A PORTION OF HEAVEN ON EARTH:
THE TRADITION OF ENCLOSED GARDENS IN THE NETHERLANDS, BRITAIN, AND FRANCE

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Introduction

Gardens by their very definition gather the landscape around them and at the same time detach themselves from what inspired them. They are a retreat of peace and control amidst a much wilder and untamed world. Many literary works, paintings, and movies have pulled from the setting of the garden, a hideaway for secret desires and whimsical fantasies, as well as a place to explore deeper meanings and purposes for life. Gardens create a refuge amidst the storm, a place for people and characters to awaken to new and profound perceptions of themselves and their worlds. Gardens are not buildings or places, they are instead natural boundaries, both inside and outside, limited and yet at the same time infinite.[1]

The enclosed garden, one that is purposefully closed off by walls or fencing, is an even more intentional border between the tamed and untamed landscapes. An enclosed garden is both a restrained piece of natural beauty and a symbol of great importance. Christianity, already deeply imbedded with agricultural imagery, easily adapted the vision of the enclosed garden. The Hebrew Scriptures spoke of a Garden of Eden, perfectly maintained and filled with every flora and fauna ever desired, as well as a garden of pleasure and love in the Song of Songs. Then the Messiah of Christianity spent his last night on earth in an olive grove praying before he was to be executed. In addition, he chose to make an appearance post-resurrection to a confused Mary Magdalene in a garden. The Christian scriptures even include visions of a heavenly paradise, where God and humanity will live together in glory in a walled city. From the Renaissance onward, enclosed gardens were imbued with deep religious symbolism and they took on new life

1. Rob Aben and Saskia de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden: History and Development of the Hortus Conclusus and Its Reintroduction into the Present-day Urban Landscape* (Rotterdam: 010, 1999), 10.

in Christian art and Christian living.[2] The garden was still enjoyed in life, but also was represented in paint and prints. The garden, both produced and depicted, provided a temporal place to commune with the sacred. Gardens in the Western Christian tradition became a meeting place for the Creator and his Creation.

This paper will focus on Dutch, British, and French Landscape Painting within the wider tradition of the *hortus conclusus*, or enclosed garden, in both production and depiction. Beginning with the tradition of the *hortus conclusus*, its origins and Christian inspirations, this paper will then look through the uses of the *hortus conclusus* in the medieval and Renaissance worlds. After a thorough overview of the *hortus conclusus* foundations in art and culture in the Western Christian world, the specifically Dutch interpretation of the enclosed garden in both production and depiction will be analyzed followed by an examination of the use of this same subject in the British and French contexts. This paper will seek to show that the tradition of the *hortus conclusus* branches throughout multiple centuries and in at least three countries, all in the pursuit of a return to the divine paradise, a piece of heaven occupied by the Creator away from the troubled and untamed earthly world.

The Origins and Images of the *Hortus Conclusus* in Western Christianity

The etymology of the word "garden" shows just how European this term actually is. Coming from Middle English and moving into French, the word garden actually descends from verbs meaning to guard or to protect.[3] The same is true for the Hebrew equivalent, *gan,* the word used in the Hebrew Scriptures for the Genesis passage, "And the LORD God planted a garden in

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2. Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 247.
3. William Alexander McClung, *Architecture of Paradise: Survivals of Eden and Jerusalem* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), 3.

Eden…" (NRSV, Genesis 2:8a). This word, like many words in the Hebrew language, comes with many different definitions. *Gan* is not just the word for garden, specifically Eden, but also derives from the word for pleasure and enlightenment. Therefore the Garden of Eden in the Hebrew tradition was not simply a place of grand horticulture; it was also to be enjoyed and to be a place its inhabitants could meet and converse with God on a higher plane.[4]

However, the Hebrew word *gan* is not to be confused with the Hebrew word for paradise, *pardes*, which specifically means enclosed park or preserve, which is found in the Song of Songs. This is an important distinction, because in the origins of the word, a garden is something that is protected, yet does not necessarily have a wall around it. However, since the words for garden and paradise were so easily conflated in translation, it was not long before the exegetical scholars of the Hebrew scriptures assimilated the *unenclosed* garden of Genesis with the enclosed paradise of the Song of Solomon, eventually relating both to the walled city of the Christian text of Revelation.[5] These three very important illustrations of a meeting place between God and humanity soon became the foundations for centuries of Western Christian interpretations, both in real gardens and in landscape painting.

The Garden of Eden is the most well known and also the most commonly thought of illustration when Christians think of paradise. However, because of the origins of the word garden, the boundaries of such a place have been manipulated and interpreted many times throughout history. Eden provides a place of harmony, beauty (even to the point of sublimity), peace, and even innocence before the fall into sin.[6] But what is so very interesting about the

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4. Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 35.
5. McClung, *Architecture of Paradise,* 3.
6. Anna-Teresa Tymiekiecha, "Theme: Gardens and the Passion for the Infinite," in *Gardens and the Passion for the Infinite*, vol. 78, *Analecta Husserliana: The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 2.

depictions of most European and Christian art is that the garden of Eden becomes a place walled off and enclosed, despite its flexible definition. The vision of Eden with all of its beautiful horticulture and experiences of both pleasure and enlightenment comes with a ring of walled protection.[7] Despite the fact that God originally designed the Garden of Eden to be unbounded, included within the greater world without a need for protection, artists now choose to shelter their pieces of "Eden," whether it be in depictions of the Garden of Eden or more modern interpretations of an Edenic landscape. Architecture becomes a way for humanity to order and control that which they find most vulnerable, whether in real gardens or in their depictions of "Eden".[8] When addressing the depictions of "Eden" in modern landscape painting, this theme of a bounded or unbounded place of transcendence will prove to be very thought provoking.

A garden in the Hebrew Scriptures, that was intentionally labeled as enclosed, was the paradise described in the Song of Songs 4:12-15:

> A garden locked is my sister, my bride,
> a garden locked, a fountain sealed.
> Your channel is an orchard of pomegranates
> with all choicest fruits,
> henna with nard,
> nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,
> with all trees of frankincense,
> myrrh and aloes,
> with all chief spices—
> a garden fountain, a well of living water,
> and flowing streams from Lebanon. (NRSV)[9]

This passage is full of love language. Interpretations from as early as the third century understand the book of the Song of Songs to be an allegory for the love between God and God's

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7. John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1992), 332.
8. Ibid., 332.
9. This comes from the book that I have entitled the Song of Songs, however it is also titled Song of Solomon and is known in the Vulgate as the Canticles.

people.[10] In this way the paradise of the Song of Songs has a lot in common with the Garden of Eden, both a place of pleasure and seduction.[11]

However, there is a completely different vein of interpretation of this text. The above interpretations hold this text within its wider Hebrew tradition, connecting it with the Garden of Eden, but Christian readers were quick to take this text as a symbol of the Virgin Mary. St. Jerome wrote that this enclosed garden, labeled *hortus conclusus*, reminds us of the mother of our Lord, mother and virgin.[12] The French Abbot, Adam of Perseigne, who wrote in the twelfth century, described the Virgin Mary as a garden enclosed.[13] Therefore this garden takes on a very important role in the Christian tradition, that of the womb which would bring the world its redeemer, Jesus Christ. In the Medieval and Renaissance traditions, this vision of the enclosed garden becomes a common backdrop for Annunciation scenes.

The last final vision of a garden comes directly from the Christian scriptures known as the New Testament. The Apostle Paul writes in his second letter to the Corinthians about a vision from the Lord,

> "I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows— was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat." (NRSV, 2 Corinthians 12:2-4)

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10. Raewynne Whiteley, "Song of Solomon," in *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 348.
11. It should not be forgotten that the Garden of Eden was the setting for Adam and Eve's love as well as temptation to sin. The story of the Garden of Eden ends with Adam and Eve covering themselves out of their shame of nakedness, something that they were not aware or concerned about prior to eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil.
12. Mirella Levi D. Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance: Botanical Symbolism in Italian Painting* (Florence, Italy: L.S. Olschki, 1977), 176.
13. Ibid., 176-7.

This vision of God's dwelling place, described here as Paradise, provides a new word for what God is eventually going to bring back to earth in the end times. The Book of Revelation, written by the Johannine community, takes this transportation between earth and heaven in 2 Corinthians to explain a similar vision of a new heaven and a new earth, more specifically, a walled city coming down out of heaven from God.

> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
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> "See, the home of God is among mortals.
> He will dwell with them;
> they will be his peoples,
> and God himself will be with them;
> he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
> Death will be no more;
> mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
> for the first things have passed away." (Revelation 12:1-3, NRSV)

So, in this vision from Revelation, instead of humanity ascending to be with God, God is instead descending and bringing a dwelling place in which God and humanity can once again meet together. Not only does this continue the vision of a paradise where there is once again harmony and peace, as in the Garden of Eden, there is also a strong love like the one depicted in the Song of Songs. This walled city is "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" filled with love and beauty. This vision from Revelation brings the Creator and the Creation back together, united in love and redeemed of all the stains of the original Garden. Once again, however, this paradise is walled, it still provides a barrier from the outer world. This place of meeting between God and humanity is still deemed vulnerable and in need of protection. It seems that even though this final walled city is understood to be a redemption of the original garden, it still needs to be

demarcated from the rest of the world.[14] Theologians make clear that humanity can never re-enter the unenclosed Eden.

The *Hortus Conclusus* in Medieval Thought

A discussion of the tradition of the *hortus conclusus* would be amiss without an examination of the key sixth-century text of Saint Augustine, *City of God*. In this foundational text, Augustine goes into great detail regarding the way that God had originally intended the universe. Everything that was made was made to a divine order and anything that deviated from that design was the work of evil.[15] He spoke of two cities, or communities of people, one was driven by love of self and one was driven by a love of God. Those that chose to engulf themselves in a man-made environment and forget that God is the creator of all natures distanced themselves from the divine model. This distancing would lead this community of selfish people into nothingness, darkness, and degradation.[16] However, if humanity instead were driven by a love of God and contemplated the created world of God, as God had intended, this contemplation would fill humanity with inspiration and elevate them to contemplate the divine.[17] The study and contemplation of nature would incite him to strive for moral and spiritual perfection as well as inspire him to create *with* God the grand City of God of which Augustine was envisioning.

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14. It is quite possible that this vision of a walled paradise is intended to be a copy of the Garden of Eden and due to mistranslations and interpretations the Garden of Eden lost its unenclosed definition.
15. Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 29. Referencing Augustine's, *City of God*, Book Eleven, sections 20-22.
16. Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 29. Referencing Augustine's *City of God,* Book Twelve, section 25.
17. Boudewijn Bakker, *Landscape and Religion from Van Eyck to Rembrandt,* trans. Diane Webb (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 2. Referencing Augustine's *City of God* Book Eleven, section 2.

Humanity's progress, according to Augustine, was to lead from the Garden of Eden to the City of God.[18] The Garden of Eden held within it an irrevocable choice, the choice to sin, however hope was not lost. The choice of humanity to turn from sin and instead to focus on the creation that God placed in the world, this Book of Nature, would allow humanity to instead attend to what was possible, the City of God. The presence of walls around the garden acknowledged the impossibility of a return to Eden, and yet also suggested the move toward the greatest architectural accomplishment that humanity could do, anticipating the arrival of that city from Revelation.[19] With humanity focused on God rather than themselves, the City of God was indeed possible; but humanity would have to remain vigilant to practice contemplation and fight against the temptation of constant work.

Augustine's passionate challenge to balance an active and a contemplative life had immense repercussions for the production and depiction of the enclosed garden. After Augustine, the natural philosophers of the Middle Ages spoke of the two books in which God was to be found, the Bible and the Book of Nature.[20] Contemplation was no longer simply attuned to the Christian scriptures, but also to the natural creation in which Augustine inspired his readers to contemplate. Both word and image would inspire people to a higher moral and spiritual understanding. This is what led to many monasteries creating their own walled gardens, small pieces of heaven on earth, in which the creator and the created could commune. This elevation of the image alongside the Scriptures also provided medieval artists with a new outlet in which to explore spiritual and moral messages, that of the landscape.

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18. Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, 331. Referencing Augustine's *City of God*, Book Fifteen.
19. Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, 332.
20. Bakker, *Landscape and Religion from Van Eyck to Rembrandt,* 2-3.

The medieval garden in the Christian West was a place to commune with God the creator and God's creation. Monasteries frequently had their own *hortus conclusus*, an enclosed garden in which they worked and produced food for themselves and others. However, the garden was never simply a means to an end since Augustine instilled the natural world with such sacred resonance. The gardens of the monasteries, whether in their choice of horticulture or in their very design, spoke to a variety of religious contemplation practices and divine concepts. Many medieval monasteries' cloister gardens had a well or a large tree at the center. These acted as symbols of Christ and reminded the monks of both the Garden of Eden's Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil as well as the Cross on which Christ died.[21]

The monastery of Santes Crues in Northern Spain, built in the twelfth century, actually has two intentional gardens.[22] The first is a Gothic garden surrounded by a succession of buildings including the main church. The intention of this garden is an endless circular movement that is perfect for processions. The other garden is in a Romanesque style that is intended for individual prayer. In this Romanesque garden the design is intended to engross the visitor in a contemplation of the infinite. Within this garden is a circle of eight evergreen cypresses, a common symbol for eternal life. Within this circle of evergreens is also a cross-shaped pool with a fountain at the center, once again replicating that central focus on Christ in symbolic form. This space for individual prayer is intentionally embedded with Christian

21. Massimo Riva, "Therapy in the Garden: The Purgatorial Eden of Boccaccio's *Decameron,*" in *The Earthly Paradise: The Garden of Eden from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. F. Regina Psaki (Binghamton, New York: Global Publications Binghamton University, 2002), 121. A central well could also be representative of Jesus' reference to being living water (John 7: 37-39) as well as the Song of Songs reference to a garden fountain and a living well.
22. The following descriptions of this monastery come from Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 73-76.

imagery that pulls from the Garden of Eden, the image of the Virgin Mary in the Song of Songs, as well as the vision of a heavenly city with ever flowing streams (Revelation 22).

One other way that monks found their gardens to be places of great insight into God was to produce a *hortus catalogi*. In a *hortus catalogi,* the Garden of Eden takes on a new purpose. No longer is it a contemplation on sin and redemption; instead, it becomes a space to recover the Garden of Eden. In these very specific gardens, monks would seek to collect and piece together a catalog of the world's horticulture. By recollecting, planting, and maintaining this catalog of nature, these monks were attempting to recollect the paradise of the garden before it was scattered in the Fall.[23] This was actually a common practice that continued well into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe, as new worlds were discovered. The botanical garden became a natural cabinet of curiosities for the new world's flowers, plants, and produce.[24]

While the religious aspects of the garden were most commonly seen in monasteries, gardens were considered quite religious in the secular world as well, thanks to the influence of Augustine in the Western world. Flowers and different variants of plants became associated with different religious peoples and concepts.[25] Even the space of the garden itself became imbued with religious devotion. In a quote from Sir Frank Crisp's survey, *Mediaeval Gardens,* he wrote, "In such a garden not only will the King delight himself, but sometimes will ease his necessary cares by glorifying God on high, who is the Author and cause of all good pleasure."[26] These different visions of the garden in the world eventually influenced the work of medieval artists, especially the religious symbols of natural flora and fauna.

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23. Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 46.
24. Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, 323.
25. H.W. Rickett, "Gardens of Cloister and Castle," *Journal of the New York Botanical Garden* 42, no. 500 (August 1941): 197.
26. Sir Frank Crisp, *Mediaeval Gardens* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1979), 18, quoted in H.W. Rickett, "Gardens of Cloister and Castle," 192.

The *Hortus Conclusus* in Medieval and Renaissance Art

Medieval artists are normally anonymous, and known simply for their work in illuminated manuscripts. Pieces from this period throughout Europe have a variety of themes, but hold more or less to a canonical set of images. One of those images is the depiction of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. As stated earlier, due to the conflated translations of the words garden and paradise, many depictions of Adam and Eve take place in an enclosed garden from which they will eventually be expelled and surrounded on all sides by walls. These gardens are depicted as sacred spaces, sometimes including God himself placed alongside Adam and Eve. These sacred spaces are filled with blossoming flowers and fruit-bearing trees, including the infamous Tree of Knowledge. Three unique and intriguing examples of this very illustration are the *Holkham Bible* from Britain (1327-1335), the *Livre des Proprieties des Choses* from France (1414) and *The Master of the Hours for Marshal Boucicaut* from either Belgium or France (1415). Each chose to place their main characters within an enclosed garden, surrounding them with many of the typical religious concepts and symbols of the Fall and the expulsion from paradise.

Another common illustrated text of the medieval and Renaissance worlds was the breviary, which was a book that contained all the liturgical texts needed for group and individual contemplative prayer. One breviary in particular from this period contains a beautiful example of the way that the hortus conclusus was eventually growing out of its use in Garden of Eden depictions, and instead was becoming a symbolic representation of the other symbols and images that we have seen in both the Christian scriptures and their interpretations by Augustine. The Grimani breviary is a famous illuminated manuscript from the 1510s. It is believed to have

various illuminators all coming from the Flemish tradition, yet it was the Cardinal of Venice, Domenico Grimani (who purchased it in 1520), from whom it claims its name. The Grimani breviary contains within it an image that is now labeled "Mystic Attributes of the Virgin" because of the variety of symbols of Mary within the piece (Figure 1).

Inside the enclosed garden are roses, which signify the passion of Christ and the love of God, and lilies, which of course represent the purity of the Virgin Mary.[27] Lilies are actually found both inside and outside the enclosed garden. The outside lily stands tall next to the tree marked "divine species" potentially signifying Jesus upon the cross and Mary's presence there. Also within the garden is a fountain, which relays the theme already seen in the monastic gardens of ever flowing streams from Song of Songs, Revelation and the imagery of the fountain of life.[28] Even outside the enclosed garden, the illustration is rich with religious imagery, from the tower of David, to the gate of heaven, to the city of God, to the well of living water.[29]

This tradition of the *hortus conclusus* as a symbol for the Virgin's womb continued well into the Renaissance. This interpretation and illustration of the text from Song of Songs provided artists with great inspiration for their Madonna scenes.[30] The most famous articulation of the *hortus conclusus* as a backdrop for the Annunciation is in Leonardo da Vinci's work from 1472 (Figure 2).[31] Behind the Virgin Mary and her angelic messenger is a strong and immovable wall. Although there is a break in this wall that provides da Vinci the chance to continue his landscape,

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27. H.W. Rickett, "Gardens of Cloister and Castle," 198.
28. Lucia Impelluso, *Nature and Its Symbols*, trans. Stephen Sartarelli (Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003), 12.
29. Naomi Miller, "Paradise Regained: Medieval Garden Fountains," in *Medieval Gardens*, ed. Elisabeth B. MacDougall (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1986), 151.
30. Another great example is Stefano da Zevio of Verona's *Madonna in the Rose Garden*, 1420-1435, Tempera on panel, Castelvecchio Museum, Verona.
31. Leonardo da Vinci, *Annunciation*, 1472, Oil and tempera on panel. Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy.

the setting is clearly placed within a garden for this sacred meeting. Therefore, this garden takes on two different yet related themes, that of God and man meeting in the womb of the Virgin Mary as well as the meeting of the divine and humanity within the garden as the angel tells Mary of her expectant news. This only furthers the theme of the garden being a place of common ground for God and humanity to gather and connect.

The Dutch Interpretation of the *Hortus Conclusus*

The Dutch have always been well-known for their gardens and beautiful horticulture. Their tulip fields are still considered a tourist attraction for any foreign visitors. The development of their landscape art was often related back to the earlier concept of nature being considered a second book from which to learn about God. Boudewijn Bakker in his book *Landscape and Religion: From Van Eyck to Rembrandt* makes a strong claim in the first few pages that it is to be known and established that people of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the Netherlands held a widespread belief in a divine presence within the world.

Unshaken by the scientific revolution, most educated people believed that the Book of Nature inherently complimented the Christian scriptures and was therefore an essential part of divine revelation.[32] This belief is clear in many of the *hofdichten* (garden) poems of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. In these poems, it is obvious that gardens are a highly valued part of society. Gardens provide an encounter with God's wisdom everywhere, and an opportunity for divine revelation in one's own backyard.[33] In the very practice of gardening, the

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32. Bakker, *Landscape and Religion from Van Eyck to Rembrandt,* 2.
33. Eveline Koolhaas-Grosfeld, "From the garden to the wilderness: On the perception of nature and landscape in the Netherlands in the eighteenth century," in *On Country Roads and Fields: The Depiction of 18th- and 19th-century Landscape*, eds. Wiepke Loos, R. J. A. Te. Rijdt, and Marjan Van. Heteren (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1997), 59.

Dutch people found a place for spiritual and physical work, as well as a space for contemplation. They could enter their gardens and contemplate those themes that the monks and Augustine had spoken of: virtue, reason, and God's providence.[34]

John Calvin, a profoundly influential French theologian whose works ultimately made up the foundation of Dutch Protestantism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, even wrote that the imperfection in nature was grounded in the fall of man and his expulsion from the paradise of Eden. Calvin believed that the breach between humanity and God could only be repaired through humanity's labor and piety.[35] This of course was absorbed into the Dutch horticultural tradition. Consequently, many household gardens of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were considered work for the glory of God and a means of bridging the gap between humanity and God.[36] Therefore, the production of horticulture and gardening became (to the Dutch) a religious as well as an industrious experience. The garden was something to be admired and valued not only for its produce, but also for its continual attention to the divine Creator and his unfolding revelation.

This special importance for the landscape of the Netherlands extended into landscape art as well as into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This was the high point of Dutch landscape art, and the works within these two centuries powerfully influenced Western art for centuries to come. Before returning to the spiritual inspirations for this art, it is just as important

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34. Erik de Jong, *Nature and Art: Dutch Garden and Landscape Architecture, 1650-1740* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 9.
35. Ibid., 21.
36. In Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith's groundbreaking biography *Van Gogh: The Life* (New York: Random House, 2011), they describe Vincent van Gogh's family garden and the way that his mother centered her family around lessons in the garden. They state specifically, "In Anna's garden, the sun was the "Sweet Lord" whose light gave life to plants just as God gave "peace to our hearts": and stars were the sun's promise to return in the morning "to make light out of darkness." (27)

to consider where the inspiration for strictly landscape art came from in the Netherlands culture, without a genre or historical scene in the foreground.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the Netherlands was transforming from a rebellious colony into a maritime empire.[37] Alongside this political shift from being a Spanish colony to a part of the independent Seven United Provinces, the economic and religious spheres of the Netherlands drastically changed as well. Independence brought with it a flood of immigrants as well as the opportunity to take full advantage of the open market economy of seventeenth-century Europe. With this increase in economic wealth, the Netherlands chose to undertake "the largest land reclamation project in the world."[38] This of course led to an increase in pride and pleasure in the lands of the Netherlands, leading into an increase in Netherland landscape painting.

The last drastic change for the Netherlands in the seventeenth century was the shift from Catholicism to Protestantism. Without the influence of the Spanish crown, the Dutch were now free to believe what they wished and (as hinted above), they were drawn particularly to the writings and practices of Protestants such as John Calvin. This also opened up an increase in the production of landscape art, as it was now not just a historical or genre piece. The landscape could stand alone as a religious devotional icon for wider public spiritual contemplation.[39]

Religion was a large influence on Dutch landscape art of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During this time, art became a second way to remedy the breach between God and

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37. W.J.T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," in *Landscape and Power*, 2nd ed., ed. W.J. Thomas Mitchell (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 10.
38. Ann Jensen Adams, "Competing Communities in the 'Great Bog of Europe': Identity and Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape Painting," in *Landscape and Power*, 2nd ed., ed. W.J. Thomas Mitchell (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 38-9.
39. Christopher Brown in his book, *Dutch Landscape Painting* (London: National Gallery, 1979), puts it bluntly, "In all, there can be no doubt that the Calvinist tenor of the Dutch Republic encouraged landscape painting to flourish." (45)

humanity. Art, unlike gardening, could actually adapt nature and perfect it so that it could be more pleasing and useful for contemplation. Art then became an additional act of labor, a work of creation that would once again allow humanity to re-enter a piece of Eden.[40] However, it was well known that art was only an imitation of nature, even when artists sought to perfect it. Nature was the art of God, the first painter and architect, and therefore is found perfect in its natural state.[41]

Although there are many paintings that could be used to showcase the embrace of the religious concepts of Eden and paradise in Dutch landscape art, the original topic of this paper is specifically the enclosed garden, the *hortus conclusus.* Much of the Dutch understanding of landscape and the Book of Nature was not specifically addressed under the issue of enclosed or unenclosed. It can safely be assumed that for most gardeners in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the gardens were enclosed by a fence or wall to keep their vulnerable flowers and produce from scavengers. However, in Dutch landscape art, the common theme was an open and wide horizon with no boundaries or margins. The Book of Nature was wide open to all and God was found in each and every place without borders. That being said, the *hortus conclusus* is found in Dutch art specifically in the sphere of religious iconography. The Dutch continued the traditions found in the medieval and renaissance artists and, despite new adaptions to Eden, they still found comfort in depicting the Virgin Mary within her *hortus conclusus*.

Jan van Eyck was a Flemish artist in the fourteenth century. His piece, *Virgin and Child with Chancellor Rolin,* is a perfect example of the Dutch aesthetic before the large shifts in seventeenth century and the move toward a more inclusive and extending vision of God's Eden (Figure 3). Van Eyck, painting within the world of Spanish and Catholic influences, paints his

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40. de Jong, *Nature and Art*, 18.
41. Ibid., 21.

Virgin elevated above Chancellor Rolin and about to be crowned in a position of dominion over the rest of the world.[42] As Christ's Queen of Heaven, she is surrounded by her many symbols, including of course her enclosed garden that produces lilies and roses. Her enclosed garden also overlooks a flowing stream with a structure at its center. This repeats the images in monastic gardens with ever-flowing streams and fountains at their center. These images bring into the vision of the *hortus conclusus* the other biblical references to gardens of paradise in Song of Songs and Revelation. The Virgin Mary herself represents one garden of paradise, but the imagery that surrounds her calls to the viewer's mind the many biblical gardens which have come and are yet to be enjoyed, a full theological grasp of what the coming of Jesus meant for the world and his believers.

Despite the fact that van Eyck painted well before the dawn of Dutch landscape art, his work bridges the worlds of seventeenth-century Netherlands and the medieval and renaissance worlds of Western Europe. Even though art changed drastically as did the political, economic, and religious environments in the Netherlands, it is important to remember the tradition that ran through the Netherlands from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century. For example, the landscape artists of the modern era would not have been able to create their scenes in such an unbounded way without considering the bounded gardens of tradition. Although van Eyck represents a very Catholic and iconographic style, it was his embrace of the natural landscape (albeit within a religious piece) that continued the tradition of landscape art in the Netherlands. Once seventeenth-century artists were able to reclaim their lands and frame that vision within a more protestant belief system, they were able to extend that landscape into the entire artwork and free it from religious iconography.

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42. Bakker, *Landscape and Religion from Van Eyck to Rembrandt,* 75.

The great landscape artists of the seventeenth century, such as Jacob van Ruisdael and Jan van Goyen, were able to contemplate a spiritual vision of the landscape because of artists such as van Eyck and theologians such as Calvin. The *hortus conclusus* itself became a symbol and an allegory that could be manipulated and recreated as long as landscape was always considered to be furthering the vision of God's presence on earth. The landscape art of the Dutch tradition is filled with spiritual and religious symbols and allegories, but it is their subtleness and more expansive acceptance of God's unbounded nature that continues the vision of the *hortus conclusus* into the next generation of painters in Britain and France.

The British Interpretation of the *Hortus Conclusus*

The British tradition of gardening was very similar to the Dutch tradition and some have claimed that the British might have been influenced by the Dutch techniques because the Dutch were so conscientious about publicizing their gardens and landscapes in art and prints.[43] The British did indeed follow many of the same spiritual concepts and practices as the Dutch. For example, they also saw the garden as a place to create with God, to join in the renewal of Eden. The English poet Alexander Pope once wrote that gardening was nearer to God's own work than poetry and also that "All gardening is landscape painting."[44] This clearly shows the importance that was given to both the grandest English estates as well as the small country gardens.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the British upper classes were just as likely to have their own personal gardens as the Dutch. The personal garden reflected financial resources and social status, as well as provided a miniature version of the gardens found in

43. David Jacques, "Who knows what a Dutch garden is?" *Garden History* 30, no. 2 (2002): 114.
44. Lucia H. Albers, "The Perception of Gardening as Art," *Garden History* 19, no. 2 (1991): 169.

medieval monasteries.[45] The British enclosed their gardens, similar to the Dutch, in an intentional return to the medieval *hortus conclusus* tradition and to purposefully seek a renewed relationship between humanity and the earth. However, also similar to the Dutch, the British found that the *hortus conclusus* was destined to be reopened to the entire world. The British landscape artist Capability Brown invented a ditch that would keep animals out but open up the garden space visually. This new invention allowed for the vulnerability of the miniature Eden to be maintained while also opening up the *hortus conclusus* to the wider world.[46] Once again, the idea of paradise was all encompassing of the world and God was sought in the small taming of horticulture as well as the artistry of far-off landforms and vistas.

The British in many ways followed the traditions of Augustine in seeing the world around them as a divine revelation of God. They, like the monastics, created a piece of that divine revelation and a place for contemplation in the garden. In the 1650s, a book by John Evelyn on gardening appeared, entitled, *Elysium Brittannicum*. This excerpt of Evelyn's book shows just how widely the tradition of the *hortus conclusus* had spread.

> So that to define a Garden now, is to pronounce it *Inter Solatia humana purissimum*. A place of all terrestriall enjoyments the most resembling Heaven and the best representation of our lost felicity. It is the common term and the pit from whence we were dug; we all came out of the parsley-bed—at least according to the creed of a poet [Lucretius V, 807-810]. As no man can be very miserable that is a master of a garden here; so will no man ever be happy who is not sure of a garden hereafter. From thense we came, and thither we tend; where the first Adam fell, the second arose. Kings, philosophers, and wise men spent their choicest hours in them; and when they would frame a type of Heaven, because there is nothing in nature more worthy and illustrious, they describe a garden, and call it Elysium.[47]

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45. Matteo Vercelloni and Virgil Vercelloni, *Inventing the Garden* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011), 158.
46. Ibid., 100.
47. John Evelyn, *Elysium Britannicum*, Book 1, Chapter 1, quoted in Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, 330.

Evelyn clearly understood the garden to be a place of great contemplation and communion with the divine, and he openly states that the garden is a framed piece of heaven, thus continuing the scriptural foundations of the *hortus conclusus* into British gardening knowledge. This book was likely very popular in the seventeenth century and would have been read widely by the upper classes who were tending their own private gardens. Therefore, this statement of the garden as a continuation of the garden of Eden and Mary's garden from Song of Songs provided many gardeners with a solid understanding of the *hortus conclusus* tradition, despite whether their gardens were enclosed or unenclosed.

Another important scholar of the British garden aesthetic was Joseph Addison, of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Addison was an essayist and poet, and also the son of a clergyman in the Church of England. Addison's protestant upbringing influenced many of his writings including what he wrote on nature. Addison firmly believed that the contemplation of nature was not simply an aesthetic pleasure, but rather should serve a higher purpose. The contemplation of nature, in Addison's belief, should put man in a spiritual state that would allow him to behold God.[48] This clearly continues Augustine's writings on nature, drawing viewers into a higher communion with God and inspiring them to greater thoughts of virtue, reason, and God's greater plan. Addison believed that the greater the visual stimuli, the more powerful the imagination would drive the mind upward.[49] This particular point was prominent in the next century in discussions of the sublime in nature, as well as influencing a whole new generation of landscape artists.

The great British philosopher Edmund Burke produced his treatise, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, in 1757. This foundational

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48. Koolhaas-Grosfeld, "From the garden to the wilderness," 63.
49. Ibid., 63.

text for aesthetics drew from a current trend in philosophical discourse on the idea of the sublime, which was first adopted in Britain by John Dennis. The sublime came to describe a unique and intriguing sensation in which the viewer is so struck in awe by their natural surroundings that they feel both pleasure and pain. Burke used terms like darkness, vastness, loudness and suddenness to explain the sublime and many times it was associated with the turbulence of nature. The sublime could be found in a chasm, a cliff, a storm, or a natural disaster, essentially any part of nature that would give the viewer a feeling of thrilling danger.

However, what was unique about Burke's explanation of the sublime was the distinct divide he placed between the sublime and the beautiful. This went directly against the tradition of Augustine, since Augustine was unable to find any evil or ugliness in God's grand design. However, despite the seemingly contradictory forces that he expounds upon, Burke still seems to find within the sublime not an evil or ugliness but a fascinating psychological effect. For Burke, the sublime is not something to be avoided; instead, he finds that most of humanity will continue to desire the sublime for its pleasant negativity. There is a delight in the pain of the sublime, the fear is mixed with exhilaration and euphoria.

This of course is what Addison had been speaking of in the last century, and it is what was taken up with more credit after Burke's treatises became widespread. Soon Burke's philosophical sublime was being blended with Addison's spiritual transcendence. Burke and Addison together offered the public a way to describe their walk through the landscape garden as an intense, even transformative, event, which left them afterwards experiencing the entire world differently.[50] Now even though it seems that Burke's treatise was secular and lacking Addison's connection with a Christian God and theological concepts, Burke was a very religious man who

50. Koolhaas-Grosfeld, "From the garden to the wilderness," 65.

believed Christianity propelled society forward. Therefore, this linking of Addison with Burke only strengthened Burke's other writings in which he defended the Christian faith as a source of morality that was attended by a God who rewards and punishes.[51] Burke fully understood that true Christian contemplation is what would drive humanity to a higher state of moral virtue and reason. Therefore, despite his new classifications of experiences in the natural world, he still continued his belief in Augustine's greater motivation and attention to God's creation.

The influence of such writers as John Evelyn, Joseph Addison, and Edmund Burke is seen not only in the gardens of Britain but also in its art. John Ruskin, an eighteenth-century artist and art critic, saw the natural world "as an expressive work of art produced through the supreme imaginative and creative capacities of the divine creator, God."[52] Ruskin saw in nature the same thing that Augustine and all these other authors saw, a grand design with intricate handiwork and a gateway to understanding religious and moral truth.[53] Ruskin extended these beliefs into his writings on landscape art. In his masterpiece, *Modern Painters*, Ruskin made it a central purpose to locate landscape within the broader history of art. He believed that landscape, especially when done by a master like J.M.W. Turner, could illuminate the deepest moral and artistic truths.[54] This took landscape art far beyond historical painting and its roots in the

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51. These ideas come from Burke's early essay, "Religion of No Efficacy, Considered as a State Engine." This essay was found long after Burke's death in a notebook alongside other papers in the possession of Earl Fitzwilliam and the Sheffield Public Library. The essays are currently dated between 1750 and 1756. Edmund Burke, *The Portable Edmund Burke*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 23-24.
52. Peter Fuller, "The geography of Mother Nature," in *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments,* eds. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 17.
53. Ibid., 17.
54. Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove, "Introduction: iconography and landscape," in *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments,* eds. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 5.

academic tradition toward something greater and with deeper resonance.[55] Turner's understanding of nature, as seen both in the garden and in landscape art is a clear continuation of the *hortus conclusus* tradition in Western Christian thought.

The Pre-Raphaelites were a group of painters and poets who were influenced by John Ruskin's writings and actually gained the praise and admiration of John Ruskin before his death. The Pre-Raphaelites fought against the current trend of academic tradition and style, and instead focused on a return to quality historical painting and imitations of nature found in medieval and Renaissance art prior to Raphael. One of their earliest doctrines was to study Nature attentively so to know how best to express it.[56] The Pre-Raphaelites were true to nature and sought within that naturalism the revelation of divine truth.[57] This group of artists took the natural world seriously as a subject rich in religious inspiration. They buried within their art many religious symbols and allegories that were typical for their inspired period of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance.

One of the Pre-Raphaelite artists, Arthur Hughes, actually uses the imagery of the *hortus conclusus* in one of his paintings, *April Love*, 1856 (Figure 4).[58] Hughes' young woman is placed under the arch of a garden and, despite the angle of the viewer, it seems that she is enclosed in the garden around her. The title of the piece elicits the sexual temptation of the Garden of Eden as well as the young fertility of the Song of Songs. This beautiful scene captures the beauty and mystery of the garden, lifting the viewer to greater attention to nature and possibly even an

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55. Daniels and Cosgrove, "Introduction," 5.
56. W.M. Rossetti (ed.), *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Family-Letters, with a Memoir by W.M. Rossetti,* 2 vols, (London: Ellis & Elvey, 1895), vol. 1, 135, quoted in Michaela Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible: Representation and Belief in Mid-Victorian Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 68.
57. Fuller, "The geography of Mother Nature," 18.
58. Nicholas Afrey, Stephen Daniels, and Martin Postle [eds.], *Art of the Garden: The Garden in British Art, 1800 to the Present Day* (London: Tate Publications, 2004), 31.

entrance into an earthly paradise. The Pre-Raphaelites not only harken back to an early period of art, which used everything within a piece to symbolize and allegorize for the viewer the greatness of the sacred world, but in this particular piece, Hughes captures the beautiful tradition of the *hortus conclusus* for a whole new generation.

Relevant to this topic is another group of artists in Britain at this time. They are the Realists known for their focus on depicting historical scenes and modern living as realistically as possible. One such British realist was James Tissot, who was actually born and worked in France before he became the successful English painter he is known as today. Only a few decades after Hughes, James Tissot used the *hortus conclusus* in one of his works, *Holyday* (1876). Pulling from his own Catholic heritage, Tissot understood the imagery evoked by an enclosed natural space. In *Holyday,* a small group of young people enjoy some illicit pleasures of flirtation, food, and drink, while their chaperone sleeps (Figure 5). The structured colonnade and pond, alongside the tempting theme of the piece, is what provides the viewer with cues to a modern day Garden of Eden.[59] Although there is not the hardened wall of the medieval *hortus conclusus* the viewer is able to take from this realistic piece many of the symbols they know from numerous exposures, such as a central water piece that recalls the living water of both Mary's symbolic garden and the visions of the city of God in Revelation. The connection to the temptation in the Garden of Eden is clear, but Tissot pulls from the wider *hortus conclusus* tradition in his depictions of the pond and trees within the natural landscape. In examining Tissot's work, it is actually hard to distinguish the difference between the Pre-Raphaelites and the Realists, because they both extract symbols from the Western Christian tradition.

59. Afry, Daniels, and Postle, *Art of the Garden*, 105.

An interesting artist who spanned the divide between the Pre-Raphaelites and the Realists was William Holman Hunt. Hunt bounced back and forth from realistic, yet symbolic, depictions of Jesus and other religious scenes to paradisial landscapes that focused solely on realistic and naturalistic views of nature. Many sources claim evidence for Hunt's religious beliefs, especially after a story circulated about his trip to the Holy Land. Apparently, his aim was to better study and seek the divine presence within the natural landscape and culture in hopes of applying it to his religious scenes. But all he found was a "mangy goat which dropped dead on him beside the Dead Sea."[60] This story, though not to be taken as a representation of Hunt's faith, which is still enigmatic at best, is a better representation of the direction that spiritual understanding was moving toward in the nineteenth century throughout Europe.

There was a frightening new concept put forth that left nature devoid of the divine presence and divine revelation that had been so prominent in European thought and art.[61] Unfortunately this fearful observation left many to simply seek transcendence in the natural world itself.[62] Although according to some thinkers, the natural world now lacked a grand design and instead seemed driven by chance, the natural world still appeared to provide what Burke had been recognizing as a higher state of attention and transcendence. This vision of the world, devoid of God and yet still rich in landscape and garden history, would continue in many other countries and would be emblematic of the nineteenth century.

Regardless of the turns in European religious attitudes, the tradition of British poetry and literature added great spiritual depth to the experience of gardens. It was even a prominent theme

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60. Fuller, "The geography of Mother Nature," 22.
61. Ibid., 21.
62. Holman Hunt was a professed atheist for many years of his life, however he claims to have had a religious conversion after painting *The Light of the World* (1853-4). See George P. Landow, "William Holman Hunt's 'The Shadow of Death,'" *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 55 (1972): 212-215.

in British hymns, such as John Newton's hymn, *The Garden,* from 1779. Here, the garden is offered to provoke meditation on the Garden of Eden and especially the sin and consequences of humanity's fall.[63]

Thankfully, not all British literary art was so brooding on the disappointment and loss of the Garden of Eden. In later British literature of the twentieth century, the vision of the garden was redeemed as a refuge from the stresses of modern life. Contemplation therein was a enlivening of the imagination, full of enchantment. In Frances Hodgson Burnett's children's book, *The Secret Garden*, the garden regains its innocence and returns again to an Eden full of possibilities and wonder. It is only through tending the neglected garden that the garden is returned to its original state of beauty and possibility. Now, despite the fact that it lacks the *hortus conclusus'* religious assertions, this literary work is important to understanding the ways that the *hortus conclusus* continued throughout British culture taking on different symbols and concepts depending on the viewer or reader's needs. The garden of Burnett's imagination still holds many of the Western Christian ideals of a *hortus conclusus*: the garden is locked up, requires work on behalf of its inhabitants, and in the end provides a little piece of heaven amidst an otherwise stressful and confusing world. This story lacks any real mention of Eden, the Song of Songs, or revelation, yet the characters undergo both physical and spiritual regeneration through their work and time in the secret garden.[64] Thus the tradition of the *hortus conclusus* lived on in the British imagination irrespective of its Christian scriptural foundations.

The French Interpretation of the *Hortus Conclusus*

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63. Afry, Daniels, and Postle, *Art of the Garden,* 132.
64. Ibid., 94.

Another country highly influenced by the Western Christian tradition of the *hortus conclusus* was France. They had their own gardening and landscape art that pulls from this expansive tradition in new and interesting ways from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. Similar to both the Netherlands and Britain, the utilization of the *hortus conclusus* became very reflective of the homeland, its customs, history, and artistic practices. Although there was a definite overlap of inspiration between these three countries, especially in the realm of art thanks to the modern art trade, the *hortus conclusus* continued to remain a common theme that could be drawn upon but would need to be adapted to the audience.

The specific French interpretation of the *hortus conclusus* began in their own monastic traditions. The Cistercian monks, a French religious order founded in the eleventh century, are actually the religious order best known for their walled-in monastic gardens. They firmly believed that a garden was their own allotment of Eden to tend.[65] Then as the landscaping tradition was passed on through the generations and centuries, the French people continued the philosophical and spiritual sentiments of these medieval monks. Despite the fact that gardens were considered a sign of social status, as seen earlier in the Dutch and British traditions as well, the garden still remained a place to commune with the Divine, to be restored through an escape into nature, and to come out more enlightened to the wider world.[66] Jean-Claude-Nicholas Forestier, an eighteenth-century French landscape artist once wrote, "…one may share with God the care of flowers which is pleasing, divine, and pure."[67] Therefore it was not simply the very environment of the garden that brought contemplation of the divine, but working within it as

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65. Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 1st ed. (New York: A.A. Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1995), 537.
66. Claire I.R. O'Mahony, "Fin-de-Siecle Fantasy to the Western Front: The Aesthetic Gardens of Nancy," *Garden History* 36, no. 2 (2008): 261.
67. Ibid., 261.

well. This of course spoke easily to the many upper class families that took pride in their private gardens and connected them right back to the traditions of the Cistercian monks.

One interesting garden to note in the French tradition that directly utilized the *hortus conclusus* form and scriptural themes was a garden built in the late sixteenth century by Bernard Palissy, a hydraulic engineer, naturalist and chemist. His garden of "natural secrets" was a strict rectangular shape with four hydraulic pumps streams, and grottos that were filled with brick furnaces that would liquefy natural elements so that they would seem to be wriggling out as living organisms.[68] This garden was built with the Christian *hortus conclusus*, specifically the image of the Garden of Eden, in mind. As a Protestant living at the height of the French Wars of Religion, he saw the whole of creation as a complex and sublime design of mysterious laws.[69] He saw within the world of nature the many faces of God and his garden reflected that great Architect in both visuality and ingenuity. This multifaceted garden may seem too mechanical or too modern to be related to the traditional medieval *hortus conclusus*, but it contains within its plan many of the characteristics of the medieval tradition. Its enclosure obviously evokes the wall of the *hortus conclusus*, as well as its use of water and natural life. Palissy is pulling from the traditions of landscaping and medieval art and utilizing the natural imagery of the Garden of Eden as well as a foreshadowing of Augustine and Revelation's City of God. Palissy's secret garden is an intriguingly modern twist on the *hortus conclusus* tradition.

Another example of the hortus conclusus, that was actually most likely made by accident and with no intention of reproducing the *hortus conclusus,* was Georges-Eugene Haussmann's renovation of Paris. Haussmann was commissioned by Emperor Napoleon III in the nineteenth

68. Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 536.
69. Ibid., 537.

century to modernize Paris with space and better war-time commuting in mind.[70] Haussmann's designs are the modern promenades and long expansive boulevards for which Paris is known today. But amidst his more practical planning he added some green space for aesthetic appeal. These green spaces were not intended to be compared with gardens, they were much more like parks. However, in Haussmann's plan these green spaces became austere square plots of grass that at the time provided an escape from the modern concrete and heavily-structured city. Having explored the *hortus conclusus* tradition it is hard not to see these square plots of escape as anything other than little pieces of pristine nature, little Edens, amidst the chaotic and work-focused world. These small plots throughout Paris now provided the city dwellers a place of refuge and escape, a place to contemplate and retune their perspectives. Much like the gardens of the monasteries and even the private gardens of the French upper class, these small pieces of grass allowed the common Parisian a chance to step out of the everyday and take a moment to commune with nature, even commune with the divine should they choose. This was probably not the intention of Haussmann when he considered the aesthetics of the city, but that simply illustrates how extensive the *hortus conclusus* tradition had been assimilated into Western Christian culture and landscape design. The way these parks were planned as well as the way they were used, brings to mind the gardens of the countryside and Augustine's divine Book of Nature.

The seventeenth-century classic French gardens and the parks of Haussmann's Paris employed many straight lines. But the art of France was soon about to take the *hortus conclusus* into a new artistic style, and the first thing to go would be the straight and pristine gardens of the past. Monet's *Garden Path at Giverny* (1902) is the only exception to a straight impressionist

70. Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, 248-9.

path and, even then, he erodes the rectangular flowerbeds so that nature spills over into the path (Figure 6).[71] Most of the others in the impressionist tradition wished to place their paths leading off into the horizon line, or out past the border of the painting, leaving the viewer with a sense of uncertainty.

This trend can be seen in the forest paths of Renoir, Caillebotte, and Gauguin. These wooded paths, especially in the more symbolic work of Paul Gauguin, took on a spiritual intention much like their inspiration, the *hortus conclusus*. Trees began to be seen as conduits between earth and heaven. Thus, the natural path of the traveller was taken to be a symbolic walk of life's greater journey, filled with the wisdom and significance of the many different landforms and horticulture.[72] This continues the importance and tradition of gardens for the greater contemplation of the world and of the divine, which was the original purpose for the monastic gardens.

Monet's garden at Giverny is actually an important bridge between the production and depiction of landscape. Since Monet's paintings of Giverny are based primarily on his own work in his garden, they clearly show the dual benefits of the garden in both work and enjoyable contemplation. Monet was inspired by his own travels to the French Riviera, which he deemed a terrestrial paradise; however, it was Monet's friends and critics who found terrestrial paradise in Monet's artworks.[73]

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71. Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, 272.
72. Katharine Lochnan, "Introduction: 'Where the Universe Sings' The Mystical Landscape from the 1880s to the 1930s," in *Mystical Landscapes: from Vincent van Gogh to Emily Carr*, eds. Katharine Lochnan, Roald Nasgaard, Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov (Toronto, Ontario: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2016), 27.
73. Clare A. P. Willsdon, *In the Gardens of Impressionism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2016), 204.

Thus it was Monet's own contemplation that allowed him to articulate in paint a similarly contemplative experience for his audience. This transfer of Augustine's vision of the natural world allowed the world to extend beyond simple walks into nature. Now the French people could enjoy a piece of the Book of Nature in their art as well. Monet was channeling this divine inspiration into his work and so it only seems apt that his audience and critics would see within a vision of Eden. However, what is important to note is that the act of gardening, such as how Monet's garden got to its paradisial state, is not depicted or even mentioned.

With the exception of some pieces by Caillebotte of gardeners or Renoir's vegetable gardens, the cultivation and conservation of gardens has completely been lost. This only extends the belief that the garden is becoming understood most importantly as a symbol for the French people, a place of respite and calm amidst the ugly and mechanical modern world. Therefore regardless of how much effort or time is put into a garden, it must always be seen as effortless, and nature must be seen as uncultivated and as intentional as the Creator originally planned.

Much like the British pushed the boundaries of their gardens with the invention of ditches, the French extended their gardens to the very edges of the canvas in landscape art. Both of these choices can be seen as conscious understandings of Eden as no longer bound, but unenclosed and found amidst the wider world. Augustine never bound the Book of Nature, it was gardening practices and landscape art that decided the Garden of Eden would be shut up like Mary's womb, the lover's garden in Song of Songs, or even the Heavenly City of God.

Therefore, similar to the English, the French opened wide their *hortus conclusus* to welcome an Eden beyond walls. The French understood the modern *hortus conclusus* to be something that could fully engulf the viewer, to be present in and surrounded by the modern

garden.[74] Jean-Baptiste Corot's *Morning at Villa d'Avray* (1868) is a perfect example of this new style and it was even deemed a "piece of Elysian nature" by the art critic Émile Zola (Figure 7).[75] This piece by Corot then inspired Monet to paint his own secular *hortus conclusus*, *Women in the Garden* (1866) as somewhat of a sequel to Corot's Eden (Figure 8).[76] Monet's modern garden of love is like Hughes' *April Love* and James Tissot's *Holyday*, a vision of both the temptation of Adam and Eve as well as the love found in the garden of the Song of Songs. These women in the garden are enjoying the pleasures of a day out in nature surrounding a large tree, which can obviously stand as a symbol for the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and with a male suitor hidden by the flowers he has brought. Roses are also abundant in this spring painting by Monet, which could take on the symbols of Christ's passion and love from the medieval Mary's gardens. Monet's *Women in the Garden* is a new version of the *hortus conclusus*, drawing from multiple symbols and concepts of enclosed gardens through the years.

Overall, the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists of nineteenth-century France took the *hortus conclusus* into new artistic styles and depictions, but in the end they remained true to the traditional Christian concepts and symbols. The French chose most often to seek Eden once again, idealizing the garden as a place of transcendence and other worldly retreat. They provided their modern viewers with a much-needed setting of uncontaminated nature and unspoiled gardens. This was in many ways a response and reply to the modern urbanization that was encroaching upon the French countryside.[77] Similar to Haussmann's France, these idealized pieces of Eden were becoming more and more enclosed by the modern world, and so it became

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74. Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, 270.
75. Emilé Zola, "Proudhon et Courbet I," *Le salut public,* July 26, 1865, quoted in Clare A. P. Willsdon, *In the Gardens of Impressionism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2016), 78.
76. Willsdon, *In the Gardens of Impressionism,* 77.
77. Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, 243.

almost necessary for painters to capture the Eden while it lasted. In some cases these small pieces of paradise were actually just a fantasy, imagined rather than realistic.

When paradise couldn't be found amidst the modern world, the visual artists still had the avenue of painting. Where they could not find an unstained and perfect nature, they could create one. Henri Le Sidaner's *The White Garden at Twilight* (1912) does just that (Figures 9). In Sidaner's portrayal, this white garden in Gerberoy, France, is utter perfection, an idealistic dream. The flowered bushes along the sides perfectly surround the garden, providing a beautiful yet stable barrier. There are higher trees that then surround the bushes. In the center is shorn grass and benches on either side to sit and enjoy this beauty. Despite the lack of symbols (such as a fountain, rivers, or a central tree), this is clearly depicting an Eden within a *hortus conclusus*. This garden is unstained by weeds or overgrowth, it is tamed and unblemished by sin or error. This is a fantastical place in which nature can return to its idealized state. A viewer can only imagine sitting in this small garden and contemplating the Creator, God's grand design, and the possibility of a return to Eden. While Sidaner comes very close to a picture of a traditional *hortus conclusus,* he still maintains the impressionist aesthetic and spiritual pantheism that leaves the *hortus conclusus* lacking its Christian scriptural foundations.

There were other French artists in the nineteenth century, however, that held more closely to the Western Christian *hortus conclusus* tradition. Beginning with literature, which was just as influential in the greater cultural aesthetic of France as it was in England, both Victor Hugo and Émile Zola utilize the vision of Eden to continue a tradition of a *hortus conclusus* in the modern era. In Hugo's highly influential epic, *Les Miserables*, the main characters Jean Valjean and Cosette spend time in a convent. Since the convent does not normally admit men, Valjean finds

work there as a gardener, which is the only other job that a man can hold within the convent other than that of archbishop.

During their time there, Hugo describes the convent like a *hortus conclusus*, an enclosed piece of paradise that keeps its occupants protected from the ugliness of the outside world. The convent begins to personify the garden of love in the Song of Songs, as well as a vision of the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve could commune openly with God. Similar to the intention of the medieval monastic gardens, this convent provides a contemplative place of solitude in which prayer and work allow the occupants to reach connection with the infinite.[78] Jean Valjean and Cosette are able to spend some time there hidden and happy before they eventually leave to allow Cosette to experience more of the world outside the religious order. Although they leave the protection and security of their paradise, they know the risks and benefits to a life that is beyond the convent walls. This is an interesting twist to the Garden of Eden story, in which the occupants of the garden are not given a choice to leave, but rather they are pushed out and no longer allowed to return. Either way, Victor Hugo has utilized a vision of the *hortus conclusus* in his novel and has continued the tradition of a spiritual place of divine communion rooted in the Christian story.

As mentioned above, another author who utilized the *hortus conclusus* tradition was Émile Zola. As an art critic, in many ways painted with words what he found most appealing in nineteenth-century French art. In his novel, *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* (*Abbe Mouret's Transgression*), Zola describes the garden in which the priest commits his acts of forbidden passion as "le paradou" or paradise. This provincial garden where Priest Serge Mouret is supposed to be recovering from a fever instead falls in love with the sixteen-year old Albine. In

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78. Victor Brombert, *Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 130.

the enclosure of the garden they find themselves naked and, much like the scene from the Garden of Eden, the Father once he has left can never set himself to enter the garden or return Albine's advances.

Zola's novel inevitably ends in despair, with Priest Mouret tortured with guilt and Albine dead by suicide. Zola's garden, which he goes into great detail to describe as a true place of natural beauty, utilized the allegory of the Western Christian *hortus conclusus* exactly. It is an enclosed garden in which both the love of the Song of Songs and the sinful transgressions and expulsion of the Garden of Eden can be displayed. The only part missing is a redemptive City of God, yet with such a pessimistic and realist author as Émile Zola, it is not surprising that this story ends in despair rather than restoration.[79] These French works of Hugo and Zola are only two examples of literary works that pulled from the *hortus conclusus* tradition, the subject and theme of gardens was just as prominent in French literature as in French art.

Finally, it would be remiss not to discuss the French Nabis movement in the late nineteenth century and their use of the *hortus conclusus*. The Nabis were a group of young artists working in Brittany, France. They were heavily influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites of England and in many ways took up their same mantle of expressing the world again through symbolic and mystical experiences. They commonly used medieval tropes and religious subjects, including of course the *hortus conclusus*.[80] Maurice Denis, a famous French artist of the nineteenth century who is commonly associated with the Nabis movement, painted *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel* (1893) within a *hortus conclusus* (Figure 10). Despite the fact that the story of Jacob wrestling the angel is not one of the three characteristic scriptures utilized within a *hortus conclusus,* upon

79. Émile Zola was incredibly focused on contemporary writing and painting depicting the "real" modern life. He critiqued artists that would beautify or idealize the hardships of everyday life.
80. Lochnan, "Introduction", 27.

further review it makes sense to place this scene within a walled garden. Much like the Garden of Eden, Mary's Garden, the garden of Song of Songs, and the City of God, this is a scene in which God and humanity are meeting as equals. As Jacob wrestles God there is an experience of communication with the divine as well as a spiritual transformation. Jacob walks away from this night blessed by God and given a new name, Israel. Therefore, when Denis was deciding what background to give this important religious scene it probably seemed logical to place behind them a short wall, sectioning off this intimate moment between Jacob and God from the rest of the world. In many ways this is a new use for the *hortus conclusus,* but it fits right in with the enclosed gardens intentional purposes for categorizing a space that is both temporal and sacred.

József Rippl-Rónai and Artistide Maillol of the Nabis also utilized the *hortus conclusus* in their work, but their use of the *hortus conclusus* was influenced primarily by the inspiration of medieval Mary gardens.[81] Maillol's *Enchanted Garden* (1894-8) captures in wool embroidery a scene of women within the garden (Figure 11). The women's faces and dresses blend well into the garden's foliage and animal inhabitants creating a flowing scene that leaves the viewer questioning where woman and garden separate. While there is no garden fence or specific margins to the garden, the border around the entire piece sets off a clear enclosure. Maillol's choice to depict these women, without their male counterparts focuses this *hortus conclusus* on the garden from the Song of Songs rather than the Garden of Eden. In this garden the sacred womanhood is emphasized and these women take on the visage of the strong and nurturing Virgin Mary. Rónai's 1898 work, *Woman in a Red Dress,* pulls from a similar theme of the sacred woman (Figure 12). In Ronai's wool piece, the woman stands alone, this time with a

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81. Cindy Kang, "József Rippl-Rónai's Embroideries: Crafting Hungarian Modernism in Paris," in *Foreign Artists and Communities in Modern Paris, 1870-1914: Strangers in Paradise*, eds. Susan Waller and Karen L. Carter (New York: Routledge, 2015), 214-216.

defined fence enclosure and next to a prominent tree that takes up the foreground. This woman in red also stands amongst many red and white rose bushes, which (as stated previously) represent the passion and love of Christ as well as the virginity of Mary, respectively, in Christian iconography.

Ronai is utilizing a much more overt style than Maillol, making it very clear that his woman in red is indeed a modern Mary in her *hortus conclusus*. Both of these pieces are beautiful examples that the traditional understanding and symbolism of the *hortus conclusus* was not lost or completely changed by nineteenth-century French artists. While the *hortus conclusus* was heavily adapted by the French artists from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, there were always artists and authors who were willing to return to the medieval tradition and pay homage to the *hortus conclusus'* Western Christian roots.

Conclusion

The tradition of the *hortus conclusus* began in the scriptural traditions of the Hebrew and Christian people. Throughout these scriptures, the imagery of gardens, groves, and vineyards surrounded by safe and protective walls became a symbol for God's love and God's presence in the otherwise untamed and wild world. These gardens, groves, and vineyards became safe havens, places of comfort and sanctuary, as well as physical examples of God's continual care and presence within creation. Being only the second story after the Creation of the world, the Garden of Eden and its garden motif set a tone for the rest of the scriptures as well as a lesson for spiritual living. Humanity had chosen to sin and disrupt the paradise that God had produced and designed specifically for humanity and God to live in together. This garden unenclosed and

expansive, was suddenly shut up, and humanity was shut out. Ever since Hebrew and Christian peoples have been writing and working on a return.

Other scriptures attempt to find God within nature again, to make the point that although the paradise is lost our connection with God has not been lost. However, this divine connection in real life has become arduous where it once was natural. Now the nature in which God can be encountered is chaotic, wild, and dangerous, so how is one to commune with God again in such a setting? This is where the stories and the tradition of gardening come together. Whether the ancient stories were imaginative allegories or mirrors of personal experiences with nature and harvests, the writers of the Hebrew and Christian passages regarding God's protective havens understood that the work of the garden was just as valued as the place of the garden itself.

The Garden of Eden set a tone that work was going to be needed to repair what had been broken. In order to mold the chaos back into order, humanity was going to have to labor, toil and work the earth. Humanity would have to act in God's stead or (as some would believe) work with God to harness the wildness of nature. In this way, the tradition of the *hortus conclusus*, the enclosed garden, was made manifest. Through gardening and landscaping humanity could once again return to a moment of time and a parcel of space with the Creator. Yet, the world outside the garden walls had not changed, and thus the walls that kept humanity out of Eden were now used to protect these new paradises.

The *hortus conclusus* of the medieval monasteries had seemingly made a compromise with God—Eden could only be allowed to survive in a fallen world if it was protected and in many ways turned into a fortress.[82] Eden would forever be vulnerable, and an enclosed garden was the only protection the medieval mind could imagine. Even as the tradition of the *hortus*

82. McClung, *Architecture of Paradise,* 24.

conclusus extended into aesthetics through medieval art, these small, enclosed gardens were isolated by high walls and fences keeping Eden safe from the evil and chaos just outside the boundary.[83]

It was not until the modern notion of landscape was expanded outward, through new gardening techniques as well as beautiful artistic fantasies, that Eden could be extended beyond walls. The artists and landscapers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries pushed the boundaries of the *hortus conclusus*, taking Augustine's Book of Nature outside its usual enclosure, and extended God's grace and presence. These artists saw the possibilities of a wider Eden; they saw the beauty in the cultivated as well as in the wild. Paradise was being reclaimed in the masterpieces of Dutch, British, and French landscape art and the viewer was being invited to enjoy God in every part of Nature. These artists had attempted to return their viewers to the time before the fall and expulsion, to remind everyone of God's original plan, a garden that surrounded and engulfed rather than separated and detached. Their modern gardens instead gave paradise back its hope, returned the *hortus conclusus* to its Song of Songs and Revelation references of a space and time when humanity would be rewarded with an eternal spring. This modern *hortus conclusus* lacked the wall and fence, but it maintained the feelings of transience and continued to be a sanctuary from the wretchedness of the world.[84]

The *hortus conclusus* took many forms in both the landscape gardens and landscape art through the centuries. The Western Christian world interpreted, cultivated, and created enclosed gardens repeatedly, each with different styles and forms, yet the foundations were always the

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83. William H. Robinson, "Painting the Modern Garden: An Introduction," in *Painting the Modern Garden: Monet to Matisse*, eds. Monty Don, Ann Dumas, Heather Lemonedes, James Priest, William H. Robinson, Clare A. P. Willsdon, Lucy I. Zimmerman (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2015), 19.
84. Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 31.

same. The artists and gardeners of the Dutch, British, and French worlds slaved over their creations in an effort to comfort their audience with a piece of heavenly paradise away from the disordered and sinfully tainted world. The examples of gardens and art from this paper all sought to return to the Garden of Eden and the garden of love where God and humanity could meet easily and openly. Whether it was an explicit representation of the scriptural *hortus conclusus* or an implicit allegory, the sentiment of these artists remained the same throughout the centuries and throughout these three countries. Something was missing from the world, and it could only be regained through hard work, skill, and contemplation amidst divine creation.

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