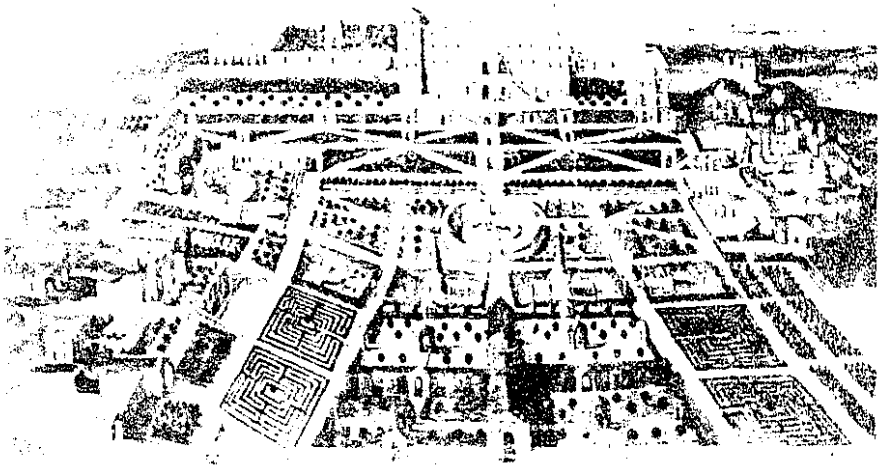


8. Attributed to Charles Bridgeman,
bird's-eye view of Stowe.



9. Charles Bridgeman's Theatre at Rousham.

10. View of the Temple of Virtue from the Temple of British Worthies.

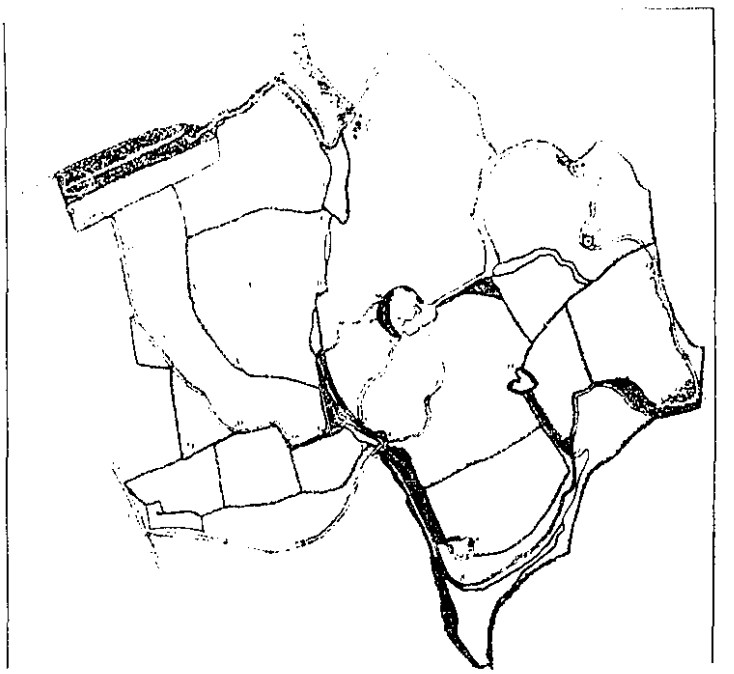


11. Anonymous, Villa d'Este, Tivoli, 17th century.

12. View of Blenheim from the air.

13. Anonymous, view of Hagley Park.

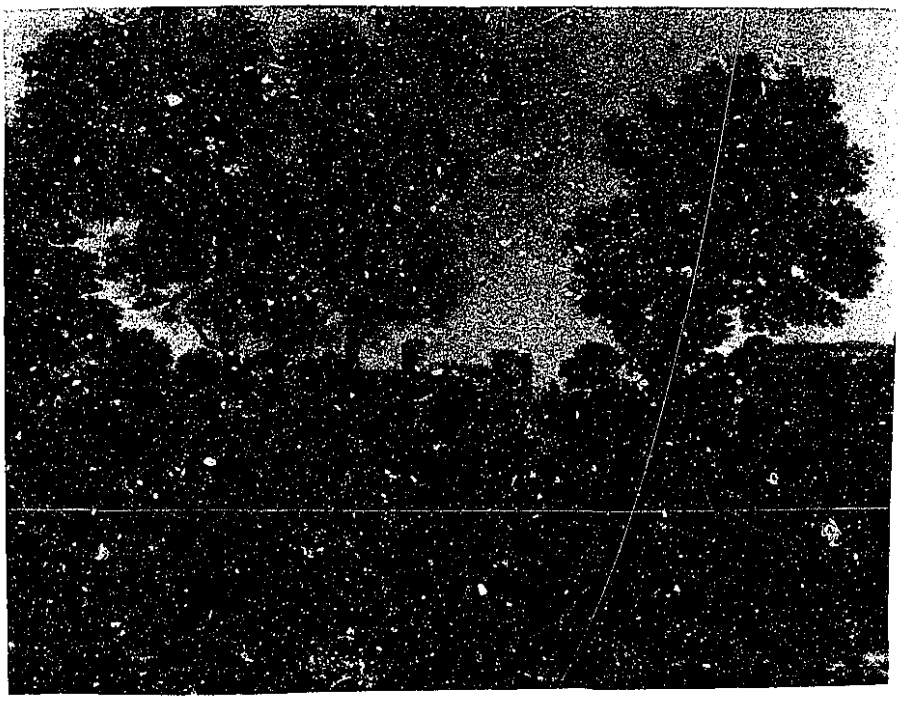
14. The Gothic Ruin at Hagley.



15. Plan of the Leasowes,
after W. Lowe, 1764.

16. The Leasowes, Shropshire, 1788.

17. Illustrations from The Landscape.



18. Claude Lorraine, View of La Crescenza.

19. Thomas Hearne, View of the River Teme
with Downton Residence in Background, 1785.

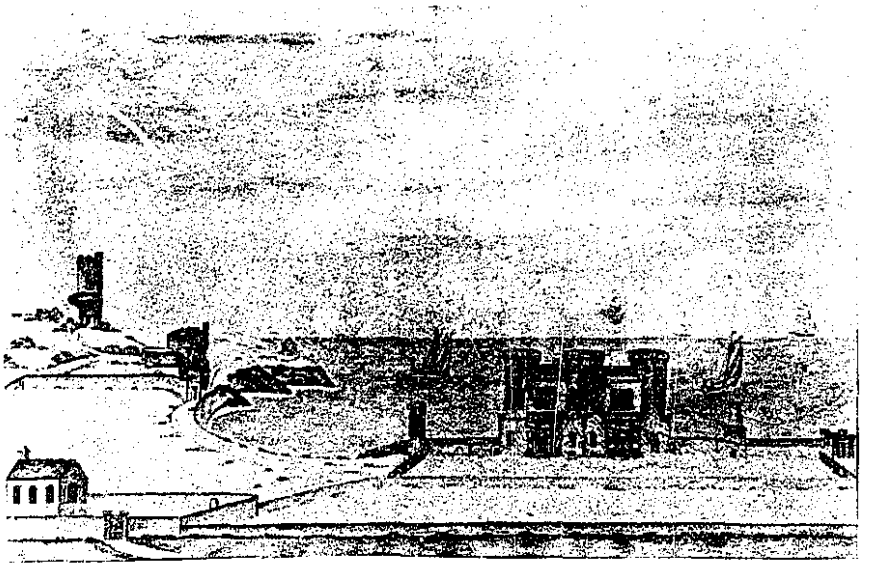
20. Downton Castle.

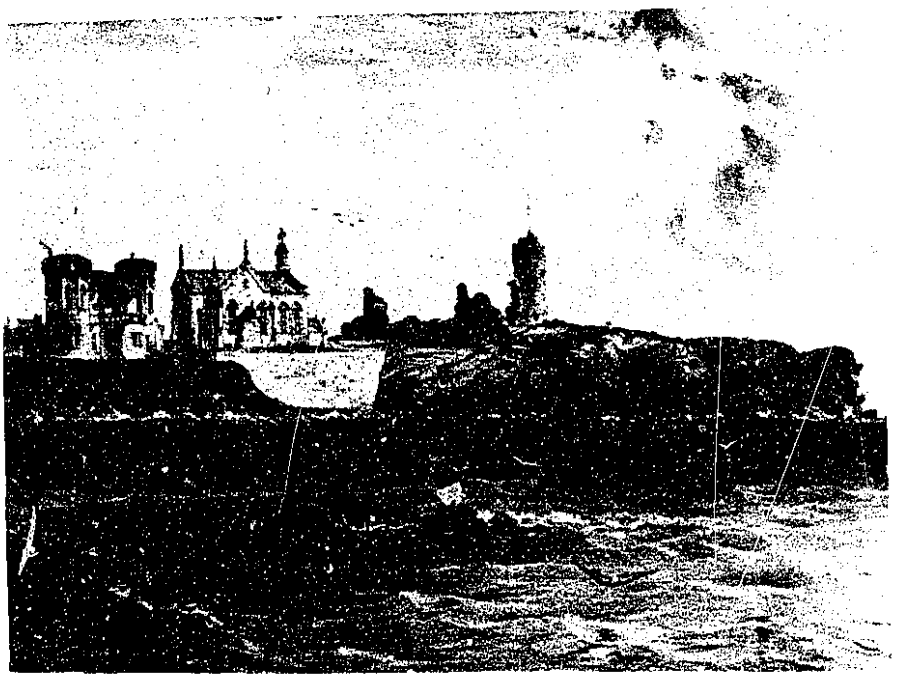
21. Thomas Hearne, View of the River Teme at Downton, 1785.

22. Thomas Gainsborough, Beech Trees at Foxley, c.1760.

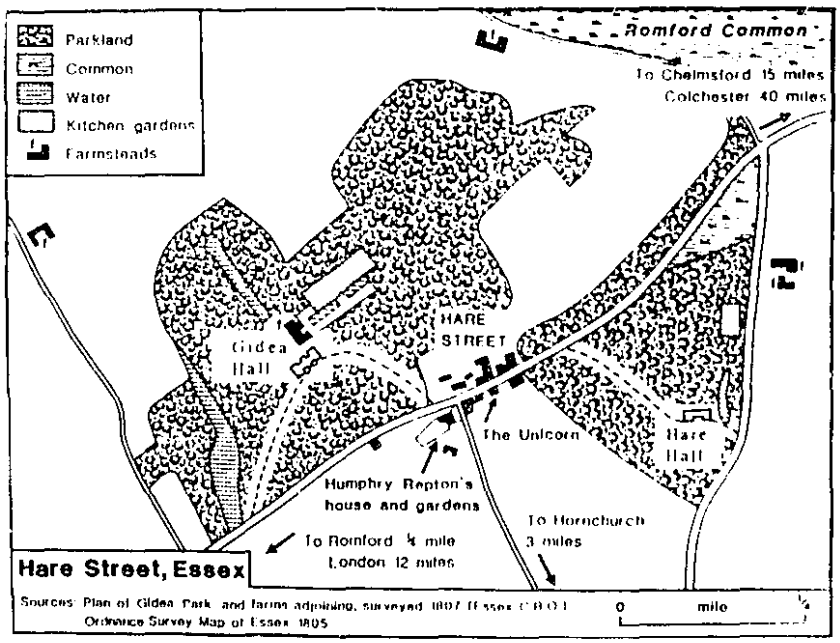
23. Salvador Rosa, St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness, c.1640.

24. Salvador Rosa, Soldiers and Peasants in a Rocky Landscape, 1650.



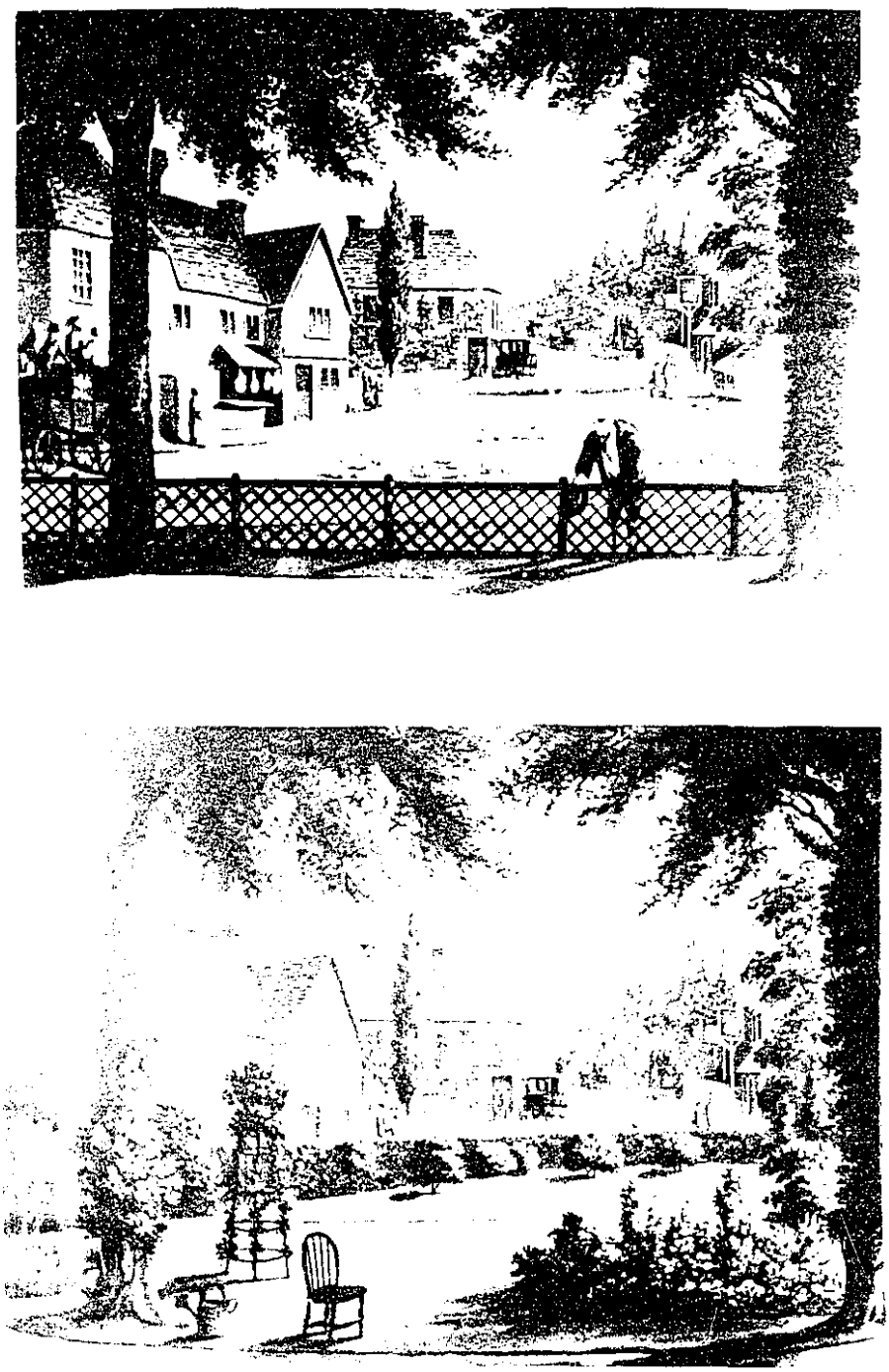


25. Anonymous, Views of Castle House, Aberystwyth.

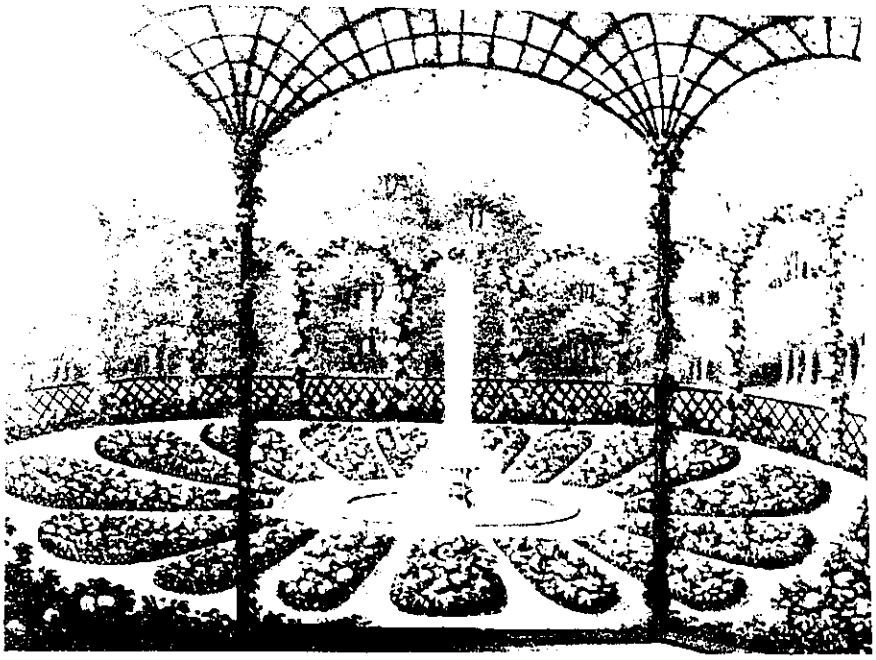


26. Plan of Hare Street, Essex.

27. Humphry Repton, Design for the gardens at Ashridge, 1813.

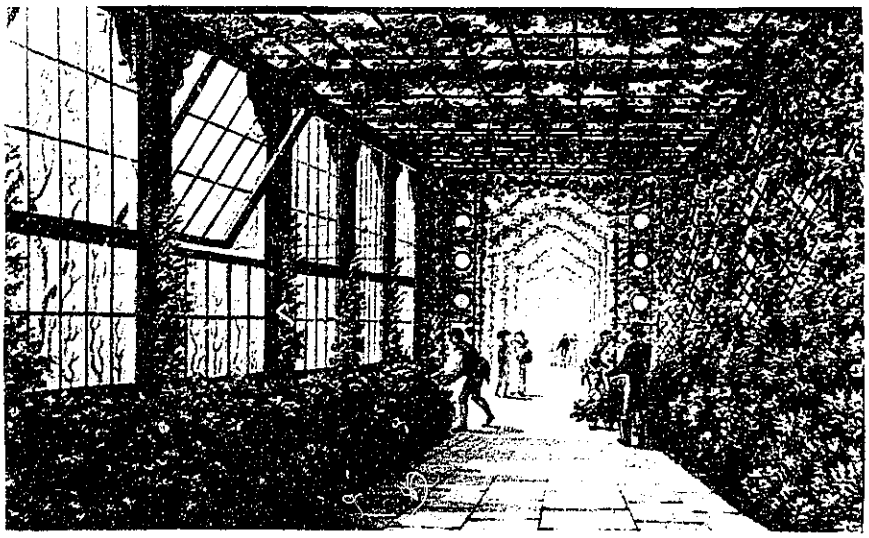


28. H. Repton, "Views from my own cottage in Essex," before and after improvement.

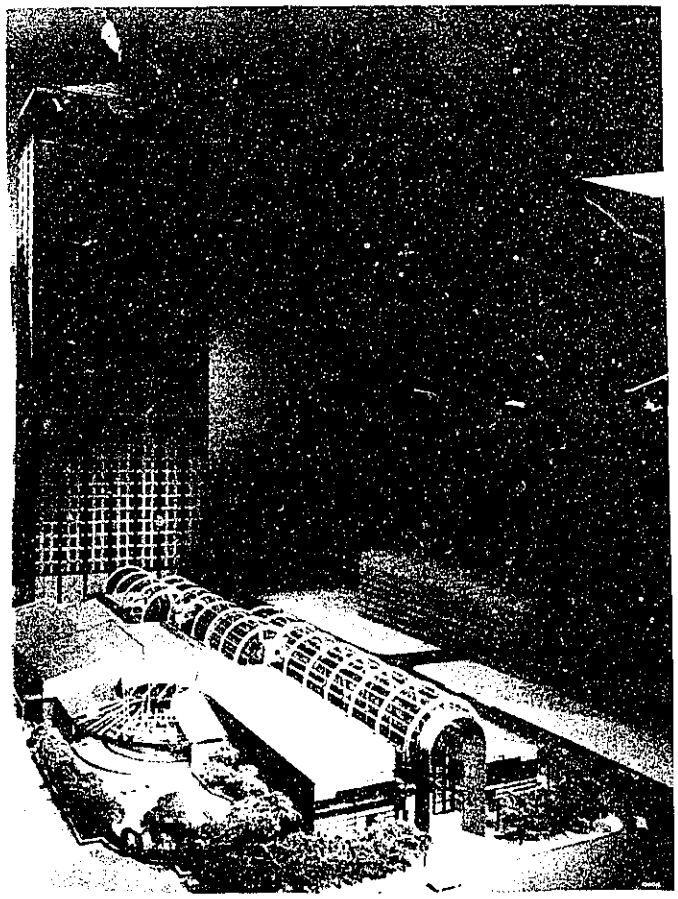


29. H. Repton, The Rose Garden at Ashridge.

30. H. Repton, A Comfortable Interior.



31. H. Repton, West Corridor from Designs for the Pavillon at Brighton, 1808.



32. Kober/Belluschi Associates, Design
for the conversion of the
Erieview Tower, Cleveland, 1986.