



1 PARADISE

If there is a Paradise on the face of
the earth, it is here, it is here, it is here.

*Inscribed on the Black Marble Pavilion, Shalimar Bagh,
Kashmir, built for the Emperor Jahangir (1569-1627)*

Paradise: the Persian garden

The first recorded gardens grew in Persia. Many centuries before the tradition of garden cultivation was established in Western Europe, a dry Persian plateau was transformed into a hunting garden by King Cyrus II, The Great (c.530). Cyrus's desert garden featured many of the elements that would come to define the concept of 'Paradise': its high walls enclosed shady orchards of fruit trees, cool pavilions and flowing water channelled from distant mountain sources. The Greek writer Xenophon (c.430–354 BC) was entranced by reports of this enclosed garden and created the term 'Paradise' or *paradeisos* (*paradēsis*) to describe it, translating the Persian term *pairi-daisa* (from *pairi* 'around', and *dai*, 'to farm or mould'). The term was to have huge resonance throughout succeeding centuries, as the Greeks spread first-hand information about Persian royal gardens to the West, and then used the term 'Paradise' to describe the Garden of Eden in the first Greek translations of the Old Testament, which appeared in the third century BC.

Chahār bāgh: the Islamic garden

The walled, royal hunting garden in Persia was the model from which all later Persian gardens derived. The standard form which developed was a formal, geometric layout of two axes crossing at right angles. The axes were often formed by canals or water channels, and the centre point was marked by a pool, basin or fountain. This form of garden was called the *chahār bāgh* (four gardens) and was adopted with enthusiasm by the Islamic invaders of the Persian Empire from the seventh century AD. To these newcomers, the quartered plan of the *chahār bāgh* brought to mind descriptions in the Koran of the 'shades and fountains' of Paradise, with its four rivers of water, milk, wine and honey, and this archetypal garden spread wherever Islamic influence prevailed over the succeeding centuries, particularly in Muslim Spain and Mughal India.¹ Between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, images of the Persian garden started to reach Europe through the many different forms of Islamic art that celebrated the garden, including tiles, mosaics and carpets. It was, above all, Persian illustrated manuscripts that provided Western Europeans with their first glimpse of the Persian garden, as these reached European collections and libraries in small numbers during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

¹ See page 107. *Al-i-Nava'i* (7885, 1387) (*Nava'i* 1961, 147); *Seven Couples in a Garden*, c.1510 (see 133332, *Vol. de Jaxart*).

Persian and Mughal miniatures: 'the garden of the page'

The high concentration of garden scenes in Persian illustrated manuscripts from the fourteenth century onwards reflects the Persians' love of gardens and provides the first truly comprehensive range of garden images of any kind in art. Historical narratives, poems and legends, such as Ferdowsi's great national epic, the *Shahnameh*,² almost invariably feature gardens, and every aspect of garden life is brought alive on the page: in the garden, princes hold audiences, receive embassies and hear petitions; scholars and poets converse with each other; musicians and dancers perform entertainments; and lovers seek each other out. The Persian manuscript provides an immense repertoire of garden scenes in which countless, immobile 'lovely painted figures' would, if only they could move, 'happily strut in the garden of the page!'³

At their peak, Persian illustrated manuscripts were produced according to long-standing traditions in Herat, where scribes, artists and gardeners were brought together in a workshop by the Timurid ruler, Baysunghur (r. 1411–32). The technique used for painting scenes in watercolour on prepared paper, often set into elaborate borders and accompanied by calligraphic inscriptions in surrounding cartouches, were perfected here and then practised in centres at Bukhara, Shiraz and Tabriz, under the Timurid (1370–1506) and Safavid (1501–1722) dynasties in Persia. Once the Timurid prince Babur (1483–1530) had invaded India in 1526, his Mughal successors, as emperors in India (Akbar, r. 1556–1605; Jahangir, r. 1605–27; and Shah Jahan, r. 1628–58), established workshops at their courts, where the technique established in Persia were elaborated and developed still further into a distinctive Mughal style.

Gardens illustrated in Persian and Mughal miniatures

The earliest illustrated Islamic manuscript in the Royal Collection is a copy of the *Almanac* (*Five Poems*) of Mir 'Al-i-Nava'i (1445–1507), a distinguished author and poet from Herat, which was commissioned by Sultan Husayn Bayqara, Timurid ruler of Herat from 1469 to 1506. The 300 folios of calligraphy, produced in Herat in 1492, are accompanied by six illustrations, which were added to the manuscript after it was transferred to Bukhara in the early sixteenth century. These include a painted miniature of *Seven Couples in a Garden* (fig. 1), painted by an artist of the Bukhara school c.1510. This shows an enclosed



Left and middle (detail) (fig. 1) *Al-i-Nava'i* (7885, 1387) (*Nava'i* 1961, 147); *Seven Couples in a Garden*, c.1510. Manuscript on paper, ink, bodycolor and gold on paper, mounted on gold-leaf paper; 21.4 x 22.0 cm (page); 22.2 x 21.1, 21.2 cm (miniature); see 133332, *Vol. de*



Fig. 14 Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568–1625), *Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden*, 1615. Oil on copper, 48.6 × 65.6 cm. RCN 405512

manuscripts, paintings and engravings, often appear close in form to the ornate baptismal font of the Middle Ages, and can be read as a symbol of the renewing powers of baptism. A pinnacled Gothic fountain of this type appears as the Fountain of Life in the background of *Adam and Eve* (c.1520) by Jan Gossaert (c.1478–1532) (Fig. 13) and serves as the central defining feature of this Eden, where the Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil are bare and truncated. Records suggest that where water was introduced to the medieval garden, it was most often contained in the form of small pools, lead cisterns or wells, emphasising the symbolic value of the highly ornate garden fountains that appear in the art of the period.⁹

Eden as depicted in the *Liber chronicarum* is contained within fortified walls with towers and battlements, and Adam and Eve are expelled through a gateway surmounted by an arch of Gothic tracery. This Paradise is not an open park, but a walled enclosure, reflecting the medieval concept that the Garden of Eden was an enclosed garden, or *hortus conclusus*.¹⁰ In a feudal society of open fields and roaming animals, the security and desirability of an enclosed garden was unquestioned, and the most familiar model for North European artists would have been the cloistered or contained monastic garden, which was often known as a 'paradise'.¹¹

'where all existence is a dream of ease'

The sacred garden, and the Garden of Eden in particular, continued to preoccupy artists until well into the sixteenth century, but with the classical revival of the early Renaissance, artists' fidelity to the descriptive points of Genesis wavered. The Tree of Knowledge, the Tree of Life, the four rivers, even Adam and Eve themselves, became less central to the imagery of Eden, which was increasingly infused with the classical myth of the Golden Age. First described by the Greek poet Hesiod, the Golden Age was the first and most perfect of the five stages of man: Gold, Silver, Bronze, the Age of Heroes, and the Iron Age. It was an age characterised by social harmony and peace, personal happiness, and natural plenty and abundance. The later Latin poets, including Horace and Ovid, dwelt lyrically on the pleasures of the Golden Age, whose inhabitants 'dwelt in ease and peace upon their lands with many good things, rich in flocks and loved by the blessed gods'.¹²

Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (1615) by Jan Brueghel (1568–1625) (Fig. 14) is one of a series of 'Paradise landscapes' painted by the artist between 1594 and c.1615.¹³ Moving away from the biblical dependency of earlier printmakers' approach to the subject, and also from the conventions observed by sixteenth-century Flemish and German artists such as Jan Gossaert or Lucas Cranach (1472–1553), Brueghel relegated Adam, Eve and the Tree of Knowledge to the middle

distance of his extensive, open landscape. Instead, the foreground is dominated by an encyclopaedic range of animal and bird species which emphasise the fecundity and variety of divine creation. From the domestic (oxen, spaniels, rabbits) to the exotic (elephants, leopards, porcupines and birds of paradise), the animal kingdom is ranged in all its variety. The accuracy of Jan Brueghel's zoological Eden was achieved primarily by bringing direct observation and scientific study to bear on his work. As court painter to Archduke Albat of Austria and Infanta Isabella of Spain, he would have had access to their menagerie in Brussels, and probably also visited the famous menagerie of Rudolph II in Prague in 1604. His extraordinary descriptive feat provided the visual equivalent of the burgeoning catalogues of natural history which appeared for the first time in the early sixteenth century, such as Conrad Gesner's (1516–65) *Historia animalium* (Zurich, 1551–8) and Ulisse Aldrovandi's (1522–1605) natural history publications (Bologna, 1599–1648).

Although Brueghel is not thought to have used the illustrations from these new natural histories to supplement his own observations, and also relied on borrowings from his artistic partner and collaborator, Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), he may have benefited from insights into the patterns of animal behaviour that they record. The most striking facet of animal behaviour exhibited here, however, is contrary to the usual laws of nature: the animals coexist in harmony, with the leopard and the oxen playfully sporting in the foreground, and the rabbit in no apparent jeopardy from its predator nearby. The idea that the 'wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid' (Isaiah 2:6) was a biblical one, but Brueghel's painting also reflects the classical tradition in which natural harmony and order, particularly between the animals, are the defining feature of earthly Paradise.¹⁴ This temperate landscape, with its promise of sunshine and showers, its verdant, forested valley, and its trees laden with fruit, breathes the spirit of classical poetry, which promised a Paradise where 'all existence is a dream of ease'.¹⁵ It was in a spirit of optimism, fired by the peace and prosperity that was being enjoyed in the Southern Netherlands for the first time after many years of conflict with the Dutch Republic, that Brueghel presented the Garden of Eden in such terms.

Gardens of the New Testament: the Gardens of Christ

Just as the Old Testament allowed artists to explore the imagery of the garden, parts of the New Testament narrative were played out against a garden setting. Christ's Passion began in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, where He endured betrayal and arrest. After His



Obelisks

Although the obelisk was Egyptian in origin, sixteenth-century excavations in Italy brought to light some of the many obelisks that had been erected in ancient Rome. The obelisk therefore joined the range of classical forms and shapes which became popular as the imagery of Rome returned to the garden during the Renaissance. Hendrick van Steenwyck the Younger (c. 1580–1649) included three marble obelisks on the terrace of the formal garden which is depicted in his *Figures on a Terrace* of c. 1615 (Fig. 55). In the foreground, courtly figures listen to a musician playing a lute, while others stroll around a gilded fountain

Opposite: Fig. 55 Hendrick van Steenwyck the Younger (c. 1580–1649), *Figures on a Terrace*, c. 1615. Oil on copper, 11.9 cm diameter RCN 4047/18

Above: Fig. 56 Hans Vredeman de Vries (1527–1606), *Perspective*, 1604, pt II, pl. 9. Manuscript, 18.4 × 28.3 cm (plate) London, British Library, 37.1. 35/12



the 4
*B*OTANIC
GARDEN

and when
Angels shall with their trumpets waken men,
And fire shall change the world, these hence shall rise
And change their gardens for a Paradise.

Tomb of John Tradescant the Elder (c.1570–1638) and
John Tradescant the Younger (1680–62), St Mary's Church, Lambeth



Fig. 87 Andrew Moore (1640–1706), *Silver table*, 1698–9. Silver and oak, 85.0 × 122.0 × 75.5 cm (ICN 35301)

Block's horticultural success was therefore due to the invention in the 1680s of the first true hothouses, equipped with stoves to generate the heat needed for the plants to survive northern winters. But the expense of these facilities (William III's orangery at his estate, Honselaarsdijk, cost 30,000 gilders) made the cultivation of these fruits the preserve of the Dutch elite alone until the very end of the seventeenth century.⁶²

With the accession of Mary II and William III to the English throne in 1689, Dutch skills in pineapple-growing were brought to England, along with stocks of the plant. The king's associate, Hans Willem Bentinck, 1st Earl of Portland (1649–1709), brought the entire stock of one experienced Dutch grower to Hampton Court in 1692, but it was to be over 20 years before a crop of pineapples was successfully grown from seed in England.⁶³ Pineapples were not, however, unknown in England before then. Imported fruits had been the subject of curiosity since at least 1640, when Parkinson described one in the *Theatrum Botanicum*: 'Scaly like an Artichoke at the first view, but more like to a cone of the Pine tree, which we call a pineapple to the forme' (Fig. 66).⁶⁴

The pineapple is the unusual subject of an early conversation piece entitled *Charles II Presented with a Pineapple*, set against the background of an unidentified house and formal garden. The house may be Dutch or English, but has tentatively been associated with Dorney Court in Surrey (Fig. 86). The commentator Horace Walpole (1717–97) owned a version of the painting that he had acquired from an heir of George London (c. 1650–1714), one of the leading nurserymen in England.⁶⁵ Walpole believed that his painting represented John Rosa (1619–77), gardener to Charles II, presenting the king with the first pineapple in England. However, Rosa and Charles II both died before the cherished aim of producing fruit from a pineapple plant was achieved in England, and the pineapple must have been one of the many imported from the Caribbean by the Dutch West Indian Company. The king was familiar with the exotic new fruit well before the likely date of the painting, which has been established as close to 1677, on account of the costume and the king's close-shaven appearance. The diarist John Evelyn records that he first saw 'the famous Queene-pine brought from Barbados presented to his Majestie' as early as 1661, and in 1668 he was presented by Charles II with a taste of pineapple from the king's plate at a banquet held for the French Ambassador.⁶⁶ The formal presentation of the first pineapple that the painting reputedly celebrates is entirely fictitious.

None of the known versions of the painting are recorded as royal commissions, and the likely date links it with the death of Rosa in 1677. Rather than documenting a historical event, the primary version of the

painting may have been commissioned by George London, Rosa's great-nephew, as a tribute to his mentor's life and work, and the other paintings in the group may have been copied for fellow gardeners, including Henry Wise (1653–1738), with whom London went into partnership when he created some of the most important gardens in England in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.⁶⁷ The informal tone of Dutch family portraits of the third quarter of the seventeenth century infuses the painting, even though the event commemorated here is clearly a momentous and solemn one; the dominance of the pineapple in the painting at this date testifies to the prestigious associations of the plant.

The pineapple's appearance as a decorative motif on a silver table commissioned by William III for the Drawing Room at Kensington Palace in 1699 further confirms this (Fig. 87). The table is one of the most magnificent surviving examples of the fashion for silver furniture, which spread to England from the court of Louis XIV at Versailles, during the reigns of the later Stuart monarchs.⁶⁸ Its solid silver legs support an oak tabletop, overlaid with thick sheets of silver, bearing the marks of Andrew Moore (1640–1706), a silversmith from Bridewell in the City of London. The table is thought to have been made to a design by Daniel Marot (1661–1752), who also worked as a garden designer for William III at Hampton Court Palace. The pineapple may simply have been included as a newly cultivated, valuable fruit of shapely form, which was often associated with hospitality and welcome. It was also a more exotic version of the traditional pine-cone form popular with silversmiths, particularly in Germany, from the beginning of the seventeenth century. But it may have been intended to suggest Dutch supremacy over the French in more than purely horticultural terms. At the point when William III commissioned this table, he had recently concluded a treaty that had brought to an end the war between England and France, and had forced Louis XIV to recognise William III as the rightful king of England. The wars had been so costly that in 1689 the French king had been forced to melt down his own silver furniture to pay for them. For William, the satisfaction of commissioning his own silver furniture, and of placing a pineapple, a fruit of the sun, and possibly a reference to the 'Sun King', underneath the table at the crossing point of the stretchers (a position that was often left empty in contemporary wooden tables of the same form) must have been intense.⁶⁹ The casting of a plant native to South America in silver mined and imported from that continent was not to be repeated, as the fashion for silver furniture was already in decline. When the pineapple later reappeared in decorative form, it was most often found on tableware (Fig. 272).

The landscape garden was England's greatest cultural export of the eighteenth century. Images of this new form of garden were crucial to how the rest of Europe perceived England, and to the strong sense of identity that came with the development of this new national style. As a consequence, printed images of the garden proliferated to meet the new national and international demand.

It was inevitable that the eighteenth-century garden image would evolve to meet different requirements because the garden itself was now more complex and more layered. The garden became a means to express some of the new preoccupations of Enlightenment thought,

and moved to the centre of the nation's cultural and artistic life. Gardening was no longer the preserve of the oligarchy, and the *Gentleman's Magazine* declared in 1739:

Every Man now, be his fortune what it will, is to be doing something at his Pleas, 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. One large Room, a Serpentine River, and a wood, are become the most absolute Necessaries of Life, without which a Gentleman of the smallest Fortune thinks he makes no figure in the country.²



Above: Fig. 144 Francesco Zuccarelli (1702–88), *Landscape with a Temple and Cascade, Figures and Cattle*, c. 1760–69. Oil on canvas, 86.7 × 118.1 cm (RCN 404391)

Previous page: Paul Sandby (1730–1809), *The garden of the Deputy Ranger's Lodge*, c. 1798. RCN 917596 (detail)



Fig. 145 William Hogarth (1697–1764), *The Family of George II*, c. 1731–2. Oil on canvas, 63.8 × 76.4 cm (RCN 401358)

Topiary, symmetry and parterres fell out of fashion, and as nature came to be seen as the ideal, the garden developed instead into a sequence of unfolding views. The aerial view, which had been the favoured means of representation until the second quarter of the eighteenth century, gave way to sequences of oil paintings or engravings providing views of the garden at ground level; these unveiled the pleasures afforded by the garden one by one.

The garden as art: 'a pretty Landskip'

The imposing formality of the late seventeenth-century garden, which had set it apart from the natural landscape, began to pall on eighteenth-century sensibilities. Increasingly, nature was seen as a force to be

emulated, not subdued or held at bay, and garden style in England evolved accordingly.³ The shift towards a less artificial style in gardening was gradual, however, and was tempered by a particular view of what constituted a 'natural' appearance. Two factors – neither of them contemporary – altered eighteenth-century perceptions of what a 'natural' garden might look like. The first was the description by John Milton (1608–74) of a wild and untamed Eden in *Paradise Lost* (1667); here, rivers coursed 'through the shaggy hill' and 'down the steep glade'; flowers were released from the confines dictated by 'Art In Beds and curious Knots', and the 'Silvan Scene' unfolded 'Shade after shade'.⁴ Milton's poetic evocation of the Garden of Eden was later treated as a prescription for the ideal garden. It was, however, as contrived as the descriptions of Arcadia – the rural idyll – conjured by classical poets such as Horace and Virgil, which constituted the