

Transformations in landscape circa 1800. Landscapes of the bard, of the promeneur solitaire, & of the pater familias

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1. Around the year 1800 the world of European landscape taste was at an exciting moment of renewal and change; but it also found itself confronted with somewhat conflicting opportunities, particularly as a taste for wider (and often wilder) landscapes manifested itself in landscape architectural designs. The swift growth of naturalistic or irregular gardening during the later 18th century had effectively challenged and in many places eclipsed the old, autocratic and aristocratic forms of geometry and architectural garden layouts. Yet the umbrella of the «giardino inglese» sheltered a great variety of forms and effects, assumptions and receptions. The term was challenged nowhere more energetically than in Italy, where – as elsewhere in Europe – the ‘English’ landscape garden was required to adapt itself to different topographical and cultural conditions. In its accommodation and reworking in what is now northern Italy, a group of gardenists (Horace Walpole’s useful coinage), among whom were Melchiorre Cesarotti, Luigi Mabil, Ippolito Pindemonte, Vincenzo Malacarne, and Ercole Silva, led discussions as to the scope and characters of the new garden mode, its relationship to the larger landscapes beyond the garden, and its adaptation for new public gardens like those of Venice.

The new landscaping that came into prominence during the 18th century generally premised its designs on an appeal to the ‘natural’; yet this ‘nature’ consisted of a variety of landscape experiences *outside* the circuit of an estate, or park or

garden. Of these landscape experiences, there are basically three to which different patrons and designers could appeal and which they could eventually replicate within their own properties.¹ The three corresponded to the alternatives set out by Edmund Burke in his *Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful*, with the insertion, by theorists like Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price, of the picturesque as a third term in the middle between the beautiful and the sublime. For this occasion I would identify these three in terms of their symbolic inhabitants – the bard [Figure 1], the solitary stroller personified by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *promeneur solitaire* [Figure 2], and the social scene presided over by some *pater familias* [Figure 3]. These three particular designations are, I suggest, helpful because they identify the users, consumers, visitors or inhabitants of the three given modes of landscape – a very important emphasis, in that theory at this time was particularly attentive to the reception as much as to the design of landscapes. I will discuss each in turn, though the first (in homage to Cesarotti's interest in the Ossian poems) receives more attention than the others.

2. Cesarotti was attracted to the whole factitious, but (for many contemporaries) apparently authentic, poetry of Ossian, as interpreted or (as the case was) invented by James Macpherson.² This cultural phenomenon which celebrated ancient, indigenous poetry and its locations among the wild fringes of the civilized world was widely popular throughout Europe, attracting many translations, commentaries, satires, imitations, and visual representations.³ Its significance is that it enabled a direct link between a northern imagination and the wild landscapes

1 These different landscapes were the subject some 30 years ago of different chapters in my book *The Figure in the Landscape. Poetry, Painting and Gardening during the Eighteenth Century*, Baltimore (MD), 1976, to which the reader of this essay is referred. On the specific topic of the north Italian and Venetian scene, see also two Italian essays by A. PIETROGRANDE, *Dalla grande maniera al landscape garden. L'idea di giardino nel Veneto tra sette e ottocento*, «Filologia veneta», III, *Varietà settecentesche. Saggi di cultura veneta tra rivoluzione e restaurazione*, Padova, 1992, pp. 215-266, essentially a descriptive overview of garden theory and practice as they were seen in northern Italy, and, focusing upon Cesarotti's own garden, *Selvaggiano: il poema vegetabile di Melchiorre Cesarotti*, in *Parchi e giardini Storici, parchi letterari*, Monza, 1992, pp. 276-85.

2 The issue of Macpherson's 'inventions' or 'forgery' has not entirely gone away: see Th. M. CURLEY, *Samuel Johnson's forgotten friendship with William Shaw. Their last stand for truth in the Ossian controversy*, «The Age of Johnson», 18 (2007), ed. J. Lynch, pp. 19-66; Curley has set out a comprehensive discussion of the 'Ossian fraud' in his earlier article, *Samuel Johnson and truth: the first systematic detection of literary deception in James Macpherson's «Ossian»*, «The Age of Johnson», 17 (2006), pp. 119-96.

3 See, for instance, the catalogues of the 1974 exhibitions: *Ossian und die Kunst um 1800* (Katalog der Ausstellung Hamburger Kunsthalle, 9-23 Juni 1974), ed. by W. Hofmann and M. Laclotte, München, 1974; *Ossian*, ed. by H. Hohl and H. Toussaint, Paris, 1974. These wide-ranging exhibitions of graphic representations of the Ossianic poems omit references to Italy. See also F.I. MCCARTHY, *The Bard of Thomas Gray: its composition and its use by Painters*, «The National Library of Wales Journal», 14 (1965), pp. 105-12. The ambiguity of Macpherson's work is captured by the double response of Burke himself: in reviewing it in 1761 he found it sublime and liked its qualities of strangeness, wildness and lack of restraint. By 1783 he objected to its «miserable rhapsodies» (see note 14 below).

that the druidic bards of this primitive and authentic poetry inhabited and which they celebrated directly or implicitly in their verse. For a German author like Klopstock, for example, Ossian was simply a symbol of nature, a nature uncontaminated by classical or neo-classical precedent. Macpherson does not spend much time *describing* landscape: however, it emerges both as implied setting and as emotional metaphor or correlative throughout the Ossianic works. Typical of the slight but nonetheless emphatic meshing of epic action with epic setting is a note by Cesarotti in his introduction to *Fingal*: «La scena [del poema] è nella pianura di Lena, presso una montagna chiamata Cronla, sulla costa di Ulster».⁴ This connection of the bardic poet and his significant landscape is picked up by a whole host of artists who illustrated the Ossian poems.

This Ossian iconography was not, however, an isolated incident, nor was a remote northern landscape its only *locus*. It gathered synaptic momentum from a variety of appeals to wilder territory and celebration of those who inhabited such unsocial places – the example of Salvator Rosa’s paintings proved especially influential with his repertoire of visionaries like the Virgilian Sybil, bandits, hermits [Figure 4]; other painters like de Louthembourg took up similar subjects. Nevertheless, it was towards northern landscapes and northern oral poetry, rather than classical scenery and texts, that many chose to look. Within England itself this attention to wilder landscapes had been encouraged by the example of poets such as James Thomson and Thomas Gray, both of whom explored the relation of individuals to their landscape, the latter becoming often the objective correlative of interior emotion. Thomson’s *The Seasons*, illustrated in 1730 by the landscape designer William Kent [Figures 5 & 6], explored a range of sceneries, associations and emotional states linked to a wide range of landscapes; but among the most popular and widely illustrated episode was the tale of the two lovers, Celadon and Amelia and their fateful last hours in a thunderstorm on Mt. Snowden, described in lines of sublime intensity.⁵

Perhaps more influential than Thomson for its capture of the coincidence of a unique landscape with its ancient poetic inhabitants was Gray’s poem, *The Bard*, written between 1755-57, thus foreshadowing Macpherson’s *Fingal* by only a few years. It was illustrated widely: by Richard Bentley, Philippe de Louthembourg, Henry Fuseli, Paul Sandby,⁶ John Martin, and Thomas Jones, all of whom with varying effect and success sought to identify the apocryphal story of the

4 M. CESAROTTI, *Poesie di Ossian*, ed. E. Bigi, Turin, 1976, p.15. «Cromla» seems very close to the old English «cromlech» or Stonehenge-like structure that became a motif in much pictorial representation of bardic landscapes (see Figure 4).

5 This episode and its painterly representations are discussed by S. JUNG, *Painterly ‘readings’ of The Seasons, 1766-1829*, forthcoming in «Word & Image». See also *The Figure in the Landscape*, cit., chapter 3. A poem, *Le Stagioni*, by Giuseppe Barbieri shows the considerable influence in Italy of Thomson’s 1730 poem.

6 Sandby’s painting, now lost, was particularly endorsed by Gray himself, writing that Sandby’s excellence in «landscapes, with figures, views of buildings, ruins, etc» would likely produce a «great picture of Snowden in which the Bard and Edward I make their appearance».

Welsh bards slaughtered by Edward I with a suitably symbolic landscape of wild mountains, blasted trees à la Salvator Rosa, and the debris of geological time. Jones' painting of 1774 is among the best and most interesting [Figure 7]: he sets the scene in mountains – the Snowdonia of Gray's ode – into which he imports Stonehenge, which despite Inigo Jones's earlier attempt to attribute it to the Romans was generally celebrated as an indigenous and ancient druidical site. Jones captures the essence of Gray's account of how the last bardic survivor, his colleagues having all been massacred by Edward, is about to throw himself off a cliff; he translates the lines and captures the consonance of the landscape and the dramatic moment of bardic despair

Loose his beard, and hoary hair
Stream'd like a meteor, to the troubled air
..... each giant-oak, and desert cave,
Sighs to the torrent's awful voice beneath.

This image of some wild poet in his landscape is picked up in many other illustrations and commentaries on Macpherson's poem: indeed some years later in 1818 it was a combination of both Gray and *Ossian* that inspired Victor Hugo's *Les Derniers Bardes*. If Narcissus had been the classical metaphor of an introspective response to landscape, now the bard or druid signalled a sterner and more sublime correspondence, something that is articulated verbally in *Ode on the Poetical Character* by William Collins.⁷

The bardic landscape deserves its own extensive treatment, for which there is no room here;⁸ such treatment would have to explore the whole revival of early celtic poetry, either in its imaginative forms like James Beattie's 1769 *The Minstrel; or, The Progress of Genius*, its scholarly researches in Bishop Percy's *The Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* of 1765, or the cleverly contrived middle mode of Macpherson himself. In all cases the discovery of a new poetics was always closely related to what were for the 18th-century largely unfamiliar landscapes, even ones to be feared and avoided – what Percy called «solitary and mountainous country».⁹ This cult of ancient bardic poetry, indigenous to the British Isles in the days before its native culture was overtaken by the classicizing Renaissance, coincided with and probably encouraged a much increased tourism to picturesque-sublime areas like the Welsh mountains, Scottish Highlands, English Lake District or even the Derbyshire Dales, to which new landscape paint-

⁷ *The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. R. Lonsdale, London, 1969, pp. 434-434.

⁸ The reader is directed to the fourth chapter, *The Landscape of the Bard* in my *The Figure in the Landscape*, (see note 1).

⁹ Ivi, p.150.

ers turned for their subjects.¹⁰ These sceneries were what Gray called «wild and British», and they aroused associations with an endemic, genuine and sublime poetry.¹¹ And the search for these wilder, newer sceneries in both ancient poetry and in first-hand tourist experiences were part of a renewed commitment during the 18th century to determining the extent and character of a full, adequate and historically nuanced Britishness¹².

All of which had an immediate if somewhat problematical effect upon landscape *design*. How could such wild topographical forms and landscape experiences be replicated within private parks and gardens? To us now, it all seems rather silly to think of doing so; and indeed Gray himself mocked the pretensions of those who bring into their suburban gardens «rock, ruin or precipice», or the «mimic desolation» of an English imitation of Cicero's villa.¹³ Walpole, the leading proponent of designed landscapes *al inglese* clearly thought that Ossianic sublime was unsubtle when he complained that «The giantry of Ossian had introduced mountainous horrors»,¹⁴ which did not render themselves very apt for landscape insertions. But the young William Gilpin, who would later popularise tourism in search of picturesque and sublime landscapes, was struck during his visit to the Stowe landscape gardens in 1747 by the absence there of what he called «rough Nature»¹⁵.

Nonetheless, the later 18th century did seize opportunities for extending the range of experiences within designed landscapes by representing elements of those wilder and usually distant regions. Ruins, real or contrived, could speak of former eras of gothic barbarism; imitations even of Stonehenge could be incorporated, as several sites boasted;¹⁶ the ruins of Fountains Abbey could be purchased and so brought to play their part in the gardens of Studley Royal in Yorkshire; the poet and gardenist William Shenstone made equal use of an authentic old priory on his estate of The Leasowes in Shropshire; and even local topogra-

10 Italian tourists, too, were attracted to the wilder parts of Scotland: Luigi Angiolini visited Loch Loman – see his *Lettere sopra l'Inghilterra e la Scozia*, ed. M. e A. Stäuble, Modena, 1990, p. 206.

11 *The Correspondence of Thomas Gray*, ed. P. Toynbee and L. Whibley, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1935), respectively pp. 603 and 892-4.

12 See Linda Colley's brilliant analysis in *Britons. Forging the Nation. 1707-1837*, New Haven-London, (1992) 2005. She adduces the case of Macpherson and his invention of Ossian on p. 86 as part of the assertion of Britishness; and she notes the resurgence of similar nationalisms throughout Europe at this time.

13 *Correspondence* (see note 11), p. 586 and *Poems* (see note 7), p. 262.

14 Quoted J. PITTOCK, *The Ascendancy of Taste: the Achievement of Joseph and Thomas Warton*, London, 1973, pp. 67-68. For Burke's views on Ossian see E. BURKE, *A Philosophical Enquiry...*, ed. J. T. Boulton, Notre Dame, 1993, pp. xxvi e cxii-cxiii.

15 W. GILPIN, *A Dialogue on the Gardens at Stow*, ed. J. D. Hunt, Los Angeles, 1976, p. 24.

16 A small-scale replica of Stonehenge was installed as a «Druids' Temple» at Swinton Park, North Yorkshire; Horace Walpole's cousin, General Conway, set up 45 pre-historic stones from Jersey at Park Place, Henley on Thames, and the repertoire of follies with druidical or simply 'gothic' associations was extensive.

phy could be exploited and incorporated into some designed landscape, as was the case at Hawkstone, in Derbyshire, where dramatic cliffs [Figure 8] could be employed as the backdrop for hermit's caves (with wax effigies of inhabitants!) and some dizzy walkways between the rocks. So for those who could not travel but who were fully aware of the new landscape experiences, and even for those who did manage to visit Scotland and Wales but wanted more than just their memories of those territories, such renditions of an authentic British wilderness were extremely popular and often feasible. However, they proved insufficient for the many enthusiasts who choose to leave or to reject the bland artifice of designed garden landscapes like Stowe and Blenheim. The poet and critic Joseph Warton, who had in an essay on Pope compared him somewhat unfavourably with Gray's *The Bard*,¹⁷ opened his own verses on *The Enthusiast* (1744) by requesting the «green-rob'd Dryads» [not, of course, particularly indigenous creatures!] to lead him away from «gardens deck'd with art's vain pomps» into a landscape of «hollow oaks» and pensive streams, those «retreats» sought after by «the bards of old». And Hugh Blair, a disciple of Burke, was quite clear that the mind was most elevated and enjoyed the most sublime sensations, «not by the gay landscape, the flowery field, or the flourishing city; but [by] the hoary mountain, and the solitary lake; the aged forest, and the torrent falling over the rock».¹⁸ And a good deal of landscape design did promote at least solitary waters and torrential cataracts, a taste that was enthusiastically taken up throughout Europe, as the Devil's Bridge and Pluto's Cave at Wilhelmshöhe in Germany or the rock bridges at Mereville in France can suggest.

3. But there were alternative landscapes to be taken into consideration.¹⁹ One, more accessible to more people who sought the solace of solitude, was given influential expression in another poem by Thomas Gray, his *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, a translation of which, also by Cesarotti, was published in 1772. A solitary figure, a pensive or even melancholy wanderer, comes upon something in the landscape that prompts his meditations – in Gray's poem it is of course the churchyard's gravestones; but, in the absence of any such physical prompts or triggers, the solitary figure is nonetheless led into his own introspections by surroundings conducive to such a pastime. Such is the force of the portrait of Brooke Boothby (see Figure 2), reclining in the forest, who has paused in his reading of a book, the spine of which bears the name of the author, «Rousseau»; given the subject and tone of the painting, we might legitimately assume the book to be that author's *Les Reveries du Promeneur Solitaire*, published posthumously in 1782.

17 J. WARTON, *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, 2 vols., London, 1782, II, p. 41.

18 Quoted in the introduction to E. BURKE, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, cit., p. lxxxviii.

19 In this case, I would wish to distinguish between the taste for Ossianic landscapes and that for Gray's *Elegy*, which Antonella Pietrogrande combines: see her «Filologia veneta» article (cited in note 1), p. 247.

That the meditations may verge upon the gloomy or elegiac was probable, but not inevitable, as Rousseau himself would show; if a country churchyard [Figure 9] necessarily elicit thoughts of mortality, there were poets like Wordsworth who could attest to the *pleasures* of solitary meditations upon Immortality or the pleasures of simple joyfulness in face of a bank of dancing daffodils. Furthermore, and again both Gray and Wordsworth provide good examples, these solitary strollers might well encounter indigenous persons, unspoilt children of the soil like peasants, but nothing quite as wild or terrifying as the bard.

4. The landscapes of both bard and *promeneur solitaire* were *not*, however, topographies of social intercourse. Burke's aesthetic category of the beautiful, in opposition to the private and often imaginary sublime, was a landscape of shared and communal experience. For this, obviously expansive activity, the landscaped garden and park were more suitable, though obviously other sites could lend themselves to social life. Groups could stroll and share conversations because the terrain was at its best designed precisely for these activities— paths wound through pleasant shrubbery or conducted visitors to moments of heightened appreciation, and along the way there might be inscriptions, statues, benches, temples, and a whole repertoire of *fabriques* designed to stimulate associations and promote discussions between the assembled persons [Figure 10].

5. These three landscapes modes, or landscapes tastes, obviously had opportunities to elide, one into the other, especially when a designer sought to represent them within a single parkland, as that extremely inventive Francesco Bettini did in his project for Andrea Dolfi at Mincana.²⁰ By his own account, this attempt to include a variety of characteristic landscapes or what he termed «le scene di carattere» was offered in the interests of both «Novità» and «Bizzarria». It had elements of the sublime («un Deserto» with ruined buildings, and «una azione eroica»), melancholy à la Gray (with an «Isola de' Sepolcri»), along with more bland and pastoral scenery, while around the mansion itself were clustered the more social sceneries. Cesarotti's own parkland, Selvaggiano, also managed to impose a remarkable agenda of effects onto a small site: these included a «stradoncino lugubre», a «boschetto funebre», a grotto and a hillock dedicated to Naiads, and many inscriptions.²¹ Other less ambitious combinations of landscapes did get built: in some the social scene could lead guests to places where the *frissons* of the sublime could be enjoyed, but always in the security of knowing that it was possible to return to a shared

20 This drawing, in the Doria Pamphili archives in Rome, is illustrated in *L'Arte dei Giardini. Scritti teorici e pratici dal XIV al XIX secolo*, ed. M. Azzi Visentini, 2 vols., Milan, 1999, II, p.117, and his text is reproduced on pp. 116-21.

21 Items cited by A. PIETROGRANDE, *Selvaggiano: il poema vegetabile di Melchiorre Cesarotti*, cit. (note 1).

and civilized environment.²² On many estates, various sublime possibilities could be accommodated within a larger and more socially directed parkscape: this could be achieved by the insertion of ‘new’ Gothic architecture [James Gibbs’ Temple of Liberty at Stowe], or of ruins either authentic or heroically contrived [the Désert de Retz had both]; even by some representation of long-ago geological upheaval or terrifying association from literary sources, like the Cave of Polyphemus at Monza (illustrated by Silva). Self-evidently, however, the social scene was by far the more usual modality of the greatest number of landscaped estates and gardens, and the most appreciated landscapes seem to have been those – like Claude-Henri Watelet’s Moulin Joli, as described in his own *Essai* –²³ where the pleasures of solitary strolling did not wholly preclude the satisfactions of social intercourse and were encouraged to cohabit seamlessly.

6. But the challenges for contemporary designers went beyond the adjudication of those three options in their designs. The real crux of much gardenist debate around 1800 focused on some slightly different if related topics: first and foremost, how should European designers rework the “English” landscape in both formal and associative ways for use in non-English locations – if you like, how to find local translations for any or all of the three landscapes; second, how should public grounds of all sorts be conceived, given that elite, private enclaves were no longer the sole object of designer’s work; and, third, within public grounds especially, how much effort should a designer devote to replicating landscape features that were not to be found on the given site, and were not obviously designed for the social activity that was envisaged for public open spaces.

In Italy the rejection of «Englishness» was strong and vociferous, and it involved moreover, not just a refusal to imitate a «natural» landscape style supposedly English in origin, but an almost frenetic determination to establish Italian origins for the new landscaping style, so-called *all’inglese*. Nobody except the most staunchly patriotic Britishers like Horace Walpole or a few outright anglophiles in Europe thought that the landscape style was English by right of invention, deployment and cultural development; the French had very early objected to the English claims for the new landscaping, insisting that its origins were as much Chinese as English (hence their *jardin anglo-chinois*). But in Italy, with its own traditions of garden-making in the Renaissance, the rejection of the «English» mode was particularly vocal. As Mabil wrote sarcastically: «Finalmente insorgono gl’Inglese a contrastare a tutti la palma dell’invenzione...».²⁴ The ex-

²² These sceneries are frequently the object of illustrations, for some examples of which see my *The Picturesque Garden in Europe*, London, 2002, figures 58, 89, 103, 104, 137, 149, 155, 170, and 172.

²³ See C.-H. WATELET, *Essay on Gardens. A chapter in the French picturesque*, edited and translated by S. Danon, with an introduction by J. Disponzio, Philadelphia, 2003.

²⁴ All quotations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from *L’Arte dei Giardini. Scritti teorici e pratici dal XIV al XIX secolo*, II (see note 20).

cesses of the so-called English style were held to be its biggest mistake, and not to be imitated: by 1819 Giuseppe Del Rosso could attack «stradellini contorti», cluttered emblems of melancholy and other «sensati Stranieri delle opera nauseanti, infelicemente appropriate»;²⁵ Mabil considered *fabriques* «puerile and insipid amusements», as had Francesco Milizia as early as 1781, who also argued for country house designs that honoured local climate and territorial character. Pindemonte promoted natural materials, while Giovanni Battista Broccia's *Trattato delle Piante odorifere e di bella vista da coltivarli ne' giardini* (1792) explored plants native to Italy among others more exotic.

Yet the true paternity of the new, modern and 'natural' garden was not at all clear or self-evident.²⁶ In Italy the obvious strategy was to invoke earlier texts where landscape descriptions could be deemed to correspond with modern taste: Tacitus and Pliny are both cited by Mabil, texts like the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, or romances by Ariosto and Tasso could be cited as precedents, which a host of garden writers explicitly did, from Pindemonte, Mabil and Cesarotti to Pietro Piacenza in his 1805 *Esame sui giardini antichi e moderni*. Del Rosso specifically insisted that the modern Italian garden discover its own «maniera di vivere che di pensare».²⁷ If designers needed a vocabulary of suitably Italian forms, they were told to appeal to both classical remains and to the supposedly indigenous and modern forms of *orto*, or *laberinti di verdure* «che sono sicuramente una produzione Italiana». Indeed, the *Hypnerotomachia* provided a succinct agenda for all manner of modern Italian garden design in its conspectus of events discovered by the hero and heroine when they arrive on Venus's circular garden island: the narrator lists a vegetable garden, a herbarium, a fertile *orto*, a plantation (or grove perhaps) and a shrubbery, the whole ornamented with playing fountains and cool rivulets.

Yet «un puro trasporto di amor di Patria» did not fit easily alongside pleas for a more 'natural' landscape design; for example, an appeal to the traditional art of fountain-making (indeed, a sure Italian craft, exported throughout Europe in the 16th and 17th century) was apt enough in these more southern climes but hardly allowed a 'natural' handling of water. Equally, the invocation of Tasso, and his description of the magical gardens of Armida were by definition indigenous, yet not at all natural; though Pindemonte, who conceded this, argued that they were thereby «quanto l'arte ha di più squisito e recondito, di più sorprendente e mira-

25 G. DEL ROSSO, *Considerazioni sulla convenienza dei giardini italiani in rapporto a quelli di altre nazioni*, Firenze, 1819. My quotations are taken from the texts reproduced in *L'Arte dei Giardini. Scritti teorici e pratici dal XIV al XIX secolo*, cit. pp. 356; 361.

26 I tried to argue for some substantial Italian origins of the English landscape garden in my *Garden and Grove. The Italian Renaissance Garden in the English Imagination 1600-1750*, London, 1986 (paperback edition, Philadelphia, 1996), thereby earning the wrath of some devout anglophiles!

27 My quotations are taken variously from the texts reproduced in *L'Arte dei Giardini. Scritti teorici e pratici dal XIV al XIX secolo*, cit. (see note 20), II, and from the article by A. PIETROGRANDE, *Dalla grande manière al landscape garden*, cit. (see note 1).

coloso». In fact, the appeal to naturalness of much late 18th and early 19th century landscape theory did not sit comfortably with Italian commentators.

If the Italian gardenists took anything from general English landscape theory it was above all the need for variety – a long-established aesthetic criterion not specifically English (though much touted by English landscape writers in their promotion of natural effects); now it could be re-interpreted afresh – Bettini's fantastic design for a multi-faceted country seat being just one manifestation of this appeal to a various formula. Another was what Giannantonio Selva produced for the Venetian Public Gardens, albeit after much debate and vacillation.²⁸

Two aspects of this civic project that mattered intensely in Venice were the choice of an appropriate landscape vocabulary for modern public gardens, and the selection of elements suited to the site, its locality, its *genius loci*. The appeal to modernity clashed with notions of specific locality, for while Venice had many private gardens, none had (at least for centuries) ever been public. New public grounds authorized by Napoleon needed both *piazza d'armi* and open areas for social activity, like a *grandiosa passeggiata*, what Zanotto in 1847 called «giardin di passeggio, che domanda larghi e dritti viali, e proscribe cio tutto che tien del difficile e complicate». But modern gardens by definition also had to be 'natural' and picturesque, which meant utilizing the viewsheds over the lagoon, exploiting the high point of the Motta at the end of the site and ensuring that there were some meandering, private areas for the solitary *promeneur*. Selva seems to have compromised between these various claims upon his project – with a largely regular entry avenue, rectangles of grass and grove, all juxtaposed at the end of the site to a determinedly picturesque shrubbery with meandering paths, what Selva himself called «sentimental greenery» [Figure 11]. No wonder some critics complained of its French taste (notably Gaetano Pinali), and others of its unnecessarily English style: Pietro Selvatico wrote of its «gretti e monotoni viali ... monticelli sgarbati con male distribuite macchie di verde».

The mixed agenda was perplexing for designers and visitors alike. These gardens had to honour their new French masters (so be somehow 'French'), to incorporate a whole cluster of local programmes (guard houses, shops, cafes, *trattorie*, bathing stations, terraces, riding-stables – only some of which were ever realized); they had also to honour the unique urban situation, difficult because the old topography of private and monastic gardens was entirely swept away in order to establish the public gardens; even the old windmills on the highpoint of the Motta were demolished, even though they might, if retained (as Selva for a while considered), have performed the role of some 'ancient' *fabriques*.²⁹ The eventual installation in 1822 of the archway from Sanmichele's former church was a meagre gesture towards historical locality [Figure 12]. The whole site, argued Antonio Diedo, needed

28 I have discussed this project at length in the seventh chapter of my book, *The Venetian City Garden. Place, Typology and Perception*, Basel and Berlin, 2009.

29 On the role of *fabriques* or follies in designed landscapes, see my essay, *Folly in the Garden*, «The Hopkins Review», new series, 1/2 (2008), pp.227-261.

neither to rely on the poetry of English gardening nor to invoke the enchanted palaces of Tasso. Pinali defined the ideal form that should have been invoked as «antica italiana moda ed industria felice che coll'apparenza di infingere la piu semplice natura maneggia». It sounds convincing and intelligent, but to find physical forms by which to translate it was much more of a challenge.

These practical and physical design choices for the Giardini Pubblici were being made in the theoretical context of meditations upon *giardini moderni* and *giardini italiani* that had first been presented to members of the Paduan Academy of Science, Letters and Arts in 1792 by Pindemonte and four years later by Mabil, both collected in 1817 along with other contributions into a publication entitled *Operette di vari autori intorno ai giardini inglesi ossia moderni*³⁰ (the indecisions of that title say much about the issues being confronted);³¹ this collection was issued at exactly the time when the Venetian project for the public gardens was being executed from 1806 onwards. Additionally, there was a flood of European publications: the same year that Pindemonte spoke to the Paduan Academy an Italian translation of Abbé Delille's poem on gardens was published, in which among other aphorisms he opined that he did not see any need to choose between French and English styles («Je ne decide point entre Kent et Le Notre»); Ercole Silva's *Dell'Arte de' Giradini* saw two editions in 1801 and 1813, a work that (as had Mabil's) drew copiously upon Hirschfeld's *Theorie der Gartenkunst*, a massive German treatise that applied itself very carefully, if eclectically, to drawing out modern and local *raisons d'être* for national public gardens. Even a major pattern book of many varieties of design items, mainly of picturesque scope, by Grohmann was issued in Venice in 1805 *presso* Giuseppe Romondini.³² To settle adequately and convincingly upon a garden style that did indeed present a local and vital «maniera di vivere e di pensare» in the midst of this substantial and wide-ranging debate was difficult. Various designers after Selva during the 19th century struggled to reconcile these various demands upon a new urban park, which could characterize itself as a 'garden', was truly modern and at the same time was aptly Venetian, which is to say (as Selva himself realized) that it was not a mainland city:³³ all they did was to play around with a mixture of regular or irregular forms. In short, what had begun to be debated in Italy around and in the years after 1800, in respect of the various landscapes of wild, solitary and communal or social, continued to be in question. Nor has that debate gone away today – but that is another story.

30 *Operette di varj autori intorno ai giardini inglesi ossia moderni*, Verona, Mainardi, 1817 (reprint Trieste, 2010).

31 Both Walpole and Whately saw the English landscape garden as essentially modern. While Manetti designed in both 'modern' and 'pittoreesco' styles for the gardens of the Villa Poggio Imperiale, in Florence: see *The Picturesque Garden in Europe* (note 22 above), p. 192 and figure 179.

32 *L'Arte dei Giardini. Scritti teorici e pratici dal XIV al XIX secolo*, cit. (see note 20), II. p. 37.

33 See Figures VII. 16-19 in my book, *The Venetian City Garden* (note 27 above).



1 Samuel Wale's engraved title-page from *Fingal* (1761). Private collection.



2 Joseph Wright of Derby, *Brooke Boothby*, oil painting, 1780-81. The Tate Gallery, London.



3 Humphrey Repton, from the Red Book for Tewin Water in Hertfordshire, a scene showing proposed design changes “appropriated to the daily use of its proprietors”, watercolour, 1799. Herts Archives and Local Studies, Inv. D/Z42 Z1.



4 Engraving after Salvator Rosa, once in the collection of the landscape designer, William Kent. Private collection.



5 Engraved plate after William Kent for "Spring" in James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730). Author's collection.



6 Engraved plates after William Kent for "Winter" in James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730). Author's collection.



7 Thomas Jones, *The Bard*, oil painting, 1774. National Museum of Wales.



8 The cliffs in landscape park at Hawkstone, Shropshire, England (photo: John Dixon Hunt).



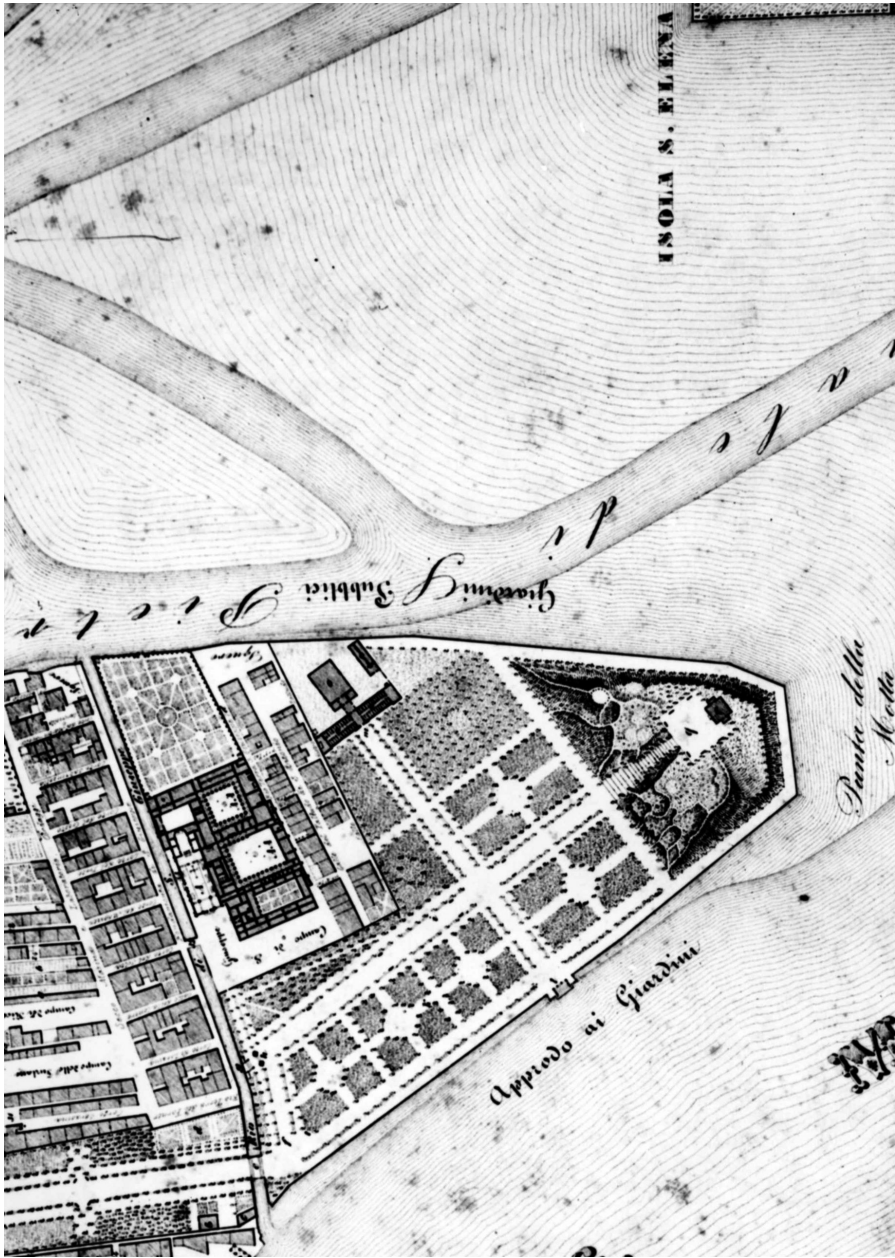
9 Maria Catherina Prestel (after Thomas Gainsborough), *Country Churchyard*, aquatint, 1790. Private collection.



10. Arthur Devis, *Edward Gordon, his sister, Mrs Miles, and her husband, in their garden at Bromley, Kent*, oil painting, 1756. Leicestershire Museums and Art Gallery, Leicester, England.



11. The arch erected in the Public gardens, Venice in 1823, from Paoletti, *I Fiori di Venezia* (1839-41).



12. The Public Gardens, detail from the Combatti map of 1846.