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Et in Arcadia Ego

Landscape theory and the funereal imagination in eighteenth-century Britain

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PhD
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ABSTRACT

This study considers the relationship between landscape and the Arcadian funereal imagination in the context of eighteenth century Britain, arguing that the Arcadian landscapes imagined by the British elite were instruments of rituals facilitating the reformation and transformation of socioeconomic, political, and moral structures of the British empire.

Drawing upon texts and landscape practices, three case studies are examined: Alexander Pope’s (1688-1744) Twickenham grotto and his descriptive letter to Edward Blount; Sir William Chambers’ (1723-1796) Dissertation on oriental gardening and his design for Kew gardens, Sir John Soane’s (1753-1837) manuscript Crude hints towards an history of my house in LIF and his house-museum in Lincoln’s Inn Fields in London.

The landscape itinerary of Pope’s Twickenham villa, in relation to his letter to Blount, suggests that it was structured analogous to the initiatory route of the Eleusinian mysteries as accounted in Pope’s translation of the Odyssey. Noting Pope’s engagement with Freemasonry, associated with the Opposition party, I suggest this implied Odyssean journey not only metaphorically anticipates the restitution of the Stuart dynasty and the reassertion of a political order founded upon aristocratic land ownership, but is also a means by which the ‘initiates’ contest the Enlightenment ideal of a mind of autonomy.

In relation to the Burkean sublime, Chambers’ Dissertation, an imaginary travel narrative, is read as a city landscaping theory which aims to shape the morals of British citizens exposed to the erosion of commercial society. Whilst the scenes of luxury in the Chinese gardens imply a double effect of commercial society, the funereal imagery of ‘the surprising,’ built upon the Burkean sublime-effect, is intended as a cure of moral corruption associated with luxury.

Stimulated by geological notions (e.g. stratigraphy and catastrophism), Soane’s ruinous text of Crude hints, a mirror of the house-museum as well as the earth, illustrates a parallel between the ‘first principles’ of the movement of the earth and that of the mind, i.e. imagination and signification. The funereal imagination in the text, which itself represents simultaneous creation and destruction, is revealed to be the architect’s construction of an ideal language that can express the being of the nation and the self.

This thesis ends with a theoretical discussion of the role of the funereal imagination in eighteenth century landscape and architecture, i.e. how British imperial identity was forged, transmitted, negotiated, and reconstructed constantly within the temporally and spatially extended discursive realm of Arcadian mythology.
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By signing this declaration I certify that:

• This thesis was composed only by myself.
• The thesis comprises work that is my own.
• This work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

Yue ZHUANG
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Plunging from my earlier studies of the phenomenology of text and landscapes in China into the funereal environments of 18th century Britain has been a challenging and often tortuous ritual journey. I should never have reached the gardens of Persephone were it not for the wise counsel of many mystai along the way.

First and foremost, my thanks go to my supervisors, Mark Dorrian for setting me the challenges and inspiring my thoughts throughout the long journey and John Lowry for being the Charon in the boat ferrying me safely across the Styx.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

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Chapter 1

Introduction:
The British elite and the British Arcadia

1.1 Virgil, Augustus and the Roman Arcadia
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An enigmatic tomb situated in a pastoral ambiance. Visited by a number of shepherds, the tomb bears the eroded inscription: ‘Et in Arcadia Ego.’ This is the scene of Arcadia that frequented Renaissance men’s imagination. It was typically depicted by Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) in two paintings entitled Arcadian Shepherds: the Chatsworth version in 1627 and the Louvre version in 1637–8 (Fig. 1–1, 2). ‘Et in Arcadia Ego’ is a classical theme that was expressed in Eclogues, by the Roman poet, Virgil. The locus of an ideal pastoral life in Greek mythology, Arcadia, in Virgil’s interpretation, was dominated by a tomb. It becomes a realm in which, as Erwin Panofsky observes, ‘human suffering and superhumanly perfect surroundings create a dissonance.’ This classical theme exerted a powerful hold upon the British imagination in the eighteenth century. This is not only seen in a number of paintings and engravings imitating Poussin’s compositions; or poems following the Arcadian genre, but it also had an impact on designs of landscape gardens and architecture, which featured funeral furniture such as mausoleums, tombs, urns, and wreaths, giving a funereal ambiance.

3 Arcadia flourished in the Italian Renaissance with the work of Jacopo Sannazaro (1458–1530) (in his poem Arcadia), Torquato Tasso (1544–1595) (in his Aminta) and Giovanni Battista Guarini (1538–1612). Arcadia was also to give its name to the academy Queen Christina of Sweden posthumously mothered in Rome—Accademia dell’Arcadia (founded in 1690), and it was to dominate Italian poetry in the first half of the eighteenth century. See Liliana Barroero and Stefano Susinno, ‘Arcadian Rome, Universal Capital of the Arts,’ in Art in Rome in the Eighteenth Century, ed. Edgar Peters Bowron and Joseph Rishel (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art in association with Merrell, 2000), pp. 47–77.

4 Although Virgil did not write this elusive phrase, ‘Et in Arcadia Ego’ may be thought to capture the essential spirit of Virgil’s pastorals. It was in a painting in about 1621 by Guercino that the phrase first emerged. See M. Owen Lee, Death and Rebirth in Virgil’s Arcadia (New York: SUNY Press, 1989), p. 89. For Virgil’s original lines describing a tomb in Arcadia, see Eclogue 5, in Virgil: Eclogues; Georgics; Aeneid, I–VI, trans. H. R. Fairclough, ed. G. P. Goold (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1999), vol. I, p. 57.

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Chapter 1  Introduction: The British elite and the British Arcadia

Fig. 1–1 *The Arcadian Shepherds*  
by Nicolas Poussin, 1637–8 (The Louvre Museum)
Chapter 1      Introduction: The British elite and the British Arcadia

Fig. 1–2  *The Arcadian Shepherds*  
by Nicolas Poussin, 1627 (The Chatsworth House)
As examples, the Arcadian theme was embodied in works such as the Twickenham garden (1720s) by Alexander Pope (1688–1744), the classical poet and amateur architect, and the landscape estate of Stowe, designed by William Kent (1685–1748), the painter, architect and landscape designer. The Arcadian theme also informed numerous designs for mausoleums and monuments in the eighteenth century, from Nicolas Hawksmoor’s (1661–1736) design of the mausoleum at Castle Howard (1731), through William Chambers’ (1723–1796) design of a mausoleum for Frederick Louis, Prince of Wales in 1751, the ruined Roman arch in Princess Augusta’s Kew gardens (1757–63) to more designs contributed by youthful architects at the Royal Academy since the 1770s, such as those of John Soane (1753–1837), James Gandon (1743–1829), and Thomas Hardwick (1752–1829), many of which were never executed.  

A conventional and influential view explained this Arcadian theme—where death was present—in eighteenth-century Britain mainly as an expression of ‘elegiac melancholy,’ a romantic device to emphasize the transience of life.’ They interpret this eighteenth-century attitude as resembling the Renaissance conception of Arcadia as a ‘Utopia of bliss and beauty’ distant in time (as distinct from the classical view of it as distant in space), an object of nostalgia, a haven, not only away from a faulty reality, but from a questionable present. 

This ‘escapist’ account, however, has been challenged by more recent scholarship. David Carrier argues that in truly Virgilian fashion this ‘escapist genre has frequently been used to make political statements about the here and now.’ From an anthropological perspective, Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides highlights that arcadia in Greek mythology is a land of Orphic or Bacchic mysteries that celebrates death and spiritual rebirth. Arcadians all enter into the mysteries through rites of initiation of which the tomb is an essential component. It does not evoke mere contemplation of death or loss—rather the tomb is associated with the birth of a

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10 Coffin, *The English Garden: Meditation and Memorial*, p. 27.
new self, and a regenerated future. For, according to the mysteries, there will be born from the tomb a miraculous boy who will restore the Golden Age to the initial co-existence of man and gods in Arcadia. Virgil was familiar with these mysteries and rituals. The tomb that dominates Arcadia in the *Eclogues*, Anagnostou-Laoutides argues, is reminiscent of the Orphic or Bacchic mysteries. Situating the Roman poet in his time—that of the civil war—she suggests that Virgil’s *Eclogues* do not address readers simply interested in the pleasures of the countryside or contemporary literary debates. Instead, Virgil is preoccupied with his fellow Romans, who have experienced a sense of disorientation and painful loss during the long civil wars, who are now called to unite under Augustus so that Romans can fulfil their foretold destiny: the Julian clan, led by Caesar, will bring the glory of the Empire to the Ocean, and his successor, Augustus, will pacify it, in order to restore an essentially Roman Arcadia. Desiring Rome’s spiritual regeneration, Virgil placed the tomb (of Daphnis) in Arcadia as a symbol of the Arcadian rituals of death and regeneration. Consequently, the phrase ‘*Et in Arcadia Ego*’ needs not express sadness at the conquest of Arcadia by death, but may rather be an insightful reflection on death being a toll for the coming Golden Age.

### 1.1 Virgil, Augustus and Roman Arcadia

Anagnostou-Laoutides’ study of the Virgilian arcadia in the *Eclogues* in relation to ancient rituals sheds new light on our understanding of ‘*Et in Arcadia Ego*. Extending this perspective to Virgil’s later epic, *The Aeneid* (29–19 BC), the poet’s conception of Arcadia as a prototype of the Roman empire [Augustan Rome] is much more clearly revealed. *The Aeneid* was commissioned by the emperor Augustus in the wake of Rome’s devastating civil war and the emergence of a Roman empire unifying the former states on the Italian peninsula. The problem for Augustus was not only to heal Roman society, to ‘restore’ the Republic, but also how to create a unified sense of Roman identity among the people of the colonies, who were ‘Italians’ rather than ‘Romans.’ The Homeric-style epic of the *Aeneid*, therefore, is aimed at ambitious goals: to recall citizens to the old virtues of manly, valorous service to the republic, the re-conception of Roman religion, and reverence for the divine forces guiding the nation’s destiny. In brief, it was to provide a model of a moral order, or ‘classical republicanism’ as called today,

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14 Ibid., p. 27.
15 Ibid., p. 28.
16 Anagnostou-Laoutides did not consider the role of funeral ritual and the implicit imagery of Arcadia in Virgil’s later epic, *Aeneid* (29–19 BC). The implicit imagery of Arcadia in the *Aeneid* has been rarely examined by modern scholarship in relation to the Arcadia in *Eclogues*.
by which the Romans and Italians, as a whole, can imagine society as a Golden Age.

The mythical land of Arcadia and its mysteries are suitable for this imperial mission of creating a unified social imaginary. Farmers in a pastoral land, the Arcadians, were renowned for their rustic lifestyle of simplicity and their virtuous characters.\(^\text{18}\) Led by Orpheus, a sage and a priest who presided over the rituals of death and regeneration, the Arcadians were all initiated into mysteries and know the secrets for achieving happiness, identified with virtues. These associations of Arcadians were perfectly suited to the utopian imaginary that Virgil built up for Rome under Augustus’ rule: an agricultural economy associated with moral ethics; a polity which, on the façade, asserted a restoration of the Republic; and a unified religion created at Augustus’ reformation, which, replacing its tradition of mixed religions, created a unified sense of identity that included both Romans and Italians.

Arcadian rituals, I believe, played a key role in Virgil’s conception of a unified religion, and in turn, of Augustus’ religious reformation programme. Readers would remember the burials that punctuated the *Aeneid*. To transplant the House of Troy to the new land, Aeneas had to bury his family gods, *Penates*, in the *terra neova*.\(^\text{19}\) His father Anchises, Aeneas buried in Sicily; Palinurus, he buries at the bottom of the mainland; Misenus, he buries near Cumae … Each one of those sites becomes in its turn a place in Rome’s future history. By interring his people in the new land, Aeneas domesticated the *terra nova*, and laid the ground for the future city of Rome.\(^\text{20}\)

The significant ritual burial in the *Aeneid*, a crucial element by which the origin of Rome was accounted for, may be seen as a skilful imitation or re-invention of the Arcadian rituals of death and regeneration, by which a new identity with continuity to the past is created. Unlike most pre-Roman myths (or religions), Arcadia is not tied to a specific place. By performing the rites of its mysteries—death and rebirth, Arcadians can establish essential links with the new land. Virgil is familiar with and avails himself of this tradition.\(^\text{21}\) In the eighth book of the

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18 Hesiod mentioned that elements of the initial Golden Age remained with the just caste of farmers, an idea that Virgil fully expands in his Georgics, and through allusions to the Epicurean belief of the Great Year that implies a cyclic perception of time and history.


20 For an insightful analysis of burial not only founded but also appropriated places, see Robert Pogue Harrison, *The Dominion of the Dead* (Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 27.

21 Before Virgil’s time, there was already a legend according to which Arcadia had been transplanted to the site of Rome, on the Palatine hill. When Evander settled at Rome with his Arcadian followers, he began by founding a cult of Pan. They established a rustic utopia as the first nucleus of the ‘pax aurea’ (golden peace). The myth was not rare, since versions of it survive in Varro, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Livy. This myth provides a reference for Virgil’s conception of an Arcadian Golden Age situated on Italian soil. Virgil alluded often to the change of the pastoral location from Sicily to Arcadia throughout
Aeneas, Arcadians are described as settling beside the banks of the River Tiber under the leadership of Evander and Pallas. When Aeneas meets them, Evander is performing a sacrifice in honour of Hercules, a god who is also an initiate into the mysteries. This ritual performance by the new Arcadian king, Evander is prophetic, as it is by the same rituals that Aeneas, as Evander with Arcadia, transplanted Troy to the land of Rome, with which Arcadia is to be merged.

Aeneas’ burial of the Penates is reflected in Augustus’ restoration of eighty two temples in Rome, crucial elements of his imperial programme. Just as Aeneas, by burying his ancestors, fulfilled his mission of recreating the House of Troy and the future Rome, Augustus realized his ambition of imperial reformation, recreating a unified sense of Rome. And just as Aeneas was remembered as a founder of new Troy, so Augustus was immortalized as a re-founder of a new Rome. The reconstruction of local temples in the City of Rome is incorporated with Augustus’ restructuring of political power, to assimilate provincial aristocrats into Rome in order to rejuvenate the ruling class of the empire. Moreover, the Roman temples served not only as religious sites, but also as the monuments in which Roman memories and Roman history resided. Transplanted to a new place, the temples or monuments recall a different past, a past seen in terms of the reconstruction, as much as that of the original structure. As viewers encounter a temple, their attention is drawn to the specific person who built the temple and the specific event it commemorates, and they are thus reminded of the accomplishments of their ancestors and of what it means to be Roman. As Orlin argues, the displacing the temples from their original places is not intended to erase the pre-roman past but to re-shape its memory. These monuments insist upon a wilful forgetfulness of the prior history of the temple, and this forgetfulness of the past may be an essential ingredient in the construction of a new Roman identity. These monuments linked not to the history of expansionist Rome over the previous 500 years, but rather to Augustan Rome and its fuller incorporation of Italy.

In this way, Virgil’s Arcadia may be seen as an exemplar of an ideal republican ‘moral order’ (economic, political and religious) that dominated Roman political thinking and the way they imagined their society. The anonymous tomb pushed to the foreground of Arcadia in the Eclogues. See Anagnostou-Laoutides, ‘Ancient Ritual and the Search for Arcadia: From Vergil to Poussin,’ pp. 28–9, n. 49–50.


24 On Aeneid as a cultural medium to express and shape Roman imperial ideologies and social imaginaries of a unified identity and society, there have been comprehensive studies, although the myth of Arcadia in Aeneid has not been emphasized. See F. Cairns, ‘Geography and Nationalism in the
the *Eclogues* became the very instrument to reshape Roman memories and create a new Roman social imaginary. The tomb is a monument to a past that has to be wilfully forgotten in order for the future to be constructed. It gives the new Roman Empire a sense of unity, ordained by a single authoritative figure. It creates an identity for people within a geographically extensive group of states and peoples, bound together as much by forgetting as by remembering. The Arcadian tomb thus is capable of reordering both topographical and chronological space. It thus links a group’s identity not to the history of wars, but rather to a promising future based on an inclusive empire.

1.2 Poussin, the Bourbon monarchy, and French Arcadia

A similar funereal vision of Arcadia, sixteen hundred years later, re-emerged from the imagination of the French painter Nicolas Poussin. Poussin’s Arcadia, as scholars have suggested, is essentially symbolic and continues the Virgilian tradition.25 Paintings of Arcadian visions for Poussin, as poems for Virgil, are not an instrument for escaping to unattainable ideal realms, but are firmly grounded in the social-politics of their realities. Despite his residence in Rome, Poussin, as T. P. Olson writes, ‘did not segregate contemporary realities from his discussion of art.’ Poussin’s correspondence leaves no doubt that the political situation in France influenced his art and his decisions about the subjects of his paintings.26 Judith E. Bernstock’s study, *Poussin and the French Dynastic Ideology*, reveals how the painter was preeminent in supporting Bourbon claims, and in establishing an early, multi-layered iconography of absolutism in French painting.27 As she demonstrates, the two versions of the *Arcadian Shepherds* (1627) and (1637–8) were painted as a panegyric of the Bourbon Dynasty and Louis XIV’s accession to the throne, exploiting the arts to create a public image of dynastic continuity.

The two paintings were produced in the wake of the Civil War (Fronde) and the Spanish

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25 Discussions about the origins of Poussin’s landscapes have led to a general acceptance of his symbolic style. Carrier, *Poussin’s Paintings*, p.153. However, similar to the case of Virgil, there is a lack of examination of the relation between Poussin’s *Arcadian Shepherds* and the implied Arcadia in the *Aeneid*, although several of Poussin’s paintings were drawn from the story in the *Aeneid*, e.g. *Venus Bringing Arms to Aeneas* and *Landscape with Hercules and Cacus*, 1658–1659, based on the lines of 190–212, 285–304, *Aeneid* VIII.


Chapter 1      Introduction:

The British elite and the British Arcadia

War and at the time when France was reunited. Louis XIV was being elevated to being a king equal to the ancient emperors in his enrichment of society, as well as in his military prestige that united the country. As the Bourbon supporter, Charles de Noaille writes, ‘you have created an empire in war, in peace, in felicity.’

Imperium romanum was the Bourbon monarchs’ model of a universal empire. Adopting Virgil’s phrase in the Aeneid, ‘I have given an empire without limit,’ Louis XIV designated himself as the successor to the Roman emperors, and ultimately to the Arcadians, in order to prove that the French kings were promised ‘the empire of the world.’ Following the military exploits, Louis XIV and Cardinal Richelieu promoted the revival of classical learning and liberal arts to form the imagination of a unified France and the dynastic continuity of the Bourbon monarchy.

Their imperial strategy was underpinned by renaissance Neoplatonist ideology. Based on the works of Plato and the Neoplatonist Plotinus (ca. 204/5–270 CE), the fifteenth-century Florentine academy produced a moral philosophic framework in which religions, philosophies, and mysteries of the ancient world are all reconciled. This stream of Neoplatonist thought, via members of the academies’ (e.g. Marsilio Ficino [1433–1499] and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola [1463–1494]) interpretation, were synthesized with Christianity. Whilst Protestantism first embraced this approach, the Catholic Church, by the seventeenth-century, also eagerly assimilated Neoplatonist philosophy as it sought inspiration in ancient philosophies and religions for rejuvenation. The Florentine Academy’s Neoplatonist system leads to contemplation as the true end of man; and with this the arts are vitally linked. For Ficino places their genesis in the contemplative experience. ‘All those who have invented anything great in any of the nobler arts did so especially when they took refuge in the citadel of

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28 ‘The bloody battles le Juste has won through great wisdom make him renowned throughout the universe. … He has also earned non-bloody victories. … O great king … by your generosity … certainly because you are Juste, preferring equity to force, … by defeating the great powers of Europe, … you have created an empire in war, in peace, in felicity.’ Charles De Noailles, L’Empire du Juste, selon l’institution de la vraye vertu, 2 vols (Paris, 1632), vol. 2, p. 538. Quoted in ibid., p.184.

29 Focusing on the reign of Louis XIV, but noting its precedent under Louis XIII, Jean-Marie Apostolidès has studied the mythology of the Imperium romanum promoted by the Bourbon dynasty attempting to recover the heritage of universal empire presumed to be its right (Le Roi-ma-chine: spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV [Paris, 1981], 67). Quoted in ibid., p. 52.

30 A verse under an image of Francus addressed the new king: ‘Of the noble blood of Troy mixed with Latin blood was born the great Caesar who marshalled under the eagle the Empire of almost all the earth and the sea. And you, being born of the blood of the Troy and Remus, the true Caesar of the French, you are predestined to submit the Empire of this world to the rule of the three lilies.’ Quoted in full by Nicolas Bergier and p. de la Salle, Le Bouquet royal, ou le parterre des riches inventions qui ont servy à l’entrée du Roy Louis le Juste en sa ville de Reims (Reims, 1637), p. 29, describing Louis XIII’s pre-coronation entry into Reims in 1610. Quoted in ibid., pp. 51–2.


the soul.'\textsuperscript{33} Arts, in particular poetry, with its divine origin, are of religious importance for the prophet, who in his performance of poetry, is a being divinely inspired, and achieves the union with God. \textsuperscript{34} This Neoplatonic conception of philosophy/arts as a way toward union with God, distinct from the traditional Peripatetic tradition, supplied many renaissance humanists with some of their richest inspiration, fostered the revival of liberal arts. With its views of virtues as the universal law, Neoplatonist philosophy had an impact on the development of political thought, namely governing through virtuous actions, which found its expressions in both Florentine civic humanism (or classical republicanism)\textsuperscript{35} and moral absolutism (princely government, as in Louis XIV’s France).

France adopted the fifteenth-century Florentine Neoplatonic academy tradition in the sixteenth century, which culminated in Louis XIV and Richelieu’s establishment of the French Academy. Using the academy as a cultural machine, they promoted the arts to glorify the monarch as a divine king whereby the prosperity of arts under his patronage would not only demonstrate his Orphic virtue, but would also indicate that France, under his rule, would achieve a Golden Age through its regeneration as Arcadia.\textsuperscript{36} This imperial programme was also compatible with Christianity. The serenity of Arcadia and its sad, but contained, realisation of mortality suited Renaissance Christians who aspired to the afterlife of the spirit. Orpheus and his rites were also widely known at this time and were steadily syncretised with Christian ceremonies as pagan presentiments of Christ and of the Christian miracle.\textsuperscript{37} The Orpheus-Arcadia allegory therefore contributed to Bourbon propaganda that the French king was the


\textsuperscript{34} Neoplatonism, or Renaissance Platonism is based on the translation of the works of Plato, Plotinus and other Neoplatonists by Marsilio Ficino and members of his Florentine academy. The origins of Neoplatonism can be traced back to the era of Hellenistic syncretism (Hellenistic period 323–146 BC) which spawned such movements and schools of thought as Gnosticism and the Hermetic tradition. Inheriting the spirit of Hellenistic syncretism, the Florentine Academy studies and interprets religions of the ancient world. Ficino regarded the rebirth of Platonic philosophy as part of the universal revival of the arts. He considered Plato as part of a long tradition of ancient theology that was inaugurated by Hermes, culminated with Plato, and continued with Plotinus and the other Neoplatonists. He also synthesized Platonism and Christianity as a new theology and metaphysics. Aimed at reconciling not only religion and philosophy, but also reconciling all religions, under a moral order ordained by a single sovereign, Florentine Neoplatonism served as a major ideology for Renaissance monarchs with ambitions of re-achieving the Golden Age of the Roman Empire.

\textsuperscript{35} Florentine civic humanism, or classical republicanism, was with its roots in ancient Roman ideals, was proposed by the Florentine humanists as a new political language of virtue that replaced the language of class and collective interests. Virtue meant serving the common good, which was defined by patrician statesmen. Virtue is firmly associated with loyalty to the elite class. James Hankins, \textit{Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 92.


\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p. 87.
Most Christian Emperor and that France was the Most Christian Kingdom, residing on a
promised land (field or garden) ruled by monarchs of the royal bloodline of St. Louis. With
reference to Arcadia, the undying Bourbon dynasty guaranteed the perpetuity and specialness
of France.\textsuperscript{38} It is to this cultural atmosphere that Poussin’s mind belonged—the Bourbon monarchy as
the embodiment of Neoplatonist moral absolutism and rejuvenated Christianity. In his letter to
his patron Paul Fréart de Chantelou (1609-1694), Poussin expressed the fear that the
‘malignancy of the century’ in which ‘virtue, conscience, religion [were] banished from among
men’ and had given way to ‘vice, deceit and self-interest.’ Yet he hoped that ‘this great disorder
might bring about some good reform,’ \textsuperscript{39} which, certainly, refers to the rule of Louis XIV.
Poussin’s pictorial panegyric of Arcadia aimed to contribute to this. As Bernstock has shown,
the landscape in the second \textit{Arcadian Shepherds}, which is proved to be derived from the actual
landscape of Col de St. Louis, embodies the birth of the dynasty that is reborn with the
accession of each successive Bourbon king along a direct line into the foreground, or future.
The Arcadian landscape—Col de St. Louis, Rennes-les-Bains, and the shadow symbolic of
royalty—therefore yields an explicit representation of the dynastic continuity.\textsuperscript{40} There are
reasons to believe that Poussin did not paint the landscape merely as mirror-like
representations, but rather, his painting provides a re-invented language of ‘Arcadian’ rituals—
death and regeneration—which might be performed in a landscape environment by the
Bourbon monarchs.

An important branch in the Florentine Neoplatonist academy tradition is Hermetism,\textsuperscript{41} an
aggregation of Greek religions and philosophies of the first century (often thought to be the
religion of the Egyptians), which emphasized rituals of initiation as a key to a complete
knowledge of the Universe and of man. Through this channel of Hermeticism-Neoplatonism,

\textsuperscript{38} Bernstock, \textit{Poussin and French Dynastic Ideology}, pp. 51, 433.
Politics of Style}, pp. 77–8.
\textsuperscript{40} For a full discussion, see Bernstock, \textit{Poussin and French Dynastic Ideology}, pp. 252–68.
\textsuperscript{41} Hermetism books (\textit{Corpus Hermeticum}), first translated and printed by Ficino along with Platonic
texts in the late fifteenth century, had an immense influence on Renaissance thinkers. These books were
attributed to Hermes, a legendary Egyptian prophet known as Hermes Trismegistus and identified with
Thoth the Egyptian God of wisdom. They were supposed to contain the Egyptian mysteries which were
believed to be a key to a complete knowledge of the universe and of man. Although in fact, they were
mainly written by Greek philosophers in the second and third centuries, and they reflected the prevailing
syncretic Platonic philosophy of the period when they were written. The emphasis was on Egyptian
religion, ritual and astrology. The universe described was a Neo-platonic one, filled with emanations of the
divine and these Hermetic treatises had a powerful influence in shaping Renaissance Neoplatonism.
\url{http://referenceworks.brillonline.com} (accessed on 12–05–12)
the revival of Virgil’s Arcadia among the Neoplatonic academies would have unlikely been
divorced from its traditional ties to ‘Arcadian’ mysteries and its rituals of initiation. Rituals of
initiation into ‘Arcadian’ mysteries, practiced by the Romans during the Hellenistic period and
lost with the fall of the Roman empire,42 were first re-invented in the Florentine Neoplatonic
academy under the patronage of the Medicis—Cosimo and Rorenzo Medici, and had been
practiced by a wide range of members of academies and secret societies. Little work has been
done on the practices of rituals of initiation within Renaissance academies, but what we do
know is suggestive.43

Poussin’s Hermetic interest might be indicated by his emphasis on the numerical harmony
of his paintings, and also by the correspondence between his paintings and the ideas of
Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639), which envisioned a Hermetic-Neoplatonic utopia in his
*The City of the Sun* (1623, 1638).44 It has also been shown that, as an antiquarian, Poussin may
be seen as a major iconographer who re-invented rituals for Christianity, to rejuvenate the
banal rites that had lost their original link with nature. As Elizabeth Cropper and Charles
Dempsey showed in their study of Poussin’s *Confirmation*, the painting is not simply a generic
representation of the sacrament as such, but is instead a deeply considered historical
reconstruction of a particular place and event, intended to document, so to speak, the antiquity
of the rite of confirmation as it actually was performed in the earliest days of the Church.45

Furthermore, as Anagnostou-Laoutides has emphasised, Poussin, like Virgil, was

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42 On Romans practices of rituals of mysteries, see Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, 
Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987). Like many subsequent Roman emperors, Augustus was
initiated at Eleusis. Immediately after his victory at Actium he participated in the Mysteries, so showing
the religion of the Greeks the same respect as at home he conferred on the religion of Rome. Dio Cassius

43 This unrevealed tradition is indicated by wide-ranging although unsystematic scholarship. For
example, in their resuscitation of Plato by the academy at Careggi, Ficino practiced the rites of Orphic
singing himself. As it is shown in many contemporary illustrations, e.g. Agostino de’ Musi, called
Agostino Veneziano (Italian, active 1509–36), *Orpheus*, engraving, 31/2x 23/8” (8.9 x 6 cm). Bartsch
14–208–259. Orpheus plays his lyre by the gates of hell, in a garden. see Robert B. Simon, ‘Bronzino's
“Cosimo I de' Medici as Orpheus”,’ *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* 81, no. 348 (Autumn, 1985),
pp. 17–27. Ficino, in the poem to the *Commentaria Platonis*, p. 1130, describes a perhaps ideal complex
of a closed garden, entrance hall, porch, and interior room, possibly in a cave-like manner. David R.
Coffin and Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies., *The Italian Garden* (Washington:
Dumbarton Oaks, 1972), p. 30. Similar tradition of French academies in the sixteenth-century is also

44 Bernstock considered the ideas expressed in Campanella’s writings were felt in Poussin’s work during
the years between 1628–1642. See Bernstock, *Poussin and French Dynastic Ideology*, p. 154. For a
description of Campanella’s *The City of the Sun* and the suggestion that it describes a utopian city with
hermetic-neoplatonic ideologies, see Frances Amelia Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic

45 Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey, *Nicolas Poussin: Friendship and the love of painting*
interested in ancient pagan rites, a detail that is often overlooked. Poussin’s follower, Le Brun, declared in a lecture before the French Academy in 1671 that each figure in the master’s *Ecstasy of St. Paul* (1649–50; Paris, Louvre) hides ‘many mysteries.’ Poussin is familiar with Orphic mysteries, as well as with Orpheus’ profile as a sage who presided over rituals to do with death and regeneration. Poussin’s paintings of ‘Et in arcadia Ego’ therefore may be read as an Arcadian ritual re-imagined, and were intended as a guide for the French kings, who aspiring to become the Most Christian Monarchs, would have been initiated into this Hermetic-Neoplatonist new ‘moral order’ following the Roman emperors. Bernstock revealed that the Louis kings of Bourbon dynasty had carried out a military campaign in this region where Louis XIII had baptism. In this light, their military campaign in the key area of the bloodline of St Louis could be considered as the king’s implementing the rituals of initiation or regeneration, to become an Orpheus priest-king regenerated, and to seek the continuation of the dynasty in perpetuity.

The mythology of Arcadia, thus, under Poussin’s erudition and creativity, was re-invented not only as a pageant to celebrate the Bourbon monarchy, but more importantly, it might function as a vehicle that enabled the French monarchy to dignify and vindicate his imperial policies towards constructing the most powerful country in Europe since the Roman empire. This phenomenon, certainly, was not exclusive to France in the Renaissance. Although so far there has not been an exclusive study of Neoplatonist philosophy in the socio-political systems of the Renaissance city states, it has been acknowledged that it had an important influence on the image of the imperial monarchies in late sixteenth-century Europe, for example, Philip II in Spain and his uncle, Rudolf II, at Prague. In England, the Elizabethan court was receptive to Neoplatonism, not least as indicated in the conception of a magic Albion. The Stuarts, as Roy

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47 For a detailed study on Poussin’s relation with Orpheus, see McTighe, *Nicolas Poussin’s Landscape Allegories*, p. 23, for example. McTighe explains Poussin’s relation with Orpheus as a result of his involvement with the libertines, a group of thinkers who rejected the Christian tradition and the notion of the afterlife. Instead they believed that the pagan fertility rites which celebrated the seasonal cycle held the key to our inescapable need to submit to nature. Hence, Orpheus, known for his mystic rites, becomes a symbol of ‘death and regeneration as passions of nature,’ even of the Arcadian nature.


Strong and Vaughan Hart revealed, coherently adopted the Arcadia myth as a cultural device to express the status of Britain as God’s chosen land, home of the purified faith of Christianity.\(^{50}\)

Broken up by Civil War (1642–51), the Virgilian Arcadia re-emerged in English imagination (e.g. John Dryden [1631–1700]) in Restoration England, and increasingly played an important role in in Britain’s social imaginary in the eighteenth-century. Focusing on the period from the death of Queen Anne and the ascension of George I in 1714, to the first quarter of the nineteenth-century, this thesis aims to show how the ancient myth of death and regeneration in a landscape setting, functioned as a cultural medium (a modern mythology) for the British elite, in an era filled with social transitions and turbulences, to reconstruct economic, social, and moral structures, as a response to the rising capitalism, secularization, liberal individualism, or—in general—‘modernity.’

### 1.3 Research question: The British elite and the British Arcadia

Recovering from its civil war, Britain emerged as a nominally united kingdom when the Act of Union joined Scotland to England and Wales in 1707. As a major partner in the European alliance against Louis XIV’s (reign 1643–1715) expansionist ambitions, Britain had played a key role in a series of wars such as the Nine Years War (1689–97); the War of Spanish Succession (1702–13); and the Seven Years War (1756–63). These prolonged struggles fostered British patriotism, expanded its colonial territories, and spurred the growth of its commercial power. They also tested and transformed state power. They led directly to the expansion of the City of London; to the evolution of a more efficient and nationwide fiscal system; and to the founding of the Bank of England. The vision of Britain as an imperial nation, put forward by John Dee (1527–1568) in the sixteenth-century, had gained currency among the British elite, as illustrated in Pitt the Elder’s (1708–1778) famous ‘Great War for Empire.’\(^{51}\) By the late eighteenth century, Britain had become a great imperial power, dominating both territory and trade from the New World to the Far East.

The eighteenth century also witnessed great revolutionary and imperial crises. Under the engineering of a progressive Whig group, a majority of the old landed class, with the

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uncomfortable association of the Jacobites, had been excluded from power for almost three decades under George I and Robert Walpole’s government. Following the Seven Years War, a series of taxation policies were introduced both in Britain and in the American colonies. The policies provoked intense protests and riots in the cities of both America and England. The tension between the mother land and the colony further led to the American Revolution (1775–83), which Britain painfully lost. The next three decades were enveloped in the shadow of the French Revolution (1789–1799) and the Napoleonic Wars (1803–15). On the surface, these crises were caused by religious conflicts (the three Jacobite risings) and French interests in reducing Britain’s territorial autonomy along with her commercial and colonial power. At a deeper level, these crises reflected and were associated with radical shifts in British traditional social structures and institutions amidst the flux of globalization, industrialization, and modernity.

During these transitions throughout the eighteenth century, aristocrats and the emergent middle class negotiated their power relations. In this process a tension arose between ideologies based on (Roman) classical republicanism and the bourgeois moral order based on the Lockean liberal paradigm. Amidst the cultural atmosphere encouraging the revival of classical ideals and ideologies substantiated by reference to Rome, it is worth noting, that in their reformation of the British economic, political, and moral systems the elite were borrowing models—from the Roman moral socio-economic system (the agricultural economy) and the constitution (classical republicanism) to Roman virtus and even rediscovering their ‘Roman roots.’

Arcadia, as an intrinsically Roman national mythology, was endearing to the hearts of the British elite. For the elite who were educated in the atmosphere of the revival of Roman ideals, Virgil’s *Aeneid* was the standard reading side by side with Cicero and Cato’s moral philosophy, which they quote as canonical texts illustrating the Roman hero dedicated to public spirit in both their oratory and writing (e.g. Edmund Burke), poussin’s reinterpretation of these ancient moral ideals—illustrated in his numerous paintings and drawings in the Arcadian genre—received official sanction, as seen, for example, in the *Discourses* of Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–92), the first president of the Royal Academy. In Windsor Castle, Frederick Prince of Wales and his son George III accumulated the most impressive group of Poussin’s drawings in the world. Poussin’s reimagining of Arcadia in the Louvre *Arcadian Shepherds*, became the

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53 Ibid.
It is worth noting that the prospering of the funereal Arcadian vision in eighteenth-century Britain coincided with the times of imperial and revolutionary crises discussed above. Moreover, these funereal visions were entertained precisely by the aristocratic elite and their associates. The first wave of imagining and constructing funereal Arcadian landscapes in Britain occurred in the landscape movement during the 1720s and 40s driven by the Opposition party, as in the example of Lord Cobham’s Stowe garden from William Kent’s design (1731–48). The second wave of the Arcadian vision—as in the examples of the royal architect Sir William Chambers’ design of Kew Gardens (1757–63) and his imagining of an oriental arcadia in his *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772)—corresponded with the constitutional crisis in the 1760s. The third wave, implemented by the youthful architects of the Royal Academy, arrived in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, witnessing the American War, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic War. Their availing of the funeral Arcadian vision, a myth of death and regeneration that is central to Roman ideologies, I believe, was associated with the processes of social-cultural reconstruction led by the British elite during these social transitions. More precisely, the Arcadian myth, as it had in Augustan Roman and Bourbon France, functioned as a cultural medium by which the British socio-economic, political, and moral structures, as well as concepts such as nationhood and subjectivity were restructured or transformed.

This hypothesis draws on scholarship by historians and art historians, cultural and historical geographers, historical anthropologists, and sociologists, who have showed the many ways in which architecture and landscape were invested with symbolic meanings throughout history. Rather than being a mere mirror of reality, the idea of landscape was increasingly seen as a cultural construction, a work of the human mind.

In landscape studies of recent years, there has been a trend emphasizing landscapes’ ideological aspects. W.J.T. Mitchell argues that landscapes are modes of political discourse that promulgate ideologies. They are agents of power in and of themselves, working through cultural media and practices. But in most scholars’ treatment—such as, for example, Denis Cosgrove—the early modern pastoral landscape is mainly recognized as a bourgeois, individualist exercise of power over space, whilst the aspect of elite ideology emphasizing communal interests has been neglected. Similarly, scholars’ examination of the English

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Arcadian landscape have mainly been associated with the development of bourgeois identity—the ways in which landscape works actively to shape capitalist social relations and express bourgeois cultural values. This trend has been so prevalent that Arcadia has almost become a term exclusively associated with the idealized pastoral Arcadia—the one Joseph Addison celebrated in ‘Pleasures of the imagination.’

This phenomenon reflects the predominant Whig or Lockean-Liberal paradigm in historical studies in the twentieth century. This proposition is challenged by some canonical studies concerned with Florentine humanism. As examples, Frances Yates’ studies of Neoplatonism and Hermeticism and Hans Baron’s re-construction of civic humanism respectively demonstrate that the Florentine academy tradition—an important stream in Renaissance thought and also an essential source of modernity—contained at its core a counterweight to the Lockean-Liberal paradigm of constitutional development. This reconstruction of the Florentine academy tradition provides a highly useful framework for the thesis to examine the Arcadian theme as a republican ideology of the British elite class. As Hans Baron shows, Florentine humanism had a deep influence on seventeenth-century England and eighteenth-century America. Not a programme, but a ‘language,’ the impact of Florentine humanism affected both individuals and intellectual environments such as the Scottish Enlightenment. Under the framework of civic humanism, contemporary scholarship on eighteenth-century movements in cultural reconstruction such as the Burkean sublime and military heroism illuminate this thesis.

Meanwhile, Arcadian mysteries were also transferred into Britain via the different channels of underground societies, the most eminent being Freemasonry. Eighteenth-century Freemasonry, first invented in Scotland, was derived from the Renaissance academy tradition. Essentially an institution of the elite class, Freemasonry forged a brotherhood among senior members in social and cultural establishments who committed themselves as ‘builders of

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A number of the elite were involved in the underground society. From Lord Burlington and Pope, to Frederick Prince of Wales and many other members of royalty, all have been shown to be senior members, or masters, of Freemasonry.\(^6\) It may be assumed that these figures would have used ritualistic practices, which were central to the foundations of Freemasonry, to promote Roman (Arcadian) ideologies.

The thesis also benefits from scholarship on eighteenth and nineteenth-century English landscapes in the context of romantic historicism. Stephen Bann has demonstrated how nineteenth-century buildings and environments constituted complex mediations of the past for the contemporary public, visibly enshrining and expressing their own history as well as accounting for the question of subjectivity.\(^6\) Philippe Kelly’s study of the Society of Dilettanti has provided an exemplar of how these early archaeological impulses were driven and connected with the idea of seeking an alternate ego as well as a collective being.\(^6\) And focusing on the theme of the uncanny (e.g. ‘buried alive,’ ‘architecture dismembered’) in literature and art since the eighteenth-century, Anthony Vidler has investigated the relationships between politics, social thought, and architectural design, revealing the uncanny as a metaphor for a fundamentally unhomely modern condition.\(^6\) These major studies of romantic historicism, to which I owe considerable debt, however, do not grant the Arcadian theme a particularly central place.

Although long neglected, studies of landscapes and gardens in relation to ritual performances have emerged as a new strength in the field of landscape.\(^6\) Borrowing from anthropologists’ studies of ritual and its social implications, the Dumbarton Oaks colloquium volumes (2007),\(^6\) in examining both well-established rituals and the dynamics of ritualized


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garden practices, recognize that gardens and landscapes were in many circumstances powerful agents contributing to human or social action, and world-wide they have made significant contributions to cultural change. Their concepts of ‘lay-rituals’ practices, or ritualized practices and performances in gardens and landscapes as ‘some limited patterning of social interactions, and thus enable social actors to frame, negotiate, and articulate their existence as social, cultural, or moral beings’ help the understanding of the eighteenth-century elite’s Arcadian landscape experiences. At the same time, recent progress in Freemasonry studies has restored the underground society as a powerful institution in the construction of British imperialism. Masonic rituals are no longer seen in terms of the simply secret practices among its members. Translated into variations of ritualized practices, they played a significant role in moulding subjectivity as well as reflecting and consolidating the empire. Whilst neither of the two trends of studies has paid attention to the eighteenth-century Arcadian genre, a convergence between the two scholarship genres should be fruitful for this thesis.

1.4 Research methodology and the thesis structure

The hypothesis of the thesis that the Arcadian myth functioned as a cultural medium through which ideas of nationhood and subjectivity were restructured or transformed will be examined through three case studies: Alexander Pope’s (1688–1744) Twickenham grotto and his descriptive letter to Edward Blount (1725); Sir William Chambers’ (1723–1796) A Dissertation on oriental gardening (1772) and his designs for Kew gardens (1757–63); and Sir John Soane’s (1753–1837) manuscript Crude hints towards a history of my house in L[incoln’s] I[nn] F[ields] (1812) and his house-museum in Lincoln’s Inn Fields in London.

Ranging from the early eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century, these three figures are key representatives of the Arcadian imagination during the period examined. None were born aristocrats, although all rose in society through their genius and diligence. They were public-spirited citizens—Chambers and Soane also possessed places at the centre of the British cultural establishment—who assumed a personal responsibility for the fine arts in the revival of British culture. Pope enjoyed the reputation of being the ‘Augustan poet’ for his neoclassical style. He was a key member of Lord Burlington’s circle, played a central role in Burlington’s Palladian revival project, and became one of the important speakers for the Opposition party after 1714.

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69 Michel Conan, Performance and Appropriation: Profane Rituals in Gardens and Landscapes, p. 5
70 Harland–Jacobs, Builders of Empire: Freemasons and British Imperialism, 1717–1927, Chapter 4, 7.
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With his famous essays such as the *Epistle to Burlington*, as well as his Twickenham garden, Pope has long been considered as a precursor of the eighteenth-century English landscape movement, of which his Twickenham garden was recognized an early exemplar. Subsequently he was consulted for many landscaping projects by wealthy landowners, such as Lord Cobham’s Stowe Garden and Lord Bolingbroke’s Dawley Farm.

Born into a Scottish merchant family under the patronage of Swedish royalty, Chambers travelled in China in his youth and was trained in Paris by J.-F. Blondel (1705-1774), a master in the French Academy. First appointed as the architectural tutor to the Prince of Wales (the future George III) in 1755, Chambers became an official royal architect (i.e. a Joint Architect to King George III from 1761; a founder of the Royal Academy of Arts in 1768; Comptroller of the King’s Works from 1769–1782, and Surveyor-General and Comptroller from 1782 until his death).\(^\text{71}\) In the 1740–50s, an era following the demise of the Arcadian elite (e.g. Chambers’ first patron, Frederick Prince of Wales the leader of the Opposition party),\(^\text{72}\) Chambers became a rather lonely heir to the 1720–30s English landscape movement. He promoted the previous landscaping tradition’s emphasis on the role of landscape gardening as a cultural instrument in promoting public virtues, as can be seen in his design for the Mausoleum of Frederick Prince of Wales,\(^\text{73}\) Princess Augusta’s new Kew Gardens in 1757–63, and the ‘national building,’ as Edmund Burke described Somerset House (1776–96). Son of a bricklayer, Sir John Soane rose to the top of his profession, becoming Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy in 1806, and an official architect to the Office of Works and also receiving a knighthood in 1831. His major work was the Bank of England, which emerged during the Napoleonic War as a ‘national institution,’ and demonstrated ‘poetic monumentality.’

Public-interested artists as they were, their works enshrined a Neoplatonist humanist view that art and architecture should play a role in promoting public virtues. This tradition in Britain conventionally was recognized as having been initiated in England by Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713),\(^\text{74}\) whose debts to Neoplatonism, however, has been

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\[^{72}\text{The 1740s and early 1750s witnessed the demise of the Opposition party members who were engaged in landscape movement, such as Lord Petre, John Aislabie, Jonathan Swift, William Kent, James Thomson, Alexander Pope, Frederick Louis Prince of Wales, Lord Bolingbroke, and Lord Burlington.}\]

\[^{73}\text{Chambers was the first British architect to envision a mausoleum as a ruin, an Arcadian vision he received during his stay in Rome.}\]

revealed by Li Shiqiao.\textsuperscript{27} The political dimension of Pope’s poetry and his Twickenham garden has been a focus of previous scholarship. Pat Rogers suggests that the landscape imagery in Pope’s early work \textit{Windsor Forest} showed the poet’s reflections on ideological contests during and following the Civil War.\textsuperscript{26} Maynard Mack, focusing on the years of 1731–43, discussed Pope’s gardening as a confrontation with Sir Robert Walpole’s government.\textsuperscript{77} The public dimension of Chambers’ landscape practices has so far received less adequate attention. However, in Richard Quaintance’s view, Chambers’ design for Kew is a ‘layout recruited public, focused, and ‘civic’ engagement in contemporary British political and economic life.’\textsuperscript{78} Soane’s unrealized ambition of building public monuments, in the manner of the French ‘Grand Prix Rome,’ in order to promote British glory has been recognized.\textsuperscript{79} Furthermore, in his lectures, Soane rebuked the modern world for its meanness and commercial priorities, criticizing the ‘commercial picturesque’ (e.g. John Nash) that was associated with the bourgeoisie individualism and commercialization of the eighteenth century, a comment following on from Pope’s \textit{Epistle to Burlington}, and Chambers’ criticism of ‘Capability Brown.’\textsuperscript{80}

In contrast to their criticisms of the commercial picturesque, Pope, Chambers and Soane shared a fascination with the imagery of the Virgilian funereal Arcadia. Pope prided himself for starting his career from the \textit{Pastorals} as Virgil did with the \textit{Eclogues}. The Arcadian imagery of the tomb in a pastoral setting featured in his poems, his drawings as well as in his gardening. This enthusiasm for the tomb in the landscape also marked Chambers’ works, from

\textsuperscript{27} English Platonism came from the Florentine development, through the teachings of Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1466–1536) and John Colet (c. 1467–1519) since the late fifteenth century in Oxford, and through the writings of Thomas More (1478–1535). English Platonism inherited all the elements of Platonism that emerged historically. As generally recognized, Shaftesbury’s thoughts were derived from Cambridge Platonists, whilst Shaftesbury’s innovation lies in his turning philosophy into an ‘aesthetic project.’ With him (as in \textit{Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times} [1711–14]), the key concept of the ‘virtuoso character’ emerged as a thinker and a patron of the arts. This concept, however, is more a revival of the Florentine humanist tradition rather than Shaftesbury’s innovation. For a discussion of Shaftesbury and his inheritance of Neoplatonism, see Shiqiao Li, \textit{Power and Virtue: Architecture and Intellectual Change in England 1660–1730} (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 84–99.


\textsuperscript{79} For example, see Robin Middleton, ‘Soane’s Spaces and the Matter of Fragmentation,’ in \textit{John Soane, Architect: Master of space and light}, ed. Margaret Richardson (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1999), pp. 28–9.

\textsuperscript{80} Modern scholarship however did not pay adequate attention to the ideological associations behind the conflict between Chambers and Capability Brown, the two royal gardeners.
his early designs for Frederick Prince of Wales’s Mausoleum (1750), to his idea of erecting a small aedicule (described by him as a ‘mausoleum’) to the memory of Alexander Pope at Kew,81 to the ruined Roman arch in Kew Gardens. The funereal Arcadia also gripped John Soane’s imagination. The Mausoleum, sarcophagus, and cinerary urns, arranged to render ‘picturesque’ interiors filled with a funereal ambiance, were constant references to the architect’s works.82 In his Royal Academy lectures, Soane frequently quoted from Virgilian Arcadian literature including the works of Virgil, Tasso, and Pope, referring to the Augustan Rome he so admired, ‘Rome her own sad monument appears.’83

Their shared fascination with the Virgilian Arcadia imagery, however, has so far not been examined in relation to their common preoccupation with the social and moral missions of art and architecture. That this intersection between the Arcadian imagination and social commitments may have been a continuation of the Renaissance tradition can be evidenced not only by examining their texts and works, but also from the three architects’ common engagement with Freemasonry. For example, the organization of Soane’s museum, Donald Preziosi has argued, was constructed around a Masonic initiatory route.84 The idea of the masonic ritual as a process of self or subject construction was—the implication is—embodied in the experience of the museum.

On the above grounds, my re-examination of these artists and architects’ works, while placing them in their own situations or contexts, bridges their artistic creations, their fascination with funereal arcadia, their social-political interests, and their masonic commitments. The focus of the study is upon the imagination of the three artists, and the expressions that they took that interconnected their ideas and practices. The idea of the imagination, often understood as a creation of the Romantic period, was actually the creation of the eighteenth-century.85 Under the Enlightenment pursuit of its definition, imagination emerged as the central value of the century, developing simultaneously in literature and criticism, philosophy, religion, and science. The imagination had become, in a phrase used by Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1786, ‘the residence of truth.’86 The three artists/architects, each in a different way, were highly engaged with the discourses on imagination, such as Chambers and

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81 Coffin, The English Garden: Meditation and Memorial, p.141.
83 This is a quote from Pope, Moral Essays, Epistle iv, To Mr Addison, line 2. Soane used it at his Royal academy lecture. Pope wrote ‘sepulchre,’ not ‘monument.’ Soane and Watkin, Sir John Soane: The Royal Academy Lectures, p. 546.
86 Ibid.
In this thesis, I mainly focus on three forms of the imagination as expressed in the three architects' practices and writings, namely, as the soul (subject, self); as a physiological image; and as a creative force:

1. the funereal imagination as the soul

Physicians such as Thomas Willis (1621–1675) and Antoine Le Camus (1722–1772) had demonstrated that the soul, or the spirit can be identified with the imagination, the fluid nervous and energy systems. This was a fundamentally new approach to sensation that provided the ground for Locke's empiricist psychology as well as inspiring Romantic writings of various kinds. As the soul is identified with imagination, the ritual subject in masonic initiation rites may be perceived as an agency, the imagination embarking on a funeral journey—from death to regeneration. In its engagement with the funereal landscape, the subject—or rather the imagination—is transformed in this ritual process. The stage of the ‘self’ is altered.

2. the funereal imagination as the sublime

Imagination also refers to an inner image of the mind. And the ‘funereal,’ as OED has it, ‘of or pertaining to a funeral; appropriate to a funeral.’ Hence, the funereal imagination can refer to the dark, gloomy and mournful landscape, a genre of the sublime originating in classical literature, typically in Virgilian arcadia. For the eighteenth-century elite, tragedy, or human suffering represented an essential dimension of religiosity and morality (John Dennis and Edmund Burke).

3. the funereal imagination as the creative force

Imagination can also be understood as the mind’s creativity realized through the processes of association (e.g. Lord Kames and Archibald Alison) while consciousness was suspended. In the then popular hermetic image of the mind as the earth/geocosm, imagination as a free creative force is seen as analogous to the subterranean force of fire and water, which simultaneously creates and destroys.

It is via these three aspects of the ‘funereal imagination’ that I will demonstrate how it worked to produce various ritualized instruments to facilitate, in different ways, the transformations of the social, political, moral and cultural fabric of Britain during the social transitions in the eighteenth century, and to forge an empire as a British Arcadia, a new Golden Age.


The first chapter focuses on Pope’s Arcadian funereal imagination as expressed in the itinerary through his Twickenham garden. With reference to the description of the route in Pope’s letter to Edward Blount, dated 1724, I will reveal how Pope, like Poussin, played the role of iconographer in designing the itinerary analogous to masonic rituals of initiation. Rather than suggesting how the Twickenham garden may be seen as a masonic lodge, I want to suggest that Pope’s creation of the Twickenham garden and grotto constituted not only an act of the ‘mythopoeic imagination,’ but that imagination had a practical dimension of Arcadian ritualistic performance. The bodily (sensory, imaginary) engagement with the Twickenham landscape, may have been used as an instrument for the elite to criticize the violence of capitalist development, to adapt and re-assert the ‘Arcadian’ humanist ideology, to explore subjectivity, and to envision a regenerated republican social moral order as a redemptive hegemony.

The second chapter examines Sir William Chambers’ *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772), focusing on its expressions of the Burkean sublime-effect. Filled with unauthentic, if not whimsical, imaginaries of the landscape gardening of China, the text was often dismissed as an architect’s retreat into a proto-romanticist imagination. My reading instead asserts that the *Dissertation* may be an allegorical text which talks about English landscape gardening through its Chinese dress—a literary technique not uncommon during his time (e.g. both Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* [1726], and Chambers’ friend, Oliver Goldsmith’s *Citizen of the World* [1760] are examples of such allegorical narratives). Focusing on the scenes of the sublime described in the text and their evocation of sentiments such as sympathy, fear, memory, and military spirit, I argue that these scenes were intended as psychological-aesthetic instruments whereby the rigours and morals of the imagined Roman martial society might be reformulated as a cure for the moral corruption of British society, and to reform its virtues for the era of liberty, civil society and the potentially excessive luxury promised by commercial enterprise.

The last chapter focuses on Sir John Soane’s manuscript *Crude Hints* (1812). In this extraordinary text, which has been described as ‘the most whimsical and strange text in British architectural history,’ Soane imagined himself as a future antiquarian, speculating on his house as a ruin—although in reality, it was just being constructed. This imagination of ‘simultaneous erosion and creation,’ characteristic of Soane’s visions of architecture, I suggest, is an expression of ‘First principles,’ which Soane identified with the principles of the

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movement of the subterranean forces of the earth. Disturbed by the architectural crisis of the
time—namely, the loss of meaning in an age of secularization and commercialization—one of
Soane’s preoccupations is to follow the ‘first principles’ to bring about an regeneration of
architecture, to re-locate the meaning of language, architecture, and self. The ‘ruinous’ text
about ‘a history of the house,’ mirroring the house-museum as the earth, is an experiment
applying the geological ‘First principles’ to architecture’s regeneration. In four sections, the
ruin, the antiquary, the fossil, and the monument to dynastic ambition, I will demonstrate that
the geological analogy holds the keys to Soane’s Arcadian funereal imagination—his
understanding of architecture (subjectivity)’s regeneration, the making of history or the past
(the text is written in imitation of geological strata), his contemplation of the nature of
language (self), and his strategy for pursuing immortality.

In the Conclusion, I sum up the three case studies by an analysis of how the Arcadian
funereal imagination facilitates the reformation and transformation of socioeconomic, political,
and moral structures; how the Roman national mythology helped forge ideas of British national
memory and individual subjectivity. In this way, I demonstrate how British imperial identity
was forged, transmitted, negotiated, and reconstructed constantly within the temporally and
spatially extended discursive realm of Arcadian mythology.
Chapter 2

The Odyssean Journey:
Alexander Pope's Twickenham Villa

2.1 Introduction: The Odyssean journey at Pope's Twickenham villa
   2.1.1 Letter to Edward Blount and the Odyssean journey
   2.1.2 The initiatory journey of Eleusinian mysteries and Freemasonry
   2.1.3 The ‘initiatory’ landscape itinerary at Twickenham villa

2.2 ‘Separation’: Crossing the Thames:
   2.2.1 The flood
   2.2.2 The immersion of the swan

2.3 ‘Transition’: Entering the grotto
   2.3.1 Initiation by water
   2.3.2 Initiation through visions
      2.3.2.1 ‘Perspective’ visions
      2.3.2.2 The ‘camera obscura’
      2.3.2.3 The ‘many-headed monster’
      2.3.2.4 ‘A thousand pointed rays’

2.4 ‘Regeneration’: Ascending to the garden
   2.4.1 The Delphic oracle
   2.4.2 Regeneration: Bolingbroke’s utopia
      2.4.2.1 The garden: the agriculture economy
      2.4.2.2 The sails: free trade and navy
2.1 Introduction: The Odyssean Journey at Pope’s Twickenham Villa

2.1.1 Letter to Edward Blount and the Odyssean journey

The well-known eighteenth century English poet, Alexander Pope (1688–1744) is also considered as a precursor of English landscape gardening. For nearly half his life, he had been building and living as a gardener ten miles south west of London in his Twickenham villa, long considered a milestone in the history of English landscape gardens.

The poet’s Palladian style house was on the banks of the River Thames, with a lawn running down to the river, whereas the garden area to the rear was separated from the house by the main Hampton to London highway. Beneath the highway, Pope dug a tunnel, which was made into a grotto, linking the riverside and the garden. (Fig. 2–1, 2, 3) Curiously, although Pope apparently took pride in this piece of *ars poetica*, he hardly gave it much commentary. The lengthiest account we find is his letter to Edward Blount written on June 2nd, 1725, reporting on his progress in building the grotto. This account which, in his own words, is ‘very poetical,’ but also ‘near the truth,’ is worth equally poetic understanding.

From the river *Thames* you see thro’ my arch up a walk of the wilderness to a kind of open temple, wholly compos’d of Shells in the rustic manner; and from that distance under the temple you look down thro’ a sloping arcade of trees [lining the walk to the grotto on the garden side], and see the sails on the river passing suddenly and vanishing, as thro’ a perspective glass. when you shut the doors of the grotto, it becomes on the instant, from a luminous room, a *camera obscura*; on the walls of which the objects of the river, hills, woods, and boats, are forming a moving picture in their visible radiations: and when you have a mind to light it up, it affords you a very different scene; it is finished with shells interspersed with pieces of looking-glass in angular forms; and in the ceiling is a star of the same material, at which when a lamp (of an orbicular figure of thin alabaster) is hung in the Middle, a thousand pointed Rays glitter and are reflected over the Place.

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2 ‘You will think I have been very poetical in this description, but it is pretty near the truth. I wish you were here to bear testimony how little it owes to art, either the place itself, or the image I give of it.’ *Correspondence*, II, p. 296.
Fig. 2–1 Pope’s Twickenham situation as shown on John Rocque’s map of the environs of London. C. 1746 (Yale University Library)

Fig. 2–2 Pope’s drawing of his grotto, 29 December 1740 (Harvard College Library)

Fig. 2–3 Redrawing of John Searle’s plan of Pope’s Twickenham garden (1745) by James Sambrook. From Peter Martin (1984).

1 Grass plot between the house and the River Thames 2 The house 3 Grotto and underground passage 4 Road from Hampton Court to London 5 Shell temple 6 Large mount 7 Stoves (i.e. hot houses) 8 vineyard 9 obelisk in memory of Pope’s mother 10 Small mounts 11 Bowling Green 12 Grove 13 Orangery 14 Garden house 15 Kitchen garden

Square marks indicate urns and statues
The opening sentence implicitly afforded two ‘perspective’ visions, achieved through taking a certain route—crossing the river, descending into the grotto and ascending into the garden. Interestingly, such a pair of visions is also depicted in the headpiece of Book V of Pope’s quarto *Odyssey* (Fig. 2–4), by William Kent, Pope’s close friend, a painter, architect and landscape designer, who was also involved in designs for Pope’s Twickenham villa garden. Published in 1725, the same year as Pope wrote the above letter, the headpiece depicted a scene of Calypso’s cave, through the arches of which, we see in the background a vision of a sail appearing at sea, framed by an arch. In the centre there is a medallion showing a vision of a garden—Odysseus is cutting down an oak tree with his axe, with a female figure in mourning drapery looking upon.

![Fig. 2–4 Headpiece of Book V of Pope’s quarto *Odyssey*, by William Kent, 1725](image)

This parallel between the narrative of the letter and the headpiece of *Odyssey* V can hardly be a coincidence. It rather suggests the connection between the conception of the Twickenham villa and that of the Homeric epic. The *Odyssey* is Homer’s story of the return of Odysseus from the Trojan War to his palace on the island of Ithaca and his battle to regain the kingship there after his long absence. Book V of the *Odyssey* describes Odysseus’s eight-year detainment on Calypso’s island. At Zeus’s order, Hermes, came to visit Calypso, requesting her to let Odysseus return to Ithaca. But Odysseus needs to make his own raft to take a voyage, first to Hades, and then only upon his return from the underworld, does he finally reach his homeland. What the engraving depicted is the scene of Odysseus cutting trees to make his raft for his journey to the underworld toward Ithaca. It is certainly worth

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3 Both William Kent (1685–1748) and Pope are protégés of Lord Burlington and are key members of the Burlington circle. As an architect, Kent is often remembered for having revived the Palladian style in England, whereas he could also provide Gothic or chinoiserie designs when the context called. As a landscape designer, Kent was one of the originators of the English landscape garden. His projects included Chiswick House and Stowe landscape gardens in Buckinghamshire, from about 1730 onwards. For Kent as a landscape designer, see John Dixon Hunt, *The Figure in the Landscape: Poetry, Painting, and Gardening during the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 25–36.
Chapter 2  The Odyssean journey: Alexander Pope’s Twickenham villa

noting, as Mack Maynard points out, the affinities between Calypso’s cave in the engraving and Pope’s grotto. 4 But we assume that Pope’s allusion to this political allegory is hardly limited to the level of aesthetic forms. Rather we should focus on what Peter Martin reminds us that Pope owed to the Odyssey on his political landscape gardening, 5 a common feature of English landscape gardening of the eighteenth century.

Pope, ‘a political poet,’ 6 is closely connected with important men in the Opposition party. 7 Among them was the key figure, Henry St John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke (1678–1751), the former secretary of Queen Anne. Exiled in 1714, Bolingbroke was allowed to return to Britain in 1723. On his short return, he settled in Dawley farm in Twickenham, becoming Pope’s neighbour. There he took up gardening, or rather straightforward farming, as an illustration of his land policy. 8 It is illuminating to note that Pope precisely saw Bolingbroke’s return through the classical perspective offered by Odysseus. Pope’s translation of the Odyssey, as well as the building of the Twickenham grotto, to some extent, has this political indication of exalting Bolingbroke-Odysseus, the much-enduring and much-experienced exile who, now returning to his own land, was about to regenerate this chaotic country from under the Walpolean-George I’s corrupt reign. The ‘perspective’ of a rustic garden and sails on the sea that Pope related in the letter, which was also highlighted in the juxtaposition of the medallion and the background in the headpiece of Odyssey V, reflected the ‘prospective’ visions of Britain regenerated under Bolingbroke’s policy—to develop agriculture and sea power (navigation, free global trade) as two fundamental strengths of the country. 9

Remarkably, just as the achievement of returning to Ithaca had to be preceded by a voyage to Hades, these prospective visions at Twickenham have to be seen through the

7 Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, on whose behalf Pope testified at the political trial at the House of Lords, was leader of the English Jacobites before their plot broke in 1722, and Secretary of State to the Pretender after being sent into exile. Robert Harley, first Earl of Oxford, directed from the Tower the Plot of 1716–17, in which Charles Caesar, husband of Pope's friend, Mrs. Caesar, was crucially involved. Lord Lansdowne, the Tory statesman and poet to whom Pope dedicated Windsor Forest, was a Jacobite until 1725. Lord Bathurst was a Jacobite until after the Atterbury Plot. Ibid., pp. 127–8.
9 That perspective vision as a vision of prospective or the future is a Renaissance allegory. I will discuss this in detail in section 2.3.2.1
10 For a detailed discussion of this innovative view of this Opposition party’s policy, see Pat Rogers, Pope and the Destiny of the Stuarts: History, Politics, and Mythology in the Age of Queen Anne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). esp, pp. 241–7.
underground tunnel, the underworld. It is a common pattern in mythological tradition, that a journey to the underworld seems to be required before a city can be founded. Or, as Richard J. Klonoski put it, the foundation of a city, the most complete human association for the Greeks, the most complete expression of Greek life and culture, requires the founder to have journeyed to the ‘city of the dead’. Contemporary Britain under the protestant Hanoverian king, as the poet perceived, was undergoing a period of chaos. The execution of Charles I and the death of Queen Anne marked the end of the Stuart monarchy. With George I’s succession and the progressive Whigs taking over power, a doomed destiny dawned for Catholics: sequestrations, confiscations, attainders, and even outlawry. In juxtaposition with political persecutions, Pope also sensed the crises brought on by the process of urbanization and industrialization, threats to British soil and forests, threats to the peasantry and the traditional paternalistic community. As a direct victim and witness, Pope, as Pat Rogers states, reflected on this tumultuous period more than any other writer of his era and he was eager to find a way of salvation.

The imagery of death in the pastorals and a dark underworld that recurred in his works, as in *Windsor Forest* (1713) and *The Dunciad* (1728, 1729, 1742), was such a conjunction of mourning for the destiny of the Stuart monarchy and an implicit criticism of the fallen world under the Hanoverian usurpers. However, just as in his *Pastorals*, winter—the season of death, is followed by the *Messiah*, the great restoration of the Golden Age, prevailing in his work is the Neoplatonic theme of deterioration preceding perfection, or in his words, the ‘ruling passion’. It is through this world of incessant inward and outward turbulence that man must make his ‘passage’. In order to achieve his flight, he must first go ‘under ground’.

### 2.1.2 The initiatory journey of Eleusinian mysteries and Freemasonry

This pattern of a voyage in the underworld before founding a republic had long been described in mythological tradition. As the French anthropologist and ethnographer, Arnold

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13 *Windsor Forest*, one of Pope’s most well-known pastorals, as Pat Rogers suggests, contained an implicit theme of death and salvation of the monarchy. Ibid.
15 ‘Know, God and Nature only are the same | In Man, the judgment shoots at flying game,| A bird of passage! gone as soon as found,| Now in the Moon perhaps, now under ground.’ Ibid.
van Gennep (1873–1957) points out, myths and legends of voyages to the land of the dead embodied a certain device that played an important role in most pre-modern societies—rites of passage, or initiation rites. According to van Gennep’s classic study, in societies where regeneration is the prevailing principle, life is perceived as a series of transitions—life crises—towards regeneration. To cope with the crises, initiation rites, which give expressions in the rites of death and rebirth, are employed to accompany human existence to go through these transitions and attain completion. Initiation rites are comprised of three stages, that is, separation, transition, and incorporation. At the individual level, they are used to transform one’s innermost being—a separation from the old state of being, and at the individual’s emerging from the realm of death, to incorporate the individual into a new status in the group. At the group level, the rites restore the equilibrium where changes in social interaction are impending or have already occurred. Initiation rites are restorative of the moral sentiments which have been disturbed through changes in the social life of the group.

The practice of initiation rites in the mysteries, prevalent in the Greco-Roman world, gradually fell into oblivion with the rise of Christianity. Owing to the efforts of philosophers such as Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and members of the Neoplatonic academies, the pagan tradition in which Hermetic and Neoplatonic thoughts were comingled, was revived, becoming an underground, but nonetheless influential stream from the Renaissance onwards in early modern western civilization. Given the central position of initiation rites within the pagan tradition, we can imagine to what an extent they helped both the individual and the group to cope with the significant changes taking place between the Renaissance and the nineteenth century, the transition period from pre-modern feudalistic societies towards a modern industrial civilization.

In eighteenth-century Britain, the most influential group that was receptive to the Hermetic-Neoplatonic tradition was the Freemasons. Originally a guild of operational masons, Freemasonry was first revived in seventeenth-century Scotland as a brotherhood of the elite, in line with the continental Hermetic-Neoplatonic academy tradition, bound

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17 Introduction to van Gennep’s *The Rites of Passage*, by Solon T. Kimball. Ibid., pp. xii-xiii.
18 Ibid., p. vii. These three-stages of initiation rites were expressed in slightly different forms in later anthropologists’ work. For example, Victor Turner described them as separation, margin or limen, and re-aggregation, Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1969), p. 94.
19 In the Renaissance Neoplatonic academies, the Hermetic-Neoplatonic thought took form and developed with its Rosicrucian and Masonic groups, and later societies rising out of modern occult revivals. From these classical texts that communities were formed where members are bound together particularly by initiation rites into the sacred mysteries. For the reception of Hermetism and Neoplatonism in Freemasonry and masonic rites, see Henrik Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2007), pp. 63–66.
together by secret initiation rites. From the early eighteenth century, the English began to innovate and adapt the movement, and then took over from Scotland the lead in the development of Freemasonry. Various authoritative studies have confirmed that Pope was a member of the Freemasons at least by the 1730s—but very likely by 1723. According to Jane Clark’s studies on Burlington’s Chiswick house, the house had been a Freemasonic lodge of the branch of the Royal Arch, in which Pope seemed to have a senior position. An Augustan poet, Pope apparently was in a better position than his contemporaries to play the role of an iconographer of the initiation rites, as Poussin did for the Bourbon monarchy.

Pope, as revealed by previous scholars, was an admirer of both Virgil and Poussin. The imagery of Virgilian Arcadia is an obvious theme in the poet’s works (e.g. from the *Pastorals* to *The Dunciad*). The French painter served as a close model for the English poet’s imagination. Giorgio Melchiori points out the striking parallel between Pope’s own drawing meant as a frontispiece for his *Essay on Man* (1734) and the Chatsworth *Arcadian shepherds*: both are dominated by a sarcophagus, raised from the ground and represented in a slanting perspective. (Fig. 2–5) In its background, the ruin of the Colosseum is covered in a seemingly morning light, indicating a message of regeneration, which is in concert with the poet’s expression of confidence in his face. Such a parallel may not be coincidence. But rather it indicates that Pope, like Poussin, had mastered knowledge of the Arcadian mysteries.

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20 On the connections between Freemasonry in Scotland and the continental Neoplatonic academy tradition, we note that the founder of Freemasonry, Sir Robert Moray was intimate with the French Royal Academy, and in particular, with Cardinal Richelieu. See David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century, 1590–1710* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 171–189.

21 The earliest study is Professor Rae Blanchard’s article, ‘Was Sir Richard Steele a Freemason?’ *PMLA* 63 (1948), pp. 903–17. A more substantial study is afforded by Maynard Mack. Maynard Mack, *Alexander Pope: A Life* (New Haven; NewYork; London: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 437–440, 889. As Blanchard pointed out, in a cumulative list of names up to 1730, for the ‘Goat at the Foot of the Hay Market,’ shows clearly the name of ‘Mr. Alexr. Pope.’ and ‘J. Swift.’ This list, however, is not the original lodge list with personal signatures, but copies entered by a clerk in the minute book of the Grand Lodge. Given its similarity to another list cumulative to 1723 of the members of the lodge at the ‘Bedford-head in Covent Garden,’ in which is shown plainly the name of ‘Dr. Arbuthnot’—that is, Dr. John Arbuthnot (1667–1735), Pope’s Scriblerus Club fellow, it is tempting to suppose that Pope joined Freemasonry when Arbuthnot joined.


Fig. 2–5 Anonymous (once attributed to Pope), sepia drawing after Pope’s own design for *An Essay on Man*, 1730s (Bryn Mawr College)
Stevenson suggested that the eighteenth-century English Freemasons rejuvenated their sophisticated initiation rituals from ancient mythologies and mysteries—the Eleusinian mysteries, in particular.\textsuperscript{25} I believe that an important component that the eighteenth-century Freemasons obtained from the mysteries is the idea of an initiatory route that comprises different stages, which was testified by studies such as Anthony Vidler’s examination of rituals of Freemasonry in eighteenth-century France.\textsuperscript{26}

While Pope’s knowledge of the mythological tradition is beyond question, he is equally familiar with the Eleusinian mysteries, to which he has frequently and skilfully alluded, most typically in his translation of the *Odyssey* and *The Dunciad*.\textsuperscript{27}

The Eleusinian Mysteries (a variation of the Orphic mysteries) were the most popular cult in the ancient Greco-Roman world, a cult of Demeter, god of agriculture, and her daughter, Persephone, goddess of earth and death.\textsuperscript{28} They embodied the Greek’s understanding of human existence in accord with the vegetative cycle of the universe—death, rebirth and death again. The Greeks believed that by initiation into these mysteries, one would be blessed as one knew both the end of life and its beginning.\textsuperscript{29}

The parallels between the mysteries and mythologies had been noted in the eighteenth century. William Warburton, one of the key scholarly speculators, Pope’s friend and editor, in his *Divine legation of Moses* (1738, 1741), explicated the *Aeneid* VI as an allegory of the


\textsuperscript{26} In his study, Anthony Vidler showed that in the rituals of the Freemasonry of eighteenth-century France, the idea of an initiatory route was at work. For example, at their ceremony, the Masons of the rue des Martyrs were arranged in two rows around a form of carpet with drawings. These drawings were allegories of the first Temple of Solomon and its attributes and were laid out to describe a route from the point of entry into the lodge to the point of reception—the route of initiation. The drawings were differentiated according to the ordered stages of the initiation process and the three grades of initiation of apprentice, companion, and master. The journey includes blindfolding, reflection, ritual cleaning, ambulation, hearing great noises and seeing great light, and questioning by the master. See ‘The Architecture of the Lodges: Rituals and Symbols of Freemasonry,’ in Anthony Vidler, *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment* (London: Butterworth Architecture, 1989), pp. 83–102. Accounts of the English rituals from 1733 also mentioned ‘foot cloths’ and ‘drawing boards.’ See Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*, pp. 93–4.

\textsuperscript{27} Brooks-Davies claimed that the four-book version of *Dunciad* is a more completely Eleusinian Mysteries. Douglas Brooks-Davies, *Pope’s Dunciad and the Queen of Night: A Study in Emotional Jacobitism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985). Also in *Dunciad*, Pope mentioned Freemasons. ‘Some, deep Free-Masons, join the silent trace | Worthy to fill Pythagoras’s place’ (571–2).

\textsuperscript{28} There are enormous scholarlyhips on initiation rites of Eleusinian mysteries. for a concise and authoritative reading, see Cf. Mylonas, *Euleis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*.

Eleusinian mysteries.\textsuperscript{30} It is therefore probable that Pope was aware of the parallel between the \textit{Odyssey} and the Eleusinian mysteries.

Referring to van Gennep’s theory of the ‘rites of passage’: separation; transition; and incorporation, we may understand the Odyssean journey as having a structure in parallel with the initiation rites of the Eleusinian mysteries. Odysseus’s detainment on Calypso’s island and his voyage to Hades are comparable with the purification ceremony—the separation rites—of the Eleusinian mysteries, a detachment or a ‘cutting away’ from the former self, a symbolic death.\textsuperscript{31} Odysseus’s descent into the Hades, where he communicates with the dead, has affinities with the neophytes of the Eleusinian mysteries entering an underground hall, the Telesterion, where they were shown ‘Kore,’ or beatific visions.\textsuperscript{32} The return of Odysseus to Ithaca, corresponds to the third phase of the mysteries, in which neophytes have completed the rites and assumed their ‘new’ identity, and are integrated into a new status as they ascend to a garden, or sacred groves.

The idea of sacred groves as a setting for the last stage of initiation rites has been suggested by previous scholars such as Carl Kerényi and Claude Calame.\textsuperscript{33} The archaeologist Carl Kerényi has documented that the Eleusinian initiation rites, after the neophytes arrived at the underground hall, were not all carried out indoors, but culminated in an outdoor environment enclosed by high walls.\textsuperscript{34} This is the normal case in most sites of Greek religion. It is also known that these sacred groves functioned for religious purposes.\textsuperscript{35} Claude Calame’s study of a text written on a gold lamella excavated from a necropolis in Magna Grecia, the tablet of Timpone Grande in Thurii, a case with a parallel with the Eleusinian mysteries, sheds special light on our reading of the final stage of the mysteries as an event set in sacred meadows and woods. It is recorded in the text that the soul of the dead was invited to rejoice and to ‘march along the right path toward the sacred meadows’ [\textit{leimônas brooks-davies, Pope’s Dunciad and the Queen of Night: A Study in Emotional Jacobitism}, p. 122–27.

\textsuperscript{31} For purification ceremony as a typical separation rite, see Gennep, \textit{The Rites of Passage}, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{32} The Telesterion is the site where the initiation to Eleusinian mysteries took place. ‘Kore,’ is the name that the hierophant called at the beginning of the last stage of the ceremony. Kerényi identified ‘Kore’ with as Persephone. See Carl Kerényi, \textit{Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter}, Archetypal Images in Greek Religion; v. 4 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), p. xviii, 94. I will discuss the Eleusinian visions further in Section 2.2.
\textsuperscript{34} In addition, we understand that a sacred grove was included in the site of the mysteries as archaeologists have shown. Kerényi, \textit{Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter}, p. 84.
hieroús] and the woods [álsea] of Persephone. Calame points out that the temporal development, as well as the spatial configuration constructed in the text, shows that the way toward the meadow of Persephone is conceived along a schema that recalls an initiatory itinerary. He writes, ‘In fact, after a first moment in which the soul must abandon the sunlight, a second stage corresponds to the present moment of the actual enunciation of the text, when the dead man is invited to rejoice while traveling the path ‘on the right’; this promising course gives him access, in a third phase, to sacred meadows and woods.’

However, given some important case studies and evidence that have been brought to attention, it is possible to make such an assumption.

An important passage from Themistios’ essay ‘on the Soul’, preserved in Stobaios and drawn from Plutarch, quoted by Monsieur Georges Foucart, the authority on the Eleusinian Mysteries, also testified to such an initiatory itinerary:

The soul, [at the point of death] has the same experience as those who are being initiated into great mysteries . . . at first one wanders and wearily hurries to and fro, and journeys with suspicion through the dark as one uninitiated: then come all the terrors before the final indication, shuddering, trembling, sweating, amazement: then one is struck with a marvellous light, one is received into pure regions and meadows, with voices and dances and the majesty of holy sounds and shapes.

Whereas ‘all the terrors’ in the dark might be related to visions in the underground or a cave, ‘the pure regions and meadows’ into which one is received, refer to the sacred grove—the meadow of Persephone. Therefore, we understand that caves and the sacred grove in ancient Greece functioned as settings for different stages of an initiatory journey. And it would be reasonable to assume, given the fact that the Renaissance Neoplatonic academy had eagerly studied and revived the hermetic tradition and their rites, very unlikely they would have

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37 Ibid.

38 Mylonas, Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries, p. 265.

39 For example, in their resuscitation of Plato by the academy at Careggi, Ficino practiced the rites of Orphic singing. Many contemporary illustrations show Orpheus plays his lyre by the gates of hell in a garden. For example, Agostino de' Musi, called Agostino Veneziano (Italian, active 1509–36), Orpheus, engraving, 3 1/2x 23/8' (8.9 x 6 cm) Bartsch 14-208-259. See Robert B. Simon, ‘Bronzino's 'Cosimo I De' Medici as Orpheus,’ Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin 81, no. 348, Medici Portraits (Autumn, 1985), fig. 17, p. 20. Ficino, in the poem to the Commentaria Platonis, p. 1130, describes a perhaps ideal complex of a closed garden, entrance hall, porch, and interior room, possibly in a cave-like manner. David R. Coffin and Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, The Italian Garden (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1972), p. 30.
failed to find the key characteristics of initiation rites—a journey of descent into a cave and then an ascent into a garden. In another word, the grotto and garden did not function only as physical settings in landscape gardens, but were associated with the neophytes’ beings of the two different stages in initiation rites. It is indeed during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries revolutionary changes took place in Renaissance landscape painting and in garden design.  

The idea of a journey and a pilgrim in landscape as a spiritual journey emerged; pilgrims were made to forests and wilderness; rustic caves became common features; springs, brooks and waterfalls, rocks and valleys appeared; and more suggestively, it is known that gardens were often the place where secret meetings of members of the academies were held.

2.1.3 The ‘initiatory’ landscape itinerary at Twickenham villa

As we know that eighteenth-century English landscape gardens were derived from Italian Renaissance landscape gardens. It may be assumed that this Renaissance tradition of using landscape gardens as the environmental agents of the initiatory state of mind, along

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40 To my knowledge, there have not been systematic studies of renaissance landscape gardens in the context of the revival of mysteries and the practice of initiation rites. This subject may constitute a field for future research.


42 The idea of a journey in landscape as a hermetic spiritual revelation, Bartolommeo Taegio’s La Villa (1559) is worth quoting: ‘with my soul, without moving a muscle, I search all parts of the Ocean, looking over all this round ball called the earth; I want to measure the area flooded by the seas, bathed by the lakes, irrigated by the rivers, the number of islands, ports, cliffs, mountains, plains, walled towns, cities, provinces, and regions. And once more, penetrating into the earth, I want to find the veins of gold, of silver, and of the other metals; together with the centre of the earth. and notcontenting [myself] with these base things, . . . and in such a manner climbing and descending, I arrive at a perfect understanding of this world, and with great contentment I can spend my days, and derive human happiness from this contemplation, and not from prudence as some say.’ Quoted in Margareta J. Darnall and Mark S. Weil, ‘Sacro Bosco Di Bomarzo. II: Historical and Literary Context,’ Journal of Garden History 4, no.1 (1984), pp. 7–8.

43 Lorenzo and his group included Marsilio Ficino, Cristoforo Landino, Leon Battista Alberti, Lorenzo and Giuliano de’ Medici. Lorenzo made a series of pilgrimages to the pine forests of Camaldoli (1468) or to the wildness of the Franciscan sanctuary of La Verna, which also appears in the works of Benozzo Gozzoli, Filippo Lippi, Piero della Francesca and Giovanni Bellini. An account of this pilgrimage is given in the Disputationes Camaldulenses of Cristoforo Landino (a good translation is in E. Garin, Prosatori latini del Quattrocento, 1952). Quoted in Coffin and Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, The Italian Garden, pp. 29–30.

44 Rich materials on this subject are included in Frances Amelia Yates, The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century, Studies of the Warburg Institute; v.15 (London: Warburg Institute, University of London, 1947). For examples, Orti Rucellai meeting in a garden (Orcellari) in 1482, p. 6; the meeting place of Baif’s academy included a garden, p. 18; the academy of Flurance Rivault (1571–1616), the tutor of Louis XIII, is likened to a cave and Ithaca, p. 279.

with the transfer of Hermetic-Neoplatonic thoughts, was also assimilated by eighteenth-century English Freemasons. This assumption may be testified by Anthony Vilder’s studies of the late eighteenth French freemasonic lodges, which demonstrated the concept of a masonic initiatory itinerary with a descent into the underworld and an ascent to the garden.\(^\text{45}\)

Given the influence of *jardin-anglais* on the eighteenth-century French landscape gardens, we may assume that the masonic associations of the new and fashionable *Élysées* may, to some extent, owe its debts to the poetic conceits of their English masonic fellows, such as Pope at Twickenham villa.

Below, I shall show that the plot of the Twickenham villa, the grotto and the garden may be read as a re-performance of the Odyssean journey analogous to an initiatory route in mysteries. Appropriating van Gennep’s terms of ‘rites of passage,’ I refer to the three stages represented in Twickenham landscape itinerary as separation—transition—and regeneration. That is, crossing the Styx, the River Thames—separation through physical death from the world under the light of the sun, descending into Hades, the grotto—passage through an intermediary space, and ascending or returning to Ithaca, the garden—regenerated into a new status. By suggesting this, I do not hold that the initiation rites had literally taken place in Twickenham villa. Neither do I consider that Pope regarded the performance of rites as a practical proposition, that is, the Golden Age could be restored simply through ritual magic. But rather the implied Odyssean journey suggested that the poet saw landscape through a theological-ritualistic perspective and he was willing to exploit landscape as the ritual instrument in his design, to mediate his and his friends’ critical reflections upon the on-going social transitions, and their shared desire to reinvent a viable Stuart kingship, or a new Arcadia.

The Twickenham landscape therefore will be examined as a setting for ritualistic performances for the visitors who, upon embarking on the Twickenham journey, would have an experience of a ritual subject in the transformative experience of ‘rites of passage.’ It would be appropriate to consider the visitor as the soul, or imagination, departing from the body when embarking on a funeral journey—from death to regeneration. In its journeying in the funereal landscape, the soul is transformed as the stage of the self is altered, so as to cope with the crisis in the metaphysical and psychological discourse. It is also possible to regard the ritual subject as the ‘bodily state,’ as represented in the chain of association linking Charles I-Apollo-Odysseus and Bolingbroke in Pope’s imagination. The ritual subject’s

\(^{45}\) For example, one of the lodges in the gardens of the Marquis de Montesquiou at Maupertuis, called ‘Élysée.’ It was approached through a subterranean grotto beneath a huge stone pyramid (a ‘descent into the underworld’), while in the park, among other ‘follies,’ sat a rustic temple beside a small spring dedicated to ‘the Eternal’ and a round tower dedicated to the arts. Vilder, *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment*, pp. 99–100.
Chapter 2  The Odyssean journey: Alexander Pope’s Twickenham villa

going through the initiation of death and rebirth, mirrors the regeneration that Pope envisioned for the state, a project to regenerate a utopian regime following Bolingbroke’s ideology.\textsuperscript{46}

My research methodology is to use Pope’s letter to Edward Blount on 1725 as a guidance of the journey through the landscapes at Twickenham Villa; and to unfold the associations between the landscapes and his poems, both of which are contextualized in the social-political environment of the early eighteenth-century—beginning of Whig dominancy following the death of Queen Anne in 1714. For example, \textit{Windsor Forest}, a pastoral poem which, as Pat Rogers considers, contains the deepest reflections on this political crisis,\textsuperscript{47} provides substantial references for understanding the poet’s landscape design. The chapter is unfolded as the following:

1. **Crossing the Thames: ‘Separation’**

The first part of the funeral itinerary started from the waterborne journey along the Thames and ended at the door behind the portico at the riverside. The motif of ‘separation,’ or death, at this stage, will be examined in elements such as the floods of the Thames and the statues of a swan and river gods which the poet wanted to set up by the riverside. Linking the poet’s idea of ‘immersing into water’ with purification rites,\textsuperscript{48} I reveal in the first part of the journey the multiple symbolism of the death of Charles I’s regime and the destruction of its socio-economic and political structures, such as agricultural economy, sea power, the paternalistic community, and civic identity.

2. **Entering the grotto: ‘Transition’**

The second part of the itinerary is confined to the grotto (including the two porticoes, one facing the riverside and the other facing the garden). In accord with the ancient mysteries, this is an intermediary or transitional sphere where ‘the dead’ have left the previous domain, but have not yet entered or joined the next. Focusing on two major themes of the grotto—water and optics, I will show how the two themes may be read in terms of instruments for allegorical initiation.

‘initiation’ by water

The idea of an allegorical initiation by water is represented by the watercourse running through the grotto. The flood of ‘Dulness and Dirtiness’ of the River Thames, in going

\textsuperscript{46} For Pope, as well as for most royalists and Catholics, Charles I represented a Golden age for England, one which was put to an end by the civil war. Charles I’s execution in 1649 by Cromwell and the parliamentarian regime is perceived as a Christ-like crucifixion by Catholics or Jacobites, who expressed their protests and sympathies in both literature and military forms.

\textsuperscript{47} Rogers, \textit{Pope and the Destiny of the Stuarts: History, Politics, and Mythology in the Age of Queen Anne}, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{48} For purification rites as separation rites, see van Gennep, \textit{The Rites of Passage}, p. 20.
through the grotto, was transformed into a fountain with ‘clearest water.’ It not only illustrated the soul of an individual regenerated in the cosmic cycle, but also symbolized the corruptive Walpolean-George I’s government replaced by a new regime purified.

‘initiation’ through visions

‘When you shut the doors of the grotto,’ the action that transforms the grotto into a camera obscura marks out the beginning of the ‘initiation’ through visions. Referring to the ‘beatific visions’ at the Telesterion of the Eleusinian mysteries, I suggest that Pope designed and showed different kinds of visions in the grotto, that are ‘perspective visions (of gardens and sails),’ ‘camera obscura,’ ‘broken mirror’ and ‘a thousand pointed rays of light’. Appropriating the theological and ritualistic associations of optics in Renaissance, Pope’s installations produced a series of visions, which are capable of provoking philosophical reflections and criticism of contemporary social-political issues.

3. Ascending to the garden: ‘Regeneration’

Pope’s garden is an imitation of a Homeric paradise and a Virgilian Arcadia, in which agricultural and ritual activities are the two main functions. The Delphic oracle, as will be examined, is the rites that are performed in Pope’s garden. A cult of celebrating the rebirth of Apollo, and the return of Odysseus to Ithaca, the performance of the oracle highlighted the symbolism of the garden as the country being regenerated. That is, a new regime built upon Bolingbroke’s policies—regenerating agriculture and sea power, which were believed to be the foundation of a British Arcadia.

2.2 ‘Separation’: Crossing the Thames

2.2.1 The Flood

At Twickenham village, the riverside was notably inviting, as Mack described, ‘on the curving Surrey shore, lay Hamwalks, a mixture of meadow and grove.’ In the river, just beyond the village, lay some picturesque islets. Such a scene reminds one of the colouring of Claude Lorrain. However, in relation to the Odyssey, a prototype of Pope’s landscape imaginary at Twickenham, this scene may be an echo of the hell-rivers surrounding Hades, and the waterborne journey along the Thames towards Pope’s grotto, a reminiscence of Odysseus’s voyage to the underworld. As we found in Circe’s prophecy at Odysseus’s request, which Pope translated as:

Where to the main the shelving shore descends;

Chapter 2  The Odyssean journey: Alexander Pope’s Twickenham villa

The barren trees of Proserpine’s black woods,
Poplars and willows, trembling o’er the floods:
There fix the vessel in the lonely bay,
And enter there the kingdoms void of day:
Where Phlegeton’s loud torrents rushing down,
Hiss in the flaming gulph of Acheron!
And where flow-rolling from the Stygian bed,
Cocytus’ lamentable waters spread;
Where the dark rock o’erhangs the infernal lake,
And mingling streams eternal murmurs make.

(\textit{Odyssey}, b. x. l. 598.)\textsuperscript{50}

It is noteworthy that the Thames is tidal at Twickenham, a feature which Pope was fascinated with and wrote about extensively.\textsuperscript{51} Water has the power to purify whatever is immersed in it, but is also associated with death. When the tide is rising, everything is immersed in water. Floods therefore, as Mircea Eliade describes, are purification rituals at a cosmic level, the cataclysm which periodically dissolves the world into the primeval ocean, such as the Deucalion in Greek mythology and the Deluge of Christianity.\textsuperscript{52} Hades is surrounded with floods—vast rivers, acting as an instrument of destruction. Pope’s imagination of the tides was largely focused on their power of destruction. When Pope initially took up residence in Twickenham, he marvelled at the scene of the slope of lawns being devoured by floods, he wrote to Teresa Blount: \textsuperscript{53}

\begin{quote}
I found our House exactly like Noah’s Ark in every thing . . . The prospect is prodigiously fine: it is just like an Arm of the Sea, and the Flood over my Grassplot, embraced between the two Walls, whose tops are only seen, looks like an open Bay to the Terras. The opposite meadow where you so often walked, is covered with Sails.
\end{quote}

The waterborne journey on the Thames to Twickenham therefore, may be considered as a purification ceremony—one of van Gennep’s rites of separation. In the poet’s mind, this deteriorating vision of forest and meadows devoured by flood, quite possibly reflected the crisis of wood and cultivatable land resulting from George I’s land policy. This crisis could

\textsuperscript{51} For example, ‘the gliding flood,’ ‘the silver flood’ recurs in \textit{Windsor Forest}. Also, as he told Martha Blount, in a house overlooking the Avon Gorge at Clifton on the western side of Bristol; ‘from the room where I write,’ he said, ‘I see the Tyde rising, and filling all the bottom between the Scenes of Rocks.’ Letter to Martha Blount on 19 November 1739, \textit{Correspondence}, IV, p. 202. Martha Blount is Edward Blount’s younger sister and Pope’s closest female friend, to whom Pope left his property before his death.
\textsuperscript{53} Letter to Teresa Blount, 11 December 1720, \textit{Correspondence}, II, p. 59. Teresa Blount is Edward Blount’s sister.
be traced back to the Civil War. The ‘usurpers’—the protestants represented by Cromwell and William III, after their triumph in the war had sequestrated land from the loyal gentry, and torn down large tracts of the woodland for their own interests—to furnish their own estates, to process urbanization and industrialization. Early in William III’s time, John Evelyn had blamed for the crisis:  

But what shall I then say of our late prodigious Spoilers, whose furious devastation of so many goodly Woods and Forests have left an infamy on their Names and Memories not quickly to be forgotten! I mean our unhappy Usurpers, and injurious Sequestrators; not here to mention the deplorable necessities of a Gallant and Loyal Gentry, who for their Compositions were (many of them) compell’d to add yet to this Waste, by an inhumane and unparallel’d Tyranny over them, to preserve the poor remainder of their Fortunes, and to find them Bread.

This crisis, for once resumed by Queen Anne (1702–1714), whom Pope considered to be the protector of woodlands, was exacerbated by the Hanoverian king, George I (1820–1830).  

Through sequestration, confiscation, enclosure, the landscape movement, and the development of industries (iron smelting,) vast areas of forests, fields, villages were cleared to make way for the interests of the new rising entrepreneur capitalists. Pope was a direct victim and witness of the great change—a flood of ‘Dulness and Dirtiness.’  

Deprived of land ownership, Pope was forced to move from Binfield, the Windsor forest where he had grown his passions for pastorals since his youth. This was a great watershed in Pope’s life which he never overcame, as we see this in his reflections on the scenes he had left behind:  

I have not dined at home these 15 days, and perfectly regret the quiet, indolence, silence, and sauntring, that made up my whole life in Windsor Forest. I shall therefore infallibly be better company and better pleased than ever you knew me, as soon as I can get under the shade of Priest-Wood, whose trees I have yet some Concern about. I hope, whatever license the freeborn Subjects of

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55 See Rogers, Pope and the Destiny of the Stuarts: History, Politics, and Mythology in the Age of Queen Anne, pp. 301–6.  
56 Pope wrote in the Epistle to Bathurst, ‘Corruption, like a gen’ral flood’ (line 135). And, in his letter to Charles Mordaunt, the 3rd Earl of Peterborow, dated August 1723, Pope referred to Peterborow as Noah, ‘for you have dwelt among us here but like a sort of Noah, preaching Sense & Honour many years, to a Generation who are doomed to be swallowed up and drownd in their own Dulness and Dirtiness.’ Correspondence, II, p. 189.  
57 He wrote to John Caryll senior on 22 June 1716: ‘Tho’ the change of my scene of life, from Windsor Forest to that waterside at Chiswick, be one of the grand Æra’s of my days, and may be called a notable period in so inconsiderable a history.’ Correspondence, I, p. 343. Quoted in Rogers, Pope and the Destiny of the Stuarts: History, Politics, and Mythology in the Age of Queen Anne, p.26.  
58 Letter to Thomas Dancastle on 7 August, 1716. Correspondence, I, p. 352.
your Commons may take, there will yet be Groves enough left in those Forests to keep a Pastoral-writer in countenance. Whatever belongs to the Crown is indeed as much trespass’d upon at this time in the Court as in the Country. While you are lopping his timber, we are lopping his prerogative.

This emotion surely had an effect on Pope’s translating the river scene of the Styx in the *Odyssey* into a mourning vision, ‘poplars and willows, trembling in the floods,’ which not only depicted this tragic destiny of the woods cut down at the order of the savage king, but might also express their mourning the death of Charles I, the protector of the English woodlands.\(^5^9\) This connection between the ill fate of Charles I and the woodlands was described in the headpiece of the *Odyssey*. The image in the medallion in its allusion to Ovid’s description of Erysichthon of Thessaly, who took his axe and cleaved the trunk with his ‘impious stroke’ in an act of sacrilege, as the blood pours forth from the ‘smitten neck’ (*Metamorphoses*, viii, 761–4), recalls the execution of Charles I.\(^6^0\)

The flood may also have alluded to the crisis of the breakdown of the traditional paternalistic community and the associated loss of individual identity. On their voyage along the River Thames, visitors could well have spotted those new country houses in the middle of the vast parkland built up by the new rising class sacrificing the soil and forests of Windsor. In his *Epistle to Burlington*, Pope saved strong criticism for them:

> The vast parterres a thousand hands shall make,  
> Lo! Cobham comes, and floats them with a lake:  
> Or cut wide views through mountains to the plain,  
> You’ll wish your hill or shelter’d seat again.  
>(73–76)

> At Timon’s villa let us pass a day,  
> Where all cry out, ‘What sums are thrown away!’  
> So proud, so grand of that stupendous air,  
> Soft and agreeable come never there.  
>(99–102)

Now the land, as promoted by the Whigs’ estate management and landscape movement, was no longer used for productive agriculture, but rather degenerated into a landscape of display. Pope firmly believed that the true character of England and its economic powerhouse was in agriculture. For Pope, these new country houses and parklands symbolized the decadence of the new rising class, who departed from the frugality of the past and betrayed the traditional

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59 Ibid., p. 245.
60 The sitting female figure may allude to Ceres, who signifies her assent to the dryads (tree nymph) with a nod of her head that shakes the fields of ripening grain. See Rogers, *The Cambridge Companion to Alexander Pope*, p. 114.
paternalistic responsibility.

The Twickenham waterborne journey indeed might have anticipated Bolingbroke’s assertion that ‘the landed men are the true owners of our political vessel; the moneyed men, as such, are but passengers in it.’\footnote{Henry St John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke, The Idea of the Patriot King (1738, published London, 1749), in The Works of Lord Bolingbroke, 4 vols (Farnborough: Gregg, 1969), III, p. 123.} If the boat sailing towards the Twickenham agricultural garden is a metaphor of the Opposition party’s political vessel, the flood may be seen as the strong flow of the monetary culture of the Hanoverian England.


2.2.2 The Immersion of the Swan

At their approach to Pope’s villa, the visitors might well have run across swans, a crucial element at the riverside that reveals the Thames voyage as an ‘otherworldly’ journey. Birds sacred to Apollo, swans were an emblem of Charles I. During the Stuart reign, the Thames was where the royal swans used to live.\footnote{In the annual ceremony of ‘swan-upping’ on the Thames, the royal swans were marked with five nicks. Lord Lansdowne’s brother, Sir Bevil Granville, held the unlikely office of Master Swanherd of all the Royalties belonging to the Crown on the Thames and other water (Handasyde 1933: 32). Rogers, \textit{Pope and the Destiny of the Stuarts: History, Politics, and Mythology in the Age of Queen Anne}, p. 284.} In Pope’s period, the sacred birds still frequented the Thames, as we can observe from a number of paintings of Twickenham villa showing swans swimming in the river.

The special role that swans played in Twickenham can be seen from Pope’s unimplemented design of the river bank. As Joseph Spence (1699–1768) recorded in \textit{Anecdotes}, Pope planned for his grass-plot at the river’s edge an extraordinary ornament, which ‘was to have a swan, as flying into the river.’\footnote{Joseph Spence and James M. Osborn, \textit{Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men. Collected from Conversation} (Oxford, 1966), no. 620.} Accompanying the statue of the swan, there were two urns and statues of two river gods, Meles and Mincius, reclining on each side.
of the land-place on the bank.\footnote{Ibid.}

This very image of a swan ‘flying into the river,’ I suggest, is not about innocent pastoral scenes, rather it is equivalent to the idea of ‘immersing into water,’ the separation rites. In this way, it reveals a message of death of the ideal pastoral and political world associated with Charles I.

This image may recall the river funeral of Abram Cowley (1618–1667) along the Thames in 1667. The greatest poet of his age, and an unreconstructed royalist, Cowley’s political visions of pastorals are a precursor of Pope’s own works. Exiled to the continent, Cowley returned to England and resided in Thames bank during the last years of his life. His friends held a special funeral for this Odysseus-like figure following the manner of the ancient Greeks—a waterborne journey across the Styx. Cowley’s body was floated down along the Thames on a barge, a solemn procession on water. Pope wrote of this extraordinary event that captured his fascination:\footnote{Abram Cowley’s influence on Pope was throughout his life. Not only Cowley’s pastorals are precursors of Pope’s, his life as an exile for his political and religious belief and return for a political-philosophical resonate with Pope’s own life. The ritual display of his funeral impressed Pope, as he talked extensively with Joseph Spence (Anecdotes i. 193–2). Rogers, Pope and the Destiny of the Stuarts: History, Politics, and Mythology in the Age of Queen Anne, pp. 284–5.}

\begin{verse}
There the last Numbers flow’d from Cowley’s Tongue.
O early lost! what Tears the River shed
When the sad Pomp along his Banks was led?
His drooping Swans on ev’ry Note expire,
And on his Willows hung each Muse’s Lyre.
\end{verse}

\textit{(Windsor Forest, 271–6)}

Traditionally swans have been an emblem of poets, for their power of singing songs. Cowley’s barge floating down the river therefore formed the very image of a singing swan immersing into water, the death moment. Yet the statues which Pope intended to set at the river bank tell much more than the peaceful death of a poet as an individual. They tell of the destiny of the state, trapped in violence and wars.

In recalling the death of this patriotic and political poet loyal to the Stuart monarchy, Pope again reinforced the mourning message of the death of the pastoral and of Charles I as his poems imply.\footnote{It should be noted that swans also contain messages of the birth of Apollo. Therefore the statue of a swan would also anticipate the rebirth of the Stuart royalty who were projected as guardians of the land.} In Pope’s imagination, the River Thames became a river of tears that Albion shed for the martyr king, a Christ-like Man of Sorrows, suffering for his people.\footnote{The image of Charles I as a martyr, was largely made by Eikôn basiliké. The pourtracature of His sacred Majestie in his solitudes and sufferings (London: [s.n], 1649). The last two lines were there originally in Windsor Forest. It was later that it was changed into ‘Oh Fact accurst! What Tears has}
Oh Fact accurs’d! oh sacrilegious Brood
Sworn to Rebellion, principl’d in Blood!
Since that dire Morn what Tears has Albion shed . . .

Violence and rape constitute a motif associated with the legend of Leda and the swan. This motif is better revealed when we put Pope’s statue of the swan in conjunction with the other adornments on the riverside. As Spence described, on one of the urns that decorated the river, Pope also wanted an inscription quoted from Politian’s *Ambra*, whose title is itself a reference to a villa by a stream at which Lorenzo the Magnificent and his circle met to carry on their philosophical studies and conversations.

*Hic placido fluit amne Meles,*

which is taken from a passage describing the river Meles as follows:

> Here softly flows the Meles, and silent in its deep grottos listens to its singing swans.

In the quoted passage, it goes on, ‘This region first bore that excellent poet. An Aonian deity, patron of the dance and even able to contend on equal terms with Apollo, had filled beautiful Critheis with a secret child. Hence sprang that mighty genius.’ Thus in using the tale of the birth of Homer, who was from a union of human and gods, Critheis and Meles, the poet directs readers’ attention towards the legend of the birth of Apollo, patron of poetry, a result of the rape of Leda by Zeus, who took the form of a Swan. Although in the *Odyssey* there is only one erotic description of their lovemaking, but lurking in the future, because of this act of love, is death and the destruction of the war. Thus in the western tradition, and in English literature, in particular, this rape had been used as an emblem of the violence of war.

That Pope’s use of the imagery of the swan is focused on civil wars needs to be revealed in relation to the second inscription on the other urn, which reads, ‘Magnis ubi flexibus errat Mincius,’ meaning, ‘where the Mincius wanders with great windings.’ This brings us to the *Georgics*, Pope’s epic model: specifically to that famous passage in the third *Georgic*, which John Dryden translates as:

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72 Ibid.

73 In John Dryden, *The Works of Virgil*, (London, 1697). As Pat Rogers points out, it is with the appearance of Dryden’s translation that the *Georgics* attained high prominence in English literature. It
I, first of Romans, shall in Triumph come
From conquer’d Greece, and bring her Trophies home,
With Foreign Spoils adorn my native place,
And with Idume’s palms, my Mantua grace.
Of Parian Stone a Temple will I raise,
Where the slow Mincius through the Valley strays… (II 15ff)

As Pat Rogers observes, here implicit was the criticism of William III’s expensive continental wars. Dryden’s words ‘I carry not out the Treasure of the Nation, which is never to return; but what I bring from Italy, I spend in England,’ seems to underlie his interpolation of ‘Foreign Spoils’ here. It is such a conflict that is put in the centre of the imagery: whereas Dryden’s own ‘Triumph’ of poetic genius will enrich and strengthen his native place, William III’s costly and dubious victories continue to drain England's treasury. In this way Pope brought into the conception of his riverside design the criticism of William III whom he accused of the violent seizure of power which belonged to James II, son of Charles I and the king in law.74

This violent swan imagery is further revealed in its symbolism of warships. To see this, the analogy of the perspective glass is crucial. The very vision of sails, when placed under a ‘perspective glass’ as Pope deliberately designed, is a striking emblem of the violence of warfare. This idea Pope may likely have obtained from his translation of the Iliad.

We see Patroclus touch’d with the deepest Compassion for the Misfortune of the Greeks, (whom the Trojans had forc’d to retreat to their Ships, and which Ships were on the Point of Burning) prostrating himself before the vessel of Achilles, and pouring out his Tears at his Feet. Achilles, struck with the Grief of his Friend, demands the Causes of it. Patrodus, pointing to the Ships, where the Flames already began to rise, tells him he is harder than the Rocks or Sea which lay in prospect before them, if he is not touch’d with so moving a Spectacle, and can see in cold Blood his Friends perishing before his Eyes. As nothing can be more natural and affecting than the Speech of Patroclus, so nothing is more lively and Picturesque than the Attitude he is here describ’d in.75

It is remarkable that Pope was captured in ‘Picturesque’ emotion at this tragic sight. He was struck by the same feeling—as told by Spence—when he spotted a swan, illuminated by the

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74 Unable to deny that James was king in law, to affirm that a contract existed before 1688, or to concede the dangerous claim that William gained his throne by force of arms, the majority of the political nation settled for the argument that James had in effect abdicated. This James himself denied by both words and arms. The image of rape, violent seizure of what belonged to another, was used by both Williamites and Jacobites. See Erskine-Hill, ‘Alexander Pope: The Political Poet in His Time.’

75 TE, VIII, pp. 233–4.
Chapter 2  The Odyssean journey: Alexander Pope’s Twickenham villa

Therefore the riverside of the Thames, the opening setting of the imagined initiatory route might have been endowed with an imagery of the heroic scene of the sea battle described in the *Iliad*, or in a same vein, the opening scene of Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia*, where there is

>a sight full of piteous strangeness: a ship, or rather the carcass of the ship, or rather some few bones of the carcass hulling there, part broken, part burned, part drowned—death having used more than one dart to that destruction.\(^77\)

Relating to Pope’s context, the swan could have stood for different layers of death of various subjects: from the Civil War to Jacobites rising, from the continental wars to colonial conflicts. It may firstly recall the royal warship of *Swan*. Built for Charles I, the ship provided a vital link between the king’s supporters in Ireland and North Wales in the Civil War. But with the crew changing their side, the ship turned to be part of Cromwell’s navy. On 13 September 1653 it was struck by a violent gale and sank in Mull. Most of the crews died. As a contemporary account recorded, ‘in sight of our men at land, who saw their friends drowning, and heard them crying for help, but could not save them.’\(^78\) This tragic story, with its resemblance with the Homeric ‘picturesque,’\(^79\) might have been a source of Pope’s funereal imagination at the riverside. The swan flying into the river Thames, for him, may characterize the moment when the *Swan* sank into the sea. Used to be an emblem of the mighty sea power of Charles I’s reign, swan sadly became a symbol of deploring in the new regime.

In line with the symbolism of swan-warship, the landscape of the riverbank at Twickenham may also refer to the prolonged infamous War of the Spanish succession, what Pope described as ‘inglorious Triumphs, and dishonest Scars’ (*Windsor Forest*, 326). Tories saw the reason for the war as being Whig greed for war profits, which thrived on the

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\(^76\) One day in 1728, Pope had been chatting with Joseph Spence on the grassy slope by the river when a swan, illuminated by the glittering light, suddenly glided over them and the river; . . . the image of their gliding over the river, appeared to be interpreted by Pope as the picturesque—’from the swan just gilded with the sun amidst the shade of a tree over the water on the Thames.’ Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, no. 631.


\(^79\) Since the eighteenth century the picturesque landscape description in Pope’s Homer has been admired, and it has been recognized that ‘if we turn to the original, we shall seldom, or never, find these landscapes. They are of Mr. Pope’s painting; sometimes suggested by a single epithet.’ Thomas Twining, *Aristotle’s Treatise on Poetry* (London, 1789), i, p. 31. Cf. D.R. Clarke, ‘Landscape painting Effects in Pope’s Homer,’ *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 22 (1963), pp. 25–8. Quoted in Morris R. Brownell, *Alexander Pope & the Arts of Georgian England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 78.
sacrifice of English lives and benefitted other nations.\textsuperscript{80} In particular, Pope may refer to the Duke of Marlborough’s marching down the Rhine into Bavaria in the summer of 1704, mourning the lives sacrificed in unjustified wars.\textsuperscript{81}

\begin{quote}
No more my sons shall dye with British Blood
Red Iber’s Sands, or Ister’s foaming Flood . .
\end{quote}

\textit{(Windsor Forest, 367–8)}

What may have been also alluded to in the death vision of the immersion of the swan is the Spanish rich galleons, like those Sir George Rooke had plundered at Vigo Bay or those Woodes Rogers had recently brought back in tow to London.\textsuperscript{82} Pope is clearly aware of the condition of the native Indians of the New World as the victims of conquest, as was shown by his courageous criticism of the Spanish conquest of America, despite this having been undertaken in the name of the Holy Roman Catholic Church—Pope’s own church. In a letter of 5 Dec 1712 to John Caryll,\textsuperscript{83} Pope refers to the exposure of ‘the poor naked Indians’ to ‘our guns’.\textsuperscript{84} He envisages that it might also be laid at the door of the English colonists in North America, a result of the Whig’s aggressive conquistadore policy and the slave trade, which the Opposition sees as an expanding and vastly profitable concern.

While the swan immersing into the river is a metaphor of dying, the process of the soul separating from the body, the visitor at his disembarking on to the meadows becomes the soul of the dead. This message is indicated in the image of a sleeping nymph which Pope wanted to set in the portico of the grotto. Sleep, in Greek mythology is identical with death.\textsuperscript{85} Although it is not clear if the poet ever carried out this design, the river portico of the grotto, as a threshold, marked out the second stage of this allegorical initiatory journey—‘transition’.

\textsuperscript{80} Tories opposed the War of Spanish Succession from the beginning considering the reason for the war was Whig greed for war profits. As Robert Harley (1661–1724), the Earl of Oxford, disclosed in 1711: ‘for the past ten years the public purse had been scandalously mismanaged for the glory of the Duke of Marlborough and the benefit of the foreigners and the Bank of England.’ The shortfall for the current year was put at £9,000,000. See John Carswell, \textit{The South Sea Bubble} (Stroud: Sutton, 2001), pp. 50–7. Quoted in Rogers, \textit{Pope and the Destiny of the Stuarts: History, Politics, and Mythology in the Age of Queen Anne}, p. 207, 232. Pope wrote his ‘\textit{Epistle to Oxford}’ in 1721.

\textsuperscript{81} During this march, nearly 40 percent of the men of some units in Duke of Marlborough’s army were lost. Ibid., p. 232.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., p. 233.

\textsuperscript{83} As a young man, Pope was close to John Caryll, grandfather of Edward Blount. Caryll’s Sussex estate of Ladyholt Park won Pope’s admiration. See Tim Richardson, \textit{The Arcadian Friends: Inventing the English Landscape Garden}, 1 vols. (London: Bantam, 2007), p. 17.

\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Correspondence}, I, p. 162.

2.3 ‘Transition’: Entering the grotto

A grotto has a long tradition of being a liminal place, gathering into itself suggestions of the cycle of burial and rebirth. In mythology, not only gods, such as Dionysus, were reborn in caves, where is Dionysus tomb, but mortals also, such as Odysseus and Aeneas, after descending into the underworld, returned with a renewed life. In religions and cults, caves are where the transition passage—initiation rites of death and birth are carried out. The Telesterion, where the ancient Greeks were initiated into death, is an enormous underground hall. Pythagoras, the supposed ancient precedent of Freemasonry, is said to have become immortal by going through a cave in Ithaca.⁸⁶

Such an underworld is not a Christian hell, where death and punishment is eternal. Rather death and birth follow a vegetative cycle, and it is only through death that greater perfection may be achieved. This pagan tradition, revived within the Neoplatonic academies since the fifteenth century, is directly connected to the fashion of building grottoes in Renaissance and Baroque gardens.⁸⁷ It is along with this Neoplatonic tradition that we shall examine Pope’s grotto.

As van Gennep observes, the transition rites form the most important and most elaborate part of the rites of passage.⁸⁸ A grotto is such a place as to afford a kind of liminal experience. Going through the first stage, the separation rites, the neophyte’s old ‘self’ suffers symbolic death. It is in the grotto that the released soul is transformed into the living. There are various machineries to enact these transition rites. In the Twickenham grotto, we will see this role played out by a device of watercourse, and various optical installations.⁸⁹

2.3.1 Initiation by water

An anonymous correspondent who reported on the grotto to the Newcastle General Magazine in 1747, only three years after the poet’s death, was impressed by the waterworks of the place:

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⁸⁷ A good example of this is the cave in Bomarzo. For a substantial case study of Sacro Bosco Di Bomarzo in the Hermetic-Neoplatonic context, see Darnall, ‘Il Sacro Bosco Di Bomarzo: Its 16th-Century Literary and Antiquarian Context,’ pp. 1–81.
⁸⁸ van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, p. 11.
⁸⁹ Symbolically, these machineries may express the idea of what van Gennep called the ‘passage through the elements.’ Such a passage through the elements has been noted as a feature of initiation rites in various cults, such as the ‘fraternity of Isis,’ an influential cult in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe that is closely related to the Eleusinian mysteries. See van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, p. 91.
Here it gurgles in a gushing Rill thro' fractur'd Ores and Flints; there it drips from depending Moss and Shells; here again, washing Beds of Sand and Pebbles, it rolls in Silver Streamlets; and there it rushes out in Jets and Fountains; while the Caverns of the Grot incessantly echo with a soothing Murmur of aquatick Sounds.  

Pope spoke of his grotto as a ‘watery cave’ as well as an ‘aquatic’ idea (LEB). Making use of a spring that he discovered in the grotto, he designed an entire watercourse linking up the Thames, the river portico and the garden entrance. In contrast to the Thames which enacted the separation rites, the water feature in the grotto was a device for performing the rites of initiation by water.

In ancient Greek tradition, water is one of the great principles of cosmic generation. It is a primal substance from which all forms come and to which they will return, either by their own regression or amidst cataclysm. The myth of the nymph of Arethusa, as Theocritus tells, embodies the understanding of this cosmic cycle in the movement of water. To escape from the erotic pursuit of the river god Areplus, Arethusa sought help from Aphrodite who transformed her into a stream, immersing herself into the sea, and then emerging again as a fountain. Pope was familiar with this myth, because he alludes to it in recounting the story of the mortal end of Lodona in *Windsor Forest*. Pursued by Pan, the child of Thames and the nymph of Diana flees. ‘Faint, breathless,’ she appeals to Diana for a return to her ‘native shades’:

She said, and melting as in tears she lay,
In a soft, silver Stream dissolv’d away.

(Windsor Forest, 203–4)

A Fountain, as an image of a river reborn, not only expresses the law of regeneration in the cosmic cycle, but also plays an important part in initiation rites. In mythologies recounted by Homer and Virgil, a watery journey of regeneration (epitomized by fountains) was frequently juxtaposed with a cave, where the dead were transformed into the living. Thus a watery

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91 Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, p. 188.


93 In *Georgic* 4, the young shepherd god, Aristaeus seeks for help to his mother Cyrene at the bottom of her river. In the watery realm, there are water nymphs singing all the tales of birthing since creation and there is an underwater cave hung with stalactites. In *vivoque sedilia saxo*, Virgil wrote of a grotto of nymphs on the seashore, where Aeneas found shelter after his long voyaging from Troy to Carthage. See M. Owen Lee, *Death and Rebirth in Virgil's Arcadia* (New York: State University of
cave has become a haven for healing and regeneration. In Hades in the *Odyssey*, the dark moist house, where the mingled rills murmur, remarkably features a fountain, ‘On the inner shore of Lake Acheron is a meadow on which grows asphodel, and a fountain, the fountain of Lethe, which ‘makes war on memory.’’\(^94\) The ritual function of fountains was informed by an ancient text found in Hipponion: \(^95\)

Following the itinerary, the dead is invited to turn him - or herself from a spring identified by a brilliant cypress from which the souls that remain in Hades drink; he or she will make his or her way toward a fountain that flows with the water of the lake of Mnemosyne. By recalling, thanks to the water of Memory, the bearer’s privileged state in which he or she was initiated into a mystery cult that must be similar to that of Eleusis, the dead are associated, as an ‘offspring of Earth and Sky’, with a group of ‘initiates and bacchants.’

It is doubtless that Pope has such an understanding, as he made plain in his translation of Homer, viz:

Strabo informs us, that upon the Amnisus there is a cave sacred to Ilithya, or Lucina, who presides over child-birth. The reason given by Eustathius why the poet places the cave by that river, is too frivolous to be recited. It is probable that it was called the cave of Ilithya because some great lady had made use of it, upon an occasion in which women invoke the assistance of that goddess; or perhaps because *water is one of the great principles of generation*, the temple of Lucina could not be placed in a more proper situation, than upon the banks of a river, and close by the sea. \(^96\)

It is very possible that it is for this reason that Pope values a spring in a grotto. He was delighted to find out that in the grotto there was ‘a spring of the clearest water, which falls in a perpetual Rill, that echoes thru’ the Cavern day and night.’ *(LEB)* His idea of having a statue of a sleeping nymph as a fountain set in the river portico may be seen a representation of the myth of Arethusa. Although it is not clear if he ever carried out this design, the Latin

95 This account is found in Hipponion, the most ancient lamella in the series dates probably to the end of the fifth century: B10 Graf = 474F Bernabe. See Alberto Bernabe’s exhaustive commentary on this text, ‘El poema orfico de Hipponion,’ in *Estudios Actuales Sobre Textos Griegos*, ed. José López Férez (Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia, 1991). Quoted in Calame, ‘Gardens of Love and Meadows of the Beyond: Ritual Encounters with the Gods and Poetical Performances in Ancient Greece,’ p. 47.
96 *Odyssey*, Ver. 218. To Bright Lucina’s fane.
verse and Pope’s own translation included in his letter to Edward Blount which we quoted above, reveals this conception.\textsuperscript{97}

\begin{center}
\begin{verbatim}
Nymph of the Grot, these sacred springs I keep,
and to the Murmur of these waters sleep;
Whoe’er thou art, ah gently tread the Cave,
Ah Bathe in silence, or in silence lave. \textsuperscript{98}
\end{verbatim}
\end{center}

Whilst sleep, in Greek mythology, is the twin brother of death, bathing, an immersion ritual, indicates regeneration following death. Pope’s translation of these fifteenth century Latin verses thus emphasized his idea of the grotto as a place of the dead to be transformed into the living, or as Hades in the \textit{Odyssey}, a watery haven between death and life.

Making use of the spring, Pope deliberately designed the waterworks in the grotto as a device representing the cyclical movement of regeneration. In a January 1740 drawing by Pope himself (Fig. 2–6), the spring is shown rising from the floor of the lobby at the garden end of the tunnel, running along the floor and discharging into a circular basin at the rear left hand side of the grotto itself. The water then disappeared through the wall via an overflow pipe and crossed beneath the floor of the left-hand chamber, described as ‘a Bagnio,’ in a conduit on its way out of the building and flowing into the river. In this way, the spring found in the grotto is connected to the Thames, and the whole course becomes a symbol of the cyclical movement of water regeneration. The system completes the metaphorical watery journey by immersing into sea—in this case, the underground grotto—the River Thames experiences a symbolic death, and achieves its rebirth as a fountain.

\textsuperscript{97} Mack points out that by the time these Latin verses reached Pope, they and the figure of the sleeping nymph had long captivated the Renaissance imagination. Sleeping nymphs accompanied by these verses were given residence beside fountains and in grottos all over Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They made their way into paintings by Dürer, Cranach, Claude, were popularized in engraved collections of ancient monuments, and in the long run became familiar garden ornaments. See Mack, \textit{The Garden and the City: Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope, 1713–1743}, pp. 78–9.

\textsuperscript{98} This verse is inscribed in the freemason Henry Hoare’s grotto in Stourhead, the construction of which might have been based on Pope’s idea. Ibid.
The rites of water initiation dramatize the process by which human beings enter into the kingdom of Hades, and are made ‘regenerate and born anew of water.’ The dirty flood in going under the sea has been purified and regenerated to be the ‘clearest water’ of the spring. Relating to our previous discussions on the image of flood in a political context, it is quite possible that Pope intended the visitor to see not only a filthy soul purified, but also the corruptive Walpolean-George III regime replaced by the government of a philosopher-king. Furthermore, it may symbolize the regeneration of British sea power. The image of the river of blood transformed into a clear fountain may represent the Tories policy, which was to rely on free global trade for the country’s development instead of on warfare and industrialization, as the progressive Whigs advocated. This interpretation we shall unfold in the following pages.

### 2.3.2 Initiation through visions

The Mysteries of Eleusis have two levels of initiation: the first rite, the *myesis*, which was enacted on the banks of the Ilissos, and the second and highest rite, the *epopteia*, which took place at Eleusis.\(^99\) Although the ceremony of *epopteia* was always kept secret,\(^100\) modern

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\(^100\) It is common for the mysteries to keep their rites secret. At Eleusis, a betrayal of the secret rites
scholars such as Carl Kerényi demonstrate that the secret of the mysteries may be identified with ‘a natural capacity to see visions,’¹⁰¹ and with epopteia, the state of ‘having seen,’¹⁰² which also suggests that happiness has been conferred upon the initiate.¹⁰³ The initiation rites of the Eleusinian mysteries are known as a festival of ‘vision’. At the initiation ceremony of epopteia, ineffable, holy things were seen.¹⁰⁴ These visions included, as Kerényi shows, a vision of Kore (Persephone, the underworld goddess); a figure rose above the ground; the Hierophant or presiding priest, silent amid profound silence, displayed a mown ear of grain. These visio beatifica of Eleusis, were seen with open, corporeal eyes.¹⁰⁵ Socrates described the Eleusinian visions, as recorded in Plato’s Phaedrus (250 BC), thus:

> But then, there was beauty to be seen, brightly shining, when with the blessed choir . . . the souls beheld the beatific spectacle and vision and were perfected in that mystery of mysteries which it is meet to call the most blessed. This did we celebrate in our true and perfect selves, when we were yet untouched by all the evils in time to come; when as initiates we were allowed to see perfect and simple, still and happy Phantoms. Purer was the light that shone around us, and pure were we.¹⁰⁶

Whilst Socrates indicated that the Eleusinian visions were phantoms, or phasmata, φασματα, which were inferior to philosophical contemplation, which spoke of a visio beatifica in a bodiless state,¹⁰⁷ Aristotle in his De Anima seemed to be trying to present a different view. He described phantasia as a capacity of the mind which could not be identified with sense-perception or with rational thought, a capacity which was like what we would call was punishable by death or banishment. Sopatros, a late teacher of Greek rhetoric simulated a case of Mystery betrayal by inventing the story of a man who dreamed of the epopteia with its entire secret ceremony. Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. xxxvi.
¹⁰³ Zosimos. *Historia nova.* ed. Ludwig Mendelssohn (Leipzig, 1887). Quoted in ibid., p. 12. The annual celebration was perceived as a part of the Greek form of existence.
¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 94. Kerényi further commented, ‘all who had ‘seen’ turned, at the sight of this concrete thing, as though turning back from the hereafter into this world, back to the world of tangible things, which include grain. The grain was grain and not more, but it may well have summed up for the epoptai everything that Demeter and Persephone had given to mankind: Demeter food and wealth, Persephone birth under the earth.’
Neoplatonists such as Simplicius of Cilicia (ca. 522–443 BC) and Plotinus further developed Aristotle’s concept. Plotinus placed *phantasia* above sense-perception and below reason, at the junction of the rational and the irrational soul. *Phantasia*, as Plotinus suggested, has two conditions: a lower phantasia which has *phantasma* that reflect the impressions of sense-perception and a higher phantasia which uses verbal formulae to apprehend pure Forms (*Enneads*, 4. 3. 29–31). Plotinus envisaged the *phantasma* of the lower *phantasia* as what we would call mental images and that of the higher *phantasia* as more intellectual versions, expressions in words which somehow represent Forms. For him, the higher *phantasia* received thought ‘as if in a mirror’ (*Enneads*, 4. 3. 30. 10), and the two became one ‘as if a shadow followed the other.’ (*Enneads*, 4. 3. 31. 9ff.)

The incongruence between Socrates and Neoplatonists on the nature of phantoms, reflects their different understanding of truth and the means towards truth. To a certain extent, Socrates’s favouring of philosophical imaginations anticipated a more speculative tradition in philosophy, as shown in Cartesianism, whereas Neoplatonists thoughts, with a mystic dimension, held that truth cannot be entirely grasped through pure reason. Provided through mystical initiation, truth was to be obtained through rational exercise and training in the art of dialectics.

Neoplatonist interpretations of *phantasia* became influential among the numerous Academies founded in Italy during the Renaissance. By the second half of the sixteenth century, along with the notion of the divine madness of the poet, *phantasia* as a way of revelation began to be extended to the visual arts. The notion of the parallel between painting and poetry—both worked through mental images—appeared more prominently and was to retain its appeal down to the eighteenth century. (The popularity of Horace’s *Ut pictura poesis* is but one example.) The story of visionary poets was a familiar one, that is the illusions or visions in their poems were obtained in a kind of divine revelation. But this phenomenon has rarely been examined in relation to the revival of Hermetism-Neoplatonism.

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in the Academies, and to the notion of ‘having seen’ beatific visions as when obtaining a higher spiritual stage—becoming ‘the initiated’—according to the ancient mysteries. Focusing on the connection between ‘having seen’ visions and initiatory or pseudo-initiatory rituals, we may come closer to Renaissance understanding of Greek forms of existence, or arts,\textsuperscript{113} a notion which did not treat artistic creation, religious revelation, scientific inquiry, and moral cultivation as separate disciplines, but as being bounded by the idea of poetic truth.

As modern scholarship has shown, visions—phantoms or apparitions in the temples of ancient Greece and Rome were produced by mirror and camera obscura projections.\textsuperscript{114} In the Medieval Ages and the Renaissance, ‘visions’ as an obscure concept coexisted among optics, mystery, and divine awe. The knowledge of showing visions, similarly, were kept alive in a grey arena belonging to natural magic, the sciences (optics) and divinity, as it was found in, for example, Giovanni Battista della Porta’s \textit{Magiae naturalis} (1558 and 1589) and the Jesuit scholar, Athanasius Kircher’s \textit{Ars Magna lucis et umbrae} (1646).\textsuperscript{115} Martin Kemp held that the showing of projections (e.g. camera obscura) flourished most in late sixteenth-century Italy in the context of natural magic, where optical instruments were used as a means of exploiting natural phenomena, to astonish and entertain the spectator, as a model for explaining human vision, and a painter’s device.\textsuperscript{116} But he did not emphasize that these various functions, for Renaissance humanist minds, might have been combined under a single frame of ritualistic performance.

As scholars have revealed, optic instruments were frequently employed by Renaissance poets. In England, in the line of imaginative poets such as Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, John Milton, and John Dryden, all of whom were Pope’s literary models, there can be traced a common interest in optical knowledge.\textsuperscript{117} Metaphors of optical instruments

\textsuperscript{113} For a detailed discussion of the moral associations of the Greek concept of art, see Ibid., pp. 498–501.
\textsuperscript{114} That camera obscura projections were in use to project phantoms and apparitions in temples in ancient Greece and Rome has been proved by many literary allusions, collected by French scholar, Bacconière-Salverte in his book \textit{The Occult Sciences} (1829). Quoted from Hermann Hecht, ‘The History of Projecting Phantoms, Ghosts, and Apparitions, Part I,’ \textit{The New Magic Lantern Journal} conventional proceedings I (1983), pp. 2–6. Smoke or vapours also play a crucial role as they act as recipients of the projection. They could let phantoms appear like fantastic luminous shapes, floating inexplicably in the air. Hermann Hecht, ‘The History of Projecting Phantoms, Ghosts and Apparitions, Part 2,’ \textit{The New Magic Lantern Journal} conventional proceedings III (1983), pp. 2–6.
\textsuperscript{115} For a detailed discussion of the history of the camera obscura being used for artistic practice, see Martin Kemp, \textit{Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat}, New ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 188–203.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{117} For Chaucer’s descriptions of apparitions in his works such as the ‘Franklin’s Tale,’ which was a camera-obscura and/or mirror projection, see Nevill Coghill’s translation of \textit{The Canterbury Tales}, 1951, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, pp. 445–56. For Milton’s use of the imagery of the telescope,
and literary descriptions of the visions produced by their optical instruments frequent their poems. Instead of seeing this phenomenon as an outcome of a pure scientific interest or entertainment, this interest in optical visions may be better understood in relation to their shared belief in intermingled magical/divine revelations and artistic inspirations.

It is in this tradition of *Ut pictura poesis* that Pope stood. Like some of the Italian poets of the Renaissance, and his own English poetic precedents, Pope knew about optical knowledge, he studied painting, and was interested in natural magic and prophecies. He is particularly known for his poetic use of colour and light. As Maynard Mack comments, Pope was ‘perhaps the acutest observer of (the) effects of light among the English poets.’

His poems know the difference between effulgence and refulgence; between the ‘mild Lustre’ of spring mornings and the peculiarly ‘Purple Light’ of autumn sunsets; between the ‘glitter’ of ice, the ‘Gleam’ of water, the flame and ‘blaze’ of the diamonds, the ‘shine’ of fruits, the ‘glow’ of flowers. They know how armor ‘beams’ in lamplight, ‘flashes’ in firelight. They know how moonlight on foliage yields a yellow radiance, on stone a silver. . . . They know too that what we see depends as much upon the optics seeing as the object seen.

Therefore it is not surprising that the grotto was an optical cave. In the letter to Edward Blount, Pope mentioned various optical instruments and visions including the ‘perspective glass,’ ‘camera obscura,’ broken mirrors,’ and ‘a thousand pointed rays.’ Apart from these, there are other various special mirrors installed in the grotto. For example, Pope in his letter to William Borlase mentioned that there were ‘two glasses fixed in a way to reflect the Thames . . . Almost deceive the Eye to that degree as to seem two arches opening to the

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Chapter 2  The Odyssean journey: Alexander Pope's Twickenham villa

River on each side.' Moreover, in some drawings of the grotto by William Kent, we not only find various types of optical instruments such as lamps and perspective glasses in the painter’s composition, but the pictures often represented special lighting effects. This significant optical feature certainly has received scholars’ attention. Nevertheless, so far it has not been examined in relation to the theme of seeing and ‘having seen’ visions as ritual or ritualistic performances for ‘initiating’ the mind.

From his early years, Pope had demonstrated his sensitivity to consciousness, or imagination. In his letter to John Caryll in 1712, he described a dream-like vision of himself:

Like a witch, Whose carcase lies motionless on the floor, while she keeps her airy Sabbaths & enjoys a thousand imaginary entertainments abroad, in this world, & in others, I seem to sleep in the midst of the Hurry, even as you would swear a Top stands still, when ‘tis in the Whirl of its giddy motion.’ Tis no figure, but a serious truth I tell you when I say that my Days & Nights are so much alike, so equally insensible of any Moving power but fancy, that I have sometimes spoke of things in our family as Truths & real accidents, which I only Dreamt of, & again when some things that actually happen’d came into my head, have thought (till I enquird) that I had only dream’d of them.

Pope’s idea of imagination inherited the Neoplatonist concept of phantasia which has the lower and the higher level. In his poems, the former often was described as ‘sensible images.’ As David Fairer suggests, Pope’s concept of the lower, sensuous imagination—represented in ‘Dulness’ comes close to the ‘Dulness’ described by Lady Mary Chudleigh in her essay ‘Of Pride’ (1710).

The Dulness of my Apprehension, which, by its being too closely united to the Body, is fill’d with sensible Images, crowded with imaginary Appearances, like the first Matter, dark and full of Confusion, and hardly receptive of pure Idea’s, of simple intellectual Truths; discover to me the Errors of my Judgment, the false Notions I have of Things . . . O that thou would’st be pleased to purifie and brighten my Imagination, make it strong and regular, fit to contemplate thy Divine Essence.

We may assume that Pope would have wished to achieve a higher stage of imagination, a purer, simpler truth. For this, the secret epopteia of the mysteries would have appealed to

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123 To John Caryll, Jr., 5 December 1712, Correspondence, I, p. 163. Cf. To Jervas, 16 August 1714. In Correspondence, I, p. 243: ‘I have the greatest proof in nature at present of the amusing power of Poetry, for it takes me up so entirely that I scarce see what passes under my nose, and hear nothing that is said about me.’ Quoted in Mack, The Garden and the City: Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope, 1713–1743, p. 42.
125 Ibid., p. 121.
him. This speculation seemed in accordance with the narrative in his letter to Edward Blount: after the action ‘when you shut the door (of the grotto),’ Pope related a series of visions—‘on the walls of which the objects of the river, hills, woods, and boats, are forming a moving picture in their visible radiations,’ ‘a very different scene,’ ‘a thousand pointed rays.’ The narrative encouraged us to see him as a hierophant at the Telesterion, who made things appear. And we know Pope did refer to himself as a magician, who showed ‘visionary beauties to his ‘visitors.’ As he wrote to Robert Digby in May 1722:

How much I wish to be her (Mrs. Mary Digby) guide through that enchanted forest, is not to be expressed. I look upon myself as the magician appropriated to the place, without whom no mortal can penetrate into the Recesses of those sacred Shades. I could pass whole Days, in only describing to her the future, and as yet visionary Beauties, that are to rise in those Scenes…’

Below, in four sub-sections, ‘perspective’ visions, ‘camera obscura,’ ‘broken mirror,’ and ‘a thousand pointed rays,’ I shall examine these visions, which, in line with the magic-poetic tradition of the Renaissance, were contrived as political metaphors as well as instruments of optical ritual. They not only deliver the poet’s and his community’s criticism of political issues, but also evoke their philosophical reflections upon an increasingly dominant rational approach to perception and self-understanding.

2.3.2.1 Perspective visions

From the river Thames you see thro’ my arch up a walk of the wilderness to a kind of open temple, wholly compos’d of Shells in the rustic manner; and from that distance under the temple you look down thro’ a sloping arcade of trees [lining the walk to the grotto on the garden side], and see the sails on the river passing suddenly and vanishing, as thro’ a perspective glass. (LEB)

Before the eighteenth-century, a perspective glass was a rather general name for any optical instrument for looking through. Here it may be best understood as an instrument for

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126 In his essay ‘Of the art of sinking in Poetry,’ he projects an ideal poet as a magician, *The Works of Mr. Alexander Pope*, vol. 2, p. 213. In his letter to Edward Blount, 3 October 1721, Pope wrote that ‘I really wish myself something more, that is, a Prophet.’ *Correspondence*, II, p. 86.


128 *Perspectiva* was a minted Latin word deriving from *perspectus*, meaning ‘to see through.’ Translated in Bacon (3), I: 232–34; the original Latin is in Bacon (1), I: 210–11. For a detailed discussion, see Samuel Y. Edgerton, *The Mirror, the Window, and the Telescope: How Renaissance Linear Perspective Changed Our Vision of the Universe* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2009), pp. 15–21.
“telescopic vision.”\textsuperscript{129} As a long and dark tunnel, the form of Pope’s grotto is like that of a telescope. The conception of the grotto also bears a resemblance with that of a telescope. During the Renaissance, a telescope was not a mere scientific instrument, but rather a prospective instrument that could discern the future as well as reveal the truth.\textsuperscript{130} Pope would have been familiar with Milton’s imagery of a ‘long and dark prospective glass’ for a telescope: ‘That far events full wisely could presage,/ And in times long and dark Prospective Glass/ Fore-saw what future dayes should bring to pass …’ (\textit{Poem at a Vacation Exercise}, published in 1674).\textsuperscript{131} The telescope, as a prospective instrument was commonly known in early eighteenth-century England, was made popular by emblem books. For example, Quarles’ \textit{Emblem book} contains an image of such use.\textsuperscript{132} The two visions of the garden and the sails, deliberately arranged at the two ends of the prospective instrument, delivered moral messages and prophecies from the poet.

\textbf{The garden vision}

At the river portico, one is supposed to see a vision of a rustic temple: ‘you see thro’ my arch up a walk of the wilderness to a kind of open temple, wholly compos’d of Shells in the rustic manner.’ (\textit{LEB}) Despite its seemingly innocent pastoral mood, this vision in distance, however, revealed the journey through the underworld as a transition between death and life. With its focus on Charles I, it can more specifically be seen as a journey towards a land of regeneration—Arcadia.

The rustic temple, here can be associated with the rustic utopia of the Arcadian king of Evander recounted in Virgil’s \textit{Aeneid}, a story used in a Caroline masque,\textsuperscript{133} Walter Montague’s \textit{The Shepherd’s Paradise} (1633), a Neoplatonic pastoral which exalted Charles I’s regime as Arcadia under his virtuous kingship.\textsuperscript{134} The Twickenham garden vision bears striking affinities with Inigo Jones’s set design for this scene in the Caroline masque (Fig. 2–7)\textsuperscript{135} with which the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{130} Konečný, ‘Young Milton and the Telescope,’ pp. 368–9.
\item \textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{132} For a detailed discussion of the allegorical use of the telescope and prism in Quarles’ \textit{Emblem Book}, see Ibid., p. 371.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Caroline masques, the most distinctive manifestation of the art of the festival at the Stuart court, are created to celebrate the divine kingship of Charles I and his personal rule. Roy C. Strong, \textit{Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals, 1450–1650} (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1984), p. 160.
\item \textsuperscript{134} \textit{The Shepherd’s paradise} was one of Queen Henrietta Maria’s Neoplatonic pastorals, acted by her and her ladies. Jones invented a repertory of appropriate backgrounds as settings. Arts Council of Great Britain. et al., \textit{The King's Arcadia: Inigo Jones and the Stuart Court; a Quatercentenary Exhibition Held at the Banqueting House, Whitehall, from July 12th to September 2nd, 1973} (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1973), pp. 161–3.
\item \textsuperscript{135} ‘Framed by an arch, a scene of temple of Pallas is shown through ‘a woode.’ Beneath the temple is
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poet was very likely acquainted through Burlington’s collection of drawings. Pope may have also identified the grotto with the cave that is shown underneath the temple, referred to as ‘a tombe,’ which, as described in Sir William Davenant’s *Salmacida Spolia*, the last court masque performed at Charles I’s court in 1640, ‘the troubled womb of earth| Where you receive your undiscovered birth,| Break out in wild disorders.’

Therefore, this key vision in perspective spells out the goal of this subterranean journey—to restitute the Stuart monarchy and to achieve the country’s regeneration. The thoughtful optical analogy of a ‘perspective glass’ also testifies to this process of regeneration. Among its various connotations, a ‘perspective glass’ in the Renaissance may refer to a magic crystal, a theological-magic device for seeing the truth. During the civil war and its aftermath, the perspective glass had been used by royalists as a political metaphor to criticize usurpers’ deeds. Specifically, it was associated with the death of Charles I, as demonstrated in the article entitled ‘Lady’s Perspective Glass,’ published in 1701.

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*Burlington collected drawings of Inigo Jones and Jones’ pupil John Webb, which Kent published as The designs of Inigo Jones: consisting of plans and elevations for publick and private buildings (London: s.n., 1727).*

*Salmaida Spolia*, performed on Jan 21st, 1640, and repeated on February 16th, 17th and 18th, was the last of the Caroline masques, a spectacle in which both King and Queen took part. Produced at the advent of Civil War, the masque is overtly political. Jones guides the audience through a tempestuous storm, the evils which ferment opposition to the sacrosanct rule of Charles, whose blissful reign is next conjured up in a luscious landscape at harvest time. See Arts Council of Great Britain. et al., *The King’s Arcadia*, pp. 183–4.

*Matthew Bee, The lady's perspective glass: through which may be clearly seen, a glorious landscape*
... our Savior was Sold and Betray’d by his own Disciple and Servant; that he was Tried, Condemn’d and Murther’d by the Sanhedrim and Magistrates of his own City of Jerusalem, that he rose from the Dead, and Ascended up to Heaven.

The concentration on Charles I in this perspective vision in the grotto can be further testified by several incised stones placed at the entrance of the grotto from the river side. One immediately above the entrance to the main passage, represents Five Wounds,\(^{139}\) which for the Catholics, certainly had associations with King Charles I’s crucifixion and the great trials and disorders—such as plague, fire, internal divisiveness—that England suffered following his death for the rest of the seventeenth-century.\(^{140}\) Other incised stones, with the inscriptions of ‘JR 1696,’ which Mack suggests referred to ‘James Rex 1696,’ a significant year of the Jacobite rising, also supports our assumption of the motif memorializing the king’s death.\(^{141}\)

Three feet away, is another piece of incised stone depicting the ‘Crown of Thorns.’ This recalled a frontispiece in the influential book of *Eikon Basilike* among Catholics, dedicated to the martyr king.\(^{142}\) The frontispiece depicts the king, before his execution, in a similar gesture as Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. Ready to take the Crown of Thorns, he saw the Heavenly Crown outside his window.

Such a scene, transferred to the Twickenham grotto, reminds us of the very vision shown in the medallion of the headpiece in Pope’s translation of the *Odyssey* Book V, in which there is a connection between the execution of the king and the tree cut down. Similarly, the vision of the shell temple framed by an arch could be read as the heavenly crown standing for eternal honour. But placed in a perspective vision at the far end of the dark tunnel, the temple from this perspective indicates the achievement of the eternal honour after a long journey—a treatment that reflects the Neoplatonic theme of deterioration preceding perfection.\(^{143}\) With the rustic temple at the far end of the tunnel and the arcade, the scene resembles Inigo Jones’ design for scene 3: ‘the Way to the Throne of Honour,’ in


\(^{140}\) Many persons, irrespective of political loyalties, thought the Plague and Fire to be evidence of the wrath of God. See *TE*, I, p. 180.


\(^{142}\) *Eikón basiliké. The pourtracture of His sacred Majestie in his solitudes and sufferings*, Printed at London: [s.n], 1649.

The ‘Way’ is ‘of strange forms,’ ‘hallow in the midst, and seem’d to be cut through by art’; ‘all of which represented the difficult way (through) which heroes are to pass, c’er they come to the throne of honour.’

It is therefore possible to see the garden vision in perspective as a reminder for neophytes to be ready for the journey of horror and torture awaiting them in the ‘underworld’. This key concept of ‘journey’ was clearly marked out by a marble plaque at the garden entrance of the grotto, quoting line from Horace (Ep. I xviii. 103) ‘Secretum iter et fallentis semita vitae’ (a secluded journey along the pathway of a life unnoticed).

Yet the perspective vision of the rustic garden tells us more than the destiny of the Stuart monarchy. In the vision of ‘wilderness’—the exuberance of the woodland—reveals the Tories policy of relying on agriculture and afforestation as key sources for the country’s regeneration, as will be elaborated in the final section 1.3 of this chapter below.

**Vision of sails**

Looking out of the portico towards the river Thames, one has the vision of what Pope wrote of: ‘sails on the river passing suddenly and vanishing, as thro’ a perspective glass.’ (LEB)

This vision further reveals the role of the grotto as a haven or sheltered anchorage, a transition place for the dead monarchy to be regenerated.

For an eighteenth century intellectual, the vision of sails in the distance, would be easily related to the ‘prospect of a sea,’ a motif recurring in Caroline masques, which exalted Charles I’s formidable navy, the strongest sea power in the world. Influenced by Neoplatonic thoughts, the masques elaborated on the pattern of deterioration preceding perfection. In accord with Virgilian mythology, it was common to use a cave by a sea shore to refer to a haven for the transition rites to take place.

The vision of sails reminds us of the scene entitled ‘Prospect Sea’ in Ben Jonson’s *Love’s Triumph through Callipolis* (1631) (Fig. 2-8), which was presented right after a purification scene (which may shed further light on the Twickenham itinerary). From the garden in the foreground is shown in the distance a vision of the king arriving with his courtiers, bestriding the waves in triumph. We may also recall another scene in *Britannia*...
Triumphans (1637), by William Davenant, where a nymph is healing the king in the haven. The motif of regeneration is clearly conveyed by the nymph’s song: ‘We in the spring, the spheres, the stars admire | Is his renewed, and bettered every night!’¹⁴⁸

As mentioned at the beginning of the Introduction, this vision parallels with the headpiece of Pope’s Odyssey Book V, which portrays the prospective of the detained hero about to sail home, by cutting down trees to make his own raft. Here Pope clearly used the image of the falling tree as an allegory to promote the Tories’ policy, that is, to promote agriculture and using oak trees to build formidable ships for free global trade, secured by a mighty navy.

Let India boast her plants, nor envy we
The weeping amber or the balmy tree,
While by our oaks the precious loads are born,
And realms commanded which those trees adorn.
Not proud Olympus yields a nobler sight,
Tho’ Gods assembled grace his tow’ring height,
Than what more humble mountains offer here,

(Windsor Forest, 29–35)

Along with the garden vision, this perfection belongs to the third stage—regeneration—which will be elaborated in the last stage of ‘Ascending to the garden.’

2.3.2.2 The ‘Camera obscura’

‘When you shut the door of the grotto, it changes instantly from a luminous room into a camera obscura. On the walls of which the objects of the river, hills,

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in ibid., p. 169.
woods, and boats, are forming a moving picture in their visible radiations.’

(LEB)

A camera obscura is founded on the principle that when rays of light from an object or scene passes through a small aperture into a dark, enclosed interior, the light or scene will re-emerge on the wall opposite the hold in a reversed configuration, often brown and glowing. The principle was known since at least two thousand years ago. Whilst the ancient Greeks employed camera-obscura projection at temples to show divine revelation, Enlightenment philosophers treated a camera obscura as a model to understand human visions. Pope’s camera obscura so far mainly has been discussed in relation to the latter type and was compared with Joseph Addison’s account of a camera obscura and John Locke’s famous metaphor of a dark room as the model of the mind:

Methinks the understanding is not so much unlike a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little opening left, to let in external visible resemblances or ideas of things without: would the pictures coming into a dark room but stay there, and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion, it would very much resemble the understanding of a man, in reference to all objects of sight, and the ideas of them.  

As Jonathan Crary points out, the modern camera obscura represents a way of seeing that takes a clean cut between the observer and the exterior world, and how observation leads to truthful inferences about an external world. Decorated with various optic devices, mirrors, stones, and shells, Pope’s grotto, however, was neither a Lockean ‘dark room’ as an empiricist mind, nor a pure instrument for observing a landscape as an external object. Replete with vapours, phantoms or imaginary appearances, the poet’s ‘shadowy cave’ rather bears more affinity with an ‘optical cave’ in the hermetic tradition of the Renaissance.

For Renaissance minds, the camera obscura was a scientific/magic instrument. It was known that Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo da Vinci, and Johann Kepler were all users of camera obscura. For these figures, who were often at the same time painters, opticians,

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149 ‘The prettiest Landskip I ever saw was drawn on the Walls of a dark Room, which stood opposite on one side to a navigable River, and on the other to a Park. The Experiment is very common in Opticks. Here you might discover the Waves and Fluxutations of the Water in strong and proper Colours, with the Picture of a Ship entering at one end, and sailing by Degrees through the Whole Piece. On another there appeared the Green Shadows of Trees, waving to and fro with the Wind, and Herds of Deer among them in Miniature, leaping about upon the Wall.’ Joseph Addison, Spectator; no. 414 (25 June 1712).
152 Nicolson and Rousseau, This Long Disease, My Life: Alexander Pope and the Sciences, pp. 283–
and devout Christians receptive to Hermetic magic, this extraordinary phenomenon of the
camera obscura demonstrated the behavior of light, as an expression of the natural law.

Leonardo da Vinci wrote in rapturous praise of the miraculous point through which the
rays could pass and be regenerated.  

O marvellous necessity . . . O mighty process. Here the figures, here the
colours, here all the images of the parts of the universe are reduced to a point . . .
Forms already lost, can be regenerated and reconstituted.

Describing a camera obscura shown to him in London in 1622, Constantijn Huygens, a
Dutch poet, musician, and art critic expressed how he was fascinated with its ‘beautiful
brown picture,’ 154 and the shape, outline and movements of objects naturally and in a
pleasing way. ‘It is not possible for me to reveal the beauty to you in words; all painting is
dead by comparison, for here is life itself or something more elevated if one could articulate
it.’ 155

Pope was also a painter himself and Marjorie H. Nicolson suggests that Pope might
have learned about the camera obscura from the studio of Charles Jervas, with whom he
studied painting in 1712–13. 156 Nevertheless he seemed to have made himself familiar with
the camera obscura through the influence of his friend Jonathan Swift at an earlier time.
Reporting his friend’s optical experiment, Pope wrote, 157

4; and Kemp, Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat, p. 189.
Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat, p. 189, n. 47.
154 Constantijn Huygens’s letter written in London to his parents on 17th March, 1622. In Constantijn
(1911–17), Vol. I (1911), pp. 89. Note that camera obscura image is naturally enveloped in a brown or yellowish
shadow. Quoted in Arthur K. Wheelock Jr, ‘Constantijn Huygens and Early Attitudes Towards the
Camera Obscura,’ History of Photography 1, no. 2 (1977), p. 93.
155 Huygens’s letters written in London to his parents on 13th April, 1622. In Huygens, De
156 Nicolson and Rousseau, ‘This Long Disease, My Life’: Alexander Pope and the Sciences, pp. 282–
157 Opticks: Or a Treatise of the Reflections, Refractions, Inflections and Colours of Light, ed. I.
268. It is worth noting that In Temple of Fame: a Vision (1715), Pope might literally depict a camera
obscura projection of a landscape:

The whole Creation open to my Eyes:
In Air self-balanc’d hung the Globe below,
Where Mountains rise, and circling Oceans flow;
Here naked Rocks and empty Wastes were seen,
There tow’ry Cities, and the Forests green:
Here sailing Ships delight the wand’ring Eyes;
There Trees, and intermingl’d Temples rise:
Now a clear Sun the shining Scene displays,
The transient Landscape now in Clouds decays.
in a very dark chamber, at a round Hole, about a third Part of an Inch broad, made in the Shut of a Window, I placed a Glass Prism, whereby the Beam of the Sun’s Light, which came in at that Hole, might be refracted upwards toward the opposite Wall of the Chamber, and there form a colour’d Image of the Sun.

This professional installation may be an appropriation of Newton’s new principle of prism and a camera obscura—possibly inspired by Kircher’s description of his observation of the sun with the instrument, available in *Ars Magna Lucis Umbrae*.\(^{158}\) This effect he could have repeated in the Twickenham grotto which was a ‘dark chamber.’ As Nicolson points out, the effects of the camera obscura could have been easily obtained by the slit in the door which is indicated in Pope’s own sketch of the grotto and that by his gardener, John Searle.\(^{159}\)

As a painter, Pope would have been attracted to the fact, as Huygens, that the exterior or natural landscape re-emerged and covered in brown and glowing shade, an extraordinary feature of a camera obscura image. And he might have equally, like Leonardo, realized the miracle of the transformation of varied forms and colours into unified shade and light. This he demonstrated in many places in his poems.\(^{160}\) In *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), a poem containing the poet’s criticism of paintings, he showed fascination with how shade and light united from varied ripe colours.

> When the ripe colours soften and unite,  
> And sweetly melt into just Shade and Light,  
> When mellowing Years their full Perfection give;  
> The treach’rous Colours the fair Art betray,  
> And all the bright Creation fades away!  

\((488–93)\)

O'er the wide Prospect as I gaz'd around,  
\((12–21)\)

Note that Pope mentioned ‘a clear Sun the shining Scene displays,’ which would be impossible to see under normal condition.

\(^{158}\) In *Ars Magna Lucis Umbrae* (Great art of light and shadow), the Jesuit scholar related similar optical experiment for observing the sun. see Athanasius Kircher, *Athanasii Kircheri Ars Magna Lucis Et Umbrae* (Romae: Sumptibus Hermanni Scheus, ex typographia Ludouici Grignani, 1646).

Kircher’s works were circulated in England among the elite circle including Sir William Temple and members of Royal Society. Swift might have had access to *Ars Magna Lucis Umbrae* when he stayed with Sir William Temple as secretary at Moor Park. Kircher was a friend and correspondent of Sir Robert Moray, founder and first president of the Royal Society of London, who was also the founder of Scottish Freemasonry. With these channels, it is very unlikely that Kircher’s scientific studies were not received by these English elite. For the Kircher and Robert Moray relationship, see John Fletcher, ‘Athanasius Kircher and his correspondence,’ in *Athanasius Kircher und seine Beziehungen*. ed. J. Fletcher (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988), pp. 141. For Kircher’s work circulation in England, see John Fletcher, ‘Athansius K and the distribution of his books.’ *The Library*, 5th series, 23 (1968), pp. 108–110.

\(^{159}\) Nicolson and Rousseau, *This Long Disease, My Life*: Alexander Pope and the Sciences, p. 282.

In his poem *Eloisa to Abélard* (1717), describing the scene on a walk, he presented an image embraced in a ‘browner horror,’ an equivalence of the unifying shade that envelopes the camera obscura image.

Black Melancholy sits, and around her throws  
A death-like silence, and a dread repose:  
Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,  
Shades ev’ry flow’r, and darkens ev’ry green,  
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,  
And breathes a browner horror on the woods.  

(165–170)

Pope’s opinion on colours and shades is in line with the Renaissance tradition of painting. As Martin Kemp discusses, there had long been the Aristotelian theory which distinguished between apparent and true colours. Colours as seen in nature present a bewildering variety of kaleidoscopic variations—fleeting, fluctuating, and almost infinitely slippery whenever we try to entrap them in a regular net of scientific categories. The vagaries of these apparent colours in nature were regarded as too transitory and variable to be anything other than dangerous for the painter of great subjects, who must aspire to eternal verities. As examples, Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) preferred learned painters to believe that the greatest art and industry were concerned with the disposition of white and black, as the incidence of light and shade, rather than the wide range and variety of colours. Leonardo afforded a more theoretical and coherent view on light and shade, by proposing the concept of ‘original shadow’:

> every opaque body is surrounded and its surface enveloped in light and shade. . . shadows are in themselves of varying degrees of darkness, because they arise from various amounts of subtracted light, and these I call the original shadows, because these are the first shadows which clothe the bodies.

Echoing the Aristotelian *De Coloribus*, the treatise implied that the original shadow is the natural colour, which however is modified by the percussion of surrounding luminous rays. In a similar vein, Noel Coypel (1628–1707) stressed that colour belonged to the lower,
We may therefore assume that the very power of Leonardo’s paintings—the unifying substratum of deep shadow, the privation of light, which dominated his work such as *Virgin of the Rocks* (London) may have been a result achieved by using a camera obscura. Having lost their original kaleidoscopic colours, the painting enveloped in a brownish shade, seemed to illustrate a status of restoration to the ‘original shadow,’ which eludes our naked eyes. We may therefore better understand Leonardo’s appraisal of the miraculous point of a camera obscura, through which ‘the figure, the colours, and all the images of the parts of the universe’ can be regenerated and reconstituted, achieving perfection. The process of a camera obscura projection thus seemed to resemble that of an initiation of the light, if not the eye.

Whilst we may never know exactly whether the pursuit of the ‘original shadow,’ or light and shade as ‘the higher, philosophical consideration’ was an underpinning of those Renaissance painters’ employment of the camera obscura, the lines from Pope, who confessed his grotto was a camera obscura projecting landscapes, may be illuminating. In his many poems, he demonstrated his sensitivity to the transformation from varied colours to a unified shade: the apparent colours, which belong to the lower, sensuous realms are always changing and decaying and are a cause of confusion.

Tis done, and nature's various charms decay.
See gloomy clouds obscure the cheerful day! 

*(Pastorals: Winter, 27–30)*

The transient Landscape now in Clouds decays.

*(The Temple of Fame: A vision, 20)*

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167 Whilst many artists’ naturalistic style strike resemblances with the ‘brown and glowing image’ of the camera obscura, and they know about such an instrument, few of them would admit their uses of the instrument. A suggestive example is Samuel van Hoogstraten. In his 1678 treatise on painting, he indicates that he erected a camera obscura on at least two occasions, one in Vienna and one in London. He does not tell us, however, whether he ever painted from a camera obscura. He writes: ‘I am certain that vision from these reflections in the dark can give no small light to the sight of the young artists; because besides gaining knowledge of nature, so one sees here what main or general (characteristics) should belong to a truly natural painting.’ But the same is also to be seen in diminishing glasses and mirrors, which, although they distort the drawing somewhat, show clearly the main colouring and harmony’. Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst*, Rotterdam 1678, p. 263. Quoted in Wheelock, ‘Constantijn Huygens and Early Attitudes Towards the Camera Obscura,’ p. 97.
The gay Colouring which Fancy gave to our Design at the first transient glance we had of it, goes off in the Execution; like those various Figures in the gilded Clouds, which while we gaze long upon, to separate the Parts of each imaginary Image, the whole faints before the Eye, & decays into Confusion.  

In contrast, light and shade are the unifying power:

The lights and shades, whose well-accorded strife
Gives all the strength and colour of our life.  

*(Essay on Man III, 121–2)*

Melting into shade and light, ‘treach’rous Colours’ achieve their ‘full Perfection.’

As discussed before, Pope’s poetry has a Neoplatonic pattern of deterioration preceding regeneration, or as Maynard Mack puts it, an apocalyptic pattern that exhibits loss converting into triumph or, triumph that in fact is loss.  

And he astutely notes, always in Pope the thing that is being lost, or lost and recovered, or lost and recovered and lost again, is a vision of the civilized community, the City.  

From this perspective, the Twickenham camera-obscura projection of a landscape, the land of Windsor forest, might have, for the poet and his friends represented the good community to which they used to belong. And the very transience of this landscape, as shown in a camera obscura, might therefore evoke their contemplation of the loss and restoration of this community. This may be better understood in relation to the transformation of the Windsor forest during the early landscape movement discussed above. Pope criticized this movement for its leading farmland to be converted into a landscape of display. Whilst it destroyed the traditional community, it also denied agriculture as being the foundation of the British economy. The camera obscura thus expressed the very vision of ‘breathes a browner horror on the woods.’

Yet the brown shade that covered the landscape of the river bank—the Windsor forest also approximated yellow, the colour of grain. Hence, the landscape under a unifying yellowish shade in a camera obscura may have represented a landscape of harvest, the very gift that Demeter and Persephone had to offer to humanity.

See Pan with Flocks, with Fruits *Pomona* crown’d,
Here blushing *Flora* paints th’enamel’d Ground,
Here Ceres’ Gifts in waving Prospect stand,
And nodding tempt the joyful Reaper’s Hand,
Rich Industry sits smiling on the Plains,
And Peace and Plenty tell, a Stuart reigns.

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168 Letter to Henry Cromwell, dated 12 November 1711, Correspondence, 1, p. 135.
170 Ibid.
Deep Harvests bury all his pride has planned, 
And laughing Ceres reassume the land. 

*(Epistle to Lord Burlington, 175–6)*

Pope’s lines make sense in terms of regeneration by vision: the restorative magic of the optical phenomenon served as a metaphor for the recovery of agriculture under a Stuart restitution.

2.3.2.3 The ‘Many headed-monster’

The wall of Pope’s grotto was decorated with broken pieces of looking-glasses, as Pope described ‘It is finished with shells interspersed with pieces of looking-glass in angular forms.’ The visual effect, as recorded in a visitor’s report in 1789, is suggestive: ¹⁷¹

To multiply this Diversity, and still more increase the Delight, Mr. Pope's poetic Genius has introduced a kind of Machinery, which performs the same Part in the Grotto that supernal Powers and incorporeal Beings act in the heroick Species of Poetry: This is effected by disposing Plates of Looking glass in the obscure Parts of the Roof and Sides of the Cave, where a sufficient Force of Light is wanting to discover the Deception, while the other Parts, the Rills, Fountains, Flints, Pebbles, &c. being duly illuminated, are so reflected by the various posited Mirrors, as, without exposing the Cause, every Object is multiplied, and its Position represented in a surprising Diversity. . . . Thus, by a fine Taste and happy Management of Nature, you are presented with an undistinguishable Mixture of Realities and Imagery.

As a background of looking into mirrors, we shall acknowledge that throughout the Medieval and Renaissance until the mid-seventeenth century, and in England in particular, looking-glasses had been an omnipresent metaphor in spiritual literature, ¹⁷² considered to be a loyal witness in which everyone could examine his soul and discern in it an exhortation to virtue. ¹⁷³ It can be inferred that the multiplied images reflected in a broken mirror embody the poet’s reflection on the question of identity. In his *Epistle to Cobham* (1733), an essay focused on the very question of personal identity, we find descriptions bearing resemblances to that of the broken mirrors in the grotto:


Yet more; the difference is as great between
The optics seeing, as the object seen.
All manners take a tincture from our own;
Or come discoloured through our passions shown.
Or fancy's beam enlarges, multiplies,
Contracts, inverts, and gives ten thousand dyes.

(23–28)

Pope and his Scriblerian friends were keenly interested in the contemporary controversy over Locke's theory of personal identity, as was evidenced by their literary use of this same debate in the Memoirs of Scriblerus and Pope's later 'Epistle to Cobham.' This interest can also be traced back to an earlier age, as Pope indignantly informs us that 'In the year 1703 there was a meeting of the heads of the University of Oxford to censure Mr. Locke's Essay on Human Understanding, and to forbid the reading of it.' At the centre of this debate was Locke's theory of personal identity that 'self is not determined by Identity ... of Substance ... but only by Identity of consciousness.' As Christopher Fox points out, this argument shattered the conventional idea of a person as a unified centre of choice and action, the unit of legal and theological responsibility which is central to Christian belief. Locke did not provide, in his critics' eyes, the same ontological and ethical assurance that the person persists as a permanent being. His strange, new vision of 'Identity of consciousness' led instead to an opposite conclusion which many of Pope's contemporaries found highly disturbing: that the self was not a permanent, but a transient thing.

In this light, we may assume that the broken looking glass in the wall of the grotto, in reflecting the numerous 'selves,' may represent the loss of the self as a 'unified centre,' a substantial self; rather, to apply Sabine Melchior-Bonnet's analysis, a broken mirror is as an agent of dissociation and illusion that threatens the integrity of the self. The multiple images shown in the broken mirror are a sign of a protean self, with internal inconsistency and infinite virtualities. They reflect the psychological crisis of the death of a substantial self in

the Enlightenment.\footnote{Melchior-Bonnet, \textit{The Mirror: A History}, p. 246.}

It should also be noted that a mirror is laden with political symbolism. In tales of the thirteenth and fourteenth-century, a mirror was frequently associated with the safety of a state, and the identity of kingship.\footnote{For example, some thirteenth to fourteenth-century tales related that Virgil’s telescopic mirror protected Rome from enemies, and its destruction led to the fall of Rome. In a variation version which was especially familiar in Britain, Virgil and Rome were substituted for Hercules and the Spanish port city. See Reeves, \textit{Galileo's Glassworks: The Telescope and the Mirror}, pp. 16–17.} A broken mirror, as found in Shakespeare’s \textit{Richard II},\footnote{William Shakespeare, \textit{King Richard the Second}. The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare, ed. Peter Ure (Cambridge, Mass., 1956). II, ii. 14–27.} was related to the death of the king’s two bodies—body nature and body politic.\footnote{For the idea of the king’s body nature and body politic, see Ernst H. Kantorowicz, \textit{The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology}. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 24–31.} At the near end (IV. i.) of this historic play, before Richard was sent to his death, he examined his plain or ‘un-king’ appearance in the mirror. Agonized by the disparity between what he saw and felt, he shattered the ‘flattering glass’ on the ground. The distorted and multiplied image of the king in the broken mirror thus pronounced the death of the monarch.\footnote{See Shickman, ‘The “Perspective Glass” in Shakespeare's \textit{Richard II},’ pp. 218, 227–8.}

During the years of 1721–5 when the grotto was being built, Pope was also working on a new edition of Shakespeare’s works.\footnote{The Works of Shakespeare, ed. Alexander Pope, 6 vols. (London, 1725).} It cannot be coincidence that the features of his grotto paralleled that of the \textit{Richard II} historical play. The optics analogy of a ‘Perspective glass,’ notably, is a featured scene preceding the mirror scene in \textit{Richard II}. Referring to a polyoptic telescope (to one end of which was fixed a multifaceted lens), the ‘perspective glass’ in the play was employed as a metaphor of the queen’s sorrow’s eye.\footnote{Shickman, ‘The “Perspective Glass” in Shakespeare’s \textit{Richard II},’ p. 228.} The tunnel-like grotto, whose interior was decorated with broken mirrors, may be seen as a simile of such a ‘perspective glass.’ Instead of a signifier of the queen’s premonitions of the doomed destiny of the king, the pieces of the looking glass on the walls of the grotto may rather be a memorial of Charles I’s execution and the chaotic aftermath of the Civil War following the usurpers’ seizure of power.

To see further Pope’s sensibility to the allegory of ‘the body politic,’ we may also recall the frontispiece to the \textit{Essay on Man} (Fig. 2–5), a sepia drawing, which shows a statue of a Roman statesman, shattered on the ground, its head severed from the body. The genre of fragmentation flourished in the late eighteenth century after the execution of Louis XV. The images of severed heads and broken bodies, as Linda Nochlin suggests, signified the loss or transfer of political power which was consolidated through this act of violence.\footnote{See Linda Nochlin, \textit{The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity} (London:}
eighteenth-century Britain, after the death of the Stuart dynasty, amidst the political change, was the question of the role of the sovereign in relation to the parliamentary system. The body politic was caught up in the struggle of political factions which, as many of the Opposition viewed, had weakened the executive authority of parliamentary administration. Pope was certainly familiar with Bolingbroke’s statement: 187

They fancied that the Peace was the period at which their millenary year would begin . . . The ministry was torn to pieces by intestine divisions; its supporters—a heterogeneous body, who had been loosely held together by a common enmity—were rapidly throwing off their allegiance; the good will, which had been founded upon large and vague expectations, was converted into hostility under total disappointment; and the failing health of the Queen rendered it probable that the accession of a Whig sovereign would shortly complete the discomfiture of the faction.

It may be assumed, therefore, the vision of ‘one thing divided into many objects,’ in the ‘bits and pieces’ of a broken mirror in the grotto could stand for the ministry ‘torn to pieces’ by divisions. The images of a multiplied self that appear in the pieces of broken mirror then become a sort of many-headed monster, best known from Shakespeare’s Henry VI, part 2, as a popular icon of political power, scorning democracy promoted by the parliamentarians. Such a political vision was found in Pope’s works;

There still remains, to mortify a wit,
Many headed monster of the pit.

(Imitations of Horace, Ep. I, ii, 304–5)

Enrage, compose, with more than magic Art,
With Pity, and with Terror, tear my heart;
And snatch me, o’er the earth, or thro’ the air.

(Imitations of Horace, Ep. II, i, 342–7)

Sees momentary monsters rise and fall,
And with her own fools-colours gilds them all.

(The Dunciad, 1729, bk. 1. II., 81–82)

Whereas the absolute king stood for the body natural, democracy, the many-headed monsters, as they are likely to disagree among themselves. 188 Such a monstrous vision spotted in the grotto thus reflected the nature of the transition in the British political

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situation. Pope might have wished to evoke Bolingbroke’s idea of a ‘Patriot King.’\footnote{Henry St John Viscount Bolingbroke et al., \textit{Bolingbroke’s Political Writings: The Conservative Enlightenment} (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1997), p. 419.} As a limited monarch, a Patriot King preserves the constitution and the spirit of liberty, espouses ‘no party,’ but rather governs ‘like the common father of his people,’ wins their affection, and reconciles them to each other. He governs by ‘a national concurrence instead of governing by the management of parties and factions in the state.’\footnote{Ibid.} Bolingbroke’s idea had direct impact on the future leader of the Opposition, Prince of Wales, Frederick, a friend of Pope. As in Frederick’s presentation at a Tory party meeting in 1747, his intention was ‘to abolish for the future all distinctions of Party,’ and restore confidence in the monarchy.\footnote{Quoted in John Brewer, \textit{Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 47.}

2.3.2.4 ‘A thousand pointed rays’

Historical accounts hinted that the secret of the Eleusinian visions included a blazing light bursting forth. One record attributed to Aristophanes (c.448 B.C.–c.388 B.C.) held, ‘But he who is already within it … has beheld a great light, as when the Anaktoron opens, changes his behaviour and falls silent and wonders.’\footnote{Aristophanes. Scholia. In: Friedrich Dübner (ed.) \textit{Scholia graeca in Aristophanem}. Paris, 1842. \textit{Nubes}, p. 304. Quoted in Kerényi, \textit{Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter}, p. 89.} And a Christian scholar, Hippolytos relates that the Hierophant officiated at night ‘under the great fire.’ ‘The hierophant then claims in a loud voice: ‘The Mistress has given birth to a holy boy … that is, the Strong One to the Strong One.’\footnote{The Mistress refers to Persephone. The message is that the goddess of death had given birth in fire to a mighty son. Hippolytos. \textit{Elenchos} [or Refutatio omnium haeresium]. Edited by Paul Wendland. In: Hippolytus’ Werke, III. (GCS, XXVI) (Leipzig, 1916), vol.8, p.40. Quoted in ibid., pp. 92–3.} In Pope’s narrative of the scenes in the grotto in the letter to Blount, he described a miraculous light that recalls the Eleusinian secret vision.

\begin{quote}
\ldots and in the ceiling is a star of the same material, at which when a lamp (of an orbicular figure of thin alabaster) is hung in the Middle, a thousand pointed Rays glitter and are reflected over the Place.
\end{quote}

The drawing of William Kent, 1724 (Fig. 2–9) of Pope’s grotto seemed to depict a scene as the letter described. In the drawing, Pope is shown seated on top of a curiously shaped chest—which may be a sarcophagus. Pope’s way of sitting, a typical pose of melancholy, reminds us of his pose of leaning on a sarcophagus in the frontispiece of the \textit{Essay on Man} (Fig. 2–5). Whilst in the setting of the Roman ruins there were emerging sunrays that broke...
Fig. 2–9 The interiors of the grotto. By William Kent. 1724
(The Chatsworth Settlement)
the darkness, here in the grotto is a lamp above the poet’s shoulder, giving off a lighting
effect like ‘a thousand pointed rays glitter and are reflected over the place.’

As discussed in the camera obscura section, the grotto was a model of the poet’s
mind.\footnote{Also, the association between consciousness and caverns was indicated in his own Cave of Spleen (Rape of the Lock, Canto IV), Cave of Poetry (Dunciad, I, 34), and Cave of Truth (Dunciad, IV, 641).} Viewed as possessing a lamp of its own that startles all it touched into ‘Imagery,’ as Mack points out, the lamp would appear to fall in equally with Plotinus’ notion that the mind
was a power, not simply a reflector, giving ‘a radiance out of its own store.’\footnote{Stephen Mackenna and Bertram Samuel Page, The Enneads; Translated by Stephen Mackenna. 4th Ed.; Revised by B. S. Page (London: Faber, 1969). IV, p. vi, 3. Quoted in Mack, ““The Shadowy Cave”: Some Speculations on a Twickenham Grotto,” p. 76.} More
specifically, the imagery of the lamp-in-the-earth bears a resemblance with the ancient idea
of the subterranean fire in the centre of the Earth, which had been reinterpreted by
demonstrated his knowledge of this German philosopher, and especially the contents of his
Mundus subterraneus.\footnote{For example, ‘Phryne,’ in Minor Poems, VI. 50, lines 19–24.}

Drawing from diverse ancient philosophies including Hermetism and Neoplatonism and
his own observations, Kircher envisioned a cosmology with Earth as the centre—a
the centre of earth, it was the very moving force of the geocosm, the divine mind. And the
Earth was a fiery mine, from which the universal seeds of things (or atoms) emanated.\footnote{Ingrid D. Rowland, ‘Athanasius Kircher, Giordano Bruno, and the Panspermia,’ in Athanasius Kircher: The Last Man Who Knew Everything, ed. Paula Findlen (New York; London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 191–206.} Relocating the subterranean world as the source of creation, Kircher’s new interpretation of
the universe catered for the Renaissance artists’ search for original poetic inspiration which,
as many believed, was a subterranean force hidden in the depths of the Earth.

In line with his precedents such as John Milton and Robert Bolton, who both employed
the subterranean fire in their creations, Pope wrote extensively about the imagery of the earth
as a glowing mine, where universal seeds grow:

For me the balm shall bleed, and amber flow,
The coral redden, and the ruby glow,
The pearly shell its lucid globe infold,
And Phoebus warm the ripening ore to gold.

(\textit{Windsor Forest}, 391–4)

Plant of celestial seed! If dropt below,
Say, in what mortal soil thou deign’st to grow?
Fair op’ning to some Court’s propitious shine,
Or deep with di’monds in the flaming mine?

(\textit{Essay on Man}, IV, 7–10)

As indicated in his phrase ‘mortal soil’ where the ‘celestial seed’ grew and diamonds shone, the mythical light in Pope’s subterranean world was associated with the transformation of the dead who were buried in the earth. Hermetism-Neoplatonism emphasizes that the universe was a living being, the One, which contained the universal seeds of things like atoms.\footnote{Greek atomism was revived and studied at Renaissance Neoplatonic academies. See Alison Brown, ‘Lucretius and the Epicureans in the Social and Political Context of Renaissance Florence,’ \textit{I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance} 9 (2001), pp. 11–62.}

Within its infinite space, all the beings and substances were immutably set and endlessly transformed in an eternal process. In this universe, death and life were but two different stages of transformation. Such a universe, as Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) envisaged, was the ‘hollow sepulchre’ or ‘cupola of the heavens’ beyond which nothing could be dispersed.\footnote{‘You have therefore, this fact: that all things are in the universe, and the universe is in all the things … we do not have to fear that by the violence of some erring spirit or by the wrath of a thundering Jove, that which is accumulated in our world could become dispersed beyond this hollow sepulchre or cupola of the heavens, be shaken or scattered as dust beyond this starry mantle.’ See Dorothea W. Singer, \textit{G. Bruno, His Life and Thought} (New York, Henry Schuman, 1950), p. 245. Quoted in Jacques Choron, \textit{Death and Western Thought} (New York, London: Collier Books, Collier-Macmillan, 1973), p. 108.}

Pope’s grotto may have resembled such a Hermetic-Neoplatonic cosmology—an infinite universe,\footnote{The imagery of an infinite universe was expressed in many of Pope’s poems, e.g. ‘See Worlds on Worlds, Compose One Universe,’ \textit{Essay on Man}, I. For a detailed discussion on this subject, see Nicolson and Rousseau, \textit{This Long Disease, My Life’: Alexander Pope and the Sciences}. Part Three, ‘Alexander Pope and Astronomy,’ pp. 133–235.} a ‘flaming mine,’\footnote{After 1739, the grotto was transformed into a ‘mine,’ decorated by all sorts of marbles, spars, and minerals, which were arranged in a way to imitate a piece of natural rock strata. For a detailed description of the grotto as a mine, see ibid., pp. 251–65. In his letter to Ralph Allen on 17 June, 1740, Pope referred to the grotto as a ‘mine.’ \textit{Correspondence}, IV, p. 247.} and a ‘sepulchre’ where the energy of the dead was transformed. In lighting his alabaster lamp in the tomb-like grotto, he may have had in mind Sir John Davies’s poem about the soul, \textit{Nosce Teipsum} (1599):\footnote{Quoted in Fairer, \textit{Pope’s Imagination}, p. 118.}

\begin{quote}
When Reasons lampe which like the Sunne in skie,
Throughout Mans little world her beams did spread,
Is now become a Sparkle, which doth lie
Under the Ashes, halfe extinct and dead:
\end{quote}
Chapter 2  The Odyssean journey: Alexander Pope's Twickenham villa

How can we hope, that through the Eye and Eare,
This dying Sparkle, in this cloudie place,
Can recollect those beames of knowledge cleare,
Which were enfus'd, in the first minds by grace?

(61–8)

The dying sparkle of the divine light, ‘half extinct and dead,’ in Pope’s grotto, was to transform into the marvellous ‘blazing light’ and infuse minds with grace. Whilst in the great light at Eleusis the goddess of the dead gave birth, under the ‘thousand pointed rays’ at the Twickenham grotto were the half-dead ancient’s imagination rejuvenated. As Pope wrote in his letter to Francis Atterbury: 205

To shine abroad and to heav’n, ought to be the business and glory of your present situation. Remember it was at such a time, that the greatest lights of antiquity dazzled and blazed the most; in their retreat, in their exile, or in their death: but why do I talk of dazzling or blazing? It was then that they did good, and they gave light, and that they became Guides to mankind.

The miraculous birth from death at the underground Telesterion, may also be seen as an allegory of the long-standing belief that all earthly bodies grow from within. 206 Kircher, for example, held that mines, if covered, would ‘bear’ once more. 207 He was believed to have grown insects from his subterranean room—a story that Pope knows. ‘So have I known those insects fair, which curious Germans hold so rare.’ 208 The vision of sun-born insects appeared more than once in his later poems:

In Miniature see Nature’s Power appear;
Which wings the Sun-born Insects of the Air,
Which frames the Harvest-bug, too small for Sight,
And forms the Bones and Muscles of the Mite! 210

205 Letter to Francis Atterbury, dated May 1723, Correspondence, II, p. 170.
206 An ancient animistic theory, this belief was found since at least Aristotle to Renaissance. It is also important to both British and French materialists that found support among reputable eighteenth-century natural philosophers and geologists. Kircher afforded a scientific explanation of this by referring to the movement of subterranean fire and water in his Mundus Subterraneus. I will discuss this further in Chapter 4.
209 Here the ‘sun’ that gave birth to insects in the subterranean world may be identified with the subterranean fire. The understanding of the core of earth, the subterranean fire, as the sun, the source of emanation, may be a Hermetic appropriation of the Neoplatonic cosmology. In Egyptian worship of the sun, the sun is believed to traverse the underworld daily. I will discuss this further in chapter 3. See pp. 154–6.
Still vary Shapes and Dyes;
Still gain new Titles with new Forms;
First Grubs obscene, then wriggling Worms,
Then painted Butterflies.\footnote{Correspondence, IV, p. 499.}

Writing to his friend Hugh Bethel on February 20, 1744, three months before his death, Pope expressed the idea of regenerating as such an insect, ‘I live like an Insect, in hope of reviving with the Spring.’\footnote{Alexander Pope, ‘Phryne,’ in Minor Poems, VI. 50, lines 19–24.} In this way, the little bees and moths swarming outside the arched entrance of the grotto, as shown in Kent’s drawing, may have been an image of Pope himself. Moths, according to Greek myth, mean the soul.\footnote{Ibid.} In flying into the fire, moths are purified and achieve a regenerated and everlasting life.\footnote{This topic was common in emblem books at Pope’s time. Freeman, English Emblem Books, p. 62.} Our poet, by dwelling in the grotto—a miniature of Nature-Earth, drawing from the subterranean water and ‘fire’ sent down to him from antiquity, may thus have represented a poetic genius, the regenerated imagination of antiquity.

\section*{2.4. ‘Regeneration’: Ascending to the garden}

\subsection*{2.4.1 The Delphic oracle}

In Odyssey, Odysseus is requested by Circe, on his return to Ithaca, ‘[you] will sacrifice a barren heifer in your palace, the best of the herd, and [you] will heap the altar with rich spoils, and offer a ram, apart, to Teiresias, the finest jet-black ram in the flock.’ This important episode of ritual sacrifice in Ithaca shed light on an important drawing of the Twickenham garden by William Kent (date unknown). As previous scholars have noted, this drawing is the only visual record of the poet’s garden we know (Fig. 2–10). With its seemingly fantastical details, the drawing has so far not been examined seriously.

There in front of a woody landscape, the shell temple is shown in the centre of the drawing. Smoke is arising from an altar below its dome, above which is a rainbow. On the left side is an epiphany—nymphs and Apollo bathing at a fountain. Through the pillars of the temple can be seen the entry to the grotto, with a perspective vision of sails emerging in the far background. Pope, shown at the right side of the drawing, is looking towards the grotto through a piece of perspective glass, while Kent has his paint brush at hand. Instead of a fantasy vision, this scene rather indicates the ritualistic dimension of the poet’s imagination.
Fig. 2–10 A ‘fantasy’ of Pope’s garden. By William Kent. (Trustees of the British Museum)
on which this chapter is focused. More specifically, it may be seen as a reminiscence of the Delphic oracle.

The Delphic oracle is an oracular power that teaches man to understand the nature and limits of human existence. The oracle was hidden in the cave of the Mother Earth, Gaia and guarded by a serpent. Apollo, on his arrival, slayed the serpent, claimed his authority over the oracle and built a temple, from where the oracle was delivered from his priestess’ mouth.\textsuperscript{215} In another version of the legend, studied by Joseph Fontenrose, it is said that the serpent is a metamorphosis of Dionysus, the god of fertility and resurrection.\textsuperscript{216} The war between Dionysus and Apollo, instead of ending with Apollo’s victory and Dionysus’ death, actually led to a cyclical death and rebirth of the two gods.\textsuperscript{217} Whilst the cave is their tomb, the temple is built for their rebirth.\textsuperscript{218}

A theme frequently mentioned in the \textit{Iliad}, the Delphic oracle, being within Pope’s wide knowledge, needs little discussion. The allusions to the sacred cave of Gaia and the Golden Dome of Apollo are in the first place suggested by the juxtaposition of the grotto and the shell temple, which, according to Spence’s \textit{Essay}, is identified with the Dome of Apollo by the poet himself under the dome, there is an altar from where vapours are arising. As we know, in performing the rite, the Delphic priest is seated on top of an altar placed above the crevasse, through which vapours rise up and induce her ecstasy.\textsuperscript{219} It is in such a trance that she acts as a mouthpiece of Apollo and delivers the oracle. Another important detail is the cauldron appearing in the very foreground of the drawing. As the ‘Delphic throne,’ a tripod is used in ancient rituals. The cauldron in the drawing may symbolize the one where the bones of the slain serpent, or Dionysus’ heart, were boiled according to the legend.

Whilst we may never know whether such a ritual performance had actually taken place in Twickenham, it certainly did in the poet’s imagination. There are various levels to consider the function of this imagined Delphic Oracle, which might be associated with the rituals of regeneration in the allegorical Odyssean journey.

Firstly, the oracle is dedicated to Apollo, and particularly, according to Fontenrose’s

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{216} This point is made by Joseph Fontenrose, \textit{Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), p. 378.
\item\textsuperscript{217} Ibid., pp. 381–2.
\item\textsuperscript{218} Every winter the prophetic ritual was held in the cave of Korykion antron, where the holy women, the Thyiades, awakened Dionysus and the holy men the Hosioi, in the meantime, performed a secret sacrifice in the temple for the victory of Apollo. Kerényi, \textit{Dionysos: An Archetypal Image of the Indestructible Life}, pp. 222–3.
\end{itemize}
research, it celebrates Apollo’s rebirth.\footnote{Fontenrose, \textit{Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins}, pp. 373–6.} With the symbolism of Charles I as Apollo, a central theme of the Twickenham villa, it is natural for Pope to use the oracle to highlight the theme of memorializing the Sun-king and wishing for the restitution of the Stuart monarchy. In the hermetic tradition, the Delphic oracle is commingled with the Eleusinian mysteries and the myth of Arcadia.\footnote{Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides, ‘Ancient Ritual and the Search for Arcadia: From Vergil to Poussin,’ \textit{Transcultural Studies}, no. 2–3 (2006–2007), pp. 19–53.} Adapting the ancient tradition, Virgil related that the Arcadians consulted the Delphi oracle, which ordered them to worship Demeter and initiate into the Eleusinian mysteries.\footnote{Hugh Bowden, \textit{Classical Athens and the Delphic Oracle: Divination and Democracy} (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 9–10.}

In ancient Greece and the Roman empire, the Delphic oracle bears significance for a state and its governance. As Hugh Bowden reveals, the oracle gave advice about state affairs, agricultural labour, warfare, and the administration of justice.\footnote{T. Dempsey, \textit{The Delphic Oracle: Its Early History Influence and Fall} (Oxford: B. H. Blackwell, 1918), p. 40.} Augustus consulted the Delphic oracle on several occasions—something not unfamiliar to the British elite.\footnote{William Kupersmith, ‘Swift’s Aeolists and the Delphic Oracle,’ \textit{Modern Philology} 82, no. 2 (1984), pp. 190–4.} It would therefore be appropriate for the English ‘Augustus poet’ to re-perform the oracle in an era of perceived national political crises.

Among the seventeenth and eighteenth-century English elite, the Delphic oracle had been considered as the source of the divine knowledge obtained by priests of the Golden Age. For example, Sir William Temple believed Pythagoras, the alleged precedent of Freemasonry, obtained his knowledge from the Delphic oracle.\footnote{Dempsey, \textit{The Delphic Oracle: Its Early History Influence and Fall}, pp. 175–6.} The Delphic motto ‘Know thyself’ is the motto of modern Freemasonry. The oracle succeeded amply in promoting unity of another kind—ideal unity, the unity of religion, which is one of the ultimate goals of Freemasonry.

In presenting the cave and the temple as the Delphic sanctuary in the centre of his garden imaginary, Pope envisioned a new world being opened up as regeneration, led by a figure—an Odysseus returned—Lord Bolingbroke.

\textbf{2.4.2 Regeneration: Bolingbroke’s utopia}

or thinking of doing so for about one year. In Pope’s account of Laertes’ settlement, we can imagine a glimpse of Dawley: ‘labor made the rugged soil a plain.’ (Odyssey 24. 236–56) Laertes is also presented as an ideal of the ‘kingly gard’ner’ whose ‘careful hand is stamp’d on all the soil.’ (Odyssey 24. 267, 288)²²⁷

In his poem Dawley Farm, Pope depicts his friend, an exile by ‘Tyrannick Jove’ (George I and/or Walpole), retired to ‘Silvan Shades, to Grots and Streams.’ He also links his friend to Apollo, who ‘Taught Patriots Policy; taught Poets Sense.’ On earth, as in haven, he was found to be a ‘simple Majesty’ whom swans and nymphs—that is, the common people or the ‘cheerful Tenants’—immediately recognized and appreciated for his ‘learning, arts and Wisdom.’²²⁸ Whilst all these elements—the shades, grots, swans and nymphs, might be better identified with Twickenham instead of Dawley, Bolingbroke, might be seen as the subject of the rites of passage, the regenerated Charles I–Apollo–Odysseus in Pope’s Twickenham plot.

In this way, through the prism of mythology, the returned Bolingbroke was projected as a new king resurrected, and his land policy was vindicated as rescuing the woodland from its earlier predation and barrenness by the protestant king, an image as Pope envisioned ‘Here Ceres’ Gifts in waving prospect stand, | And nodding tempt the joyful Reaper’s Hand’ (Windsor Forest, 39–40). Bolingbroke surely endorsed such a mythological representation of himself. In his letter to Swift, dated September, 1726, he wrote of burying himself from the world in ‘an agreeable Sepulchre’ that he hoped to bring about by ‘next Spring.’²²⁹ The Bolingbroke circle understood that such imagination is not merely a literary man’s play, but rather was used as a powerful instrument to legitimate, and to articulate their political strategy—to lay emphasis on the agriculture economy. Writing to Swift in February 1727–8, Bolingbroke made it plain: ‘I am in my farm, and here I shoot strong and tenacious roots: I have caught hold of the earth, to use a gardener’s phrase, and neither my enemies nor my friends will find it an easy matter to transplant me again.’²³⁰

Upon the above background, we may understand better the message hidden in the Delphic oracle, the incorporation rites associated with the garden imaginary—the prospective of a British Arcadia built upon Bolingbroke’s strategy. Shifting their focus from the Jacobites rising, the opposition party now emphasize that the future greatness of Britain should rely on agriculture, and interconnected with which, sea power.

This dual policy, or rather a way towards salvation, was central to the conception of

²²⁸ Dawley Farm. Quoted in ibid., p. 131
²²⁹ Letter to Swift. Sep 1726. Ibid., p. 131.
Chapter 2   The Odyssean journey: Alexander Pope’s Twickenham villa

Pope’s garden, and indeed, was integral to the overall idea of the Twickenham journey as ‘rites of passage’. As we recall what Pope described in his letter to Edward Blount, which was quoted above,

> From the river *Thames* you see thro’ my arch up a walk of the wilderness to a kind of open temple, wholly compos’d of Shells in the rustic manner; and from that distance under the temple you look down thro’ a sloping arcade of trees [lining the walk to the grotto on the garden side], and see the sails on the river passing suddenly and vanishing.

It must not be a coincidence that the perspective vision of sails was also represented in Kent’s drawing of the ritualistic scene. Within the frame formed by the two pillars of the shell temple, precisely is shown the entrance of the grotto, through the arch entrance of which is the perspective vision of sails appearing in the far distance.

As discussed earlier, the perspective visions formed by the telescope-like grotto may be read as telescopic, or prospective visions. Evoking the theological tradition of seeing, Pope’s grotto, as a telescope with two prospective visions seen from each end, thus shaped the Twickenham landscape as articulations of Bolingbroke’s political strategy, in which Pope believed lay Britain’s future.

### 2.4.2.1 The garden: agriculture economy

The garden, placed at the end of the landscape itinerary of the Twickenham villa, thus may be seen as an embodiment of the last stage of the ‘rites of passage,’ with associations with Bolingbroke’s agriculture policy.

Comprised of an orangery, orchards, and the kitchen garden, Pope’s garden was known for its utilitarian character. However, it has not been pointed out before that this emphasis on ‘naturalness’ and ‘productivity’ may be an appropriation of the Homeric garden to dignify Bolingbroke’s idea of landscape gardens as straightforward farming, and in turn, vindicating his emphasis on the agricultural economy. As Homer recounted, upon his re-emergence from Hades, Odysseus’ being was renewed and ready to return to Ithaca. There he would live and die while cultivating his land which he made into an indescribably beautiful garden as the gardens of Alcinous he had visited on his voyage. The imagery of the delicious gardens of Alcinous, described in the *Odyssey*, and translated by Pope in the early 1720s, would have inspired the poet’s making of his little plot of land near Thames.

> Nigh where a grove with verdant poplars crown’d,
> To Pallas sacred, shades the holy ground,
> We bend our way; a bubbling fount distils
A lucid lake, and thence descends in rills;  
Around the grove, a mead with lively green  
Falls by degrees, and forms a beauteous scene;  
Here a rich juice the royal vineyard pours;  
And there the garden yields a waste of flowers.  
Hence lies the town, as far as to the ear,  
Floats a strong shout along the waves of air.

(Book VI, 349–358)

Just as Odysseus returned after his re-emergence from Hades, ready to cultivate his land into a garden, the visitor to Twickenham, ascending from the subterranean grotto, would find himself in the Twickenham garden, which conveyed the idea of an agricultural arcadia as the renewed Britain.

Whose rising Forests, not for pride or show,  
But future Buildings, future Navies grow:  
Let his plantations stretch from down to down,  
First shade a country, and then raise a Town.

(Epistle to Burlington II.181–90)

The Greek agricultural garden was at the same time a holy place. As discussed earlier, a sacred grove, very likely from ancient Grecian times onwards, had accommodated the last stage of the initiation rites of the mysteries. The beatific vision of ‘Kore,’ instead of being incarnated as a figure, may well have been a sacred garden—‘the meadow of Persephone,’ as the Greeks referred to, in which the goddess of death was omnipresent as the universal law of the vegetative cycle.

In the line from Homer, through Virgil, to the Renaissance humanists, and the eighteenth-century British elites, Arcadia had maintained both its agricultural and its religious dimensions. Arcadia was no Edenic paradise, where death, sacrifice, and labour are denied. In Arcadia, death was the very condition of life. The integrity of death to human existence was illustrated in agricultural labour. Just as Odysseus was determined to sail back to Ithaca to attend to his land, despite the immortal life on Calypso’s island, the initiates at Eleusis were freed from fear of death, not because they were granted an eternal life in an Eden, or an eternal afterlife in an Elysium, but because they had known ‘Kore’—human existence in the meadow of Persephone. In celebrating the annual reunion of mother and daughter, or Earth and Death in the garden of exuberance, in the vision of death giving birth, of an ear of corn cut in silence, the initiates understand that was is death that was the universal law of regeneration, that eternity was not at the level of the individual, of the here and now, but at the level of generations, of a sustainable future. This message, for the British elite, who had been witnessing society in transition to an industrial civilization, might be more informative. The eternal vegetative cycle for them might not only serve as a metaphor
of continuity for agricultural civilization, but further, of continuity for humanity.

Pope’s eyes are clear. Elaborating Odysseus’ wishes to return to the land where his forefathers had cultivated, he held that agriculture and farming were the best way for man to acquire knowledge of the universe, and to understand the secret of life and death. He suggested in a note to the *Odyssey* 18:

> The truth is, the greatest persons follow’d such employments [plowing, mowing, harvesting] without any diminution of their dignities; nay, a skill in such works as Agriculture was a glory even to a King ...

Pope longs to be a farmer cultivating the Windsor forest, living and dying,

> There dy’d my Father, no man’s Debtor,  
> And there I’ll die, nor worse nor better

*(Imitations of Horace, Ep. I vii 79–80)*

Through death, the inhumation and putrefaction of the dead, the eternal vegetative cycle is promoted and maintained. Human beings hold nothing more dear than death, which is what they bring into being or maintain in being. As Pope puts it:

> Builds Life on Death, on Change Duration founds,  
> And gives th’ eternal wheels to know their rounds.

*(Epistle to Bathurst, 168–9)*

Linking agriculture to the ancient mysteries of an agricultural civilization and its ethos, Pope, from an ontological level, defended Bolingbroke’s political-economic strategy of agricultural economy and undermined the modernist approach to the land.

2.4.2.2 The sails: free trade and the navy

As the vision of sails is integrated with the garden, the Opposition party’s policy of global trade and building a mighty navy was combined with their strategy of strengthening the agriculture economy.

In *Windsor Forest*, for example, there are repeated conjunctions of English trees with the ships built from them and recurrences of the favourite Augustan allusion to the Royal Oaks.

> Thou too, great father of the British floods!  
> With joyful pride survey’st our lofty woods;  
> Where tow’ring oaks their spreading honours rear,  
> And future navies on thy shores appear.
Pope envisages the spread of the nation’s trade as her oaken ships navigate around the earth. The waves of sea becomes an optimistic rush of energy as the trees of Windsor forest carry Britain’s ‘Thunder’ to the ‘distant Ends’ of the earth.

Thy trees, fair Windsor! Now shall leave their woods,
And half thy forests rush into my floods,
Bear Britain’s thunder, and her cross display,
To the bright regions of the rising day;
Tempt icy seas, where scarce the waters roll,
Where clearer flames glow round the frozen pole;

Influenced by Bolingbroke’s utopian thoughts, Pope envisions the River Thames as the Ocean, going beyond the borders of Britain, and bringing beatitude to a harmonious world through free global trade. The sails might have alluded to the South Sea Company, in which Pope himself had made some investments. A Tory project, the establishment of the South Sea Company was in expectation of concessions from Spain as part of the on-going peace negotiations. As Pat Rogers discusses, the South Sea Company effectually pledged the government to make peace. If the company were a success, it would indeed illustrate Pope’s view of a harmonious world of free trade.

The time shall come, when free as seas or wind
Unbounded Thames shall flow for all mankind,
Whole nations enter with each swelling tyde,
And seas but join the regions they divide;

Such a vision would culminate in promoting navigation and trade around the globe, Peace will stretch her reign. Savages would be drawn to the seat of imperial civilization.

Till Conquest cease, and Slav’ry be no more.

The perspective vision of sails on the Thames thus may be seen as a vision of a future brought about by trade, peace, and domestic virtue, as Bolingbroke proposed. Underlying such a vision was a desire to bring relief to a nation ‘groaning under a tedious and destructive War’ (a Tory shibboleth) contrasted with the aims of those promoting ‘factious

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232 Ibid., p. 233.

233 Pope sees it testified by the episode of four Indian kings’ visit to Britain in Queen Anne’s reign in 1710, managed by the colonial governors. (*Windsor Forest* 401–4)
Animosities at Home,’ to establish a new world order where slavery had been banished, the Indians freed, and both Peru and Mexico restored to greatness. This vision envisaged a world made free by peace and trade, and the blessings of humanity passed to all corners of the globe. The Twickenham garden thus demonstrated a utopian land as Bolingbroke envisioned:

concord will appear, brooding peace and prosperity on the happy land; joy sitting in every face, content in every heart; a people unoppressed, undisturbed, unalarmed; busy to improve their private property and the public stock; fleets covering the ocean, bringing home wealth by the returns of industry, carrying assistance or terror abroad by the direction of wisdom, and asserting triumphantly the right and the honor of Great Britain, as far as waters roll and as winds can waft them.

Such a vision of a Britain as the Golden Age, an ‘imagined community,’ beautifully represented by the rainbow that frames the entire scene of the garden (Fig. 2–10), may have been an idealized dream, but it remains a noble concept of civilization.

234 Rogers, *Pope and the Destiny of the Stuarts: History, Politics, and Mythology in the Age of Queen Anne*, p. 239.
235 Bolingbroke et al., *Bolingbroke's Political Writings: The Conservative Enlightenment*, p. 419.
Chapter 3

Shaping the Passions of Empire:
Sir William Chambers’ *Dissertation on Oriental gardening* and the Burkean sublime-effect

3.1 Introduction: the Burkean sublime-effect and the *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*
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Chapter 3 Shaping the passions of empire: Sir William Chambers’ *Dissertation* and the Burkean sublime-effect

3.1 Introduction: the Burkean-sublime effect and the *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*

Chinese gardens fascinated the English and British elite in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This fascination was not mere exoticism, but was associated with the political discourse within which the English landscape movement evolved.¹ In seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, China enjoyed a reputation for civility and moral government. In Britain, the Chinese garden, known for its irregularity and thus identified with English ‘liberty’ and civic virtues, was evoked by various groups such as Sir William Temple (1628–1699) and Joseph Addison (1672–1719) to articulate and legitimate their own interests and political pursuits.² In the late eighteenth-century, a book entitled *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772)³ by Sir William Chambers (1723–1796), marked yet a new representation of Chinese gardens. Contrary to previous representations of Chinese gardens by Temple and Addison, Chambers’ gardens are no enemies of ‘the regular,’ which used to be associated with the tyrannical state. Cultivating an air of sensationalism, Chambers’ text describes Chinese gardens as composed out of pleasing, terrible and surprising scenes.⁴ In journeying through these the traveller’s imagination is stimulated by all sorts of pleasures, ‘variety and gaiety’ in glass-houses in winter, a botanic paradise of spring, concubines dancing in summer pavilions, and a pleasing melancholy in autumnal ruins. But the traveller is also terrified by howling wolves and tigers in forests, gibbets and gallows by the roads, and encounters pale

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⁴ Ibid., pp. 19–30.
images of ancient kings and heroes in subterranean tombs, awful monuments by dull rivers, and dark passages on whose sides dragons yield a constant flame. These contradictions are, Chambers emphasizes, capable of exciting opposite and violent sensations \((DG, 28, 64)\). Compared to this, the English style, which he criticizes, is a mere imitation of nature, monotonous, insipid, and indicative of a languid mind \((DG, 33)\).

Such a contrast in two mental states—languor and violent sensation—recalls the opposition between the beautiful and the sublime as articulated by Edmund Burke in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), which Chambers had carefully studied.\(^5\) As Eileen Harris argues, Chambers was much impressed by the *Enquiry*. Throughout his professional life, Chambers returned again and again to Burke’s challenging ideas, seeking inspiration for his *Treatise on Civil Architecture* (1759) as well as for preparatory notes for his Royal Academy lectures.\(^6\) This appreciation was reciprocated. From reprinting Chambers’ 1757 essay ‘The Art of Laying Out Gardens,’ an early account of the Chinese gardens in his *Annual Register* (1758), to publicly supporting the *Dissertation*, which was being attacked by ‘Old Corps’ Whigs in 1772,\(^8\) to later praising Chambers’ design of Somerset House, which was being criticized for its expense,\(^9\) Burke, a self-declared ‘Chamberist,’\(^{10}\) was a constant supporter of the royal architect.

It seems inadequate to explain Chambers’ and Burke’s mutual appreciation simply on the grounds of their shared aesthetic interests, as previous scholars have suggested.\(^{11}\) Rather


\(^6\) Ibid., p. 208.

\(^7\) Included in William Chambers, *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines, and Utensils. Engraved by the Best Hands, from the Originals Drawn in China ... To Which Is Annexed, a Description of Their Temples, Houses, Gardens, &C* (London, 1757).

\(^8\) In an anonymous pamphlet entitled, *An Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers*, the poet and garden amateur, William Mason, aided and abetted by Horace Walpole, lampooned Chambers’ theory in *Dissertation* as Toryism landscape. For a discussion of the political contents of the *Epistle* see John W. Draper, *William Mason: A study in eighteenth century culture* (New York, 1924). Burke encouraged Oliver Goldsmith to launch a counter-attack. As Harris quoted from Goldsmith’s letter to Chambers, ‘Mr. Burke was advising me about four days ago to draw my pen in a poem in defense of your system, … Mr. Burke you may say upon my authority as also on that of Sir Joshua Reynolds, is a profest (sic) Chamberist. He always speaks of your System with respect.’ Goldsmith to Chambers, BM ADD. MS 41134, 21bv, 21c, 21d. Quoted in Eileen Harris, ‘Designs of Chinese Buildings and the Dissertation on Oriental Gardening,’ in John Harris, J. Mordaunt Crook, and Eileen Harris, *Sir William Chambers: Knight of the Polar Star*, Studies in Architecture, vol.9 (London: Zwemmer, 1970), p. 161.

\(^9\) See above, note 8.

\(^10\) For example, Eileen Harris considers that Chambers’ interest is driven by ‘a gnawing desire to find more satisfactory explanations of our aesthetic experience.’ Ibid. Harris, ‘Burke and Chambers on the Sublime and Beautiful,’ p. 207.
Chapter 3 Shaping the passions of empire: Sir William Chambers’ Dissertation and the Burkean sublime-effect

it may be useful to see their connection within the ideology of ‘Arcadian classicism,’\(^\text{12}\) in the tradition of the academy of art as statecraft and instrument with which to mould citizens’ morality. Arcadian classicism prospered in sixteenth–eighteenth century Italy and France, and also in Charles I’s England. Broken by the Civil war and the political turbulence of the early eighteenth-century, this tradition saw its revival in Britain under the promotion of Frederick Prince of Wales, Lord Bute and George III.\(^\text{13}\) As the architectural tutor to the Prince of Wales (the future George III) and in turn the royal architect to George III, Chambers was a key figure in realizing this revival. Trained in Paris by Jacques-Francois Blondel (1705–1774), who subsequently taught at the French Academy, Chambers’ understanding of art and architecture in the academy tradition was further enhanced by his experience during his five-year stay in Rome, where the Accademia dell’ Arcadia functioned as the official centre of artistic activities. These experiences prepared Chambers not only to become a royal architect to the King in the manner of the French academy tradition—architecture as an ornament of the state, but also to be one of the Founder Members of the Royal Academy, a parallel to the French L’Académie royale d’architecture. Chambers’ approach to landscape gardening was within the tradition of ‘Arcadian classicism.’ It was made plain in the Preface to the Dissertation that gardens are tools, superior to buildings in terms of their universal effect on the human mind, a more effective instrument in shaping citizens’ minds. In Dissertation, Chambers also highlighted that landscape gardening was an art of empire building, ‘the whole scenery of the adjacent country, in appearance forming a continuation of the Garden.’ (DG, 21) In his Explanatory Discourse, an essay attached to the second edition of the Dissertation, Chambers further emphasizes, ‘By these means (of landscape gardening) this whole kingdom might soon become one magnificent vast Garden, bounded only by the sea.’\(^\text{14}\) It might be suggested that it was such ideas that led to the


\(^{13}\) Frederick Prince of Wales, since the 1730s, became the leader of the Opposition party. He was influenced by The Idea of a Patriot King, introduced to him possibly by Bolingbroke himself. Frederick’s plan of developing the Kew Farm grounds into the Mount of Parnassus, the site associated with both Orpheus and Apollo (home of poetry, music and learning) was in accord with the Arcadian gardening tradition active during the reign of Charles I whom the prince admired. For the relation between Frederick and Bolingbroke, see Jeffrey Peter Hart, Viscount Bolingbroke. Tory Humanist, Studies in Political History (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 71–80. For Frederick’s admiration and emulation of Charles I’s artistic achievements and princely patriotism, see Kimerly Rorschach, ‘Frederick, Prince of Wales (1707–51), as Collector and Patron,’ The Walpole Society 55 (1989/90), pp. 27–31, or more fully in her Ph.D. dissertation, ‘Frederick, Prince of Wales (1707–1751), as a Patron of the Visual Arts: Princely Patriotism and Political Propaganda’ (Yale University, 1985).

Chapter 3 Shaping the passions of empire: Sir William Chambers’ Dissertation and the Burkean sublime-effect politician Burke’s deep sympathy towards Chambers’ landscape theory. Although Burke criticized the king’s prerogatives, he was an advocate of Chambers the royal architect’s availing of the grand French Academy style in national projects. This was best demonstrated in his praise of Chambers’ design of Somerset House. Whilst many criticized the over expenses of this building, Burke declared that Somerest House ‘did honour to the present age, and would render the Metropolis of Great Britain famous throughout Europe.’

Against these backgrounds, this chapter argues that the Dissertation is not merely a retreat into romantic imagination, but rather, by situating Burke’s Enquiry and Chambers’ Dissertation in the social-political context of late eighteenth-century Britain, the chapter aims to show that Chambers’ reference to Burke’s aesthetic theory is underpinned by an ambitious goal—that is, to envision landscape theory as a project for shaping the passions of empire.

3.1.1 The Theory of the passions and the physiology of the Burkean sublime

Burke’s Enquiry is aimed at finding laws for passions and establishing standards of taste for the British elite: his aim, as Burke made plain, was ‘to find whether there are any principles, on which the imagination is affected, so common to all, so grounded and certain, as to supply the means of reasoning satisfactorily about them.’ This pursuit of universal principles of affect was shared by many of the elite of the time, Chambers being one of them. His exploration of the art of landscape gardening was precisely because, as he declared at the beginning of the Preface to the Dissertation, in reference to gardening, compared with buildings and other arts, ‘its dominion is general; its effects upon the human mind certain and invariable.’ (DG, v) Chambers identified this ‘certain and inevitable effect’ with Chinese gardens. Created by philosophers who are thoroughly versed in all the affections of the human mind, Chinese gardens stimulated a great variety of opposing and violent sensations. (DG, 64)

Despite the Chinese mask, this principle of passions as opposite, violent sensations in

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16 Burke believed with David Hume that ‘in the production and conduct of the passions, there is a certain regular mechanism, which is susceptible of as accurate a disquisition as the laws of motion, optics, hydrostatics, or any other part of natural philosophy. See Edmund Burke and J. T. Boulton, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (London: Routledge, 1958), p. 13. Hereafter cited as PE.
17 Active in Enlightenment discourse, Chinese subjects are often evoked as models. Nevertheless, such models rather function as mirror or disguise of certain values inherent in the western non-orthodox
Chambers’ *Dissertation* resonated with the Virgilian Arcadian tradition, revived in Arcadian classicism in Renaissance. Epics such as Homer’s *Iliad* and Virgil’s *Aeneid*, the very source of the theme of the sublime, are characterized by tensions and conflicts between love and frustration, the sacred and the profane, pleasure and pain, and life and death. The reception of these texts, since the Renaissance, had been intertwined with the studies of Neoplatonism and Natural Law philosophy, carried out in Neoplatonic academies. The violent emotional oppositions shown in classical art and literature were perceived as no less a demonstration of the Platonic love, or ‘Natural Law,’ and were appropriated into the theme of ‘the sublime.’ Associated with the principle of a Neoplatonic universe and guidance of the mind, the sublime was heatedly discussed among literati and pursued by artists in their creations, Nicolas Poussin’s *Arcadian shepherds* being one example.\(^\text{18}\) The eighteenth-century British elite’s enquiry into the sublime—such as Joseph Addison’s ‘The Pleasures of the Imagination’ (1712)\(^\text{19}\) and Burke’s *Enquiry* are in line with this classical tradition.\(^\text{20}\) As for Chambers’ *Dissertation*, most revealing of all is the title page of the *Dissertation* (printed by W. Griffin, 1772): in a rustic scene, an angel is joyfully adorning a statue in Roman civil garb with festoons of flowers, while putti are painting in the foreground; a seated female figure, in mourning drapery, leans against a pedestal in a sentimental pose. With the very composition and the emotional contrast between pleasures and reflections upon death, the image proves to be one of the many imitations of Poussin’s *Arcadian shepherds*, which was highly admired among British intellectuals. (Fig. 3–1)\(^\text{21}\)

Under the influence of Neoplatonism, it was widely accepted that the universal principle is a vital force which prevails upon the universe and human soul. The pleasures of the imagination, as Joseph Addison proposed, came to be seen as the expression of the prevailing ‘vital force.’ Whilst Addison paid attention mainly to pleasures, Burke, in line with the Virgilian Arcadian tradition, emphasized that human passion is capable of pain as well as pleasure. Unlike conventional views—a tradition from Longinus to Addison and

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Chapter 3 Shaping the passions of empire: Sir William Chambers’ *Dissertation* and the Burkean sublime-effect

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Fig. 3–1 The Title page of *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772)
beyond which sees the sublime—the art of spiritual elevation—as the experience of great pleasures, Burke instead suggested that the sublime experience was a stronger, ‘relative’ pleasure resulting from the removal of pain or threat—high-intensity emotions which he called ‘delight.’

Burke’s theory was underpinned by the research of eighteenth-century vitalist physiologists, such as Christopher Nugent’s (Burke’s personal physician and father-in-law) enquiries into the nervous system. A fundamental proposition of vitalist physiology was the new concept of the contractility of nerves. Rather than seeing the ‘intelligent principle’ or the rational ‘soul’ as speculative forms of mechanical fluidism, they identify the vital force as an innate ‘force in the fibres themselves, a life which makes them contract.’ The tendency of fibres and muscles to contract was always responded to and ‘held in balance by the opposing muscles’ and fibres in a continuous antagonism. A healthy condition obtains when fibres are in ‘continuous oscillation, in constant movement as an expression of the vis vitalis.’ Burke’s definition of the sublime, as Aris Sarafianos points out, is designed to be compatible with the contractility of the nerves. Whilst Burke connects the beautiful with pleasures (relaxation), his definition of sublime affects in terms of ‘pain or danger,’ ‘sickness, and death’ (heightened instances of tension). The most intensified, lifting emotion, according to Burkean aesthetic-psychology, therefore, must not be the pleasures caused by the beautiful, wherein the fibres are in constant rest or trapped in an unchanging movement. But rather, it is a ‘delightful horror’ caused by the sublime, which occurs at the point of a distancing-effect that relieves the real danger (or a physiological image of contraction), which he understood no more than ‘a change as produces a relaxation should immediately produce a sudden convulsion,’ ‘a violent pulling of the fibres.’ (PE, 132) This new physiological definition of the sublime has continuity with Burke’s political view of liberty, a continuity that is essential to comprehend Burke’s sublime in contexts of both aesthetics and politics.

3.1.2 The politics of the passions: liberty and landscape gardening

Rooted in the classical tradition, the discourse on passion has inherent moral, educational, and social-political dimensions. Liberty, a key notion of eighteenth-century moral, social—

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22 There are continuities between the physical concept of pain, the psychological categories of terror, and a superior realm of high-intensity emotions called delights in Burke’s theory, for all cause ‘an unnatural tension of the nerves’. See Aris Sarafianos, ‘The Contractility of Burke’s Sublime and Heterodoxies in Medicine and Art,’ Journal of the History of Ideas 69, no. 1 (2008), p. 24.

23 Ibid., pp. 27–29.


25 Ibid.

political life, was understood as freed imagination. Landscape gardens, as an emerging aesthetic object in eighteenth-century England, are precisely linked with the discourse on liberty as freed imagination. A most explicit and celebrated expression is found in Joseph Addison’s famous essay, ‘The Pleasures of the Imagination,’ in which he put forward the view of freed sensation aroused by English naturalistic gardens as a symbol of Englishmen’s liberty:

a spacious Horizon is an Image of Liberty, where the Eye has Room to range abroad, to expatiate at large on the Immensity of its Views, and to lose it self amidst the Variety of objects that offer themselves to its Observation. Such wide and undetermined Prospects are as pleasing to the Fancy, as the Speculations of Eternity or Infinitude are to the Understanding.27

Under Whig politicians’ propaganda, English landscape gardening, with its natural appearances identified with Englishmen’s freed imagination, became a symbol of English liberty. This English style of gardening, however, in the Preface to the Dissertation, was put beside the continental (French) style, both of which, as Chambers criticized, went to extremes in dealing with the relation between art and nature. At a time when landscape discourse was laden with political symbolism, Chambers’ metaphor is evident. Whilst the French style, ‘too extravagant a deviation from nature,’ (DG, v) was evoked by the ‘Old corps’ as arbitrary and tyrannical rule, that deprived subjects of their freedom; the English style, ‘too scrupulous an adherence to her (nature),’ for Chambers, represented the other extreme as unrestrained passion turned out to be a revolutionary, despotic power. The end of the Preface significantly featured his apologies for this unrestrained English liberty:

I must not enter upon my subject, without apologizing for the liberties here taken with our English Gardens . . . the axe has often, in one day, laid waste the growth of several ages; and thousands of venerable plants, whole woods of them, have been swept away, to make room for a little grass, and a few American weeds. (DG, x)

Seeing the unrestrained passion as a violent force destroying trees—a symbol of traditional institutions—Chambers expressed a view held by the conservative Whigs, typically Burke, who perceived the contemporary threats to the Constitution as being revolutionary forces, a false liberty that ‘stretched to its full length,’ and lacked the necessary moral and social restraints.28 If it was necessary to emphasize the freedom of the imagination of aristocratic Englishmen in the early eighteenth-century (as there was then the threat of Stuart restitution),

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towards the mid-century, to regulate the unbounded imagination fostered by social, political and material conditions, as the conservative Whigs sensed, became a more urgent issue.

The ascension of George III, overlapping with England’s victory in the Seven Years War, was a landmark of Britain accelerating to become a global power, possessing both vast colonial territories and rapidly increasing wealth. Along with the growing economic power and liberalism, however, there was considerable socio-political unrest in British society, known as the Constitutional Crisis in the 1760–70s. Enclosure and colonial expansion destroyed traditional communities, and dramatized social polarities. The implementation of universal taxation provoked intense protests in the American colonies, threatening the relationship between the colony and the mother country; commercialization brought along luxury, conspicuous consumption, political dishonesty, venality, and moral dissolution.

In his reflections over the political unrest in *Thoughts on the present discontents and speeches* (1770), Burke argued that the root of the crisis came from revolutionary forces (a freed passion amidst a lack of moral restraints).\(^29\) Without restraints, liberty became a most dangerous revolutionary force. Following the French revolution, Burke wrote that liberty is not a licence to act from sheer self-will. Rather, it was ‘*social freedom* (Burke’s italics). It was that state of things in which liberty was secured by the equality of restraint,’ with no individual or group able to violate the liberty of any other.\(^30\) Liberty without wisdom and virtue, he warned, ‘is the greatest of all evils; for it is folly, vice, and madness, without tuition and restraint.’\(^31\) Chambers views on liberty coincide with Burke’s. In a letter to his Swedish friend, Count Scheffer, Chambers challenges the much vaunted political liberty of Britain:

I am fully persuaded, that perfect happiness cannot exist in any state, where liberty is stretched to its full extent, and power confined to its narrowest limits; wherever the balance is thus nicely poised, it never can be at rest; a breath of air, the weight of a feather makes it preponderate, and suffer a thousand vibrations before it fixes at the true point again.

The English are for ever exulting in the excellence of their constitution, and ever drawing haughty parallels between their liberty and the slavery of others, yet, there is not a more uneasy set of mortals upon the face of this little world. a spirit of general discontent rags through the whole nation; they are; and at all times have been; dissatisfied with the prince, enraged at his ministers, displeased with their laws, disgusted with every thing about them: like children spoilt with too great indulgence, they cry for more while they have too


Chambers would have agreed with Burke that, to constrain such false liberty, society has the duty of exerting its pressure to free the individual from his own blind and brutal passions. Burke wrote, ‘Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites … Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere,’\textsuperscript{33} ‘If they are unable to exercise this restraint, society must do it for them.’\textsuperscript{34} Burke did not come to these thoughts only in the late 1790s. Rather his position that society should play a role in restraining citizens’ morals already was firmly grounded in the \textit{Enquiry}.

\textbf{3.1.3 \textit{Virtus} and the Burkean sublime-effect}

As many have suggested, Burke’s \textit{Enquiry} is an investigation into training imaginative sensibilities.\textsuperscript{35} Terms such as sensibility, imagination, or taste, in eighteenth-century Britain, were political at the same time as they were psychological or moral. An important background to explain this phenomenon lies in the nature of the constitutional government of Britain. After the Glorious Revolution of 1688, political authority no longer rested upon the monarch’s prerogatives. The morals or virtues of Englishmen were considered to be the very protection of English liberty and constitutional government.\textsuperscript{36} The English concept of virtue was inherited from the Roman \textit{virtus} which referred to martial values such as courage, self-restraint, and strength.\textsuperscript{37} As Philip Ayres discusses, the newly empowered English aristocrats, following the Revolution, used Roman-republican constitutional liberty as a model of governance.\textsuperscript{38} They identified martial values as constituting the core values of Englishmen’s


\textsuperscript{33} Edmund Burke, ‘A letter to a member of the National Assembly,’ in Burke, \textit{Further Reflections on the Revolution in France}. p. 69.

\textsuperscript{34} Edmund Burke, \textit{Address to the King} (1777). Quoted in Alfred Cobban, \textit{Edmund Burke and the Revolt against the Eighteenth Century: A Study of the Political and Social Thinking of Burke, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey} (London: Allen and Unwin, 1960), p. 55.

\textsuperscript{35} For example, see Richard Bourke, ‘Pity and Fear: Providential Sociability in Burke’s \textit{Philosophical Enquiry},’ in Koen Vermeir and Michael Funk Deckard, \textit{The Science of Sensibility: Reading Burke’s Philosophical Enquiry} (Dordrecht; London: Springer), p. 151.


\textsuperscript{38} Philip Ayres, \textit{Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth-Century England} (Cambridge:
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The greatest enemy of virtues, as the Stoic philosopher Seneca held, is fortuna, e.g. wealth or luxury. The Stoic’s teaching is close to British hearts, as such anxieties about the corruption of the morals by commerce were constantly present at the time. Whilst some condemned commerce as sinful, Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, typically as Adam Smith, considered commercial society a final stage of the development of society, succeeding that of agriculture naturally. In this stage, aesthetic qualities of commodities satisfy ‘the nicety and delicacy of our taste,’ which signals progress, but Smith also notes the emasculating effect of excessive luxury. In his Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759) he comments that ‘perhaps the delicate sensibility required in civilized nations sometimes destroys the masculine firmness of character.’ The refined material culture of commercial society, which enhances sensibilities to the pleasures of liberty and commerce (i.e. liberal or civilian virtues), for him, undermines martial values. To counteract the negative effect of commerce, Adam Smith and many other liberal thinkers suggest military strategies to revive the languishing martial spirits of Britons and the nation. Whilst Chambers, of Scots descent, was familiar with Scottish enlightenment discourses, as an architect he took up a sensationalist approach and following Burke’s theory of the sublime, put forward a theory of moulding citizens’ martial virtues by city landscaping, a theory which he dressed up in the garb of Chinese gardens.

Eighteenth-century English sensationalism, underpinned by Scottish theories of the nervous system, or materialist psychology, emphasized the influence of the environment on human sensibilities. As Christopher Lawrence remarks, ‘all man’s higher attributes—taste, imagination, and indeed the capacity to reason—would, in the last analysis, depend on his condition of existence, diet, weather, labour and so forth… Sensibility (was) in the end related to the individual’s mode of life and should, in the healthy state, be properly adjusted to it.’ This theory is a background to Burke’s Enquiry which deals with the psychological effects of objects associated with the beautiful and sublime.

Human nature, for Burke, is based on the body of senses, and can be approached through a moral and aesthetic psychology. Burke’s Enquiry therefore could be seen as

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40 Ibid., p. 209.
42 Ibid., pp. 245–6.
The remarkable contrast between the sublime and the beautiful in *Enquiry* is not simply an opposition of aesthetic categories, but underpinned by Burke’s contemplation of the social and educational role of aesthetics in the politics of liberty. As discussed above, the beautiful and the sublime are traced to the physiological reaction (of the senses)—pleasure and pain—and further to the release and contraction of the fibres of the organism. Their roles in the human body—release and contraction—has continuity with what Burke considered the opposite elements of liberty and restraint in the body politic. As he was to articulate in *Reflections*, ‘A free government would combine those opposite elements of liberty and restraint in one consistent work’. The emotional opposition of pleasures and pain, the aesthetic antithesis of the beautiful and sublime in the *Enquiry*, are inherently connected with the political discourse of liberty and restraint.

In Burke’s *Enquiry* the beautiful is associated with the feminine, pleasure and social passion, including ambition and imitation (*PE*, 49). His analyses of these passions are inseparable from the new conditions of liberal commercial British society: developments in agriculture, commerce, economy, sciences and technologies, all of which afford all sorts of objects of beauty for the upper classes’ enjoyment. These objects increased material comfort and economic power, expanded knowledge, fostered confidence, refined their aesthetic sensibilities, and sustained national sentiment. Meanwhile, Burke’s analyses of these passions associated with pleasures have ambivalent effects—ambition may induce a swelling of selfish appetite; imitation of foreign manners may trap one in an eternal circle without improvement. (*PE*, 50) The negative social effects of ambition and imitation, Burke held, resulted in their nature as unnatural pleasures, which operate by association and abstract reasoning. Dissenting from the authority of John Locke’s associationism and the popular concept of the dominant role of ‘reason in producing our passions,’ (*PE*, 72) Burke rejected association as an explanatory cause of natural pleasures. ‘It would be absurd … to say that all things affect us by association only.’ (*PE*, 130) But rather he considered association as a mechanism which aids the imagination in expanding the sensory impression, leading to expansive human will, without ever touching upon original, natural sensations. Moreover, in part IV of the Enquiry, Burke provided a physiological analysis of the ill-effect of pleasures on the body. Relating pleasures to the nature of rest, he concluded that the languid inactive state would induce melancholy, dejection, despair and often self-murder (*PE*, 135).

The sublime, associated with the terrible, the masculine, and the powerful, stimulates the strongest passion that we are capable of feeling. In accord with the principle of the

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contractility of nerves, Burke sees a countervailing energy in the authentic sublime. Among these causes of tension or contraction of the nerves that Burke discusses in the *Enquiry*, are sympathy, fear, memory, and labour, which may be seen as the antitheses of those passions and nervous status associated with the beautiful, namely, ambition, reasoning, imitation, and melancholy. The effect of this tension or contraction of the nerves in counteracting the states associated with the beautiful might be described as the Burkean sublime-effect. The antitheses that Burke described in *Enquiry* may be summarized as follows:

Sympathy and ambition: Sympathy as a passion of substitution, by which we are put into the place of the other, forms an opposition of the passion of ambition which is associated with selfish appetite. Turning on pain, sympathy may be a source of the sublime. For we feel ‘a degree of delight, and that no small one, in the real misfortunes and pains of others.’ (*PE*, 45) The pain that we sympathize with others would counteract the pleasure aroused by selfish desire.

Fear and abstract reasoning: as sympathy, fear belongs to fundamental anthropological responses. It is an instinctive reaction to our own situation. As Burke points out, ‘whatever is qualified to cause terror, is a foundation capable of the sublime.’ (*PE*, 57) These causes of fear are things that we cannot apprehend, and power of irresistible violence which deprive us of our freedom. The sublime-effect of such incomprehensible and violent force, Burke shows, is to exclude the power of reason. During this experience, fear ‘robs the mind’ of its power to reason. The mind is so entirely filled with the object of contemplation that ‘it cannot reason on that object.’ (*PE*, 53) This natural instinctive reaction to terror thus paralyzes our rational capacity by fear.

Memory and imitation: memory or sufficient remembrance, in Burke’s *Introduction on Taste*, is implied as a universal rational ground for the determination of taste, which is compromised by given process of imitation. For Burke, memory precisely plays a role in capturing original sensations and in sustaining their mediated relation with the faculties. ‘There is in all men a sufficient remembrance of the original natural causes of pleasure, to enable them to bring all things offered to their senses to that standard, and to regulate their feelings and opinions by it.’ (*PE*, 16) Memory, in *Enquiry*, is implicitly identified with the role of the ‘godhead,’ the origin and cause of the sublime. Its effect of retaining exact original, natural sensations allows for the retention or renewed encounter of the original, rather than merely similar copies.

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45 Herein lies Burke’s essential difference from the Addisonian-Kantian sublime-effect. The latter emphasizes a transcendence coming from the mental process of expansion, whereas Burke insists on the minimization of the role of the mind. Rather than operating by association, the Burkean sublime experience involves original, natural sensations, which are associated with self-preservation.
Labour and Melancholy: labour is ‘a surmounting of difficulties, an exertion of the contracting power of the muscles.’ As ‘it resembles pain, which consists of tension or contraction,’ *(PE, 135)* labour can be a source of the sublime, the effect of which is a remedy for the languid inactive state, as represented in melancholy. During this remedial exercise, the contraction of the nerves naturally functions against relaxation. ‘Without this rousing they (the muscular parts of the constitution) would become languid, and diseased; . . . to have them in proper order, they must be shaken and worked to a proper degree.’ *(PE, 135)*

Such antithetical emotions would have been recognizable for Chambers as an heir to the tradition of Arcadian classicism. If Burke’s *Enquiry* proposed to train citizens’ sensibilities through objects of the beautiful and the sublime, Chambers’ *Dissertation* specified such objects as landscape gardens in Chinese dress.

### 3.1.4 The Appropriation of Chinese gardens and Burkean-sublime in the *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*

Chambers was born in Gothenburg, Sweden to a Scottish merchant family under the royal patronage of the Swedish East India Company. Before he took up studies in architecture, Chambers served in the East India Company and made several visits to Canton, China in 1742–45, and earned a reputation as an amateur sinologist. In 1749, he was introduced to Lord Bute, and Frederick, Prince of Wales who had a particular interest in China. As a leader of the Opposition party, Frederick was seeking information for his project to build a Confucian temple, intended as a tool against the government dominated by the Whig politician Robert Walpole. At the meeting with Lord Bute and Frederick, Chambers presented a design for the House of Confucius, which was then built on the Prince’s estate at Kew.\(^46\) This connection later advantaged Chambers in being appointed as the architectural tutor to the Prince of Wales (the future George III) in 1755, and then towards a successful career as an official architect (e.g. a Joint Architect to King George III from 1761; a founder of the Royal Academy of Arts in 1768; Comptroller of the King’s Works from 1769–1782, and Surveyor-General and Comptroller from 1782 until his death).\(^47\) The political dimension of this royal connection remained a background to Chambers’ career, and posited him in a position against the capitalistic democracy and market economy values. He was sensitized to political affairs as demonstrated by his networks of senior politicians of the time, such as—

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as we have already noted—the Swedish Minister, Count Scheffer, and Edmund Burke. Chambers’ thoughts were under the influence of Scottish Enlightenment, which was receptive to the Republican humanism tradition. He was a reader of both David Hume and François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire and to the latter he sent a copy of his Dissertation.48 Through his connection with Lord Bute, with whom many Scottish liberal thinkers such as Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith were related or in correspondence, Chambers would also have had first-hand knowledge of the latest Scottish liberal thoughts. It was this strong political philosophical background that positioned him to write the Dissertation.

As mentioned earlier, the Dissertation may be read as an allegorical text which talks about English landscape gardening through its Chinese garb—a literary technique not uncommon during his time.49 Such an allegorical Chinese image that was often adopted by European authors at the time was connected with the general model-effect (in terms of its religious, socio-political, economic systems) or cultural superiority which China had enjoyed in sixteenth–eighteenth century Europe.50 The evocations of the Chinese models, as had been noted by previous scholars, were not necessarily authentic. Rather the Chinese models functioned as mirror or disguise of certain values inherent in the western non-orthodox tradition. And as models, the Chinese subjects justify those western values.51 As mentioned earlier, the discourse of landscape gardening in eighteenth-century Britain was yoked with political ideologies. In Dissertation, ‘art’ and ‘nature,’ which Chambers posited as two ‘extreme’ styles of gardening, referred to current political trends of absolutism (George III’s attempt at prerogatives) and acquisitive liberalism (progressive Whigs, radicals). Instead of the two extreme, Chambers proposed a system of ‘coalition’ or ‘union’ of the two. Or, as he put it, ‘a judicious mixture of both would certainly be more perfect than either.’ (DG, v) But Chambers is wary of the potential danger of positing such a system openly. As he wrote in the Preface, ‘such a coalition is therefore now not to be expected: whoever should be bold enough to attempt it, would probably incur the censure of both sides, without reforming either; and consequently prejudice himself, without doing service to the Art.’ The censure that Chambers feared, to a large extent, refers to eighteenth-century print culture (e.g. newspapers, pamphlet). In those prints controlled by radical Whigs, such as John Wilke’s North Britons, liberty was exalted as the core of Englishness, a narrow notion associated with jingoism. Criticism or movements against this radical notion of ‘liberty’ could have

48 Ibid., p. 158, 161.
49 See my Introduction, p. 25.
51 Ibid., pp.72–3.
been easily labelled and attacked as being Torism or traitors. For example, Chambers’ patron, the Scottish Prime Minister of 1763–4, Lord Bute, was projected as a Jacobite who sought to convince his sovereign of certain ‘unconstitutional notions of prerogative and government,’ or, as some of his fierce critics put it, who endeavoured ‘to instill Despotism into the Heart of his Sovereign.’\footnote{A.Z. Some Considerations upon the present situation of affairs,’ Gazetteer, 30 May 1763; George Rmytage to Rockingham, 2 Jan. 1763, Rockingham 1–348. Wentworth-Woodhouse Muniments, Sheffield City Library. Quoted in John Brewer, ‘The Misfortunes of Lord Bute: A Casestudy in Eighteenthcentury Political Argument and Public Opinion,’ The Historical Journal 16, no.1 (1973), p. 26.} A victim of such propaganda, Lord Bute’s government lasted only one year before his resignation. As the king’s minister, and a Scot, Chambers was also a target of the progressive Whigs’ media. For example, in Political electricity, or, an historical & prophetical print in the year 1770,\footnote{Political electricity, or, an historical & prophetical print in the year 1770 (caption title), published according to Act of Parliament (London, 1770). In Catalogue 260, Colonial Americana, William Reese Company 409 Temple Street, New Haven, CT06511, item 15. \url{http://www.williamreesecompany.com/catalogs/cat260.pdf} (accessed on 09–07–11)} Chambers, along with Lord Bute, was caricatured as a corrupt Tory leader who drew power from an anthropomorphized turbine on the coast of France via an electrified chain. The electrical surge moves invisibly through the chain, connecting the Tories to the King, and powering events.

Upon this background, we may understand better Chambers’ evocation of the Chinese dress, which he was allegedly acquainted with, as a strategy to protect himself from the censure. He wrote,

> I may therefore, without danger to myself, and it is hoped without offence to others, offer the following account of the Chinese manner of Gardening; which is collected from my own observations in China, from conversations with the Artists, and remarks transmitted to me at different times by travellers. (DG, ix)

On the other hand, China is also evoked as a mirror of British colonies, and reflects British economic, political relations with these colonies. Following the seizure of the colonies, the governance of these lands became a central issue for the British government: the management of the land, the economy, and the governance of the people. As discussed before, along with colonial wealth pouring into the country, and the prevalence of enjoyment and entertainment amidst material comfort, as well as the hubris and appetite of the upper class, there emerged a growing anxiety about national decline in terms of morality and martial values. Liberal-conservatives such as Burke considered shaping the citizens’ taste—their aesthetic-psychology in accord with the physiological idea of \textit{vis vitalis}, as being central to maintaining the well-being of both the individual and the state. Against this background, the context of late eighteenth-century China—an effeminate Han civilization...
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replaced by a powerful Manchurian empire—may be perceived by the late eighteenth-century Britain as a vehicle for demonstrating the emotional antitheses of Han liberty and Manchu constraint. The double images of China—Manchu empire as a moral model for Britain, and Han China as a mirror of British engagements in oriental colonies, are clearly seen in Chambers’ plot.

Following a preface that implies the social-political associations of landscape gardening, Chambers in Dissertation first introduced the ‘Chinese’ methods of gardening, that is, three scenes—the pleasing, the terrible, and the surprising. Constructed according to the seasons, the pleasing scenes contain four themes with reference to certain aspects of contemporary British society, winter (agriculture); spring (governance); summer (commerce); autumn (arts). In contrast to the pleasing scenes, the terrible and the surprising scenes featured funereal imagination, which are demonstrations of the Burkean sublime. In scenes of ‘the terrible,’ Chambers presented a series of dark images such as floods, wars, execution, mines, and other early industry plants. In the surprising scenes, Chambers narrated a traveller’s adventure starting from the underground tombs where he encountered ‘pale images of ancient kings,’ and then to the foot of mountains where there is a riverbank of selpuchers, to a passage of ‘trial’ where he was astonished by dragons, tortured by fire, rain, and electrical impulses, and eventually led to a union with oriental damsels.54

Subsequent to the introduction of the three scenes, Chambers outlines his project of ‘landscape city’ as a sensational system. In substantial pages, he addressed to various aspects of imperial and colonial development that can be integrated into ‘landscape city’ project. These aspects include: cultivating new species of plants and animals, possessing natural resources, developing agricultural technologies, constructing transportation networks (e.g. roads, canals), erecting grand national buildings and monuments, growing naval force, and fostering forestation and city plantation.

In this chapter, I focus on the antithesis of the summer scene (commerce) and the passage of ‘trial’ in the surprising scenes, a scenic dyad that is in concert with Burke’s theory of the beautiful and the sublime. A mirror of British urban commercial exuberance from colonial trade, the summer scenes of luxury signal refined sensibilities to the pleasures of liberty, commerce and the arts; whilst the scenes of the pseudo-military passage, evoking the Burkean sublime-effect as labouring of the nerves, are curative of the languid status of the nerves. In unfolding the above argument, I note that Chambers used the ambivalent image of China—both the southern Han Chinese and the Manchurians—as his model of the scenic

54 This narrative implies a structure of ‘rites of passage’ of the Burkean sublime-effects, by which the traveller’s mind is regenerated for coping with the new conditions of the society.
dyad of luxury and the surprising. The narrative of the conflict between these two cultural identities of China conveniently reflected the binary of feminine, civilian sensibilities and masculine, martial values which was central in eighteenth century British minds, and therefore facilitated the British political discourse of strengthening its military spirit amidst the constitutional crisis.

I will then demonstrate how this pseudo-military passage was applied to Chambers’ project of ‘landscape city’ in the form of transportation networks. Chambers’ landscape scheme embodying Burke’s sublime-effect, I shall suggest, contained echoes of the Chinese notions of landscape city which were laid out according to systematic plans, taking into account multiple factors of the agricultural, economic, transportation, as well as the visual and psychological. The Chinese ‘garb’ may thus be seen as an evocation by Chambers to justify his innovative approach to governing the British empire under the changed conditions of the new commercial society. Vehicles of the sublime-effect, such sensational transportation systems demonstrate his notion of ‘country as a garden,’ and are expected to counteract the emasculating effect of the excessive commodities produced by commercial society.

Last but not least, in the following pages, I wish to emphasize that the role which China played in Chambers’ idea of British state building in the eighteenth century is inseparable from the then British contemporary perception of China as a civilization equivalent to Republican Rome. The image of China acted as a mirror, or double, of the Roman republic, which was identified as an antecedent of British constitutional government. From the idea of *virtus* to the view of martial virtues being an antidote to luxury, to the curative effect of the sublime, these central topics of the Enlightenment discourse have their roots in classical culture, which was keenly pursued by the eighteenth century British elite. It was within this framework of a culture of nostalgia for the Roman republic that Chinese influence on the construction of British statehood took place.

### 3.2 Luxury and ‘the surprising’: Commercial society and martial values

#### 3.2.1 Luxury: visions of a commercial society

The 1760–70s were a time in which Britain experienced economic prosperity as the Peace of Paris secured great imperial gains. Following the victory of the Seven Years War in 1763,
Britain won vast colonial territories in America, Asia and Africa. Exploiting the spoils of the war, Britain became the world’s greatest trading nation, its economy boomed and its commercial power grew. Under the new conditions associated with the commercial society, the national anxiety about moral corruption became particularly pertinent. As a famous pamphlet, by John Brown, observed about civil life:

Every house of fashion is now crowded with porcelain trees and birds, porcelain men and beasts, crossed legged mandarins and Brahmins, perpendicular Lines and stiff right Angles: every gaudy Chinese Crudity, either in Colour, Form, Attitude, or Grouping, is adopted into fashionable Use, and become the Standard of Taste and Elegance. . . . . There is hardly a corner of the kingdom, where a summer scene of public dissipation is not now established.\(^{56}\)

The greatest worry concerning the new economy is that the rich English middle class who had made quick fortunes in the colonies not only brought back luxurious consumption, but also oriental corruption. These ‘nabobs’ openly competed for political power with the landed aristocracy in Parliament and elsewhere by means of bribery. As Horace Walpole in 1773 querulously asked: ‘What is England now? A sink of Indian wealth, filled by nabobs and emptied by Maccaronis! A senate sold and despised! A country overrun by horse-races! A gaming, robbing, wrangling, railing nation without principles, genius, character, or allies.’\(^{57}\)

Chambers’ ‘Chinese’ summer scene—a landscape of luxury—precisely responds to these social reflections. In his representation, it is worth noting, the landscape of luxury has an ambivalent effect: both of civility and effeminacy. This ambivalent image not only reflects Chambers’ own identity—a patriotic politician from a mercantilist background, but also as we will reveal, it aligns him with the Scottish liberal thinkers, who see the necessity of global trade to make Britain a great nation, but who are also aware of commercialism’s fatal side-effect of effeminacy.

In contrast to the conservative moralist presentation of chinoiserie in terms of ‘foreignness’ and the grotesque, Chambers welcomed and even celebrated oriental luxury as a scene of civility. He presented them all in detail: the plentiful waterworks, the rich plantations, the exotic animals and birds, the sophisticated tree-lined walks; the ‘cabinets of verdure’ and the grottos adorned with ‘incrustations of coral shells, ores, gems and christalisations’; the elegant pavilions with sophisticated names (e.g. ‘Miao Ting’), the finishings with marble, inlaid precious woods, ivory, silver, gold, and mother of pearl; the splendid and spacious buildings, furnished with pictures, sculptures, embroidery, trinkets,


and clock-work pieces of great value, enriched with ornaments of gold, intermixed with pearls, diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and other gems.’ (DG, 20–23)

In the Chinese gardens, all senses are satisfied. As he relates, smell is pleased by aromatic herbs and flowers, as well as fragrant, artificial breezes. Taste is aroused by sweet-scented water. Hearing is entertained by melodious birds and murmuring fountains. So many objects are to please the sense of sight, to stimulate the imagination: the finest verdure, the most brilliant, harmonious colouring imaginable; the most colorful birds such as gold and silver pheasants and pea-fowls; painted glass that fits in windows, which tinge the light and give a glow to objects; and the tinged-glass skylights in Halls of the Moon, wherein the interiors were spread with the pleasing gloom of a fine summer’s night (DG, 22–23).

In this way, Chambers showed himself to be a follower of the new evaluation of luxury, which was put forward by liberal thinkers such as David Hume and Adam Smith. Despite a wary of the emasculating effect of commerce, their views were differentiated from the conventional idea that associated luxury items with the excess and ostentation of older elite consumption, nor did they consider that foreign imports harmed the domestic economy, but rather these imports expressed civility, comfort, fashion, taste and moderation. Hume, for example, identified ‘luxury’ with the invention and production of manufactured goods designed for the ‘gratification of the senses.’ Thus luxury functioned as an incentive for individual and social-economic improvement.

As Maxine Berg points out, the emerging higher way of life and the new capitalistic economic order in Europe drew inspiration from the trade with Asia from the seventeenth-century. The Asian craft objects of luxury, in Chambers’ scenes, therefore, represented for Europeans a whole new category of what Berg calls ‘an economy of quality and delight’ which stimulated new ways of thinking about a more civilized way of life, and undermined the existing feudalism. Monarchs and politicians skilfully used Asiatic luxury to promote this new liberal political-economic order to aid their own interests. Frederick Prince of Wales, Chambers’ royal patron, is one such example. Frederick sponsored the famous Vauxhall gardens (1732), a popular pleasure garden featuring oriental tastes and entertainment, a key site of ‘the new capitalists’ cultural enterprise’ in London. As Nebahat Avcioglu discusses, for Frederick, to patronize the luxury hedonistic garden is not only an effective way to

distinguish him from the old feudal political-economic order and monarchical tradition, but also it is an effective way to bring down that order, and to promote a new order of free trade that had won him tremendous support from the mercantile middle class.\footnote{Nebahat Avcioglu, \textit{Turquerie and the Politics of Representation, 1728–1876} (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 23.} The ‘Chinese’ scene of luxury, with its obvious parallels with this hedonistic garden, may be seen as homage by the Scottish merchant’s son to the Hanoverian prince who, by promoting Asiatic luxury gardens, initiated the reform of foreign and commercial policies in favour of the overseas trading community, and facilitated the establishment of a liberal, civil and commercial society.

However, the scene of luxury in oriental gardens has another aspect in that luxury objects are marked with the character of femininity: sweet and scented vegetables, ‘clumps of rose trees’ and ‘lofty flowering shrubs’ making up ‘a wilderness of sweets,’ adorned with all sorts of fragrant and gaudy productions.’ Birds are chosen for their beautiful colours and melodious songs; animals for their mild and obedient nature—deer, antelopes, spotted buffaloes, and sheep; ‘murmuring fountains, sleeping nymphs;’ water gives sweet scent, breezes are fragrant and artificial; music is soft; books in the library are for entertaining; paintings are amorous. The feminine characters of objects are virtually expressed in human figures—eunuchs, women servants, and concubines, who are either indulging in all sorts of entertainment: dining, conversation, music, and playing games, or awaiting in secret recesses for their patrons visiting. The only male characters, Chinese princes, as represented by Chambers, are engaged with nothing, but they ‘retire with their favourite women’ to pavilions, ‘whenever the heat and intense light of the summer’s day becomes disagreeable to them; and here they feast, and give loose to every sort of voluptuous pleasure.’ (\textit{DG} 23–24)

In describing it thus, Chambers echoes a predominant view in the minds of the eighteenth-century British elite. Asia, such as India and China, epitomizes the evil union of luxury and effeminacy. The seventeenth and eighteenth century British readers were familiar with the conquest of the Ming Empire by the Manchus through works such as the Jesuit Martin Martini’s \textit{Bellum Tartaricum} (London 1654), which perpetuated a familiar binary of the sensual effeminate Southern Chinese and their antithesis the hardy masculine Northern Tartars (Manchus).\footnote{Peter J. Kitson, \textit{Romantic Literature, Race, and Colonial Encounter}, Nineteenth-Century Major Lives and Letters (New York, N.Y.; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 182.} The warlike Tartar spirit will be civilized by the softness of Chinese civilization, through the marriage of the Tartar conqueror to his Chinese love. Such representations had considerable currency in the minds of the eighteenth century British elite, for whom, the civilizing force is perceived as enfeeblement and feminization which
would emasculate the masculinity and virility of their *virtus*.

Early in the century, the third Earl of Shaftesbury in his *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711), had already warned of the negative effects of commercial luxury and effeminacy. It was widely recognized in the mid-eighteenth century that commercial society inevitably brought luxury consumption and effeminate masculinity. As mentioned before, aristocratic men’s public virtues were considered as the very protection of liberty and national freedom. In commercial society, martial values were seen being undermined by delicate living. As Adam Smith recognized, the outcome of an increasingly commercial and liberal order produces ‘weak men.’ Adam Ferguson describes the upper class of Britons: ‘The Hearts of our People are not Steel, they are softened by a Disuse of Arms, by Security, and pacific Employments.’ Lord Kames also notes that ‘where arts, manufactures, and commerce, have arrived at perfection, a pacific spirit prevails universally.’ The pacific spirit, he sees as a danger on the grounds that now ‘not a spark of military ardor’ remains ‘nor will any man be a soldier.’ The anxiety of decline resulting from excessive commerce was prevalent. William Russell, in his highly popular *History of Europe*, first published in 1786, warned: ‘So great an influx of wealth, without any extraordinary expenditure, or call to bold enterprise, must soon have produced a total dissolution of manners; and the British nation, overwhelmed with luxury and effeminacy, might have sunk into an early decline.

The task, therefore, as Ferguson, among many, sees, is to find a way ‘to mix the military Spirit with our civil and commercial Policy.’ War, military exercises, militias, and a standing army, were among various means proposed to stir up the military spirit by Scottish liberal thinkers. Chambers was familiar with this discourse, as he said, ‘Our gardeners, and I fear our Connoisseurs too, are such tame animals, that much sparring is necessary to keep them properly on their haunches.’ The 1760–70s were a period which witnessed continued and

64 Ibid., p. 117
extensive militia agitation in Britain. The British navy, benefiting from the ‘blue water’ tradition, grew at a greater rate than the army and at immense expense.70 Naval reviews and exercises were also intensified during George III’s reign.71 These social phenomena are reflected in the scenes in the Dissertation. For example, ‘They observe, that the different aquatic sports of rowing, sailing, swimming, fishing, hunting and combating, are an inexhaustible fund of amusement’; ‘sea-ports with fleets of vessels lying before them, forts with flags flying, and batteries of cannon,’ (DG, 47) ‘upon their lakes, the Chinese frequently exhibit sea-fights, processions, and ship-races’ (DG, 48). Active scenes of military exercises, for Chambers, become an important part of urban spectacles emphasizing masculinity and virility, which are to be transferred to citizens. But the visual effect of military exercises as spectacles on the audience is restrained with the tempo and loco. To engage with a larger polity, Chambers instead orchestrated a landscape (scenes of the surprising) of a pseudo-military journey, in which citizens are not merely spectators, but they become travellers on the journey, like a Manchu-Roman soldier on a campaign.

3.2.2 The Surprising: The pseudo-military passage

Of the surprising scenes Chambers wrote:

His way now lies through dark passages cut in the rocks, on the side of which are recesses, filled with colossal figures of dragons, infernal fiends, and other horror forms, which hold in their monstrous talons, mysterious, cabalistical sentences, inscribed on tables of brass; with preparations that yield a constant flame; serving at once to guide and to astonish the passenger: from time to time he is surprised with repeated shocks of electrical impulse, with showers of artificial rain, or sudden violent gusts of wind, and instantaneous explosions of fire; the earth trembles under him, by the power of confined air; and his ears are successively struck with many different sounds, produced by the same means; some resembling the cries of men in torment; others the roaring of bulls, and howl of ferocious animals, with the yell of hounds, and the voices of hunters; others are like the mixed croaking of ravenous birds; and others imitate thunder, the raging of the sea, the explosion of cannon, the sound of trumpets, and all the noise of war. (DG, 29)

For Chambers’ contemporary British readers, such descriptions may not be seen as whimsical as it now appears. It may remind them of the Manchu Emperor Kangxi’s military campaigns, vividly described by the Jesuit Ferdinand Verbiest, who attended the Emperor on occasions in 1682 and 1683. These accounts were included in John Lockman’s Travels of the

71 Ibid., pp. 33–4.
As a minor ethnic group ruling a Chinese empire with vast territories, the Manchurian imperial project rested on the military. Maintaining martial prowess was central to Manchurian identity. It would stiffen the sinews of Chinese culture, which was considered too ‘feminine’ (civilian). The military ethos would also counteract the potential of an enervating military spirit assimilated by the Manchu empire’s growing economic and political power. The Manchurian experience of balancing between the civilian and the military in their governance would have been of great interest for those British readers who could identify them with similar situations. As we read in Verbiest’s description: ‘The emperor’s troops marching in high mountains and dark forests’; ‘Trumpets sounding and Drums beating all the way’; exposure to ‘the scorching Sun-Beams,’ to the rain, and to other clemencies of the weather; experiences of extreme fatigue; ‘Cannon discharged, from time to time, in the Vallies—purposely that the Noise and Fire issuing from the Mouths of the Dragons, with which they are adorned, might spread Terror around.’

The Manchurian campaign as a major strategy of the Kangxi emperor to strengthen the military spirit is made plain by the Jesuit author. ‘The Emperor, whose chief Design by this Progress was to keep his Troops in Exercise, succeeded in that Respect to the utmost of his Wishes,’ which, as he explained, was, ‘to prevent the Luxury which prevails in China and too a long Inactivity, from enervating their Courage, and lessening their former Valour.’

But the narrative taking form in a journey as a trial of elements also demonstrates the

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72 According to John Lockman’s annotations, Ferdinand Verbiest’s letters were written originally in Latin. They were dedicated to Louis XIV, and were printed at Paris by Étienne Michallet, Rue St. Jacques, 1685. See John Lockman and Jesuits. Travels of the Jesuits, into various parts of the world (London, 1743), pp. 140-160. In Travels of the Jesuits, Verbiest’s letters appears under the title of ‘A journey undertaken by the emperor of China into Western Tartary, Anno 1683.’ Of Chambers’ library, there remains no full catalogue, but only a sale catalogue from the three-day auction held at Christie’s during July 16, 18 and 19, 1796. Lockman’s Travels is not included in this sale catalogue which contains 151 out of 264 books in Chambers’ library that were auctioned. See A. N. L. Munby and D. J. Watkin, Sale Catalogues of Libraries of Eminent Persons. Architects; Edited with Introductions by D.J. Watkin, vol. 4 (London: Mansell with Sotheby Parke-Bernet Publications, 1972). Given the parallels between his depiction of the surprising scenes and the account in Lockman’s Travels, it may be assumed that Chambers re-enacted Verbiest’s account in Lockman’s book. Further research is required to demonstrate Chambers’ access to Lockman’s Travels.

73 Such catalogues include S. Baker and G. Leigh, A catalogue of several libraries and parcels of books lately purchased (London, 1767); William Cater, A catalogue of valuable and elegant books, being several Libraries, lately purchased (London, 1768); William Otridge, A catalogue of above fifteen thousand volumes: in which are included the library of the Rev. Mr. Chalmers, of Eglin, in Scotland (London, 1770). Lockman’s Travels is also cited in contemporary intellectuals’ works, such as John Brown, A general history of the Christian church (Edinburgh, 1771), p. ix.

74 On this subject, see Joanna Waley-Cohen, The Culture of War in China: Empire and the Military under the Qing Dynasty (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006).

75 Quoted in Lockman, Travels of the Jesuits, pp. 141-2.

76 Ibid., p. 142.
influences of hermetic doctrines and Masonic ritualistic practices on Jesuits’ and Chambers’ description. It is an old hermetic concept that in an initiatory journey, the neophyte, by experiencing all sensations—fire and water, dry and moist, can achieve elevation, obtaining a new identity. 77 David Mungello has showed that the seventeenth-eighteenth century Jesuits order was receptive to Hermetism doctrines. 78 The Hanoverian royal family, since Frederick Prince of Wales, had also been involved in the Masonic order. 79 Therefore it is not surprising to see that in Chambers’ scenes of the surprising the narratives of the Manchurian expedition are intermingled with facets of Masonic folk lore—a trial of ‘the elements’: Fire, rain, electricity, earthquake, together with sounds of trumpets, cries of men in torment, explosions of canon, and all the noises of war. These elements give the body painful and disturbing stimuli, as if to put the body through the purification of war, whereby to create a new martial identity.

From a psychological perspective, all these experiences embodied Burke’s sublime-effect, as a kind of mental or sensory exercise or labour, ‘an exertion of the contracting power of the muscles’ which ‘as such resembles pain, which consists in tension or contraction, in everything but degree.’ (PE, 135) By increasing the tension of the body, putting the body at the verge of pain, exciting the opposite strongest sensations, the mock-trial experiences function as a kind of homeostatic device, which ensures against the risk of the dangerous reduction of tension induced through pleasure. Thus, the neophyte is made into a virtuous man of martial power.

The spatial experience created at the ruined Roman arch at Kew may be seen as a demonstration of this sublime-effect of ‘military’ labour—the antithesis of melancholy and ‘military’ spirit shown in the view of the Ruin in Chambers’ Plans (Fig. 3–2). When a passenger approaches the Arch from the north, he would note how the arch twists the path to focus a northward gaze through its arch to the gleaming Temple of Victory beyond, crowning its hilltop. Richard Quaintance comments how a generalized ‘melancholy’ seems an irrelevant self-indulgence to one’s experience on the walk, with the vista of a military monument beyond. 80 According to the Burkean sublime-effect discussed above, this spatial-

79 See my Introduction chapter, p. 19, n. 66.
Chapter 3 Shaping the passions of empire: Sir William Chambers’ *Dissertation* and the Burkean sublime-effect

Fig. 3–2 Chambers’ design of triumphal arch as a ruin at Kew in *Plans, elevations, sections and Perspective Views of the Gardens and Buildings of Kew* … (London, 1763)

emotional effect is hardly accidental, but a result of a deliberate design. The tension between
the Roman ruin and the Temple of Victory, for Chambers, prevents the passenger’s
imagination from sinking into melancholic reflection. But rather, at the sight of the
monument to the British victory in the Seven Years War, his passion would be reduced,
‘shaken and worked to a proper degree.’ Thus his confidence would be cultivated in terms of
British martial valor as a contemporary form of Roman *virtus*.

3.3 ‘One magnificent garden’: the *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* as
city landscaping theory

3.3.1 The landscape city as an educational instrument

Equipped with the methods of shaping human passions using the antithesis of the beautiful
and the sublime, Chambers in his ‘Oriental gardening,’ is able to imagine beyond the
boundary of a landscape garden as Kew, but cities as one such educational instrument. In a
substantial body—one third of the *Dissertation*, Chambers applied the antithetical sublime-
effect of landscape gardening, at a much larger scale, to city planning—a scheme of city
landscaping. If Burke wished to shape citizens’ minds by aesthetic-psychological training,
Chambers the architect, proposed a project of making the city itself as a form of moral
education, an experiment site of moulding citizens’ minds. He justified his scheme by
evoking the Chinese, whose cities have enjoyed an appearance of landscape gardens.

It is natural for the reader to imagine, that all these bridges, with the pavilions,
temples, palaces, and other structures, which have been occasionally described
in the course of this work, and which are so abundantly scattered over the
Chinese Gardens, should entirely divest them of a rural character, and give them
rather the appearance of splendid cities, than scenes of cultivated vegetation.
But such is the judgment with which the Chinese artists situate their structures,
that they enrich and beautify particular prospects, without any detriment to the
general aspect of the whole composition, in which Nature almost always
appears predominant; for though their Gardens are full of buildings, and other
works of art, yet there are many points from which none of them appear: and
more than two or three at a time are seldom discovered; so artfully are they
concealed in valleys, behind rocks and mountains, or amongst woods and
thickets. (*DG*, 50)

Chambers’ grand vision that the city, or even the country, be constructed as a garden
may have been influenced by the Chinese landscape tradition, in which imperial gardens are
built integrated with the city, and the city was built as a landscape garden. Construction of

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81 The tension between the two opposite sensations regulated the flow of imagination, rather than
letting it loose.
systems of transportation, irrigation, water conservation and city landscaping are combined to achieve an integrated effect. From a number of letters, engravings and publications contributed by missionaries and merchants that had been circulated in Europe since the seventeenth-century, the images of Chinese landscape cities have impressed the European audience. In particular, Jean-Baptiste Du Halde’s *Descriptions of China* (London, 1738), of which Chambers owned a copy, contains general maps of China, showing extensive networks of rivers and roads spreading throughout the country. In late eighteenth-century Britain, the vision of China’s national transportation network was of particular significance, because the capacity of roads, navigable rivers, and canals were still under-developed in Britain. Decades of commercial revolution and trade development had already put pressure on the British government to give attention to this issue. It may be assumed that knowledge of the Chinese imperial landscape city may have informed Chambers for him to envision a British garden empire, built on transportation networks which simultaneously serving as ‘initiatory passages’ to form citizens’ virtues.

In the meantime, it is worth noting that the western perception of the integrated effects of the Chinese landscape city were commingled with the hermetic tradition, in which cities are a key site of shaping citizens’ morals. Such an understanding was indicated in many Jesuits’ accounts including that of Du Halde. Chambers’ vision of the ‘landscape city’ as a form of moral education thus may be more in debt to the concept of ‘city as forest,’ proposed by Robert Castell, or the ‘garden city’ of the Jesuit Abbé Marc-Antoine Laugier (1713–1769), which were appropriations of an age-old tradition of hermetic utopia, traced to the city of Rome.

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85 With supposedly Egyptian origin, the hermetic utopia is a prototype of ideal republic, ruled by combination of rational laws and magical, natural religions. This vision was realized in Augustan Rome, and revived in hermeticism studies within Neoplatonic academies. Representations of this hermetic utopia are, among others, Tommaso Campanella’s (1568-1639) *City of the Sun* (Frankfurt, 1623) and Nicolas Poussin’s *Landscape with a city*, and *Campo Marzio* (The Field of Mars) (1762)—a scheme of city planning for urban regeneration designed by G. B. Piranesi (1720-1778), with whom Chambers neighbored with during his stay in Rome. Inspired by their experiences on the Grand Tour, Englishmen re-imagined their ideal cities through pastoral settings. Robert Castell, a protégé of Lord Burlington, first theorized ‘City as forest,’ which is then followed by Abbe Laugier’s famous principle of gardening as city planning. Both of them were receptive to the idea of Chinese landscape city.
This vision of the city as an instrument of moral education, for Chambers, is underpinned by the same principle which Burke laid out in the introduction to his *Enquiry*, that, we could, through sufficient remembrance, recall these natural causes of pleasures, so that they can play a mediating role to tie together the various faculties of the mind as Burke describes them, namely, sensibility, imagination, and judgment. The landscape city, the environment which surrounds citizens, through which they pass every day, and with which their senses are constantly in play, ought to be made into a constancy mechanism—the sensational city of the sublime-effect.

For Chambers, present society is filled with pleasing scenes—as seen in the naturalist landscape farms (winter), the botanical gardens (spring), the hedonistic commercial gardens (summer) and the melancholic gardens (autumn). These gardens reflected the prosperity of contemporary liberal-commercial society, the entertainment and enjoyment of the upper class in the expanding British empire. However, the exposure to these pleasing scenes alone is not sufficient to shape a balanced individual mentality and collective well-being, since other parts of the reality (e.g. lives of the poor and the colonists) of empire are excluded from the privileged visions of the upper class. Chambers’ proposal for constructing the scenes of the terrible and the surprising (sympathy, fear, memory and military spirit), therefore, may be seen as an effort to bring the unhappy side of reality to the often narrow vision of the upper and middle class,’ to make them alert to, and prepared for, blows of fortune.

Chambers argued for the practicality of creating these scenes of the terrible and the surprising throughout the country. The scenes of the terrible that can evoke sympathy, he suggested, can be converted from wastelands:

> England abounds with commons and wilds, dreary, barren, and serving only to give an uncultivated appearance to the country, particularly near the metropolis: to beautify these vast tracts of land, is next to an impossibility; but they may easily be framed into scenes of terror, converted into noble pictures of the sublimest cast, and, by an artful contrast, serve to enforce the effect of gayer and more luxuriant prospects.\(^{86}\)

To provoke fear of power, Chambers envisioned ‘Castles or prisons, for the reception of criminals to mausoleums; and all other works of which the intent is to inspire horror, veneration or astonishment’ should be built in cities. (*DG*, 33)

To form a ground of the collective imagination of the nation, and to evoke and sustain the past, Chambers emphasized that monuments should be made into grand spectacles:

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In the mountains, on each side of these imperial roads, are erected a great number of buildings, adorned with colossal statues, and other works of sculpture, which afford constant entertainment to the passengers. These are the monuments of their wise men, their saints, and their warriors, erected at the expense of the state, and furnished with nervous inscriptions, in the Chinese language, giving an account of the lives and actions of those they commemorate: some of these buildings are distributed into many spacious courts and stately apartments, being little inferior to palaces, either in magnificence or extent. (DG, 39)

3.3.2 Moulding Virtus: the transportation network as a pseudo-military journey

In Chambers’ vision, the Chinese roads, with various arrangements, can produce all different kinds of effect—of greatness, of surprise, and of horror. As he relates, a most striking effect, is obtained by those spacious roads ‘planted on each side with lofty trees, and stretching in a direct line, beyond the reach of the eye.’ Fearful and solitary effects can also be produced along the roads, which, sometimes, ‘kept at a considerable distance from each other, and separated by close planted thickets, to hide all exterior objects; as well to keep the passenger in suspense with regard to the extent, as to excite those gloomy sensations which naturally steal upon the mind, in wandering through the intricacies of a solitary forest.’ (DG, 34)

The effect of the surprising can be achieved by turning the roads at certain points where they are combined with new or uncommon objects. He writes, those objects ‘present themselves at every change of direction, occupy the mind agreeably; their abrupt appearance occasions surprise; which, when the extent is vast, and the repetitions frequent, swells into astonishment and admiration: the incertitude of the mind where these repetitions will end, and its anxiety as the spectator approaches towards the periods, are likewise very strong impressions, preventing that state of languor into which the mind naturally sinks by dwelling long on the same objects.’ Not only natural objects such as mountains and valleys can be such objects to cause surprise, but also towns, palaces, and monuments. He wrote, ‘the straight directions, particularly the zig-zag, are, on account of these effects, well adapted to avenues or high roads, which lead to towns, palaces, bridges, or triumphal arches; to castles or prisons, for the reception of criminals; to mausoleums; and all other works of which the intent is to inspire horror, veneration or astonishment.’ (DG, 33) Or, ‘in the mountains, on each side of these imperial roads, are erected a great number of buildings, adorned with colossal statues, and other works of sculpture, which afford constant entertainment to the passengers.’ (DG, 39) While prisons evoke terror, monuments arouse awe, reverence, and sober reflection. More exciting feelings perhaps are aroused when the roads are constructed in natural wonders. As he imagines, ‘in some places, these roads are carried, by lofty vaulted
passages, through the rocks and mountains; or, upon causeways and bridges, over lakes, torrents, and arms of the sea; and in others, they are supported, between the precipices, upon chains of iron, or upon pillars, and many tire of arcades, over villages, pagodas, and cities.’  

(DG, 38)

Chambers equally applied the sensory principles to the construction of the waterway network. The experiences along the waterway journey can be tranquil, great, and astonishing. ‘In some places, the borders consist of lofty woods, with creeks and rivers for the admission of vessels, whose banks are covered with high grass, reeds, and wild spreading trees, forming close gloomy arbors, under which the vessels pass.’ (DG, 47) Such tranquillity is to be contrasted with the sublime of infinity. ‘From these arbours are cut many vistoes through the woods, to distant prospects of towns, bridges, temples, and various other objects, which successively strike the eye, and fill the mind with expectation.’ (DG, 47) The water journey can also be full of adventures: ‘Sometimes too, instead of being intercepted in your passage, the vessel, together with the whole river, are, by the impetuosity and particular direction of the current, hurried into dark caverns, overhung with woods; whence, after having been furiously impelled for some time, you are again discharged into day-light, upon lakes encompassed with high hanging woods, rich prospects on mountains, and stately temples, dedicated to Tien-ho, and the celestial spirits.’ (DG, 47–8)

The irregular, uncertain, and adventurous experiences of the surprising scenes that the traveller obtains on such passages would awaken his senses from the drunkenness of the pleasures of entertainment and the enjoyment of luxury, from the soft feelings of love and grief, from what Burke calls, in relation to the experience of the beautiful, ‘that sink, that melting, that languor,’ from the excessive commodities produced by commercial society. Bringing the body ‘to the verge of pain,’ surprise immunizes him against the dangers of both pleasure and pain. Underpinning Chambers’ sensory transportation network may also be seen the stoic idea of life as a moral journey. Roads, rivers, may be a substitute for what Adam Smith proposed as military education, becoming ‘the best schools for forming every man to this hardiness and firmness of temper’ and for ‘curing him of the opposite weakness.’

In these experiences of horror, fear, and sudden astonishment on his travelling, the British man would build his mind as a virtus, a stoic solider, who learns to withstand the adversities and reverses suffered from the attack of fortune. In this way, the transportation landscapes, the city, or the country per se, built as a landscape garden, functions as the Burkean ‘homeostatic device,’ or a ‘constancy mechanism.’ It comes to act as a kind of displacement of the rigors

88 Suzanne Guerlac, ‘Delights of Grotesque and Sublime (Book Review),’ Diacritics 15, no. 3 (1985:
of military experience, whereby the moral effects of the latter are translated into the context of the modern commercial state.

This chapter has discussed how Chinese gardens—as a disguise of ‘Arcadian classicism’—are evoked as material for Chambers’ political allegory addressing the constitutional crisis of the British government in the 1760–70s, with a focus on the tensions between luxury and moral corruption and between civilian and military virtues. It highlights that the ambivalent representation of Chinese gardens in the scenes of luxury—as civility and effeminacy—correspond to contemporary debates on the double effects of oriental luxury items on Britain’s economy and socio-politics. Moreover, the chapter indicates how the sublime funereal landscapes are proposed by Chambers to counteract the emasculating effects of the new liberal and commercial conditions, so as to defend the martial virtues of British citizens and to maintain the socio-political stability of the British state within the new context of a liberal, commercial society.

In this chapter, we see how Arcadian classicism functioned as an inherent frame for the British elite to assimilate information on China, such as the Manchurian imperial art of the military and its projects of integrated landscape construction as a reference for his landscape scheme. Whilst it is possible to suggest that the Dissertation provided an example of how Asian governance technologies informed, facilitated, and justified the reformation of the state building process in the West, it is worth noting that such interaction was not bipolar, but took place via a multi-polar network, as British nostalgia for the Roman republic in the eighteenth-century played an important role in the conception of the Dissertation (leaving aside the mediating factor of Jesuits’ interpretation in this culture encounter). As we discussed, whereas Chambers’ notions such as ‘country as a garden’ may owe more to the Chinese landscape tradition, his conception of the therapeutic effect of the sublime, are strongly imbued with the western traditions such as Roman stoicism and hermetic interpretations of Christianity.

In Chambers’ often confusing images of the Chinese Arcadia—a masculine Manchurian empire, a feminine oriental civilization, entangled with a Roman tradition of virtus—we find encoded British statesmen’s imaginings of an imperial empire. The politicized aesthetics of the Dissertation gives us a powerful and highly-significant example of how the Arcadian tradition, in the context of eighteenth-century European-Asian contact, in both its reality and imaginary dimensions, shaped discourses on the building of Britain’s statehood in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Fall), p. 52.
Chapter 4

The ‘Eroding’ Monument:
Reading *Crude Hints towards an History of my House in L[incoln’s] [inn] Fields*

4.1 Introduction: *Crude hints* and Soane’s house-museum
   4.1.1 First principles of the earth and mind
   4.1.2 The Picturesque: the operation of the earth and mind
   4.1.3 The Sepulchral: The receptacle of the spirit of the dead

4.2 The Ruin
   4.2.1 The new sign system: geological landscape
   4.2.2 Artificial ruin: self-dismembering

4.3 The Antiquary on the Grand Tour
   4.3.1 ‘The Appearances of the Lion’: ritual creation and the encounter with ‘the father’
   4.3.2 Coals in the cellar: collecting cultural capital

4.4 Fossil and magician: The auto-monument

4.5 Monument to dynastic ambition
   4.5.1 Imagined cemetery
   4.5.2 Erosion and collecting
4.1 Introduction: *Crude hints* and Soane’s house-museum

In August and September 1812, John Soane wrote a curious text about his house in Lincoln’s Inn Fields: *Crude Hints towards an History of my House in L[incoln’s] I[nn] Fields*,¹ which has been described as ‘the most whimsical and strange text in British architectural history.’² Claimed to be a ‘history,’ the text was a fiction, wherein Soane, disguised as an antiquary of the future, speculated on the origin of the house which had become a ruin, a deserted landscape in the metropolitan city.

> In this age of research when the Connoisseur and the Antiquary find a lively interest in whatever relates to former times & their attention is thereby frequently directed to the investigation of things which, at least to common minds, seem of little importance, no wonder, in such an age, so much notice has been taken of the ruins and very extensive assemblage of fragments of ancient works. partly buried and in some degree attached to a building in this metropolis apparently of later date [in Lincoln's Inn Fields (del.)]³

(CH, 61)

The imagination is not without ground. At the time Soane was demolishing the existing No.13 house of Lincoln’s Inn Fields as part of his rebuilding. Soane’s progress notebook reveals that by the 30th August, the first date on the *Crude hints* manuscript, the front brick wall of the house was completed and some floors had been inserted, but the house remained a shell. The house, therefore, as Helen Dorey puts it, ‘could be viewed imaginatively as

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³ My quotations of *Crude Hints* use the version published in ibid., pp. 61–74. The text was transcribed from the original manuscript and annotated by Helen Dorey. As Dorey notes, Soane’s text is written in long paragraphs dived not into sentences but into long phrases separated by dashes and semi-colons. Some of these have been turned into sentences although for the most part the punctuation has not been modernised. In editing the text most of Soane’s extensive and often illegible deletions have been omitted. Where they seem of particular interest they are included in square brackets with (del.) to indicate that they are deleted in the MS. In a number of places alternative words or phrases are written in above the text: these are shown in square brackets. In places the preferred phrase or word is underlined and this is also shown. On a small number of occasions an alternative choice of word is written in the margin alongside the main text column and prefixed by *v.* for ‘versus.’ See Dorey, ‘Crude Hints,’ p. 59.
Chapter 4 The ‘Eroding’ monument: Reading Crude hints towards an history of my house at LIF

Fig. 4–1 pages from the Crude hints MS (ff. 30–31)

Fig. 4–2 Design for an extended façade for Nos. 13–15 Lincoln’s Inn Fields, by Joseph Gandy, January 1813 (Sir John Soane’s Museum)
either partly built or party ruined.” Soane went on to write,

to rescue this work from its present uncertain origin and that the public should be fully [better] informed respecting these ruins and be led to have an interest in them, I shall collect together the various conjectures which have been made respecting this building and also the data on which these speculative opinions have been raised. I shall likewise point out the improbability of some of those hypotheses and also my own opinions on the subject, hoping thereby to call the attention of others better qualified [gifted] than myself to rescue this plan from its present unmarked uncertainty &c.

(CH, 61)

In a gesture recalling the Arcadian shepherds’ contemplations on the eroding inscription, ‘Et in Arcadia Ego,’ on the anonymous tomb, Soane presented various speculations on the origin of the ruin, embodying his own funereal imagination: a Roman Heathen temple where vestal virgins were buried alive; a palace of a necromancer who was petrified; a burial site now merged into oblivion; and a dwelling of an architect who died from persecution.

The architect’s funereal imagination is also reflected in the structure of the text. Rather than written in a singular body, the text is divided into three columns: with the main body in a single column down the right hand side of the page, and its secondary and third commentary in two further columns to the left. Thus the text forms a series of columns which in theory can go on and on continuously (Fig. 4–1). This unusual form reminds us of copies of library books, which, through time, contain in the margins writings by various hands, continuously receiving amendments. And just as marginalia tends to reflect the views of different readers, in different columns of Crude hints various voices were articulated. Often, one voice argued with the other.

Instead of an enclosed entity, the ruin is imagined as being inseparable from its foundations, a ground consisting of ruins of previous times.

This building has been supposed to have been of much greater extent than appears from the remains now to be seen – & it is also presumed to have been enlarged at different times and, its decorations suggest, and [sic] in some degree formed from the ruins of others or a more magnificent and interesting

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4 Ibid.
Therefore, the ruin has become part of the ground, and the text, a history of the house seemed to intermingle with the history of the earth. Indeed, the geological and archaeological image of the house is central to the text. It is mentioned that ‘the ground has been considerably raised by the lapse of ages,’ as Soane compared it to Rome, ‘Modern Rome is at least 15 feet above the level of the Ancient City.’ (CH, 68) Underneath the present level of ground there are ‘various catacombs and crypts of which at present the remains are inconsiderable.’ (CH, 69) In this way, the imagery of the ruined house suggests the rock record, or strata, which recalls the English geologist John Whitehurst’s (1713–1788) apocalyptic vision of ‘ruin upon ruin’ and anticipates Percy Shelley’s image of ‘infinite mines.’ (Prometheus Unbound IV).

Soane’s knowledge of geology—an aspect that has been neglected by modern scholars—is shown not only in his library collection, which includes titles such as John Whitehurst’s Inquiry into the Original State and Formation of the Earth (1786), or his display of a bust of Georges Cuvier (1769–1832), the pioneering French geologist and palaeontologist in the museum, but more importantly, should be seen in parallel with their intellectual approaches. For instance, Cuvier’s position as Professor of ‘Comparative Anatomy’ mirrors Soane’s position as Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy, where he was curator of a collection dedicated to ‘comparative architecture.’ Cuvier’s theories such as functional integration, cataclysmic extinction and the idea of revolution (periodic catastrophes) may also be seen reflected in those ruined landscapes, such as Rotunda of the Bank of England as a Ruin (1798) and Bank of England (1830), that Soane commissioned from his draftsman and creative partner, Joseph Michael Gandy (1771–1843). (Fig. 4–3, 4–4) For these geologists, strata meant that the formation of the earth was influenced by catastrophes such as deluge and volcanic activities. In many places in Crude hints there are indications of this then common sentiment of catastrophism. The new excava-

5 Joseph Michael Gandy (1771–1843) was an English artist, visionary architect and architectural theorist, most noted for his imaginative paintings depicting Sir John Soane's architectural designs. For a recent detailed study on him, see Brian Lukacher and Sir John Soane's Museum, Joseph Gandy: An Architectural Visionary in Georgian England (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006).
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Fig. 4–3 Rotunda of the Bank of England as a Ruin
By Joseph M. Gandy, 1798 (Sir John Soane’s Museum)

Fig. 4–4 Bank of England
By Joseph M. Gandy, 1830 (Sir John Soane’s Museum)
tions at Pompeii and Herculaneum and the increasing frequent eruptions of Etna (five times between 1669–1812) and Vesuvius (six times during the eighteenth-century) made strong impressions on early nineteenth-century minds. The ancient monuments mentioned in Crude hints inevitably are associated with catastrophes: Noah’s Ark and deluge; Nineveh, destroyed by its enemies and flood; Sodom, destroyed by volcanic eruption; Rome and Babylon, victims of barbarian invasions, etc. Those figures of his funereal stories, such as the vestal, the magician, the Ionic order, the architect, be it artefact or living being, may all be seen as fossils entombed in different strata in the Earth of various catastrophes.

In these catastrophic imaginings, it can be seen that Soane’s personal crises are interwoven with these historical or natural catastrophes. The architect in Crude hints, who died from persecution, is Soane’s self-image. At the time of writing Crude hints, Soane was in a suspension of his Royal Academy lectures. This was in protest against the Academy’s motion to prevent lecturers publicly criticizing the work of living architects vis-à-vis Soane’s fourth lecture on 29th January 1810, in which he criticized a number of recent buildings. Among those criticised were George Dance’s Royal College of Surgeon in Lincoln’s Inn Fields and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden—completed to the design of Robert Smirke (1780–1867). The ban from the Academy, reinforced by an attempt in 1811 to have him replaced as professor on the grounds that he was not lecturing, convinced him that there was an organized persecution in the Academy against him.

Professional crises were intermingled with his domestic problems. Two years earlier, Soane had reluctantly come to terms with the fact that none of his sons—John and George—would become architects and establish an architect dynasty as he had desired. John had recently gone through a fairly disastrous period of architectural training and had on-going health problems. George, Soane’s younger son, was continuously pestering his parents for money and attempting to make a living as a novelist and playwright. The purchase of the houses in Lincoln Inn Fields, as a replacement for Soane’s previous house, Pitzhanger Manor, an inducement for his sons becoming architects, was a result of Soane’s shattered dream. The disappointment was further reinforced by his sons’ marriages—both in 1811—none of which satisfied the family. The dilapidated house therefore may also be seen as a symbol of personal catastrophe, as Soane’s disheartened inner world.

Soane’s funereal imagination of a catastrophic history of the house, mingled with the tragic experience of his ‘self,’ should not be seen as a mere fancy. Rather it may have been a

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8 Dorey, ‘Crude Hints,’ p. 55.
9 As Dorey observes that right was on Soane’s side in the lecture dispute—he expressed his criticism discreetly and there does seem to have been a conspiracy against him at the Academy, so his sense of persecution was perhaps not misplaced. Ibid., p. 56.
demonstration of the connection between architecture (art) and the geosciences based on Soane’s understanding of the movement of the Earth as ‘first principles’ or ‘original causes’ of ancient art and culture in the unitary intellectual milieu shaped by the dynamics between the Hermetism-Neoplatonism of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. This proposition is already seen in Pope’s making of his grotto into a mine in 1739, wherein he arrayed his minerals in a way following a piece of stratum, under William Borlase’s, the geologist, instruction.10 The mine, as a miniature of nature or the earth, a piece of *ars poetica*, for Pope, may be an expression of the law of nature or earth. It is in the same vein that we can compare Soane’s fascination with the image of strata to that of those geologists and romantic poets. Humphry Davy (1778–1829), one of the founding members of the Geological Society, in his popular serial lectures on geology, given repeatedly between 1805–1811 at the Royal Institution, presented strata as an expression of the geological order:

The secondary strata are monuments of the great changes the globe has undergone. They exhibit inhabitable evidences of a former order of things and of a great destruction and renovation of living beings. . . . The connection between their causes and effects is obscure but apparently within the reach of our faculties, and it is displayed in characters which can be deciphered only with difficulty, but which express sublime truths.11

Soane had been a member of the Royal Institution since 1807, where he was also to lecture in 1817 and 1820 when Humphry was the president of the institute. Very probably he had attended one of these lectures and was influenced by the idea that strata exhibiting a former order of things, which, as the English geologist, William ‘Strata’ Smith (1769–1839) put it, ‘must lead to accurate ideas of all the surfaces of the earth, if not to a complete knowledge of its internal structure, and the progress and periods of its formation.’12

10 Pope’s interest in geology and his transforming of the grotto into a mine has been discussed by previous scholars, e.g. Marjorie Hope Nicolson and G. S. Rousseau, *This Long Disease, My Life*: *Alexander Pope and the Sciences* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968). Chapter IV. However, it has not been noted that this interest is not from a mere scientific curiosity, but may be understood better in relation to his pursuit of ‘poetic’ truth of nature, as shown in Pope’s letter to Bolingbroke on Sep 3, 1740, ‘Next to patching up my Constitution, my great Business has been to patch up a Grotto (the same You have so often sate in the Sunny part of under my house,) with all the varieties of Nature’s works under ground-Spars Minerals & Marbles. I hope yet to live to philosophize with You in this Musaeum, which is now a Study for Virtuosi, & a Scene for contemplation.’ *Correspondence*, IV, pp. 260–62.


4.1.1 ‘First principles’ of the earth and mind

This idea that the internal structure of earth may indicate a general order of things is not new. A long-existing European image, the subterranean world was a central concept in the seventeenth-century Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher’s scheme of the geocosm (divine mind-earth), an idea which had shaped the eighteenth-century geosciences. The witnessing of a series of volcanic eruptions in Italy in 1637–38 sparked the German polymath’s interest in exploring the rumbling, burning world below the Earth’s surface as the origin of all creation. (Fig. 4–5) Inheriting the basic notion of an eternal fire at the earth’s centre, he developed a more complicated system to describe the subterranean world, which contained a fiery tangle of passageways that ran from the central fire to the earth’s surface, and a second independent subterranean system of canals and pools filled with water. Such a subterranean world, Kircher described as an analogue for the greater universe itself, where God is the non-dimensional centre (or punctum) of the cosmic reality, and Earth represents the absolute perfect and finite geometric structure (the sphere). By manipulating the ambiguity of the word mundus, Kircher could refer to either Earth as an isolated planetary body, or the whole cosmos. Thus the geocosm maintained the Church’s doctrine of the geocentric position of Earth and the finiteness of the universe. Through the important Hermetic principle of maintaining equilibrium between fire and water, Kircher explained the opposing principles of subterranean fire and water, the movement of which he had empirically observed and scientifically explained in *The Mundus subterraneus*. He came to conclusion that it is by these opposing forces of the subterranean fire and water that the Earth is driven and operates. (Fig. 4–6, 7)


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Fig. 4–5 Eruption of Vesuvius in 1638. From *Mundus Subterraneus* (1678 ed.)

Fig. 4–6 Kircher’s system of subterranean fires. From *Mundus Subterraneus* (1678 ed.)
The perpetual cycling of the fire and water in and around the Earth, the simultaneous

And if the first principles of the World are like this, then they must certainly have eternal operations through which they will not fail over the course of time, together with the destruction of all Nature. For this reason that endless duration and perpetuity of the natural operations and Elements comes into being, which cannot be imitated by any human art or industry, for they belong only to the Omnipotence of the divine art. Although its parts may seem to perish, nothing can perish or be lost entirely according to its whole being, so long as it remains subject to the dictates of Nature’s law. Hence that perpetual, tireless whirling of the Stars comes into being, ever proceeding by some constant and inviolable law over so many myriads of years; hence the motions of the Elements is ever invariable amid Nature’s great variety. Hence the cycling of the waters in and around the Earth is perpetual, and as the Wise Man testifies: ‘All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers came, thither they return again [Eccl. 1:7]; the Sun evaporates the Sea by its vapours, the vapours are dissolved in rain, whence they are extracted, and are soon restored.’

perishing and coming into being, for Kircher, is the ‘first principles’ of the eternal natural operations which will not fail over the course of time. The endless duration and perpetuity of the natural operations (the destruction of all nature and elements’ coming into being), for him, belong to the omnipotence of the divine art. Although its parts may seem to perish, nothing can perish or be lost entirely according to its whole being, so long as it remains subject to the dictates of Nature’s law.

An indigenous scheme that re-interprets recent scientific observations into the traditional religious view of the universe, Kircher’s geocosm counteracts the seventeenth-century mechanical account of the universe. An ideal scientific-religious framework, the geocosm appealed to the seventeenth and eighteenth-century intellectuals who were reluctant to accept sciences and arts as merely mechanical and instrumental, divorced from their religious and spiritual associations. As Earth was considered as God, the original Creator, the principles of its movement or operation, or the first principles of the world, as Kircher called them, were the most natural or original principles of any creation. For example, upon Kircher’s frame of geocosm and principles of circulation of subterranean fire and water, the Danish Catholic bishop and scientist (a pioneer in both anatomy and geology), Niels Steno (1638–1686) and the Anglo-Irish natural philosopher, Robert Boyle (1627–1691), and Robert Hooke (1635–1703) had provided scientific explanations of how the Earth operated and produced (e.g. fossils, minerals, gems) by a process of simultaneous liquidation and coagulation. Kircher also likened the universe to a magnificent building, borrowing both the architectural conceit and the terms he used from the ancient Roman writer Vitruvius, whose *Ten Books on Architecture* (written ca. 25 B.C) he read with care as a philosopher, aesthetician, and archaeologist:

Thus you see that this wonderful work of the divine wisdom has been established so that it lacks neither ordering, nor design, nor management, in which there is nothing that is superior, harmonious, magnificent, and beyond all admiration: for whether you observe the ornaments of its types of columns, or the splendour of its ceiling coffers, or the solidity of its foundations, you will necessarily be carried away by well-deserved rapture.\(^{17}\)

The influence of these Kircher’s first principles is observed in a genre of eighteenth-century romantic antiquarian pursuits of the origin of art and culture, such as Pierre François Hugues d’Hancarville, or the self-styled ‘Baron d’ Hancarville’s (1719–1805) *Recherches sur* ...


As David Watkin in his canonical study, *John Soane: Enlightenment Thought and the Royal Academy Lectures* (1996) points out, d’Hancarville was important for introducing England to the revolution in the study of antique art. The ideas propagated by him circulated among a remarkable group of scholars and antiquarians which included Sir William Hamilton, Payne Knight, James Christie, and the great collector Charles Townley, in whose London house d’Hancarville wrote his *Recherches sur l'origine*. Soane was in tune with this antiquarian spirit of enquiry. During the years of preparation for the Royal Academy lectures, Soane accumulated a large number of notes from these antiquarian authors comprised of travellers, archaeologists, and architects. Apart from d’Hancarville’s *Recherches sur l'origine*, a most frequent reference in his manuscript notes, there were also notes from Kircher, Christie, Court de Gébelin, Viel de Saint-Maux, Fischer von Erlach, and Cornelis de Bruyn and many travellers, archaeologists, and architects. It is from this antiquarian study that Soane paid high attention to ‘first principles.’ He stated in his first Royal Academy lecture:

> The architect, by close study and unwearied attention, should be learned in history, well informed of the primitive destination and origin of things, and on all occasions be able to trace every invention up to First principles and Original Causes.

Although the geological connotation of ‘first principles’ were not clearly articulated in these antiquarian works including Soane himself, what we know are suggestive. A key example is the geological explanation of the origin of pyramid, the oldest monument on the earth. As...
Samuel Simon Witte (1738–1802), a German professor of natural law held, the pyramid was the remains of a volcanic eruption, or petrification of the subterranean fire. This theory clearly manifested its understanding of the ‘first principles’ as Kircher and geologists had put forward. The tenacity of this idea of an ancient monument originating from volcanic eruption and petrification could be seen in many accounts written by late eighteenth-century travellers and mythographers. For example, in Views in Egypt from the Original drawings in the Possession of Sir Robert Ainslie (1801), which was in Soane’s library, Luigi Mayer points out that Witte was not alone in his beliefs: James Byrrant (the mythographer) imagined that the three largest pyramids were not artificial structures of stone and mortar, but solid rock cut into a pyramidal shape. James Bruce (1730–1794), the explorer supported this opinion when he suggested that the lower course of the pyramids was an actual stratum of rock. Such imagery of the oldest monument as petrification of a living fire certainly strikes a resemblance to the petrification narrated in Crude hints: the magician turned into marble, and Lot’s wife becoming a pillar of salt. In many occasions, And in fact, as Watkin observes, the pyramid or obelisk, the most ancient monument in the world is central to Soane’s belief in ‘First principles or Original causes’:

The Ancients, not regarding the origin, misapplied the Pyramid in some of their works, and set a bad example to the moderns, who, without considering whether a practice was sanctioned by first Principles, have merely availed themselves of Ancient errors.

From these circumstances the moderns, forgetting the origin of obelisks, have frequently placed them indiscriminately as decorations to buildings of various descriptions, and for other purposes. These errors show the propriety and necessity of our attending to the observation of Vitruvius, namely that the architect, by close study and unwearied attention, should be learned in history, well informed of the primitive destination and origin of things, and on all occasions be able to trace every invention up to first principles and original causes.

27 Soane owns a copy of Luigi Mayer (ca. 1755–1803), Views in Egypt, Palestine, and other parts of the Ottoman Empire (London: printed by Thomas Bensley, for R. Bowyer, 1804). This was a combination of three closely related work by Mayer, in which Views in Egypt was one. The other two were Views in Palestine ...; and Views in the Ottoman Empire, chiefly in Caramania. See Soane library online catalogue (accessed on 10–06–2011)
29 Lecture I, RAL, pp. 70, 73.
30 Lecture IV, RAL, p. 106.
In Soane’s lectures and his extensive notes, it was frequently mentioned that the pyramids or obelisks, as emblems of solar rays, referred to the worship of the sun.\(^{31}\)

> It is not improbable that the obelisks of Egypt suggested the idea of spires; whatever partakes so distinctly of the pyramidal form may be reasonably supposed to refer to the worship of the sun.\(^{32}\)

The origin of obelisks was in Egypt; . . . Obelisks entered into the religious opinions of the Egyptians, and probably were first used in honour of the worship of the sun, to whom they were consecrated.\(^{33}\)

For eighteenth-century students of religions, the Egyptian worship of the sun, interlocked with the cult of Osiris, was considered as the oldest religion and, in particular, a key subject that interested erudite masons, who intended to reinvent Freemasonry as a revival of the Egyptian religion.\(^{34}\) Soane was a diligent student of the Egyptian religion. In works such as *Herodotus*,\(^{35}\) which Soane made references to in his lectures, it was noted that Egyptians believed that the sun traversed the underworld daily, through which he passed before being born again on the eastern horizon. For many eighteenth-century minds receptive to Hermetism-Neoplatonism, this Osiris-sun of generative power seemed to be identified with the core of the Earth with the subterranean fire buried underneath. For example, the archaeologist (member of Society of Dilettante) and theorist, Richard Payne Knight (1750–1824), whom Soane had read, related that the obelisk was a ‘pillar of fire’ which ‘represented the generative power of the [Eros], the Osiris, Mithras, or Bacchus, whose centre is the sun, incarnate with man.’\(^{36}\) A passage from Philostratus the Elder describing the battle between

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\(^{31}\) For the very first of his lecture illustrations, ‘The Pyramids and Mausoleum at Lake Moeris,’ as described by Herodotus, Soane used an engraving by Fischer von Erlach as a model. SM Archives MBiii/10/1, fol.14. *ETL*, p. 291. The view that the obelisk as emblems of solar rays was seen in Plutarch, and was re-accounted by James Cowles Prichard (1786–1848), *An analysis of the Egyptian mythology: to which is subjoined, a critical examination of the remains of Egyptian chronology*. By J.C. Prichard, M.D (London: printed for John and Arthur Arch, 1819). Soane owned a copy of Prichard’s *Analysis*. See Soane library online catalogue. (accessed on 10–06–2011)

\(^{32}\) Lecture VI, *RAL*, p. 141.

\(^{33}\) Lecture IV, *RAL*, p. 105.

\(^{34}\) On late eighteenth-century Freemasonry’s self-perception as being a revival of the Egyptian religion, see James Stevens Curl, *The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry: An Introductory Study* (London, 1991). ‘Freemasons sought a return to simple, primitive, elemental truths, and a reconstruction of a noble, unfalse, altruistic progress from those truths along the civilized paths of architectural history in which the language of the Orders, the Temple of Solomon, and Reason would play their part. Freemasons desired to rebuild a moral edifice, no less, as an exemplar of what was noble and splendid and true in the first ages of the world.’ p. 118.


\(^{36}\) Knight, Richard Payne (1750–1824) *An account of the remains of the worship of Priapus*, ...
the volcano god and the river god by the river bank of Scamander, famous among artists of Soane’s time, also refers to subterranean fire as the sunbeam: ‘flames of the fire are not ruddy nor yet of the usual appearance, but they shine like gold and sunbeams.’

Crude hints used this allusion: ‘It is said that the Iliad is best relished on the banks of Scamander,’ (CH, 64) identifying the volcanic lava with the Homeric creative imagination. In his lectures, Soane often referred to the ancients’ imagination as the ‘fire of invention.’ Furthermore, in Soane’s design of the route through the house-museum, the generative power of the subterranean sun was also indicated in the itinerary which started from the sarcophagus—the sepulchre of the Egyptian sun-king in the basement to the statue of Apollo Belvedere, the sun god in the dome. In this way, we may assume that for Soane, the first principles or ‘original causes’ of ancient architecture (e.g. monument) may have been identified with that of the Earth, or geocosm, namely the perpetual movement of the subterranean fire and water, which simultaneously destroyed and created, petrified and animated. With this assumption, Soane’s characteristic style embodying the Arcadian theme, that is, the juxtaposition of the picturesque landscape interior and the sepulchral theme, both of which are reflected in Crude hints, may be understood at a deeper level.

Below I will discuss how Soane’s picturesque idea is linked to the movement of earth which is envisioned in analogous to the operation of the mind. In relation to the hermetic concept of cosmos as sepulchre in which nothing perishes but in perpetual transformation, I will also show Soane’s fascination with furniture of death was connected with his pursuit of the regeneration of the ancient spirit.

4.1.2 The Picturesque: The operation of the earth and mind

In preparation for his Royal Academy lectures, Soane copied out a passage from Abbé Charles-François de Lubersac (1730–1804)’s Discours sur les monumens (1775),

The obelisk was consecrated to the sun whose dominion extends over all the elements: the ground of the colour of this stone is red... an emblem of fire, the

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38 E.g. RAL, Lecture III, p. 68.
39 Soane translated in full Lubersac’s account of the origin and use of the obelisk in 1809. SM Archives 1/86, fols. [2–3]. The quoted passage is in Abbé Charles- François de Lubersac, Discours sur les monumens publics de tous les âges et de tous les peuples connus, suivi d’une description de monument projeté à la gloire de Louis XVI & de la France. Terminé par quelques observations sur les principaux monumens modernes de la ville de Paris, & plusieurs projets de décoration & d’utilité publique pour cette capitale (Paris 1775), p. 12. See ETL, p. 166.
principles of life and of the activity of nature. The ground is mixed with crystalline particles, whose transparency is the symbol of the transparency of the air; it is scattered with blue and black spots, the first designate water, and the others by their darkness, the gross elements of the earth. It is also strewed with small particles of gold… by some (supposed or) called the emblem of the sun.

The balance of elements—water and fire—as represented by the mixed minerals on the ground reminds us of Pope’s grotto changed into a mine, or a museum, as the poet called it, wherein the poet tried to array the minerals in a random, but geologically correct, way in order to imitate Nature. This ‘picturesque’ manner, or ‘neo-classical’ style of display, was characteristic of many private museums or collections in eighteenth-century Britain, Soane’s house-museum being an exemplar. 40 (Fig. 4–8) As A. Michaelis described it in 1882, ‘There is an immeasurable chaos of worthless fragments, of all times, from all countries, of all kinds of art, originals and copies mixed together.’ 41 This ‘immeasurable chaos’ of his collection also resonates with the so-called ‘picturesque interior’ 42 of the museum, Soane’s signature style. With a multiplicity of viewpoints, chiaroscuro, unexpected vistas, irregular outlines, tints and variety, and its abstract qualities (variety, intricacy, and surprise), Soane’s interior is reminiscent of the eighteenth-century landscape garden. 43

This picturesque idea of the museum—both its manner of display and spatial organization—understandably, is mirrored in the unusual structure of Crude hints. For Soane, that the picturesque is associated with a random blend of fragments is also indicated in his notes in preparation for his Royal Academy lectures. Commenting on Richard Payne Knight’s idea of the picturesque in An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste (1805), Soane noted, ‘Tints (apply this to architecture and change tints for parts) happily broken and …harmoniously blended into each other, are in themselves grateful to the eye.’ 44 The geological image of Crude hints, or its association with Earth, as we discussed, therefore further allows us to see that the picturesque landscape idea of the architect’s museum may be

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43 ETL, p. 414.
44 SM Archives 1/165, fol. [5], ETL, p. 241. Soane acquired his copy of An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste (London 1805) in June 1805, the year of its publication, and read it in preparation for his first course of lectures. The first reference to the book in his notes is in 1806.
Fig. 4–8 The ‘Picturesque’ arrangement of the Dome (Sir John Soane’s Museum)
underpinned by the idea of imitating the first principles of the movement of Nature, i.e. the 
free flow of subterranean forces that simultaneously create and destroy. Whilst the random 
display of the artefacts represents the way fossils are found in the strata, a result of the 
earth’s volcanic activities, the picturesque spatial organisation of the house-museum may 
indicate the movement of the creative force in the mind, imagination.

Kircher’s geocosm is also the divine mind. The fluid menstruum in the Earth, held by 
Kircher as one original cause of Earth’s creation\(^45\), was linked to the Enlightenment 
philosophers’ idea of imagination as an autonomous creating agency. For example, the 
French physician Antoine Le Camus (1603–1687), through his anatomical research, came to 
hold that the soul is ‘a simple modification of matter’ and a sensible fluidity consisting of 
sensory particles.\(^46\) For many contemporary intellectuals, such as Niels Steno and Robert 
Boyle, the parallel between the fluid sensory stream in the subcutaneous realm and the fluid 
subterranean menstruum in the Earth was clearly at work.\(^47\) Soane owned Robert Boyle’s 
six-volume collection of works.\(^48\)

The geocosm frame connects with the discourse of sensationalism or associationism in 
eighteenth-century architectural theory, which emphasized the role of association in 
arboriculture. For example, the Royal Academy Professor Reynolds wrote,

> Architecture certainly possesses many principles in common with Poetry and Painting. Among those which may be reckoned as the first, is, that of affecting the imagination by means of association of ideas. Thus, for instance, as we have naturally a veneration for antiquity, whatever building brings to our remembrance ancient customs and manners ... is sure to give this delight.\(^49\)

In common with sensationalists, for Soane, the discourse of architectural principles is to an 
extent, situated in psychology, the operation of the mind.\(^50\) This is not a new idea, but was 
rooted in the classical art of memory, or architectural mnemonics. Basically, memory is a

\(^{45}\) Kircher called the menstruum a ‘lapidifying juice’ (*succus lapidescens*), diffused throughout the 
geocosm, that caused stony matter to grow in a multitude of forms. He discussed this in the *Mundus* 
(1665 ed.) vol. 2, pp. 6–7. Quoted in Nummedal, ‘Kircher’s Subterranean World and the Dignity of 
The Geocosm,’ p. 41.

\(^{46}\) Antoine Le Camus, *Medecine de l’espiritt* (Paris 1753). For a full account on this matter, see Barbara 

\(^{47}\) Toshihiro Yamada, ‘Hooke–Steno relations reconsidered: Reassessing the roles of Ole Borch and 

\(^{48}\) *The Works of the honourable Robert Boyle. In six volumes. To which is prefixed the life of the 
2011)

vol. II, p. 137 (AL 37H). Soane annotated the *Discourse*, as noted in *ETL*, p. 42.

\(^{50}\) Soane referred to the ‘operation of the mind’ on no less than 161 occasions in the course of his 
lectures at the Royal Academy. *RAL*, p. 3.
faculty that readily responds to training and can be structured, expanded, and enriched. In the late Republic and early Empire, a decorated house was an obvious, easily reconstructable model for the architectural mnemonic. The methods of the architectural mnemonic is to associate specific ideas with unique locations within an imaginary structure, and then linked those ideas through a memory walk from place to place.\(^{51}\) The Roman art of memory was active during the eighteenth-century classical revival. Soane, for example, through his study of the *De Oratore* by Cicero and the *Institutiones oratoriae* by his disciple, Quintilian (c. AD 40–95), knew well of this tradition.\(^{52}\) His house, with its apparent reference to a Roman memory house, illustrates this tradition.\(^{53}\)

In line with the tradition that the Roman house was an extension of the self, during the era from the Medieval and through the Renaissance, a building (as a vertical and enclosed entity) became a palpable metaphor for thought and the workings of the memory. The building was thus valued as an active state of knowing as well as a construction of histories. Examples of such models include Hugh of St. Victor’s (1096–1141) Ark of Noah, the Vitruvian theatre in the Renaissance (e.g. the Memory theatre of the villa of Pompoio Catto). These models largely followed an Aristotelian model of the mind. That is, reason precedes verbalized ideas, and imagination operates as a visual expression or sensation with memory sitting between reason and imagination.\(^{54}\) Soane’s being in line with this tradition is demonstrated not only in his including an illustration of Noah’s Ark in his lectures,\(^{55}\) his descriptions of architectural ornaments such as staircases and galleries as exercises for

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\(^{52}\) Cicero, *De Oratore*; Quintilian, *Institutes of Eloquence: or, the Art of Speaking in the Public, in every character and capacity*, 2 vols, London 1805, transl. by William Guthrie (GL 23A). Soane annotated these volumes, probably at the time of writing his lectures. He also made separate notes on Quintilian: See SM AL Soane Case 161/3, Portfolio 2 (watermark dated 1805), and Archives 1/310, 3 January 1819, as noted in *ETL*, pp. 185–6.

\(^{53}\) The route in the house may resemble what Cicero and Quintilian describe of the art of memory. ‘The basic methods are to form mentally a clear series of places, then order the ideas, words, or images that you wish to remember, placing the first thing in the vestibule, the second in the atrium, then move around the impluvium, into side rooms, and even on to statues or paintings. Once you have put everything in its place, whenever you wish to recall something, start again at the entrance and move through the house.’ Cicero, *De oratore* 2. 86, pp. 351–4, trans. E. W. Sutton, pp. 465–7. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 11. 2, pp. 17–22, trans. H.E. Bulter, IV, Cambridge, Mass. 1921, pp. 221–5. Quoted in Bergmann, ‘The Roman House as Memory Theater: The House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii,’ p. 225.


\(^{55}\) Comparative plans and elevations of Noah’s Ark, and a Man-of-War [HMS Commerce]. Drawn by Henry Parke, SM Drawer 23, set 3, no.10. *ETL*, p. 400. PL, 4.
architects’ imagination, but also, as shown in *Crude hints*, his metaphysical associations of these architectural components as defined in a conventional Aristotelian system of the mind. Availing of the Renaissance Hermetism-Neoplatonism tradition from the comprehensible world of the Vitruvian architect to the occult and mystical world of the followers of Hermes Trismegistus to the art of memory, eighteenth-century Freemasonry incorporated the initiatory journey with a memory walk within buildings. For example, Anthony Vidler reveals how a masonic initiatory route consists of a sequence of chambers which impress the mind differently. The earliest modern museum, built by Alexandre Lenoir (1761–1839), a Freemason, after the French Revolution, is notably organized with its basic unit as a century. The visitor would proceed from room to room as moving from century to century. Along this seamless path by which fragments were ordered, it is hoped that, as Wolfgang Ernst argues, the visitor would develop a historicist consciousness in the era of rapid, revolutionary socio-political change.

Against this background, Soane’s emphasis on the house-museum as a ruin, and its relation with association, an operation of the imagination, becomes more interesting. More than once in his lectures, he states that ‘it is from the association of ideas they [the ruin] excite in the mind that we feel interested.’ And notably, instead of an uplifting force towards reason or God, this association orients towards memory, the faculty beneath the ground. It is imagination carried away ‘through different ages and successive revolutions in taste, arts and sciences,’ and would ‘give him great pain.’ Or as he wrote elsewhere, the ‘play on the association of ideas … lead our imaginations to fancy that we are conversing with the great heroes, legislators, historians, poets, and artists of antiquity.’ His ideas of association are not what the mechanist David Hartley understood of—a rational logic, represented by a clear chronological sequence as seen in Lenoir’s museum, but is intuitive and arbitrary. It is what Locke envisioned as ‘another connexion of ideas owing wholly to chance or custom,’ which takes place in a mental underworld beneath that of the conscious

57 For example, Soane emphasized the missing staircase, which he compared to Piranesi’s ‘Carcerian dark staircases.’ *CH*, p. 63. Also see section 1 ‘Ruin.’
59 Ernst, ‘Frames at Work: Museological Imagination and Historical Discourse in Neoclassical Britain,’ p. 481.
60 Lecture VIII, *RAL*, p. 224.
Soane’s theory was derived from Scottish psychology represented by Lord Kames and Archibald Alison. The psychology of association, as Alison called it, is ‘the constant connection between the sign and the thing signified.’

Relating to the frame of the geocosm, where the centre of the universe is relocated in the subterranean world, and the operation of the Earth/Mind is likened to subterranean fire and water, Soane’s, and many of his contemporaries,’ fascination with ruins and the volcanic force may be better understood. Under the geocosm frame, the associations of the unconscious, the imagination that had been attracting the creative minds obtained an image of subterranean fire and water, a fluid medium whose movement was free from any restraints and of the original creative and destructive force. Examples could be seen in Ledoux’s aerial view of a canon manufactory for the presumably utopian city of Chaux (1804), Joseph M. Gandy’s architectural fantasies (e.g. Pandemonium, 1805), and more often in the romantic poets, such as Lord Byron, ‘poetry is the lava of the imagination whose eruption prevents an earthquake.’ It is within this intellectual milieu that we may understand Crude hints, a mirror of Soane’s architectural system which is interconnected with psychology, physiology and geology. With its structure of commentaries on commentaries, Crude hints is like a hyper-text, mapping out the movement of the imagination which extends freely and forcefully. The randomness and heterogeneity of the textual structure, and the mixing of different voices, echoing the constitution of the subterranean menstruum, may symbolize the very activity of the unconsciousness free from rational reasoning.

4.1.3 The Sepulchral: The receptacle of the spirit of the dead

Soane’s imagery of the sepulchral is a theme dominating both his work and his collections, and is represented in Crude hints. The geological image (catastrophism) described in Crude hints allows us to see that the house, as Earth, is a representation of such a Hermetic-Neoplatonic universe and a receptacle of the spirit of the dead.

In ancient Greece, there was this concept of the body (soma) as a tomb (sema), a prison...
of the soul. Christianity adopted this idea, envisaging death as the moment when the soul is released from the body (sepulchre) and transcends to heaven. The Hermetic-Neoplatonic doctrines, however, construe a different cosmology. As mentioned in Chapter I, the Hermetic-Neoplatonic universe is the ‘One.’ It is an infinite, immobile, and eternal being. Within its infinite space, all the beings and substances are immutably set and endlessly transform in an eternal process which we may call cosmic metabolism. As Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) claims, in this infinite universe, death is impossible. Nothing is in fact diminished in its substance, but all things, wandering through infinite space, undergo changes of aspect. Death, as well as life, was but a stage in this process, a quality inherent to a lesser or greater degree in every part of nature. Such a universe, Bruno envisages, is the ‘hollow sepulchre’ or ‘cupola of the heavens’ beyond which nothing can be dispersed. Kircher’s geocosm is an elaboration of Bruno’s vision. The geocosm emphasizes the earth as an analogue of the universe, whose centre is the core of the earth, the eternal subterranean fire, from which seeds emanate. This Hermetic-Neoplatonic cosmology differed drastically from conventional Christian account of universe and afterlife and had considerable impact on Renaissance humanist view of the afterlife of the soul (imagination) from the seventeenth century and lingered on till the nineteenth century.

Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges’s (1830–1889) *The Ancient City* (1874) provided a substantial account of this belief. Quoting from Virgil, Ovid and Pliny the Younger, de Coulange related how for the ancients, souls did not go into a foreign world to pass their second existence. Rather with funeral ceremonies, they became fixed and enclosed in their tombs, and could also be evoked from the sepulchre. A tomb, or a cinerary urn, a vase which contained the remains of the dead, thus is a miniature of the Hermetic-Neoplatonic universe, whilst the spirit of the dead in a tomb is like the subterranean fire at its core. Or, like sensory particles, petrified as fossils contained in the earth, the spirit of the dead can be re-animated or evoked under certain formula.

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For eighteenth-century artists’ minds, the reanimation of the dead was associated with mythical emanation. The miraculous light of ‘a thousand pointed rays’ from the alabaster lamp in Alexander Pope’s grotto, as I have discussed, is a metaphor of the light of the antiquity, or the imagination (soul) of the dead reanimated. Far from being a single case, Pope’s mythical vision was echoed by many followers. James Christie in his *A Disquisition upon Etruscan Vases* (1806) speculated how lamp-light at Eleusis functioned as visions of regeneration.72 Joseph Gandy, Soane’s genius draftsman, in *The Tomb of Merlin* (1815) (Fig. 4–9) created a phantasmagorical vision in which the tomb became an inter-lit monument, a source of emanation of the spirit of the dead.73 Similar effect recurred in Gandy’s *View of the Dome* of the Soane Museum, c. 1825 (Fig. 4–10), as one would speculate that the mythical light shooting up to the dome from below must have come from the ‘Belzoni Sarcophagus’, the tomb of the Egyptian pharaoh, Seti I, which Soane newly acquired.

In *Crude hints*, the house itself is imagined as such a sepulchre, in which the vestal priestess, the architect, and the chained ghost are all buried. In reality, the house-museum is also designed and built as a sepulchre. The idea of the house as a sepulchre is demonstrated in the first design drawings, dated 13 June 1808, labelled on the upper division, ‘Museum’ and on the lower division, ‘Crypt.’74 This idea may well have been derived from a Roman monumental villa of the Augustan Age. According to the Roman religion, the Romans buried their dead in the house. A Roman house thus signalled piety to divine protectors and social and genealogical status to the world outside.75 This image of Soane’s house as a sepulchre may be further evidenced by both the numerous furniture of death—cenotaphs, cinerary urns, and even a fake tomb that filled in the museum, and by the funereal decorations on its façade. For example, the carved blocks flanking the central section of the rear façade are based on the lids of antique cinerary urns of which there are numerous examples in the Soane collection.76 The most revealing case to illustrate Soane’s house as a sepulchre where

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74 Millenson, *Sir John Soane’s Museum*, p. x.

75 For the Roman house as a burial site of the dead and the tradition of monumental villa, see John Bodel. ‘Monumental Villas and Villa Monuments’ *JRA* 10 (1997), pp. 5–35. For the Roman house as a gallery training memory, see Bettina Bergmann, ‘House of the Tragic Poet.’ Soane’s knowledge of this monumental villa tradition (as a symbol of family continuity) was already shown in his Pitzhanger Manor, modelled on the Albani villa, an exemplar of a Baroque revival of the Roman monumental villa (Augustan villa, L II, 43), which he had visited on his Grand tour. David Watkin, ‘Sir John Soane’s Grand Tour: its impact on his architecture and his collections,’ in C.Hornsby ed. *The Impact of Italy: The Grand Tour and Beyond* (London: British School at Rome, 2000) p. 116.

76 Dorey, in *Crude hints,* p. 54.
Chapter 4 The ‘Eroding’ monument: Reading *Crude hints towards an history of my house at LIF*

Fig. 4–9 *The Tomb of Merlin*, by Joseph. M. Gandy, 1815 (RIBA, London)

Fig. 4–10 *View of the Dome*, drawing, 1813, by Joseph M. Gandy (Sir John Soane’s Museum)
the spirit of the dead can be reanimated is Soane’s famous lamp-exhibitions for the celebration of the Egyptian sarcophagus. During the nocturnal event, over one hundred lamps, chandeliers, and candelabra were hired to illuminate the ground floor and the basement of his house, transforming the house itself into a ‘flaming mine’ if not a volcano. The sarcophagus of Seti I, containing lamps shining out through the translucent stone, recalling the mysterious light radiating from the sepulchre, forming a climax of many re-performances of the Eleusinian visions by the Arcadian artists in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain.

Above we have discussed various aspects of the geological ‘first principles’ that are at work in Soane’s house-museum: the movement of the earth being a picturesque arrangement representing the process of imagination and the earth/house as the receptacle of the spirit of the dead. What needs to be emphasized is that Soane’s interest in ‘first principles’ was not only from a geological or archaeological perspective; but rather, in accord with romantic antiquarianism, as represented by d’Hancarville, Soane considered first principles as a platonic ideal, the main path of regeneration of architecture and art.

As Daniel M. Abramson discusses, by the 1830s British architecture had slipped into a widely acknowledged malaise brought on by the effects of commercialization, which included professional disrepute, unsatisfactory patronage, unsympathetic criticism, mediocre design and failed urbanism. The view of a process of architecture’s extinction—‘its origin—progress—meridian splendour & decline’ was repeatedly emphasized in Crude hints. Soane, more than any other of his peers, sensed the decadence of the contemporary architectural culture of London. In the increasing currents of secularization and commercialization, architectural language (e.g. ornaments) was used, regardless of the ‘character’ (e.g. meanings, functions) of buildings, as merely arbitrary signs. Soane’s criticism of contemporary architects, the central issue of the ‘lecture dispute,’ precisely addressed the lack of appropriate character of some recent buildings. Referring to George Dance’s Royal College of Surgeons in Lincoln’s Inn Fields and Robert Smirke’s Royal

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77 The event was first held in March 1825 and spread over three evenings. James Christie who visited the exhibition held that the exhibition was identical with that of the Eleusinian mysteries. See SM Archives Private Correspondence I. C. 8.1. ETL, p. 276. For Christie’s association with Etruscan vases and Eleusinian lamps, see J Christie. A Disquisition upon Etruscan Vases, 1806. Lukacher, ‘Phantasmagoria and Emanations: Lighting Effects in the Architectural Fantasies of Joseph Michael Gandy.’ Considered the lamp-exhibition as an expression of Soane’s obsession with the ‘lumière mysterieuse’ advocated by Le Camus de Mezières in Le génie de l’architecture. The relation between the ‘lumière mysterieuse’ and Eleusinian visions of regeneration should be an interesting topic for future research.

Opera House in Covent Garden, Soane commented that they were ‘combination(s) of meanness and pretension’ and of ‘utter want of appropriate character.’\(^{79}\) In common with the great architectural scholar and thinker, Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy (1775–1849), who was one of the most important determining factors in Soane’s interpretation of the character and meaning of architecture, Soane considered the crisis of architecture as a language problem.\(^{80}\) As he noted from Quatremère’s essay on ‘Caractère,’\(^{81}\) ‘the character of architecture and the language of architecture were related’ as a sign; and decoration was ‘a language of which the signs and expressions should be endowed with a precise signification capable of conveying ideas.’\(^{82}\) Following Quatremère, Soane considered that the crisis of architecture resulted in the moderns’ deviation from ancient or first principles and it could be solved only by a return to origins, to the ‘ancient principles of architecture.’ In his first lecture, Soane stated that ‘the main object of these lectures … is to trace architecture from its most early periods,’ and

> By referring to first principles and causes, the uncertainties of genius will be fixed, and the artist enabled to feel the beauty and appreciate the value of ancient works, and thereby seize the spirit that directed the minds of those who produced them. We must be intimately acquainted with not only what the ancients have done, but endeavour to learn (from their works) what they would have done.\(^{83}\)

In this way, we may assume that the associations of *Crude hints* with the geological, archaeoological and psychological imagery of the geocosm, deserve a close examination, because they may be viewed as the architect’s project for the regeneration of architecture within a framework of Hermetic-Neoplatonic ‘first principles.’

As Soane was trained in the Renaissance academy tradition, the projects of architecture he dreamed were megalomaniac public buildings in the French Grand Prix manner, or as his friend James Elmes put it, ‘a public spirited language,’\(^{84}\) which could express public spirit and mould civic virtues. In his lectures, he repeatedly called forth the government and society to give support to the renewal of antique-inspired sepulchral works on a public, monumental style, to build more monuments, bridges, and public cemeteries. In a typical

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79 Dorey, ‘*Crude hints*,’ p. 55.
80 For a detailed account of Soane’s relationship with Quatremère de Quincy, see ETL, pp. 171–6.
84 ‘Excellent!—Mr Soane—excellent! And, although by a recent law of the Academy, the students are precluded from expressing their approbation of such public spirited language, we thank you in the name of our art.’ James Elmes, *Annals of the Fine Arts*, vol. IV, 1820, p. 111. Quoted in ETL, p. 388.
Virgilian Arcadian spirit, for example, he suggested that the burial fields of the ancients, rich with tombs and mausolea ‘in honour of the dead [which] inspire the soul,’ both recall and ‘prepare the mind for those grand effects produced by the steeples, towers, spires, and domes of great cities, when viewed at a distance.’ However, Soane’s vision remained a dream. In the unprecedented wave of commercialization and the control of Parliament, George IV’s Britain witnessed the construction of very few national public buildings, but instead saw the destruction of many historic buildings in London, something which deeply disturbed Soane.

As an architect who held the belief that architecture should express character, the house-museum, which simultaneously represented his own ‘self’ (as a private house), and the nation’s character (the house was intended as an educational instrument and a public museum donated to the nation) would have represented his concerns with both his personhood or subjectivity, architectural education and nationhood (e.g. being of Britain, the past and the future). Soane’s visions of the house-museum as a ruin as well as an archaeological site, the fabulous imagination of petrification, and the house-museum as a sepulchral monument, may all reveal at a deeper level the architect’s inner world and his reflections on social phenomena.

Below, in the first section, ‘Ruin,’ I analyse the imagery of the house—‘ruin upon ruin’ as an image of architecture, an illustration of the classical sign system, dissolved into the geological landscape, the new sign system of romanticism. I also read the mythographic imagery of the ruin, suggesting this shift of sign system as perceived and associated with the first stage of initiation rites—ritualistic dismembering.

In relation to the section, ‘Grand Tour,’ I discuss in the second section the imagery of the house as an archaeological site. I suggest that the text may be seen as an illustration of the journey of the imagination through the underworld, wherein ritual re-performance is mingled with recognition of the root of the subject (prehistoric psyches). On the social level, Soane’s antiquarianism—collecting and display in the museum is associated with his educational and cultural scheme of architectural renewal and enriching the nation’s memory.

Focusing on the images of ‘fossil and magician,’ in the third section, I suggest that Soane’s idea of seeing and using petrification as decoration envisions a new sign—‘auto-monument’ which dissolves the boundaries between art and nature, signifier and signified. Linked with writing as mummification, this auto-monument also shows a death drive in Soane transformed or harnessed into the dream of a deathless existence.

In the last section, I demonstrate how in the context of post-French revolution, 

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85 Lecture VI, RAL, p. 142.
following the tradition of ‘Et in Arcadia Ego,’ the house is contrived as a place for public worship, to cultivate sympathetic emotions as communal bonds of British citizens. In relation to Soane’s alert to architecture’s mortality—the dream of ‘filii filiorum’ is radically broken, I also discuss how Soane’s collecting and museumology is an impulse to reconstruct an imagined utopia, i.e. Arcadia.

In this way, it may not only be revealed the enigmatic architect’s picturesque style and his obsession with the theme of the sepulchral in the broader context of seeking architecture’s regeneration, but also, we will better understand how the Arcadian funereal imagination, as a vehicle, mediates the eighteenth-century British elite’s subjectivity and their making of British identity.

4.2 The Ruin

4.2.1 The new sign system: the geological landscape

The geological landscape imagery of *Crude hints*, a dilapidated monument written in words, is indicative of Soane’s vision of an anti-classical architectural language system.

Associated with the tradition of the art of memory, the analogue between writing and architecture can be traced back to the Roman republic. According to the account in the anonymous *Ad Herennium* (circa 86–82 B.C.), backgrounds or ‘places’ are like wax tablets, and the images that are ‘placed’ on or within them are like writing. From Aristotle onwards, memory treatises concur that corporeal images are necessary for an idea or experience to be fixed securely in the mind and readily available for recollection. In *De visione Dei*, the German philosopher Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) asserts: ‘The human intellect, if it is to find expression in action, require[s] images [*phantasmata*], and images cannot be had without the senses, and senses subsist not without a body.’ This tradition has influences on the sensationalist view held by some architects and theoreticians from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, who challenged conventional classicism which reduced architecture to mechanical formulae. Instead, they held that architecture was as visual as poetry and


87 *Ad Herennium* was compiled by an unknown teacher of rhetoric in Rome in about 86–82 B.C. Drawing on Greek sources of memory teaching, probably in Greek treatises on rhetoric all of which are lost, it is the main and the only complete source for the classical art of memory both in the Greek and in the Latin world. It was the most popular book on rhetoric during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. It was commonly used, along with Cicero’s *De Inventione*, to teach rhetoric. See Yates, *The Art of Memory*, pp. 18–21.

painting, offering provision for thought and supplying memorable figures of expression. Quatremère de Quincy, for example, from a linguistic perspective, considered architecture as a visual, emblematic sign over the alphabetic sign.⁸⁹ For him, architecture was a form of hieroglyphic writing.

By means of allegory, the art of architecture is made historian and narrator: it explains to us the general and particular subject of which it treats, and it informs us of the moral aim as well as of the physical use of the building. Allegorical decoration takes the place of inscriptions; it says more, it speaks better, than all those legends that weigh down pediments and walls.⁹⁰

It is in this tradition that Soane’s idea of architecture may be grasped. From his idea of ‘Poetry architecture’ to ‘speaking marble’ and monumental architecture as ‘histories open to the world,’ to his criticism that architecture does not express its character and architecture being mechanical, Soane, following his precursors in that French academy tradition, held strongly to the view that architecture was an art as opposed to the more mechanical classical doctrines. For Soane, architecture was a science of making impressions on the mind,⁹¹ a kind of inner writing, the process of which was identical with that of imagination as commonly understood at the time.

Presenting the text, a monument written in words, as a ruin, Soane indicated his desire to envision an alternative, or ‘original’ architectural language. The search for the origin of the house interconnects with a key question of language—What and how do these signs signify?

Unlike the romantic and mythographic antiquarianism represented by d’Hancarville, the emerging eighteenth-century antiquarians, who were to become future modern archaeologists and historians, emphasized empiricism and historicism and sought to reconstruct history or historic objects as wholes and certainties. Writing on the ‘Antiquaries and Connoisseurs’ in the opening sentence of *Crude hints*, Soane would have in mind those

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⁸⁹ For a detailed discussion on this subject, See Anthony Vidler, ‘From the hut to the temple: Quatremère de Quincy, a freemason, and the idea of type,’ in Vidler, *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment*, pp. 147–64. The analogue of architectural language as alphabetic/ phonetic speech and pictographic writing, for the eighteenth and nineteenth century minds, is associated with the difference of the Judeo-Christian and Egyptian concepts for immortality— the opposition between god as disembodied voice and god as graven image. For an in-depth discussion, see John T. Irwin, *American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 145–7.


⁹¹ RAL, Lecture III, p. 70; Lecture IV, p. 103; Lecture VII, p. 164; Lecture IX, p. 211.
reconstruction projects by persons like Robert Smirke and Samuel Lysons, who from scanty fragments and slender data extrapolated whole buildings. He had addressed this issue in his manuscript on the Pitzhanger Manor garden ruin in 1802, wherein he pretended this artificial ruin was a new discovery of a ‘very ancient temple.’ As he recalled in his 1832 book of views of Pitzhanger:

One of my objects was to ridicule those fanciful architects and antiquarians who, finding a few pieces of columns, and sometimes only a few single stones, proceeded from these slender data to imagine magnificent buildings; and by whom small fragments of tessellated pavements were imagined into splendid remains of Roman grandeur, which were given to the world in the most pompous and expensive style.

For the eighteenth-century empirical antiquarians, history was a linear progress which had evolved continuously along a seamless path. Opposed to history was the geologist and paleontologist, Georges Cuvier’s theory of extinction and catastrophism. As mentioned before, Cuvier’s view influenced Soane’s view of history, and in his vision of the house as strata, ‘ruin upon ruin.’ Soane indicated that the past was a series of catastrophes, and its history featured both discontinuities and inscrutability. He suggested that the extent of the building had been ‘so much greater than appears from the remains now to be seen.’ (CH, 61)

This extensiveness of the building, however, was not demonstrated in its verticality, for, after a debate as to whether there was a staircase in the building, the ‘antiquary’ came to understand the negative (CH, 63–4). In conventional architectural mnemonics, something that was familiar among eighteenth-century architects, a staircase was an emblem of the link between the faculty of reason and memory. Soane’s writing shows how the staircase had such a metaphorical meaning for him.

* Note. Admitted— but at the same time there is a space, well suited for a Staircase as it would communicate most easily with the different rooms now existing in the building – I am aware it has been supposed that this very space, if a staircase, could only have been one of those Carcerian

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92 In Remains of two temples and other Roman antiquities discovered at Bath (London, 1802), by Samuel Lysons, a few remnants discovered in Bath in 1790 were extrapolated into a grandiose vision of a Sacred Precinct with porticoes, an equestrian statue and a Trajanic column, drawn in perspective by the architect Robert Smirke. Soane and Sir John Soane’s Museum, Visions of Ruin: Architectural Fantasies & Designs for Garden Follies, p. 30.

93 Ibid., p. 31
dark Staircases represented in
some of Piranesi’s ingenious
dreams for prisons: – those who
argue thus forget that a staircase
may be [might have been] lighted
by a Skylight – & it must be recol-
lected that this reasoning at least
makes in favour of the great
Antiquity of this Design which
some have doubted – skylights
have been long in use, and after
all the want of lights proves
nothing – does not Pliny speak
in rapturous delight of the
pleasure of writing in a Room
lighted by lamps.

(CH, 63)

The absence of the staircase, or the imagination of Piranesi’s Carcerian dark staircase, may demonstrate Soane’s negation of the conventional authority of reason, symbolized by the skylight, in a signification system. On this, Soane might have received influence from Henry Home, Lord Kames (1698–1782), for whom, Aristotle’s logical system was like the Egyptian pyramids or Babylon’s beautiful hanging gardens, ‘absolutely useless for raising render.’94

Instead, he was drawn to the enormous foundations that were found ‘in various parts of the substructions of this very building.’ He emphasized, ‘we are so completely in the dark on the subject of this structure, that to ascertain with any hope of precisions … will be found to be no moderate task.’ and was aware that ‘such reasoning make our work very extensive indeed.’ (CH, 61)

He also compared this building to the then un-discovered city of Nineveh and the legendary Noah’s Ark, indicating that the past was irretrievable. The image of history constituted with ruptures caused by catastrophes was reinforced in all the ruined ancient monuments and cities that were mentioned. As examples of natural catastrophes, apart from the deluge and Noah’s Ark, there were references to Nineveh, a city destroyed by its enemies and by flooding,95 and the city of Sodom, destroyed by volcanic eruption [Genesis]. The fall


95 Diodorus Siculus, Histoire universelle, I, xliii. This source Soane often quoted in his lectures. For example, Lecture I, RAL, p. 31.
of Rome and Semiramis’ Babylon demonstrated the role of man-made catastrophes.\textsuperscript{96}

In a description of a cluster of fragments found in the ruin, Soane focused on architectural history itself, as he showed how the past are all only fragments:

There are no Staircase [sic] in the present Remains, proof of the structure having been more extensive.

*A Votive foot & hand indicate this building to have been a temple – and the cornu ammonis designate it as dedicated to Jupiter. The Columns describe a Colonnade of a kind almost peculiar to Convents, and as these Cols: [sic] are of the Ionic or Feminine order it is reasonable to conclude from thence that it had been a convent of Nuns & not a Heathen Temple. The Sphinx, The Griffon & Lamb carry us very far back into Antiquity – & the flat vaulted Ceiling of the great Crypt is in itself so truly Egyptian that

[UNFINISHED NOTE]

Relating to Soane’s Grand Tour in Italy in 1778–9, it would be reasonable to assume that the fragments of the ‘votive foot & hand’ referred to the Colossus of Constantine the Great, then in the courtyard of the Palazzo dei Conservatori on the Capitoline Hill in Rome, which he would have seen on his Grand Tour.\textsuperscript{97} They were of special meaning for Soane also because Soane held Constantine’s reign as a period of the declension of architecture.\textsuperscript{98}

The name of \textit{cornu ammonis} implies their resemblance to the curly rams’ horns which are the attribute of Jupiter Ammon. Therefore it may also be Soane’s reminiscence about the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill, which Augustus has restored and dedicated to the god in order to consult the Sibylline oracles. The reign of Augustus for Soane was one of the great periods for architecture, with superior structures of royal patronage.\textsuperscript{99} (There are frequent allusions to Augustus in \textit{Crude hints}.) Whilst the colonnades of the Ionic order stand for Greek architecture, the Sphinx signals Egyptian temples and monuments.\textsuperscript{100} And it

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} See Lecture V, \textit{ETL}, p. 552. The summary of architecture’s rise, progress, and decline from Noah’s Ark, via the age of Constantine, and the Middle Ages, to its revival under Brunelleschi and Colonna, is a familiar tale, going back at least to Giorgio Vasari. Soane owned two editions of Vasari’s \textit{Lives}. \textit{ETL}, p. 249.
\textsuperscript{99} The others are the reigns of Pericles, Augustus, the Medici, and Louis XIV. See \textit{ETL}, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{100} In his Royal Academy lecture XI, Soane referred to the sphinx as ‘emblematical of the mysteries of the Egyptian theology.’ The sphinxes ‘were held in such veneration by the people of that country that entire rows of those chimeras of colossal dimensions formed avenues leading to their superb temples.’
is meaningful that the whole overview of the past ends with an unfinished note after the mention of the great Crypt of the Egyptians. A ‘triumph of the fragment,’ this cluster of images recalls intensely Piranesi’s *Campo Marzio*, which, as Manfredo Tafuri characterized was a kind of typological negation, an ‘architectural banquet of nausea, a semantic void created by an excess of visual noise.’

Problems occurred when we ask about these fragments’ origin—What do they signify? A monument is a sign as well as a symbol. As Anthony Vidler suggested, the very definition of monument or memorial implies a singularity, a particularity that encloses the meaning of a single event or individual, that carries a symbolic memory of a once-unique presence, one thereby worthy of memorializing. But all these—identity, presence, being, the taken for granted ‘signified’ or ‘absolute’ in a conventional monument, are lost in the unfathomable ruin upon ruin.

Certainly those ancient monuments, briefly mentioned as fleeting ghostly visions in the text, lose their original signification. Nothing is known about those ‘more magnificent and interesting’ (*CH*, 61) ruins that the current ruin was built upon. And it is not possible even to identify the more recent building. If it was a temple, it was to unknown gods (The assumption that it was the Temple of Vestal was denied by Soane, because ‘they are always round’); if it was a monastery, it was possessed by unknown persons; if it was a burial site, the graves were those of anonymous persons.

What Soane implied was that the house had become a tomb which had become an anti-monument, and this metropolitan city was construed as an immense graveyard. What may be assumed might have died, in this elaborate allegory of transformation, would seem to be architecture itself: no longer a temple, no longer a house, no longer a tomb, no longer a memorial. *Crude hints* repeatedly emphasized the view of a process of architecture’s extinction—‘its origin—progress—meridian splendour & decline,’ a view that was closer to Cuvier rather than to Soane’s other hero, Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768). The entombed vestal, the chained ghost, the petrified magician—symbols of the living spirit of architecture indicated the death of architecture in its conventional sense.

The entire history of architecture was implied in absentia. But it does not lead to the conclusion that the fragments meant nothing; for precisely in the rejection of history, and the

*ETL*, p. 638.


103 For Soane’s relation with Johann Joachim Winckelmann, see *ETL*, pp. 111–4.
defined moments in history that were rejected, is signification retrieved. The loss of the staircase and the upper-structure engenders a new signification as an association of ideas in the subterranean realm. Captured by the Sphinx, we are carried ‘very far back to antiquity,’ but not now in the attempted fullness.104

Again we recall the shifting ground of the ruin which Soane compared to Rome,105 those various catacombs and crypts with unfathomable depths underneath, the vast substructures so extensive that they spread over many acres. They seem to be the very mark of their posthumous existence that they have already symbolized and occupied.

The intermingling of Soane’s idea of ‘first principles’ with a catastrophic subterranean landscape cannot be more implicit than when Soane introduced an allusion to the river of Scamander in the Iliad, perhaps quoted from Philostratus the Elder—the battle between Achilles and Patroclus in which Hephaestus, god of volcano and the water god Scamander were involved and fought with each other.106

Now of this battle of the gods the painting ignores all the rest, but it tells how Hephaestus fell upon Scamander with might and main. . . Here is the lofty citadel, and here the battlements of Ilium; here is a great plain, large enough for marshalling the forces of Asia against the forces of Europe; here fire rolls mightily like a flood over the plain, and mightily it creeps along the banks of the river so that no trees are left there. The fire which envelops Hephaestus flows out on the surface of the water and the river is suffering and in person begs Hephaestus for mercy.

As Philipp Fehl suggested, this passage must have been very familiar within the artists circle of the time, as he pointed out the relation between some of the most daring and affecting of the pictures by J.W. M. Turner (1775–1851), Soane’s close friend, such as Fire at Sea (circa. 1835).107 The destruction of human habitation and the immense graveyards buried underneath are projected as an image of a burning fire on the river. In this very process, it implies the emergence of a signification mode opposed to architecture—a mode approximating nineteenth-century geologists’ stratigraphy, and to some extent, anticipating Marcel

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104 Here Soane referred to the account by Plutarch that in mysteries, sphinx is the animal that seizes the dead person’s soul to drag it off to Hades. Soane noted, ‘Mystery was the first base of the Egyptian religion. They therefor placed sphinxes before their temples, to denote (according to Plutarch) that the Egyptian theology was mysterious and emblematical.’ SM AL Soane Case 175, Architecture. Extracts, Crude hints, suggested from reading different works and from occasional reflexions thereon…1818, fol. 76. ETL, p. 175.
105 ‘the ground has been considerably raised by the lapse of ages’; ‘Modern Rome is at least 15 feet above the level of the Ancient City.’ (CH, 68)
Duchamp’s geological landscapism. Neither city nor country, building or nature, it is a landscape in itself; what was once architecture has been entirely subsumed into a continuous surface inside which habitation cannot be predicted.

This landscape is illustrated in *Crude hints*. With its unusual structure with different strata, and its writing mode of spontaneous deletion and addition, the text resembled Derrida’s characterization of trace as ‘a system of relations between strata,’ Soane would have shared Derrida’s fascination with this mechanism of erasure and the conservation of the trace. In fact he himself already did. The fragments, the ‘noisy’ signifying elements of architecture are in the process of being absorbed, buried into the unfathomable ground. The employment of the very mechanism of the strata, makes it precisely a battle site as well as a burial site on the banks of the River Scamander near Troy.

### 4.2.2. The artificial ruin: self-dismembering

Having seen the text of *Crude hints*, the artificial ruin, an illustration of the classical sign system dissolved into the geological landscape, we are aware that the very text is an artificial ruin created by Soane the architect. We may assume that for him, the text, which he relates to strata, is an illustration of the first principles of earth, might represent the regeneration of an architectural language, that is, from the classical language (emphasizing orders, proportions, and anthropomorphism) of formal aesthetics to the language of romanticism which is an expression of emotions, or the unconscious. The fragmentation of the classical language, a trend that started from the fifteenth century, found a strong metaphorical image in the subterranean world.

The description of the fragmented sculptured Colossus of Constantine, the symbol of the anthropocentric tradition in architecture, is revealing. The votive foot & hand, associated with the dilapidated colonnade of the Ionic order, seemed to suggest the revolution in eighteenth-century architecture, initiated in Claude Perrault’s (1613–1683) *Ordonnance*,

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demolishing the Renaissance belief that the rules of proportion in classical architecture were rooted in divine harmony. Soane would certainly have in mind the *Drawing of a figure seated before gigantic antique fragments* (circa 1778–80) by Henry Fuseli, the Royal Academy professor of painting, whose lectures he had attended. Soane’s drawing characterizes the cult of romanticism—fragments of antiquity had become desirable objects. The dismembered body was ubiquitous in evoking melancholy and nostalgia, on which Soane’s mythical figure of the poet in *Crude hints* seemed to resonate.

We fancy we hear him repeat with enthusiastic satisfaction the words ‘mihi turpe (?)
relinqui est’ recollecting how often he had used this in Rome when deliberating between going and staying* 

*Note. Surely it is not too much to suppose his mind so forcibly struck with these words that he instantly composed an Ode to Augustus on the occasion and altho’ we have only this fragment of it remaining, and that misplaced, yet the thing was possible.

(CH, 62–3)

The visitor repeating ‘mihi turpe relinqui est’ (‘it is shameful for me to be left behind’) in the ruin was a mirror of Soane on Grand Tour. In this paragraph and the note, we have a glimpse of Soane’s perhaps most momentous memory of the journey to the land of the past. It was precisely by the sight of fading inscriptions in the ancient ruin that his mind was ‘so forcibly struck,’ and was inspired to compose ‘an Ode to Augustus.’

The indication that poetic inspiration is imagination animated from the past and the ancients to the present is further evinced in an allusion to writing under a lamp in *Crude hints*. Following the bold claim ‘skylights have been long in use, after all the want of light proves nothing,’ (CH, 63) Soane introduced Pliny the Younger’s speaking ‘in rapturous delight’ of the pleasure of the Greek philosopher Athenodorus’ writing in a lamp-lighted...

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111 *ETL*, pp. 432–3.

112 In this paragraph and the attached note Soane imagines the visitor finding the inscription 'mihi turpe relinqui est' among the ruins. In the first reference to the existence of a single founder or builder of the ruins, the visitor is asked to imagine this founder 'recollecting' his own use of the quotation when in Rome and 'deliberating between going and staying.' This is a reference to the moment in early 1780 when Soane was in Rome and had to decide whether or not to give up the final third year of his Grand Tour in order to return home and take up the offer of work from Frederick Hervey, Bishop of Derry, at Downhill in Ireland. In the note to this paragraph Soane speculates that the inscription is a fragment of an Ode to Augustus. Quoted in Soane and Sir John Soane’s Museum, *Visions of Ruin: Architectural Fantasies & Designs for Garden Follies*, p. 76.
A lamp in a dark room, in contrast to the skylight, is a familiar metaphor of the romantic poets for the creative force of the mind — the imagination. The rapturous delight, the pleasure of writing, therefore, is associated with the free flowing of the imagination. This is the pleasure that Piranesi spoke of when he contrasted the ruins in Rome with Palladio’s most perfect drawings.

I will tell you only that those living, speaking ruins filled my spirit with images such as even the masterfully wrought drawings of the immortal Palladio, which I kept before me at all times could not arouse in me.\textsuperscript{114}

To which Soane clearly echoed, a ruin would ‘carry his imagination through different ages and successive revolutions in taste, arts and sciences’ and would ‘give him great pain.’\textsuperscript{115} In this way, ruins implicitly articulate an aspiration for the change of the language system: the pleasure, or pain of imagination, the redeemed signification is precisely provoked by contemplation of the loss of the past—the fragments of the colossus, the decapitated head of Jupiter, the fading inscriptions, and the haunting ghost.

Here may lie, partly, the motivation for the eighteenth-century cult of construction of artificial ruins in landscape gardens, an aspiration spelled out in Diderot’s pre-revolutionary remark, ‘il faut ruiner un palais pour en faire un objet d’intérêt.’\textsuperscript{116} (We need to ruin a palace to make it an object of interest). But what needs attention is artists’ identification with their artworks. The ancient hermetic principles may be seen at work: one must die in order to be reborn, or to die is to be initiated. For the pro-romanticism artists, the destruction of a building, or the construction of a ruin, the desire to break down the superficial and mechanical form of the classical body and to free the imagination hidden underneath, is a mission interlocked with the regeneration of the self.

As the Delphic oracle reveals, this regeneration starts from death, or a ritual dismemberment of the human body, which is inseparable from that of the Earth.\textsuperscript{117} Knowing the anatomy of the human body in order to locate the spirit (soul) and knowing the anatomy

\textsuperscript{115} SM AL Soane Case 161/4, Portfolio 2, Hints 17 February 1806. \textit{ETL}, p. 237.
\textsuperscript{117} As discussed in Chapter I, Python, as a spirit, or symbol of the earth, was killed and dismembered by Apollo. See Joseph Fontenrose, \textit{Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 371–3.
of the Earth to search for the creative force have both been so closely related in those most
creative minds at least since the Renaissance, as so often demonstrated by Leonardo Da
Vinci and Andreas Vesalius (1514–1564). With figures in proto-romanticism or
romanticism such as Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux and Percy Bysshe
Shelley, the tradition reached its apex. It is actively at work in these artists’ envisioning of
the new sign system, of which the artificial ruin is an example. Crude hints, an artificial ruin
itself, sheds light upon this.

A close re-reading of the passage describing the cluster of fragments is revealing. Soane
would have been thoughtful in choosing his images in relation to his extensive reading of
mythographic writers such as Pierre-François Hugues d’Hancarville. The Colossus of
Constantine is a typical example of the anthropocentric tradition expressed in architecture.
The cornu ammonis, an image of Jupiter, may indicate the sun god who had now lost his
head. The image of decapitation is further underpinned by mythological monsters. The
Sphinx is the animal that tears its head off and seizes the dead person’s soul to drag it off to
Hades and ensures their rebirth. Soane seemed to endorse this view as he envisioned these
creatures ‘carry us very far back into Antiquity—& the flat vaulted Ceiling of the great Crypt
is in itself so truly Egyptian that …’ (CH, 62) It may not be a coincidence that this passage
appears in the second column of Crude hints in juxtaposition with the very sentence that
describes the house without its head (i.e. ‘There are no Staircase [sic] in the present remains’
see above). By the phrase ‘the Sphinx, the Griffon & Lamb carry us very far back into
Antiquity,’ Soane seemed to indicate that the missing upper structure of the house—the roof,
the staircase, the absence of which he repeatedly emphasized, may be just like the emperor
of the absolute, the sun god, the light of reason, is now decapitated or removed. We may
recall that in the Pitzhanger Manor ruin, built right after the French revolution, in the
dilapidated colonnades Soane had also ‘discovered’ the cornu ammonis.119

Here the sphinx, and ‘Egyptian Griffon’ draw our attention to the cult of Mithras, to
which the Griffon, or chimera was an emblem of the Mithraic rituals. Soane would have
known about this mythology, which was the subject of both the writings and illustrations in
Gandy’s manuscript of Comparative Architecture continued.120 In this mythology, Mithras is

118 Andreas Vesalius, De Humani Corporis Fabrica of 1543. See Gary D. Rosenberg. ‘The Measure of
Man and Landscape in the Renaissance and Scientific Revolution.’ In The Revolution in Geology from
the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, edited by Gary D. Rosenberg (Coulder, Colo.: Geological
Garden Follies, pp. 30–1.
120 The winged Mithraic chimera appears in Gandy’s illustration Comparative Architecture Continued,
an Emblematic Sketch. His writing is in his manuscript 1: 133, see Lukacher and Sir John Soane's
personified as the celestial fire, as Georges Bataille relates:

People stripped in a kind of a pit that was covered with a wooden scaffold, on which a priest slashed the throat of the bull (Mithra), thus they were suddenly doused with hot blood, .... Of course the bull himself is also the image of the sun, but only with his throat slit .... One might add that the sun has also been mythologically expressed by a man slaying his own throat, as well as by an anthropomorphic being deprived of a head.  

The resemblance between Soane’s image and the Mithraic cult is hard to neglect. Both could be interpreted that it is only by having lost the head, the emblem of reason, the classical doctrines, and the dismembering of the body, that the soul is released, and is carried to the past; it is only at this moment that the mode of signification is redeemed, (although without its attempted fullness and in the subterranean realm) not signifying any presence, but rather emphasising the loss of the past, the lack of the head, the signified, the meaning.

This also leads us to Ledoux’s image of the Greek hero Epimenides of Knossos waking up from his long sleep, as described in ‘Prospectus of L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des mœurs et de la législation’ (1802). Soane acquired a copy of this work in 1804. He particularly copied out this passage and translated it.

> I wake like Epimenides after a sleep of twelve years. My arms fatigued with their chain, and whithered by misery lift up the stone from my tomb. My head casts off the long mourning of winters. My eyes just opened are dazzled with the new day. They see nothing. The first rays of Aurora vacillate on heaps of stones, ... inextinguishable flame of Genius, everything is reanimated by thee. Already thou preparest a brilliant age: already the blood of Pericles bubbles in my veins. Here the avenging thunder bolts burst: the vaulted arch of heaven splits/opens, and I discover the frontispiece of the temple of imagination.

The parallel with the Mithraic cult is revealed when we recall that the Mithraic rite is thought to re-enact what has come to be called the ‘Water Miracle,’ in which Mithras fires a bolt into

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122 The quoted work is published in Paris, C.F. Patris, *Imprimeur de l'Académie de législation*, s.d. According to Plutarch, the Greek hero, with his expertise in sacrifices and the reform of funeral practices, was of great help to Solon in his reform of the Athenian state. As Ledoux’s commentary on the Director’s building at Chaux indicates, Ledoux saw himself as a new Epimenides, imparting the laws of a new Athens to a new Solon, in an ancient and unbroken ritual of initiation. For a detailed discussion on this subject, see Anthony Vidler, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Architecture and Social Reform at the End of the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990).

123 SM AL Soane Case 163, *MS Extracts Relating Directly to Architecture. J. Soane 1815*, fols. 83–86. Although the translation dates from 1815, the first extracts from Ledoux in Soane’s notes were made in a manuscript volume which he began in March 1803. Quoted in *ETL*, p. 220.
a rock, and from the rock now spouts water. This resembles Ledoux’s pictures of an incredible grotto, vomiting petrified water into a vast Doric peristyle. Rather than the absolute sun god, the first rays of Aurora are similar to Mithra, an indicator of the first principles, the subterranean fire turned to volcanic lava—imagination. It becomes clearer that the hermetic rites of passage—the first principles were behind the romanticist artists’ visionary redemption of the ancients’ imagination. In other words, the transformation of the classical body/soul sign system into the romantic aesthetics of the autonomous imagination may be seen as being conducted through a fusion of mythological, ritualistic and scientific visions. Through such visions of catastrophes (e.g. volcanic activities) and ritualistic dismembering, the cold, rigid body of classical aesthetics, associated with the naked rock and the rational ego, were transformed or domesticated into the status of a humanized Other.

Within the body of the text, the mirror of the house (architecture) and the architect’s mind, is found the most suggestive dismembering—the rites of passage: to die in order to acquire a new body of landscape.

Amidst the eighteenth-century fashion of physiognomic writing—in which the overt hand is linked to the covert sentiment—it is not surprising that Soane saw the text as an indicator of the body of himself. Whilst proper writing was hailed as painting ‘unbody’d thought,’ and written lines needed to be perfectly straight and of uniform breadth to embody neoclassical ideals of proportion, legibility, and honour, Soane’s frenetic or delirious writing, and the lack of a clear and dialectical logic could well have suggested a body devoured by its outpouring of emotion, a body that had got rid of reason—the ‘heaps of stones’ vacillated by the first rays of Aurora.

The structure of layers upon layers of text is associated with the anatomists’ dissecting of the human body and the archaeologists’ excavation to grasp the hidden secrets of nature. We are reminded of Soane’s collection of Piranesi’s etchings, wherein there are ruined structures whose walls removed its veneer and exposed its innards, as in the Temple of the Sybil, or the shreds and tatters of the Baths of Caracalla, which, as Barbara Stafford points out, were analogues with those flayed bodies in anatomical illustrations such as William Cowper’s (1660–1709) revision of Vesalius, or Felice Fontana (1730–1805) and Leopoldo M. A. Caldani’s (1725–1813) exhibition of the stringy arterial and venous systems. These systems may well be represented by the sentences, broken into pieces of reading units by

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126 Ibid., pp. 64–5.
dashes and semi-colons, to be reanimated and formed into streams of consciousness or imagination, ‘the blood of Pericles bubbles in my veins.’

The text is also a body disintegrated into a series of contingent fragments, a maze of isolated and scattered remains. The fragmentary paragraphs are the fragmented body of the king, or the dismembered Mithra, broken up by the subterranean convulsion, decomposed and dissolved into particles, to be absorbed into the ground, dissolved by the soil. Yet fragments may also be like fossils shuffled into layers of strata, multiple, self-sustaining relations, in the same surrealistic fashion that the subterranean imagination navigated through. The gap between the strata could also be seen as the ground of burial, evoking the signifying mode of the geological landscape. With signifiers floating on the surface, the signified remained under the ground, unfathomable and inaccessible.

4.3 The Antiquary on the Grand Tour

4.3.1 The Appearance of the Lions: ritual creation and the encounter with ‘the father’

Following the ritual dismembering, ‘The Sphinx, the Griffon & the Lamb carry us very far back into Antiquity’ implying a journey that is only implicit in *Crude hints*. This journey appears to be one through the underworld, because the sentence is succeeded by the image of ‘the great crypt,’ and a more apparent allusion, ‘descending to the shades, the appearances of the Augustan Lion’ (*CH*, 68), as a reference to Aeneas’ descending to the underworld and meeting his dead father Anchises.\(^{127}\) It also appears to be a journey into the lands of the past, as we were shown visions of Rome, Egypt, Nineveh, and Noah’s Ark. Tafuri in his The Sphere and the Labyrinth suggests that Soane’s house is a re-performance of his Grand Tour.\(^{128}\) On this the text of *Crude hints* affords evidence: a map of stratigraphy, it not only maps out the depth of the earth, the depth of the mind, but also a map of the land of the past, or a journey to antiquity. Such a journey in *Crude hints*, with its associations with the second stage of the rites of passage and transition rites, sheds light on the complexity of Soane’s Grand Tour.

For many eighteenth-century European and British elite, the Grand Tour was a means of

\(^{127}\) In Book VI of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, the Trojan hero Aeneas descends to the underworld to meet his dead father Anchises who reveals to Aeneas his future destiny. Anchises shows him the future rulers of Rome, his descendants, awaiting rebirth and names each one. The term ‘Augustan Lion’ is used here to mean ‘the Roman emperors.’ Soane and Sir John Soane's Museum, *Visions of Ruin: Architectural fantasies & designs for garden follies*, p. 78. n. 45.

political and artistic education. More specifically, within the Society of Dilettanti, the prime mover of the Royal Academy where Soane was affiliated, the elite developed their alter ego on the Grand Tour, their self that was associated with the realm beyond the decorum of participatory citizenship, a self that was liberal, sensuous and imaginative.\(^\text{129}\)

Considering the status of the self as identical with one’s capacity for sensing and feeling, the elite emphasized seeing ancient monuments as well as the landscapes or topographies of antiquity. Jonathan Richardson offered his sage advice to the elite readers that the Grand Tour provided ‘Opportunities of seeing.’\(^\text{130}\) It reminds us that the nature of the transition rite is a journey of initiation by visions, as we note that many members of this elite society were also members of Freemasonry.\(^\text{131}\) The educational function of the Grand Tour may therefore have been taken ritualistically in relation to Freemasonic initiation rites. As readers of classical literature, the elite did not approach the sites as anything alien, but recognized in them mental images that they had formed in their youth, as evocations of their memory.\(^\text{132}\)

In the meantime, they were also interested in visiting ancient sepulchres, mausoleums, and tombs, often combined with archaic ritual performances (e.g. Frances Dashwood’s Order of St. Francis).\(^\text{133}\) This interest apparently beyond mere empirical archaeological ends can be better understood in relation to the hermetic idea of regeneration than simply being dismissed as ‘strange psyche problems.’ On the one hand, as Göran Magnus Blix argued, this interest may be an attempt to experience the mid-century recognition of man’s prehistoric existence.\(^\text{134}\) On the other hand, specifically among innovative artists such as Robert Adam and Soane, the emphasis on the on-site experiences in tombs, as receptacles of the ancients’ spirit, may reflect the renaissance humanist tradition of re-creation that is underpinned by the Hermetic-Neoplatonic idea of imagination. This spectatorship may echo what the German art historian and Neoplatonist thinker,

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\(^{131}\) Ibid., p. 17–18.

\(^{132}\) Joseph Spence noted how struck he was by being in the presence of antiquity: ‘this is one of the pleasures of being at Rome, that you are continually seeing the very place and spot of ground where some great thing or other was done, which one has so often admired before in reading their history.’ Spence to Mirabella Spence, 22 July 1732, in Joseph Spence, *Letters from the Grand tour*. Slava Klima ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1975), p. 115. Quoted in ibid., p. 16.

\(^{133}\) Underscoring this mentality may be found both empirical and Neoplatonic ideas.

\(^{134}\) Dashwood intended to revive a tradition imitated in the seventeenth and early eighteenth-centuries by a Roman colony of Dutch and Flemish artists known as the ‘Bentvueghels’ or ‘Schildersbent’ made pilgrims to the sarcophagus for mock rituals and alcohol-laden ‘baptisms.’ Ibid., pp. 40–42.

Winckelmann described of Greek sculpture. It is not static, rather is a process of imaginative engagement.\textsuperscript{135} In an intimate relation between the spectator and the work of art, the spiritual attributes of the artefact pass over into the observer's own nature, giving him intimations of a new potential within himself.\textsuperscript{136} It is difficult not to discern ‘first principles’ being at work in Winckelmann’s description, as the transfer of the spirit from the artefact to the artist strikes us as a re-animation of the petrified imagination of the dead or of the sleeping ancients. Soane saw it this way. Rephrasing Winckelmann’s words, Soane clearly associated ‘first principles’ with being ‘intimately acquainted with’ and learning from ancient works. In this way, they would know not only ‘what the ancients have done,’ but also ‘what they would have done,’ thus reviving architecture and becoming real artists.\textsuperscript{137}

Soane’s Grand Tour is within the ambiance of such an archaeology promoted by the Society of Dilettanti. As a mature architectural student and the winner of a travel scholarship set by the Royal Academy, the young Soane had already developed the ambition of seeking the first principles of architectural language in order to revive English architecture. Although he sang highly of Greek art and architecture which he believed embodied ancient principles, he supposed that what was written as doctrines in later treatises was corrupted by the moderns.\textsuperscript{138} This is shown clearly in \textit{Crude hints} as he ridiculed those whose love for ‘pure architecture,’ namely the advocates of classical rigidism (the speculative builders and copyist architects).

As mentioned earlier, Soane’s understanding of the first or ancient principles was influenced by the mythographic antiquarianism that was prevalent in late eighteenth century Britain. Opposed to the classical aesthetics that advocated Greek art as the perfect ideal, the mythographic antiquarians proposed that the true and first principles were expressed in the symbolic language of works of art in an ancient and universal religion, the father of all subsequent religions, the Mysteries of Isis. This idea Soane took seriously, as demonstrated by his own experience at the site of Temple of Isis in Pompeii. He was also influenced by their view that this symbolic language was corrupted (i.e. rationalized) at the time of Homer, when the gods first began to be represented in human form as opposed to aniconically as a sign or symbol but it can still be found in archaic Greek art (and in the remains of eastern

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{137} Lecture I, \textit{ETL}, p. 491.
\textsuperscript{138} On this, Soane was influenced by the mythographic antiquarian view. For example, in Lecture VI, he wrote, ‘For the construction of staircases, Vitruvius applies the invention of Pythagoras of for the formation of a right angled triangle. The ascent of the steps of staircases, thus constructed, so far from having a moderate inclination, must be very inconvenient and even dangerous. We may therefore conclude that the text of Vitruvius has been corrupted.’ \textit{ETL}, p. 570.
civilizations. And Soane might have sympathized with what he had found in the work of Antoine Court de Gébelin (1719–1784). A Protestant pastor and Freemason, Gébelin held that this ancient tradition of symbolic language, although repressed, yet by virtue of its initiatory rituals, possessed a continuity which led from the Egyptian world to that of Demeter and Persephone, of Orpheus, of the Sixth book of the Aeneid, and finally to the modern world of Freemasonry. Therefore, to perform initiatory rituals was essential as a ritual re-enactment of the myths made their substance contemporary, to resurrect the past amid this whirlwind of change, and to make the self endure.

Although rationalist sceptics like Constantin-François Volney, or later Hegel, criticized this visionary tradition as a province of ‘magic, magnetism, demons, the superior apparitions of clairvoyance, the disease of somnambulism,’ those ‘visionary’ artists were intrigued by the unknown force. They sought to renew mythology through their work, to replace the corrupted with a revised version fitted to modern scientific knowledge. Visionary or imaginative work, as William Blake claimed, is ‘an endeavour to Restore what the Ancient’s call’d the Golden Age,’ a dream central to Soane’s world. This visionary antiquarianism sheds light on Soane’s allusion of ‘descending into Shades, the appearances of the Augustan Lion’ in Crude hints, a mythical experience which may refer to his own visit to Pompeii, the buried city. Soane’s first impression of Pompeii had been (by choice) in the moonlight, when entry to the site was forbidden. There he had thrillingly and illicitly sketched the Temple of Isis, thought to have links to the Egyptian cults and which upon excavation had revealed the bones of sacrificial victims upon its altars. He also made drawings of several other monuments, and drew a plan of the Via delle Tombe. It may be assumed that underpinning his motivation was the visionary idea of reanimating the ancients’ spirit.

139 Baron d’Hancarville in his seminal study, Recherches, compared Greek with Renaissance art, arguing that the decay in late antique art as well as in Baroque art was due to an increasing spirit of luxury. He indicated an interest in archaic Greek art, noting that at the time of Homer, the gods first began to be represented in human form as opposed to aniconically as a sign or symbol. Quoted in ETL, p. 257.

140 Antoine Court de Gébelin’s key work, Monde primitif, analysé et comparé avec le monde moderne, was published between 1773 and Gébelin’s death in 1784. Soane bought the single-volume version, published in 1777 as a ‘Nouvelle Edition,’ on 18 December 1814.

141 For an account of this, see Vidler, The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment, p. 141.


145 Ibid., p. 36.
Admittedly, a mixture of both attitudes—the rational and visionary are found in Soane, as is evidently shown in the conflicting voices of the narrative of *Crude hints*. Despite the criticism of the visionary tradition—e.g. ‘far too visionary & absurd to be admitted for a moment’ (*CH*, 69), it can be argued that this visionary, sensuous alter ego is the very poetic spirit that emerged during the Grand Tour and whose birth Soane celebrated each year after his return to London. It was in this endearing poetic spirit, the mystic poet who murmured ‘Mihi turpe relinqui est’ (*CH*, 62) that Soane seemed have found the root of his identity, ‘the father’ of the antiquity.

It is suggestive that in *Crude hints* Soane favoured sacred sites and monuments embodying enduring imperial identities, such as the Pyramids of Cairo, Babylon, and Rome. His praise of the ancient customs indicates his leaning towards ritual recreations. For him, the ancient monuments, on the one hand, are symbols of trans-historical identities and endurance, in which individuals may be assimilated; on the other hand, they are subject to catastrophes and their fragility echoes the individual’s fragility. Soane’s labour of restoration, or rather, regeneration binds the two together.

*Crude hints*, remarkably, shows how this journey of ritual recreation is intermingled with an experience of prehistoric instincts—a kind of Freudian tracking of a subterranean unconscious and somatic intensities. As we recall, the shelter of the staircase is revealed to be a place where vestal virgins were entombed alive. This most intriguing part of *Crude hints* seemed to reveal a certain mental status of him on Grand Tour. The image of ‘total darkness,’ or being ‘left to starve to death in all the horrors of endless darkness’ is rather considered ‘food for meditation even to madness’ (*CH*, 63), curiously suggesting a sort of half-pleasure, which has already been anticipated by the lines of Pliny’s ‘rapturous delight’ and Athenodorus’ ‘pleasure of writing.’ In doing so, *Crude hints* exhibited the typical nineteenth-century psychological sensibility—the uncanny, as shown in the novel of E. T. A. Hoffman and Edgar A. Poe, which explored the encounter between the ego and its other, buried alive. This vague sentiment, uncanny, or *unheimlich*, as Freud, quoting from Daniel Sanders, explains, ‘is the name for everything that ought to have remained… secret and hidden, but has come to light.’

This may be just applicable to Soane’s experience when being in the real site of Greek temples, such as the six-century B.C. Doric temples at Paestum. Realizing that the real, half-buried, structure was far from what he thought he knew well of the classical Greek temples,

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Soane described the temples as ‘exceedingly rude, Grecian Doric but not the elegant taste,’ and ‘of stone formed by petrification.’ The once familiar Greek temples turned out to be a dark, vague, mysterious thing. The uncanny sensibility is not only evoked in the above quotation by the contrast of aesthetics of ‘elegant’ and ‘rude,’ but more importantly it is provoked by the realization that these temples’ service the Egyptian Mysteries, the prehistoric religions that had been repressed and forgotten by the classical world. Soane must have been overwhelmed by the Temple of the Sun in Palmyra, the Temple of Jupiter Serapis at Pozzuolo, and the Temple of Isis in Pompeii, as he witnessed the decorations of these Greek temples in their original context, in the service of those prehistoric religions. This uncanny sensibility most strongly struck Soane in the excavation site at Pompeii, where he was mesmerised by the poignant paradox with the Via Appia in Rome—a street of mausolea and tombs in a city itself buried alive. Just as the excavations of Pompeii, the textbook example of the uncanny, *Crude hints* revealed a version of antiquity at odds with the sublime vision of Wincklemann and his followers’ explanation. The mysteries of Isis and a host of Egyptian and Roman cults took the place of high Greek philosophy and Acropolitan rituals. The textual archaeology of *Crude hints*, by revealing what should have remained invisible, had irredeemably confirmed the existence of a dark side of classicism—the Greeks’ slavery of the caryatides was mentioned in *Crude hints*, and equally it revealed the two egos of Soane himself.

The text, with its ‘root’ (i.e. commentaries) extended, strikes an image of live burial, like the city of Pompeii buried by volcanic activity. Compared with the pyramidal architecture favoured by rational philosophers, the half-sunken image of the ruin, and the text as the city of Pompeii represent the romantic idea of ‘personality’ The half-buried under the ground represents the alter ego that is inaccessible to the gaze of reason. On a purely aesthetic level, the text [Pompeii] seemed to reflect precisely the struggle identified by Schelling between the dark mysteries of the first religions and the sublime transparency of the Homeric hymns, but in reverse, as if re-enacting the battle in order to retrieve the uncanny. The fragmentary text—‘votive foot & hand’—might be related to the castration complex, and superstitions of haunting ghosts might be traced to the return of a primitive fear, long buried but always ready to be awakened in the psyche. The ‘half-buried’ text may be seen as an image of the repressed unconsciousness that evokes primitive fear, buried alive. The image always returns, haunting the ego, as the multiple voices of the narrative of


the text precisely illustrated.

Freud’s formula of piercing elements of the unconscious into the conscious mind applies to Soane’s text, which speaks in several voices. We often heard the voice of the alter ego, a pagan initiation ritual deriving from the ancient religion of solar worship; its image of collectivity and connection are still there (e.g. ‘Mihi turpe relinqui est’ and ‘fili filiorum’), though they are at war with the ‘repellent,’ power-hungry individualistic spirit of liberalism. Whilst in the first half of the text, the pagan voice dominates, and the commentaries of the text extend, indicating the desire for seeking roots, in the later parts of the text, the reader loses contact with the fragmentary subterranean strata, and moves into a phase dominated by a lust for the End, as we will explore.

4.3.2 Coals in the cellar: collecting cultural capital

In describing the ruin as a burial site, the amateur antiquarian points out that on the present ground level there is ‘a small opening or aperture which some have rashly & inconsiderably supposed to have been for the admission of Coals into a Cellar.’ (CH, 69) In a further note this idea is confirmed, for ‘some person bolder than common made his way into the crypt & … found a large quantity of Coals.’

... another thing to be noticed in this front is that near the present level of the ground (which by the lapse of ages must doubtless have been considerably raised) there is a small opening or aperture which some have rashly & inconsiderately supposed to have been for the admission of Coals into a Cellar. This aperture most likely has been much narrowed by time & most probably was one of the openings or entrances leading into some of the various crypts & catacombs of which at present the remains are inconsiderable. This will account for the great number of funereal ornaments still remaining on the summit of the external wall of this front which have just been noticed & which served as in other places to characterise the work: — no pillars nor fragments of pillars or burded Cypresses have been found, but this deficiency of evidence may be hereafter supplied by further and deeper excavations & indeed if none of these should be found we have sufficient proofs of what here is advanced to satisfy the minds of the most sceptical.

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Modem Rome is at least 15 feet above the level of the Ancient City

* Note. This however has lately been almost proved to have been the fact — some person bolder than common made his way into the crypt & there, it is said, found a large quantity of Coals.

* Note. Some idle persons have supposed this hole was originally intended for the admission of coals but this is too idle a conjecture to be treated seriously — apart who brings Coals into a park — it is ridiculous & malicious.

(CH, 68-9)
Whilst a cellar is a common metaphor for the faculty of memory in the tradition of architectural mnemonics, the hole ‘intended for the admission of coals’ is akin to Locke’s concept of senses as ‘passage’ by which man perceives the external world and forms his memory. Locke describes,

> But our ideas being nothing but actual perceptions in the mind, which cease to be any thing, when there is no perception of them, this laying up of our ideas in the repository of the memory, signifies no more but this, that the mind has a power in many cases to revive perceptions, which it has once had, with this additional perception annexed to them, that it has had them before.\(^{149}\)

He continues,

> The memory of some, .,.is very tenacious:. but yet there seems to be a constant decay of all our ideas, even of those which we are struck deepest . . . Thus the ideas, as well as children, of our youth, often die before us: and our minds represent to us those tombs, to which we are approaching.\(^{150}\)

Locke’s funereal image of early perceptions or ideas laid up in our memory could be a source of Soane’s image of the mind as a burial site, and it allows us to see coals as a metaphor of transformations of those early perceptions. Yet it posits a question as one voice in *Crude hints* articulates, ‘who brings Coals into a park—it is ridiculous & malicious.’ In other words, why transfer memories from elsewhere which should be produced from original perceptions in one’s own mind?

This image however may be a rather honest analogue of the very activity in which Grand Tourists were engaged. As mentioned before, one of the purposes of Grand Tour was for the ‘opportunity of seeing’—to acquire visions and perceptions in the land of antiquity, and to refresh their old impressions in their mind. ‘Coals,’ however, different from mere visions, were rather a metaphor for classical artefacts. ‘Transporting coals into a park,’ therefore may refer to connoisseurs and antiquarians’ collecting artefacts of ancient or prehistoric civilization such as Italy, Greece, Egypt—a form of collecting ‘cultural capital’ so as to build or enrich the cultural memories of Britain. At the time, mineralogy, resources for the industrial revolution, was considered as a subject of ‘national concern, as William ‘Strata’ Smith’s (1769–1839) 1815 Memoir reveals,

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\(^{150}\) Ibid., p. 86.
The wealth of a country primarily consists in the industry of its inhabitants, and in its vegetable and mineral productions; the application of the latter of which to the purposes of manufacture, within memory, has principally enabled our happy island to attain her present pre-eminence among the nations of the earth.  

A similar programme was at function in the sphere of art and culture. The British elite who had developed their sociable traits in Grand Tour from appreciating artefacts, also needed to bring them back to their own country. A duty of civic humanism urged them to not only use these collections for exercising the taste of individuals, but also for improving the manners and communal bonds of the nation. The importance of architectural improvement is summed up by an anonymous author in 1711:

> The refinement of taste in a nation never fails to be accompanied by a suitable refinement of manners; and people accustomed to behold order, decency, and elegance in public, soon acquire that urbanity in private, which forms at once the excellence and bond of society.

But there is also a more ambitious intention behind this programme of collecting cultural capital, as Jason M. Kelly argues, the British elite imagined themselves to be modern versions of Hector or Achilles, as they forged a national identity as descendants of the Greeks and Romans, the cosmopolitan empire of the past. The dream of a lost Golden Age was part of this pastoral tradition and members of the paternalistic elite saw themselves as the architects of a new British Arcadia. To construct such a national identity, the obtainment of artefacts from Greece, Italy and the whole world of antiquity was essential because identity could only be redeemed by virtue of its visionary prehistory and its colonizing future. The mission of constructing a collective identity as new Arcadians, to become cosmopolitan citizens, called for a structuring and enrichment of such a memory.

Soane’s collecting of classical fragments could be seen within this tradition. In his house-museum, he collected and displayed an extraordinary number of books, paintings, architectural models, drawings, prints, plaster-casts and sculptural fragments. For Soane, these architectural fragments, ‘the decoration parts of our art,’ had special value.

Architecture could not fail of deriving the most solid and brilliant advantages from the respect paid by the ancients to the dead . . . that from

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153 Ibid.
those inexhaustible sources we might collect the most useful knowledge of architecture, both in theory and practice. In them we see that infinite variety and knowledge which calls forth talents, quicken invention, . . . \textsuperscript{154}

In a later lecture,

for it is the most serious import to the artist to be able to trace every species of decoration to its source, and likewise to be well acquainted with the different styles of executing ornaments found in ancient works.\textsuperscript{155}

Soane had the idea that his house would be available for inspection by students.

I have often lamented that in the Royal Academy the students in architecture have only a few imperfect casts from ancient remains, and a very limited collection of works on architecture to refer to. I have, therefore, never lost any opportunity of collecting casts from the ruins of ancient structures, marble fragments, vases and cinerary urns, as well as every book and print that came within my reach on the subject of architecture, and the arts relating thereto.\textsuperscript{156}

At the same time, they will likewise have an opportunity of consulting the plaster casts and architectural fragments.\textsuperscript{157}

Therefore, \textit{Crude hints}, a collection of rich images (fossil-like) of a world wide range, could be seen as a miniature of the house-museum that contains cultural coals of the world, ‘the inexhaustible sources’ of the earth.

To see the programme of collection for regeneration, again we are led to the cluster of fragments in \textit{Crude hints}, where fragments of architectural components of various periods were juxtaposed, Roman, Greek, and Egyptian. The seemingly arbitrary images, certainly an echo of the picturesque display of his collection in the museum, contain an idea that is more than mere randomness. As discussed earlier, in parallel with stratigraphy, the picturesque display suggests its adapting the first principles, the movement of the subterranean menstruum in the Earth. Whilst the naturalness of the movement of the Earth vindicates Soane’s innovative approach to architectural language (breaking up from classical doctrines), the violent nature of such movement justifies his collecting as barbarian archaeology.

Soane thus addressed himself as ‘barbaros Brittannos,’ (\textit{CH}, 62) which not only spells out his low-class credentials as the son of a brick-layer, but also his innovative approach to architectural renewal. In presenting the Greeks and Romans as the benefactors of such catastrophes and barbarian archaeology, Soane emphasized that they acquired their high

\textsuperscript{154} \textit{RAL}, Lecture IV, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{155} \textit{RAL}, Lecture VI, p. 155.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{157} \textit{ETL}, Lecture VI, p. 356, n.288.
artistic achievements by booty rather than by love of art. Speaking of the two Caryatides in the cavedium, Soane wrote, ‘these statues might have been brought from Greece into this Country and here placed for ornament.’ He pointed out, ‘it is well known that the Greeks doomed to ignoble services, & also decorated their buildings with statues of those they had taken in war.’ Then, by alluding to Mummius, a Roman commander who had no sensibility of art at all (as he asked …), a barbarian, (was responsible for the sack of Corinth after which its art treasures were shipped to Italy), he recalled the Elgin marbles, ‘Lord Elgin the modern Mummius in modern times caused various parts of antique buildings to be taken from Greece into this Country.’ Whilst this commentary is only neutral, his compliments for Lord Elgin are found in his notes for lectures:

No wonder Rome was so rich in sculpture. When speaking of the number of statues in Rome, quote how they became possessed of them, not from Roman talent, nor even love of art. The objects were invaluable intrinsically which at first executed the cupidity and afterwards gave the Romans a taste for arts. In this view how much praise is due to Lord Elgin.158

Here Soane came to terms with the catastrophe and adopted the long view of it as a necessary rejuvenation of tradition. Barbarian blood does regenerate, then, and catastrophe can be a blessing in disguise. Seeing stratigraphy as an indicator of catastrophes which are themselves suggestive of regenerative power, Soane’s museology stood opposed to that of historicism and restoration. Rather, as a kind of misuse, his museology envisions an innovative, educational programme of architectural renewal.

### 4.4 The Fossil and the magician: the auto-monument

Whilst by some this place has been looked on as a Temple, others have supposed it to have been the residence of some Magician, & in support of this opinion they speak of a large statue placed in the centre of one of the Chapels which they say might have been this very necromancer changed into marble* for having dared to destroy the statues of the Apostles formerly placed in the niches now remaining in the front of this building next to the park. Some say his offence was not destroying the statues of the apostles, but by the power of his diabolic art

* This is not extraordinary. Lot’s wife for looking behind her we all know was changed into a pillar of salt & remains so to this day!

transforming them into statues of female[s] – there is some colour for this, indeed there is little doubt of the fact as several of the statues thus transformed and which correspond exactly with the dimensions of the niches are now remaining. I judge because the transformed status are in dimension sentate to the niches  

\[CH, \text{64--5}\]

The eighteenth-century notion that Nature or Earth is a creator with ‘magic properties’ is hinted at in the characterization of the Soane’s house as the palace of a magician, who transformed things into stones: the metal statues of the apostles became stone statues of females; Soane himself was changed into marble (Soane here probably alludes to the cast of Apollo Belvedere in the chapel). The emphasis on petrifaction or fossilization was earlier expected in the mention of cornu ammonis, the marine fossil of remote antiquity, and is reinforced by a commentary added to the magician’s petrification—‘This is not extraordinary. Lot’s wife for looking behind her we all know was changed into a pillar of Salt & remains so to this day!’

It may be assumed, as discussed earlier, that petrification, for Soane, embodied ‘first principles,’ because the term recalls geologists’ images of pyramids as petrifications of volcanoes.

The picture of petrifaction displayed in the ammonite fossil; the magician turning into marble; and Lot’s wife in the Book of Genesis becoming a pillar of salt. That Soane’s interest in petrifaction has a linguistic dimension could be seen in the ammonite fossil. This marine fossil was generally thought to be the origin of the Ionic order in the eighteenth-century. Soane had particularly praised George Dance’s invention of an ammonite capital which he illustrated in his lectures. Later in the house-museum, Soane created a roofscape in the monumental court incorporating ammonite fossils. It is also revealing that in his Description in 1832, Soane described a frieze of Grecian sculpture juxtaposed with a fossilized plant at the window of the dining-room, and commented, ‘The lovers of Grecian Art will be gratified by comparing the outline of this work with the two natural productions on the sides of the window.’\textsuperscript{159}

A further example is shown in Soane’s imagination of the transformation of the statues of the ‘apostles’ into ‘females.’ Apostles and females were familiar metaphors of the time. Whilst the apostles stood for the conservative and the rigid, the females were variable, liberal, and imaginative. These two opposite images were shown in their associations respectively with the building of Royal College of Surgeons and Soane’s house, examples of

The ‘Eroding’ monument: Reading *Crude hints* towards an history of my house at LIF

... an officer yclept a district Surveyor* was pressed forward [put in the front of the battle] on the occasion and boldly entered his veto against this apocryphal work – praise is however due to this dapper animal on this occasion* – he had been taught to believe that the two old women

[female statues]* in one of the fronts [of this building (del.)] were intended [purposely placed here] to ridicule the infantine idea in the great national work opposite where two old men with Greek names on their skirts are represented embracing or rather hugging a sort of Shield*, which they display to the public view, thereby to attract notice [excite curiosity] and to direct the multitude to contemplate the beauties of that great [conspicuous] Work*

* This gentleman was a great Genius, having become district surveyor he was made for the place – more of the phenomenon hereafter

* Hen. Steele .... bears ......

Note. Some illiberal persons have asserted that the two old Women are to represent [personify] the two great Architects to whose combined talents we are indebted for the great display of fine Architecture opposite & who are supposed to be placed here to admire and to point out to others the beauty of that extensive pile of bricks & mortar.

(CH, 67)

The ‘grand national work’ was the Royal College of Surgeons (begun in 1806, but not completed until 1813) that was opposite Soane’s residence. The ‘two old men with Greek names,’ corresponding to the apostles, represented Machaon and Podalirius, the surgeon sons of Aesculapius, holding a cartouche bearing the College arms. Soane’s 1830, 1832 and 1835 Descriptions of his house-museum all refer to the fact that the caryatids on No.13 are nearly opposite those of Machaon and Podalirius in the front of the College of Surgeons, on the south side of the square. The statues of females, i.e. caryatids are Soane’s characteristic language—his innovative use of decorations in many of his designs including the house-museum. Soane’s antagonism against the metals of the apostles may be influenced by the mythographic antiquarian view, which considered the Greek representation of gods in human form as opposed to aniconically as a sign or symbol of degeneration from the ancient, or First principles. (It may be useful to consider that, as opposed to the anthropomorphic image of Aesculapius, Soane favoured the hermetic sign of the caduceus, which was frequently used in his interiors, including the Monk Parlour of the house-museum.) From this view, Machaon and Podalirius were barely ‘two old men with Greek names.’ The relation between the anthropomorphic images of the two ‘Greek men’ and the meaning of medical practices was arbitrary. The caryatids are different signs from the ‘apostles.’ Symbols of the Carian

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women who were enslaved by the Greeks, the caryatides represent the victory of the Greeks over Persians and Carians.¹⁶¹ In Soane’s imagination, the caryatid statues, first discovered in an excavation site of the Temple of Pandrosus, were like the caryatides fossilized and buried in the earth.

Soane’s linguistic interest in these fossilized living beings may be understood in relation to Kircher’s semiotic study of ‘figured stones.’¹⁶² For Kircher, figured stones are an indexical sign, that is, the relation between the sign (signifier, form) and the object (signified, object) is not arbitrary, but directly connected. A causal link is made or born naturally between the sign and the object.¹⁶³ The form reflects its being. This quality of a fossil, the indexical sign, must have appealed to Soane as an essential merit, because his major concern with the modern language of architecture was precisely that the decoration of buildings did not reflect their character, or the relation between the sign and the real character was arbitrary.

Crude hints thus affords an important clue to Soane’s understanding of the fossil as the origin of architectural language. He does not see them as two disciplines of objects (things) and language (words), but rather identical. In the very image of fossil, or a living being petrified, the boundary between sign (art) and object (things, or nature) in classical aesthetics is blurred, and the law of art imitating nature is denounced. The fossil or architectural language became a sort of auto-monument, as a pyramid accounted for by Samuel Simon Witte.¹⁶⁴

In a comparative reading of the text of Crude hints and the house-museum, we can see this language of auto-monument at work. As discussed before, the structure of the text has a pictorial quality, illustrating the strata, a key concept in Soane’s design of the house as a symbol of the mind and earth. This unusual employment of words not merely in terms of their linguistic meaning but also of the dimension of their spatiality may be an intentional experiment using this new form of auto-monument language. The highly visual text is written in words that are like images (thinglike) rather than concepts (idealike). These

¹⁶¹ In Crude hints, describing the two caryatides in the cavedium, Soane wrote, ‘This is strong evidence* [I admit (del.)] for it is well known that the Greeks doomed to ignoble services.’ (65). Here he referred to an account by Vitruvius which he used in his lecture III. ‘The people of Caria having joined the Persians against the Grecian states, and the Greeks having put an end to the struggle by a glorious victory, declared war against the Carians, and having taken and destroyed their chief city, they slew the men and led the matrons into captivity. This event suggested to the architects of that time the idea of applying statues of the Carians to support the entablatures of buildings, in order that the remembrance of their defeat might be transmitted to the latest posterity.’ RAL, p. 67.


¹⁶³ For a detailed discussion, see Parcell, ‘Signs and Symbols in Kircher’s Mundus Subterraneus,’ p. 65.

¹⁶⁴ Witte, Ueber die Bildung und der Ursprung des Keilformigen Inschriften zu Persepolis, Ein philosophisch-geschichtler Verusch, pp. 1–2.
fragmentary images are like visions petrified and inscribed in the strata of the earth-like text, in a way echoing the fragments that Soane collected, which throng the walls of the house-museum. It is not for one to tell whether they are decorations or things in themselves. Constituted by such a pile of fragments, the text of *Crude hints* escapes from the restraint of a logical narrative, and naturally acquires a ruinous form that is in accord with its ruinous content. For Soane, such a ruinous text would reflect the world less arbitrarily and conveys being more directly than a conventional text would have done. The language as auto-monument of *Crude hints* also illustrates a tendency of romantic historicism, that is, to abolish the representational gap between language and thing.

Just as one cannot tell whether a fossil is a natural (organic) being or an historical object, so art works of the poetic imagination escape the conventional category of artworks as an imitation of nature. Unlike in a conventional system where a signifier has to signify something else, the artwork of the poetic imagination seems to be it ‘self’ but the ‘self’ has been transformed. Just as an ammonite fossil is no longer a living being, but, a being dissolved and concreted by lava, that has become part of the Earth and obtained eternity, the artwork is not an object external to the subject. Embraced by the artist’s fiery imagination, its corporeal body dissolves, and instead acquires a non-corporeal body of matter—a body of all the range of sensory particles. Maintaining a balance between animation and petrifaction—the opposing principles of the earth-mind, artwork can be re-animated. Its body is magical—‘speaking canvas’ and ‘breathing marble,’ as Soane terms.\(^{165}\)

A useful example to underpin such a ‘seeing’ is found in the 1835 *Description*,\(^ {166}\) wherein Soane used a female voice of B. H. to reveal the emotional experience at Pompeii. As John Elsner observes, this female voice can speak with a certain passion that the sober male must aver and this voice, if necessary, can be disowned.\(^ {167}\) It is telling that, as Elsner points out, it is not possible to differentiate whether Soane’s female voice was describing the model room or the real; the mind is ‘arrested’ and transferred to the realm of a hybrid, where there is no boundary between the real and the fictional, ‘actual research’ or ‘ideal supposition.’ In this liminal realm, all the models—the ‘appalling objects of terror,’ speak to him directly about the ‘stroke of instant fate’—the ‘lingering misery,’ ‘utter hopelessness.’\(^ {168}\)

In seeing artefacts in the museum as fossils—Apollo as a fossilized magician, friezes as

\(^ {165}\) RAL, Lecture VII, p. 173.


\(^ {168}\) Soane, *Description* (1835), pp. 92–3.
petrified plants, statues of females as buried caryatids, Soane envisioned an organic sign system which escaped the Cartesian system of body and soul. The sign system had an innate character—it included the sensory particles of its creator. It reflected the new expressive regime that marked romantic literature that sought to make words thinglike. Art is not an equivalent of nature, but identical with a segment of nature, as well as a fragment of the artist’s mind.

What is hidden is not only a motivation for letting language deliver ‘being,’ but also a death drive transformed or harnessed into the dream of a deathless existence, as petrifaction, for the eighteenth-century minds, was associated with mummification and catastrophes. From reading Charles-François de Lubersac, Soane was aware that the Egyptian god, Thoth, who was reputed to have invented mummification, also invented obelisks and writing. Ammonite fossils, the magician, Lot’s wife and caryatids, are certainly all victims of catastrophes. In catastrophes, their body became their own tombs, a sort of uncanny preservation; or as vehicles of sensory particles petrified, which were to be reanimated.

In this way Crude hints may be seen as a poetic experiment using the hermetic sign system as a form of writing. Like a catastrophe, writing ironically fixes and petrifies a living world as if representation unwittingly doubled the work of death. Memories of fragmentary images of ancient monuments, archaeological artefacts, decaying senses, are petrified or preserved in the very form of writing. They are like fossils, forming a text as an auto-monument that is to be handed-down to posterity. (Note that Soane considered publishing Crude hints.) Such a use of language he had already applied to his designs, typically the facade of Pitzhanger—which is adorned with antique decorations such as eagles in wreaths, statues atop columns, foliage and acroteria, which were funereal objects discovered from various excavations, or in Soane’s own words, ‘an immense quantity of ancient remains of sculpture and architectural fragments.’ To ‘preserve[d] (them) from ruin,’ the acroters, statues and roundels ‘unearthed’ were embedded within the walls of Soane’s house, in a visible way, in the manner of forming a corpse pillar, an auto-monument.

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170 Blix, From Paris to Pompeii: French Romanticism and the Cultural Politics of Archaeology, p. 236
171 As Soane noted that the facade was a ‘intended to give some faint idea of an Italian villa … [for] in like manner in the fronts of Italian villas we see an immense quantity of ancient remains of sculpture and architectural fragments.’ He explained that the visitor to Pitzhanger ‘might suppose that its builder was possessed of a number of detached pieces of ornaments, such as eagles and wreaths, demiboys and foliage, columns and statues, pedestals and acroters &c, and that … [his aim was] a desire to preserve them from ruin, or to form a building to give a faint idea of an Italian villa.’ Soane concluded that, ‘this building may thus be considered as a picture, a sort of portrait.’ SM, AL Soane case 170, ff. 134–35.
4.5 The ‘Eroding’ monument: Reading *Crude hints* towards an history of my house at LIF

4.5.1 The imagined cemetery

The ‘imperfect motto’ ‘et filii filiorum etc’—a theme to be repeated in the last few pages—frequently was found in the wall of the ruin. As the antiquary explained, ‘[it] indicates that not only some private persons had occupied the site, but also that he had fondly flattered himself with the hope of its remaining for ages in his family.’ *(CH, 70)*

By the time of writing *Crude hints*, Soane had given up his hope that his sons, George and John, would become architects and therefore build an architectural dynasty as did the Adam’s and the Dance’s families. The ‘filii filiorum’ therefore was an indicator of Soane’s disappointment. But the ‘family’ may also refer to the Royal Academy where Soane the Professor delivered lectures to young students. In Soane’s mind, there was clearly a genealogy or lineage of architects. In his lectures, Soane refers to ancient architects, Greeks in particular, as the forefathers; ingenious architects of later periods as the fathers, and contemporary architects as young generations.*\(^{172}\) Speaking of the way to develop good architecture, Soane stated ‘let the young artist store up in his mind the advice of the father of architects;’ or when criticizing false uses of ornaments by modern architects, he used phrases such as ‘censure from the father of architects,’ or ‘authorities.’*\(^{173}\) It is not difficult to recognize Soane’s intention of asserting himself as the authority of the Royal Academy. This may be seen in his eagerness in obtaining the professorship, in his unrealized plans of reformation in the Academy; in his lectures, and in his intention to omit the original authors’ name from whom he quoted or plagiarised in his lectures.*\(^{174}\) This could be testified by his description of his collections in the museum, following up the assumption that this individual inhabiting the house was an architect. He wrote,

… do we not account most satisfactorily for that great assemblage of ancient fragments in the interior of the building which must have been placed there for the advancement and knowledge of ancient Arts & may not those varieties in the Cavedium evidently the work of different artists have been fixed there in like manner to exemplify later changes in architecture & to lay the foundation of an history of the Art itself – its origin – progress – meridian splendour & decline!

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*\(^{172}\) He also took notes of Horace’s statement that ‘Our Fathers were worse than their Ancestors, we are more wicked than our Fathers; and posterity is like to prove yet more wicked than we.’ *(Ode VII).*

*ETL*, p. 184.

*\(^{173}\) *RAL*, pp. 146–7.

*\(^{174}\) For example, in his lectures, Soane neither mentioned the name of Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand (1760–1834) nor the controversy about the anthropomorphic origin of the orders and about Marc-Antoine Laugier’s theory of the primitive hut, despite citing from these authors. See *ETL*, p. 183.
This is clearly Professor Soane’s dream.\textsuperscript{175} Hidden behind his ambition of becoming the professor of the Royal Academy, a centre of the British cultural establishment, is a long-standing Arcadian dream shared by many of his predecessors such as William Chambers, Robert Wood, James Stuart and other members of the Society of Dilettante.\textsuperscript{176} Via the revival of Roman and Greek architecture, they hoped to rejuvenate British architecture and enact it to achieve the glory of antiquity, in the words of \textit{Crude hints}, to ‘raise(d) Architecture to its meridian splendour’ (\textit{CH}, 72). This dynasty, in which the ‘filii filiorum’ were expected to dwell ‘from generation to generation’ is a utopia that Neoplatonists such as Shaftesbury envisioned, as was revealed by Soane’s terms in \textit{Crude hints}, which identified truth with the ‘Laws of nature,’ the ‘practice of antiquity justified,’ and ‘good taste.’ (\textit{CH}, 72) In this way, they hoped to make Britain a real descendant of the Roman Empire, an exemplar and ruler in the modern world as a new Golden Age, a British Arcadia.\textsuperscript{177}

With the aim of forging a British identity as cosmopolitan citizens, as well as to reinforce the innate bond of the British community and the country, they emphasized the role of art and architecture in cultivating citizens’ sensibility or ‘sentiment.’ Sentiment, typically as Hume proposed, was an invisible force that revealed the natural affinities among human beings. Like gravity holding together the universe, the sentiment of sympathy provided the bonds of human society. Human beings with heightened sentimentality were more attuned to the needs of others, and consequently, they were more likely to act and react in publicly beneficial ways.\textsuperscript{178}

Along with the revival of the Greco-Roman humanist tradition, the Virgilian idea of ‘Et in Arcadia Ego,’ that is, monuments, sepulchres, and tombs as vehicles of both personal and

\textsuperscript{175} In his first delivery of Lecture VI, on 16 January 1812, Soane announced that, ‘the various drawings and models’ which he had exhibited in crowded circumstances at the Royal Academy would, in future, be available for inspection by students in his own house. Watkin also suggested that Soane seemed to have had this scheme in mind when in an early draft for Lecture VI, as Soane explained how ‘on my appointment to the Professorship, I began to arrange the books, casts, and models, in order that the students might have all the benefit of easy access to them...’ Susan G. Feinberg, ‘The Genesis of Sir John Soane’s Museum Idea: 1801–1810,’ \textit{JASH}, vol. 43, October (1984), p. 236. No original source in Soane’s Museum is given. Quoted by Watkin, \textit{ETL}, p. 356.

\textsuperscript{176} Soane’s planning to obtain this position started the very day after Chambers’ death on 8 March, 1796. Margaret Richardson and Mary Anne Stevens, \textit{John Soane, Architect: Master of Space and Light} (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1999), p. 38.

\textsuperscript{177} Jason M Kelly touches upon this point in his discussions of the classicism and aesthetics of the Society of Dilettanti. He points out that the dream of a lost golden age was part of the pastoral tradition, and members of the paternalistic elite saw themselves as the architects of a new British Arcadia. Kelly, \textit{The Society of Dilettanti: Archaeology and Identity in the British Enlightenment}. pp. 96–7.

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., p. 231.
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public memories had been active since the Renaissance. With Hermetic-Neoplatonic interpretations, the funereal furniture was perceived as a receptacle for the invisible mental forces of the virtuous dead that could spread to the contemporary milieu to benefit the living.

An important example was Christian Cay Lorenz Hirschfeld’s (1742–1792) Théorie de l’art des jardins, which was published simultaneously in German and French from 1779 to 1785, the first three volumes of which Soane owned. Hirschfeld cited Poussin’s painting in a discussion of how the sight of a tomb in a garden affects the visitor. ‘…the fullness of the emotions he is experiencing.’ In the third volume, Hirschfeld praised the Elysian Fields at Stowe as the first example of the consecration of a whole area in a garden dedicated to the memory of the illustrious dead. Under the influence of the moral conception of ‘Et in Arcadia Ego,’ burial was not only a nexus that drew loved ones together, but it was also a means of attaching citizens to their country and to the soil. François-Valentin Mulot commented that the tomb planted with flowers enabled the visitor to breathe in the scent of the deceased’s virtues. The idea of the tomb in nature as a site where visitors ‘breathe in’ the virtues of the deceased was earlier illustrated in that singular example of the tomb in a garden in France: Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s tomb at Ermenonville, outside Paris. Rousseau was buried in 1778 on the property of René-Louis de Girardin, who had a Greek-style sarcophagus erected there on a small island surrounded by poplars. Before the removal of his remains to the Panthéon in 1794, Rousseau’s tomb in the garden at Ermenonville was the object of pilgrimage for ‘sensitive souls’ (les âmes sensibles). Soane thought highly of this practice, and he may have visited the site. Such a discourse on burials/tombs as an emotional and ethical nexus that would enhance citizen’s morals was an important part of the Enlightenment project and directly contributed to the establishment of the secular system of burials in France.

Crude hints made clear allusions to this discourse and the French practice,

if this place has been as now premised a place of [for] public Worship a burying place would have been attached to it, accordingly we find the ornaments with which this place is surmounted are of a kind to designate

181 Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur universel, 24 vendémiaire, An III (15 October 1794). Quoted in ibid.
the approach to a place of sepulture, some terra ornaments of our Churches as at santa attached to the building. This idea if established accounts for the great number of funereal decorations in this facade & scattered about the different parts of this extensive [the] building thus pointing out by these [ornaments (del.)] decorations and monumental mementos the intention of this place in like manner as the terra santa at Pisa is designated:—

(CH, 68)

Soane also mentioned in Crude hints, ‘in later times the Legislators of the great nation [French people] have directed trees to be planted to mark out the site & to render sacred the peaceful mansions of the dead [those who sleep]’ which alludes to the French practices of building public cemeteries in the tradition of ‘Et in Arcadia Ego,’ such as the garden cemetery of Père Lachaise built in 1800.183

Campo Santo of the republic of Pisa was envisaged as the ideal cemetery as a cloister by many eighteenth-century theorists. Soane visited it on his Grand Tour and was immensely impressed by it and had a large drawing of it prepared for use in his Royal Academy lectures.184 Soane would have shared Quatremère de Quincy’s description of Campo Santo as ‘a speaking museum formed from frescoes, antique tombs, modern mausolea, inscriptions, and effigies of great men honoured by the republic of Pisa.’185 Quatremère further suggested, with allusions to the art of memory, that such places should be planted with cypresses and yews, dark brown foliage especially heightening the atmosphere of ‘sacred melancholy.’ The indication of the garden cemetery as a designation of memory corresponded with what Soane had written on the ruin, ‘no pillars nor fragments of pillars or burded Cypresses have been found’ in this ruin (CH, 68).186 Pillars, or columns and cypresses were traditional symbols in memory of the dead, which were familiar to an even larger number of the eighteenth-nineteenth elite. Soane made it plain in his lecture,

Columns … were often applied to record the actions of great men. From Homer we learn that Ulysses raised a column on a hillock in memory of Elphenor who broke his neck by falling over a staircase in the Palace of Circe.187

This background allows us to understand better Soane’s pre-occupation with the theme of the

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183 Denton, ‘Death in French Arcady: Nicolas Poussin’s the Arcadian Shepherds and Burial Reform in France C. 1800,’ p. 201.
186 As Dorey suggests, Soane here may also have in mind of the tradition that Roman Imperial mausolea (such as those of Augustus and Hadrian) incorporated cypress groves. He seems to be being consciously archaic in using ‘burded’: burd is a Middle English word of obscure origin meaning ‘bird.’ Dorey, ‘Crude Hints,’ p. 78.
187 RAL, Lecture IV, pp. 89–90.
sepulchral (and also, the same preoccupation demonstrated by his academy colleagues and students in the late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century, mentioned earlier). A place where the dead sleep, the house is for public worship, a receptacle of collective memory in the modern city. Soane might have perceived his house-museum as one of those ancient monuments, which he referred to as the receptacles of ‘powerful imagination, elegant fancy, and refined taste.’ In his tenth lecture, he thoroughly discussed the ancient monument’s effect of cultivating citizens’ minds:

The monument of the Horatii and Curatii fills us with the respect for the patriotic and heroic deeds to which it refers, whilst the remains of many towering structures, broken arches, and massive walls, bring back to our recollections interesting, important, and instructive incidents of history which call forth all the nobler feelings of the sympathetic mind; and when the mighty ruins of a column, whose enormous dimensions first excite our attention, and then point to the fatal spot where the unhappy Nicias threw himself at the feet of the conqueror, beseeching Gylippus to stop the further slaughter of the brave Athenians, his comrades in defeat, (thousands of whom were then bleeding before his eyes), when such sensations are raised, if the ruins of buildings bring the recollection of such deeds fresh to the mind, as if then acting, we are only anxious for time to spare such monuments, that the same effect may be produced to the latest ages. Here there is no delusion, no imaginary colouring: the effect on the mind is complete.188

Although Soane’s house-museum is only an imagined tomb, for him, it can be of equal effect with cultivating ‘noble feelings of the sympathetic mind’ as the real. As he continues,

And if artificial ruins of rocks and buildings are so cunningly contrived, so well conceived, as to excite such reflections and convey such useful, though melancholy, lessons, too much cannot be said in favour of their introduction on every occasion. Like the buildings of the Egyptians, covered with their hieroglyphics, they may be considered as histories open to all the world.189

Soane called for young architectural students, under the state’s support, to dedicate their talent to build monuments for national heroes,

Let us hope that the young professors of the fine arts, … will be called upon to erect churches, palaces, and national edifices commemorative of the glorious achievements of our Nelsons and Wellingtons. . . .190

The national monument in contemplation, the result of the late events of the long struggle in Europe, and the extensive alterations making in this great

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188 RAL, Lecture X, p. 223.
189 Ibid.
metropolis will, it is hoped, create in the public mind finer and more correct feelings of art and more powerful opportunities of calling into action the energetic powers of the young artists in painting, sculpture, and architecture… it now depends on the young artists themselves to restore architecture to its classical purity and to the importance it enjoyed under Pericles, Augustus and Hadrian.  

Soane’s emphasis on the house as a burial site, a sepulchre thus is revealed as a place dedicated to public worship and for cultivating ‘in the public mind finer and more correct feelings.’ This vision echoes with what Burke had described in *Reflections on the revolution in France* (1790):

> In this choice of inheritance we have given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood, binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties, adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections, keeping inseparable and cherishing with the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected charities our state, our hearths, our sepulchrones, and our altars.

Inheriting the Roman tradition, the house-museum, as a sepulchre, became an intrinsic part of the nation’s inheritance, resembling state grace and collective memory.

### 4.5.2. Erosion and collecting

The paradox of Soane—the conservative juxtaposed with the revolutionary —is fully exposed in the final part of *Crude hints*, an account of the architect’s death and the house falling into ruin. On the one hand, the architect ‘declared open war’ against what he considered as deviation from the truth, until ‘at last he had raised a nest of wasps about him sufficient to sting the strongest man to death.’ (*CH*, 71) On the other hand, his death, as Soane curiously described, was rather like a king’s fall—‘they smote his rock & he fell as many had done before and died as was generally believed of a broken heart.’ This image echoes the fragmentary statue of Constantine, or the petrified magician described above. Correspondingly, this monumental house, the sepulchre that contains the vital heat, along with the architect’s death, dilapidated into ruin.

The ambiguous death of the architect may represent Soane’s contradictory understanding of the commercial spirit. Many of Soane’s clients were commercial men—among which, needless to mention, was the Bank of England. In his lectures Soane praised
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As with the Bank’s building committee, commercial clients could treat their architect as a social equal and as a professional. They trusted his expertise and let him experiment artistically in ways unusual with more socially condescending, aesthetically controlling and self-consciously cultivated aristocratic patrons. And it was supported by these commercial clients that Soane’s innovative designs were implemented. For example, his work at the Bank of England illustrated his use of simplified flat surfaces, plain round arches, grooved pilaster strips and reduced orders, all breaking away from the fundamental, anthropomorphic metaphysic of classicism.\(^{194}\)

However, if this aspect of the ‘great commercial spirit’ was once associated with the subterranean force, the creative imagination, that shattered the formal architectural language structure, this commercial power was also, in Soane’s mind, simultaneously, a force of destruction. In post-revolutionary Britain, many minds turned round to examine the previously applauded innovative power of commercialization and democracy to reflect on the fatal consequences that they might bring forth, as seen in Burke’s statement, ‘Rather too much countenance was given to the spirit of innovation, which soon was turned against those who fostered it, and ended in their ruin.’\(^{195}\)

In *Crude hints*, a direct cause of the architect’s fall was by the ‘twin ruffians,’ who ‘set on by malice in the dark combined together to strike at his [the architect] infirmities and mistakes.’ The ‘twin ruffians may echo the ‘two famous misers’ and ‘two great Architects’ mentioned in previous page. The ‘two great architects’ of the ‘great national work opposite’ are allusions to George Dance and James Lewis, architects of the Royal College of Surgeons. As mentioned earlier, Soane at his fourth lecture in January 1812 criticized this building for its utter want of appropriateness. In *Crude hints*, he astutely pointed out that the real cause for the inappropriate facade of the building is because architects sacrificed noble principles for monetary interest. He caricatured the two statues of old men on the Royal college of Surgeons as ‘two misers,’ and the shield they hug as ‘guineas,’ and ‘that the whole was a sort of sign of the business carried on, in like manner as pawn brokers shops are distinguished by

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\(^{194}\) Soane’s innovation was both applauded and criticized by his contemporaries. His abstractions of the classical orders were described as ‘sins.’ See Abramson, *Building the Bank of England: Money, Architecture, Society, 1694–1942*, p. 120.

three great Balls & Barbers shops with long poles.’ (CH, 67) He further ridiculed ‘the celebrated facade’—‘magnificence & beggary [extravagance and parsimony] are so mixed.’ (CH, 67)

As Soane indicated, the ‘twin ruffians’ (the two great architects subject to economic interests) not only smote the rock of the architect, but also brought to ruin the architecture of truth, the house. In other words, the dilapidation of the house was ultimately caused by the allies of architects and speculative builders who sacrificed architectural principles for monetary interest.

This was precisely the reality to which Soane was becoming increasingly alert—the mortality of architecture in the age of commercialization. Soane was aware of how the speculative system of building demand was ceaselessly consuming its past for commercial gain, and destroying his ‘First principles of architecture.’ The Bank of England had been developed on the basis of demolishing earlier parts contributed by previous architects. He was alert to the demolition of much of historic London at the expense of expanding capitalism, as a result of manipulations by architects and speculative builders. As Soane sadly noted, elegant historic buildings were torn down. ‘Inheritances of the ancestors’ were changed into ‘streets of (the) monotonous.’ He lamented,

Somerset House, Ely House, Leicester House, Bedford House, Foley House, and many others, are no longer in existence. Some of those magnificent mansions until a few years past boasted of their grand and imposing courts, spacious apartments and extensive gardens. All are now swept away, and their sites, . . . are now occupied by miserable, monotonous, paltry, plastered dwellings.

For the increased value of the site occasioned re-building in a more productive manner, one side of Covent Garden burnt down.\(^\text{197}\)

The economizing system of our days, so destructive, so fatal to every principle of good architecture, has, I fear, doomed Burlington house likewise to destruction. . . . the ruin of the noble residence.\(^\text{198}\)

The very phenomenon of the elegant, simple historic buildings that contained memory and inspired imagination were erased by the banal, monotonous, fashionable buildings produced by the commercial architect-speculative builders. It was these architect-speculative builders who Soane perceived, were ungracious children’s rebel to their father. The *filii filiorum* of his loins, who should be ‘anxious to shew their gratitude for the benefits & care & comfort they

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\(^{196}\) RAL, Lecture XI, p. 257.

\(^{197}\) Ibid.

\(^{198}\) RAL, Lecture V, p. 134.
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derived from it,’ and ‘would have raised architecture to its meridian splendour’ but only left the house in a horrible condition – ‘no pillars nor fragments of pillars or burded cypresses have been found,’ (CH, 69) ‘no trace to be seen of the artist within its walls, the edifice presenting only a miserable picture of frightful dilapidation.’ (CH, 74) Soane asked:

to what causes are we to ascribe these mighty and growing evils which threaten speedily to overwhelm us in such darkness . . . The greater part of this growing evil arises out of the rage for speculative buildings and of a wretched system whose basis is sordid interest, a system which banishes all art and talent, renders study and application needless.  199

Relating to his awareness of the mortality of the architectural dynasty, Soane’s collecting mania may be seen as a counter action that could undo the work of commercial erosion. That this counter action was like petrification, a moment in which all the changes were arrested may be illustrated in Soane’s description of how the statue of Apollo Belvedere in the centre of the museum was a magician petrified, and his donating the house-museum to the nation with the stipulation that the ‘Trustees and their successors shall not (except in Cases of absolute Necessity) suffer the arrangement in which the said Museum or Collection or Library respectively shall be left by the said Sir John Soane at the time of his decease to be altered.’  200 The museum thus, as John Elsner argues, a kind of entombment, seeking to be a static hold-all, and a mausoleum of cultural products for preservation.  201

That this collecting or museumlization was an impulse for reconstructing an architectural dynasty may be better seen in the large group of architectural models in Soane’s collection. Soane possessed over one hundred scale models of his own buildings, some of which had never been built. He interspersed these models of his buildings with other models of antique buildings, the majority of which were displayed in a designated Model Room. According to various editions of the Descriptions of Soane’s house-museum (1830–1835), the attic Model Room stood at the end of the visit itinerary in his house, the supposedly stage for regeneration in the ‘rites of passage.’

In this model room, the visitor would see Soane’s own buildings marry with the classical models to form a single collection: on the upper shelf of the pedestal were models of antiquity’s buildings clustering around a large-size model of Pompeii, ‘the Ur-model of the very process of unearthing the ancient world,’ the endless potential of destruction and

199 Ibid.
collecting. Beneath the pedestal’s exhibition of antiquity’s finest building was a display of Soane’s own major works in miniature, such as the south-east angle of the Bank of the England, the Three per Cent Reduced Office, the Bank Stock Office and the original Design for the New Board of Trade and Privy Council Offices, at Whitehall.

This very placement provoked different ways of understanding. One possibility was that, as Elsner suggests, these Soanean buildings resting on the base of antiquity’s pedestal claimed descent from the antique. By invoking famous British architects, such as Sir Christopher Wren—some of whose collection of models Soane claimed to possess—and Sir William Chambers whose original designs filled the drawers of the pedestal—Soane painted an evolutionary picture of the progress of British architecture from the influences of Greek and Roman antiquity, through some of Britain’s finest architects, and finally to himself.

In this way, the museum reinvented the collection as an architectural dynasty, of which Soane was the heir. From another perspective, the supreme model of Pompeii, the buried city, that dominated the centre of the model room, not only commemorated its object (an archaeological site) but also the archaeological act of disintering ancient objects, the act of collecting them and thus authenticated the value of the collection institutionalized as a museum. In contrast to the spectacle of the city of London outside the window, a future ruin in a way, Soane’s museum remained a realm where Arcadian values were preserved.
Chapter 5

Conclusion:
The Arcadian funereal imagination and the construction of imperial identity

5.1 Thesis findings:
The Arcadian funereal imagination and the construction of imperial identity
5.1.1 Agriculture and free trade
5.1.2 Aesthetics and politics
5.1.3 Moral reintegration
5.1.4 National memory
5.1.5 Beyond binary subjectivity

5.2 Summary of findings

5.3 Implications for future research
5.1 Thesis findings: The Arcadian funereal imagination and the construction of imperial identity

This study has examined the Arcadian funereal imagination in its three forms: the imagination as the soul on an initiatory passage in Alexander Pope’s Twickenham villa; the imagination of the sublime in Sir William Chambers’ *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772) and his designs for Kew gardens (1757–63); the imagination as a creative force of simultaneous creation and erosion in Sir John Soane’s manuscript *Crude Hints towards an History of my House in LIF* (1812) and his house-museum in Lincoln’s Inn Fields in London.

In the first chapter, ‘An Odyssean journey: Alexander Pope’s Twickenham grotto and garden,’ the experience of the Arcadian landscape is interpreted as a journey that embodies ‘rites of passage,’ and the poet’s funereal imagination is examined as an identification with the itinerary through his Twickenham garden. Designed analogously to Arcadian rituals of initiation, the itinerary through the Twickenham garden includes a waterborne journey along the River Thames, entering the grotto, and then rising into the garden, each stage paralleling the experiences of death, transition or liminality, and regeneration. Tracing the content of these pseudo-initiatory rituals, I explored how they functioned as a medium through which to criticise the violence of new regimes, to engage in debate on contested ideologies and to envision redemptive social, economic and psychological structures. I suggested that this allegorical Odyssean journey—an imaginary rite for King Charles I—metaphorically anticipates the restitution of the Stuart dynasty and the reassertion of an imperial politico-economic order, such as that envisioned by Lord Bolingbroke, founded upon a rapprochement between the feudal past (aristocratic land ownership) and the new mercantilism (global trade). At the same time, I illustrated the relation between the ritual journey and the initiates’ self-understanding. The masonic injunction to ‘Know thyself,’ as represented in the journey through the subterranean Twickenham grotto, negotiates the Socratic ideal of a mind of absolute autonomy or authoritative all-knowingness, calling into question the self’s ability to gather itself fully around an autonomous ‘I,’ or an all seeing eye.

In the second chapter, the connections between the funereal imagination and the aesthetics of the sublime are examined. Built on the physiological principle of contractility, ‘the sublime,’ as Edmund Burke held, makes nerves contract, thus preventing otherwise languid nervous states. The thesis refers to this as the ‘Burkean sublime-effect.’ Drawing
parallels between the funereal imagination (the terrible, the surprising) in Chambers’ description of Chinese gardens in the *Dissertation* and those passions described in Burke’s *Enquiry* (i.e. sympathy, fear, memory, and military spirit), I suggest that Chambers’ advocacy of sublime landscapes was grounded in a concern to provoke such passions for moral effect. The passions evoked in citizens’ minds would counteract the different kinds of pleasures associated with ambition, abstract reasoning, and imitation and melancholy, which were perceived by the elite as corrupting forces that emanated from liberal-commercial society. Sympathy dispelled selfish desire; fear diminished the mind’s capacity for ‘reason’; memory anchored imitation; and the military spirit overcame melancholy. Taken together, these passions comprised a new language of civic virtue, emphasizing the sense of community—nation, country, and empire. In the Arcadian funereal imagination, the landscape is projected as an instrument of subject-formation, a medium that diminishes the sense of the individual self in favour of the nation.

In the last chapter, entitled ‘The eroding monument: Reading *Crude Hints* towards an history of my house in L[incoln’s] I[nn] Fields,’ I examined the architect’s ‘erosive’ text as his experiment in seeking and reconstructing a language suitable for the national character of eighteenth century ‘Britain.’ Contextualizing Soane’s geological and antiquarian interest, I suggested that the ‘first principles’ in Soane’s architectural theory may be identified with that in Athanasius Kircher’s theory of geocosm, i.e. the subterranean forces of simultaneous creation and destruction. Whilst the text, as a mirror of the house-museum, may represent the mind-earth, the funereal imagery of the text (and the house-museum) may be expressions of an ideal language based on ‘first principles.’ Four funereal images from Soane’s text are examined in detail: firstly his phrase ‘ruin upon ruin,’ whereby all monumental (upright and architectural) analogues for the sign are collapsed into the motif of the archaeological landscape; secondly, his persona of ‘the antiquary,’ which echoes in temporal terms that of the grand tourist in space; thirdly, his strange allusion to the architect as a ‘magician’ who has become an auto-monument’ through a process of fossilization, dissolving boundaries between art and nature, signifier and signified, and life and death; and finally his allusion to his ruined house as a ‘monument to dynastic ambition,’ which implies the post-revolutionary meaning of the monument—a reconstruction of dynastic imaginaries.

Through these three case studies, I showed that the Arcadian myth, via the three forms of the Arcadian funereal imagination, functioned as an instrument of ritual that facilitated the transformation of the social, political and cultural fabric of Britain during the social transitions associated with capitalism and modernity. During this period, these artists and architects, through their artistic practices, committed to the classical republican moral
order that stressed communal interest, as opposed to the increasingly dominant acquisitive individualism. Understanding that both country and national identity were going through a crucial transformation, the Arcadian artists and architects aspired to make their arts participate in shaping the new forms of governance and the national identity.

Through what may be considered ‘ritualized landscape performances,’ the Arcadian artists and architects expressed their cultural strategies as distinct from those of the bourgeoisie, critiqued the bourgeoisie’s emerging powers linked with capitalist development (e.g. industrialization, acquisitive individualism, democracy, instrumental rationalism, and progressivism), and negotiated relations among authority, self and British society. Their Arcadian imagination strategically helped the elite to meditate upon the duties, problems, dangers, and possibilities inherent in a new national identity. They promoted the vision of a utopian empire, with morally based socio-economic, political, and civic structures, for reflecting upon their own subjectivity and the mission of art per se. Below I will discuss how the Arcadian funereal imagination played its role in restructuring and transforming socio-economic, political, civic and psychological structures—the agriculture-free trade economy, constitutional monarchy, morality, national memory, and subjectivity—during the social transition.

5.1.1 Agriculture and free trade

The tension between the Walpolean government and the Opposition party between 1720 and 1750 emerged, as has been already noted, from a conflict between the aristocracy and the progressive Whigs over the issue of landownership and the economic system. The traditional system of landownership and agricultural economy was under the threats of reform and industrialization, driven by the progressive Whigs and the rising middle class. To defend their landed interests, social status, and political power, the elite promoted utilitarian farm activities and ‘agrarian improvement,’ as they simultaneously accused the new mode of landscaping (such as the conspicuous display of leisure parks) of lacking productivity and public concern. Against this background, the Arcadian myth of an agricultural civilization and a land inhabited by virtuous farmers, was employed by the elite as a powerful instrument to promote social imaginaries associated with an agriculture economy and underpinned by moral values.

In Pope’s Twickenham garden, as shown above, the Arcadian myth, orchestrated as an initiatory journey of different stages—separation, transition, and regeneration—rendered the mythopoetic not only as visual propaganda, but also as intellectually transformative. The
classical image of ‘Death in Arcadia’ lent the poet a medium for his lamentation of the degeneration of agriculture under the progressive Protestants’ land policy—the sequestration of land from the local gentry, the destruction of forests for profit, etc. By rendering the woodlands as the mythical Arcadia where nymphs and shepherds used to dwell, the poet provoked the contemplation of his audience, and implied his criticism of the government and nascent industrial development. The early environmental consciousness was thus expressed through the medium of Arcadian mythology.

But ‘Death’ in Arcadia was also used as a symbol of the fertility of the land. As the site of the final regeneration stage of the Arcadian mysteries, the garden—with both its agricultural and moral associations—became a vehicle to dignify the aristocrats’ advocacy of the agricultural economy and to emphasise the elites’ self-association with the frugal and virtuous farmers of that ancient Golden Age. In Twickenham, the ‘naturalness’ or utilitarian character of the Pope’s garden, as well as his farmer’s life style and agricultural labour, were vindicated by his references to Arcadia the Golden Age, as the poet skilfully framed the garden scene with the temple (with references to Apollo and Pan—gods of agriculture and fertility), as a perspective/prospective vision through the grotto-channel. In the camera obscura, Pope highlights the transience of the projection of the landscape of Windsor, where the agricultural woodland containing his child memory was replaced by new villas and parklands of display. This brown shade which melts the ‘treacherous colours ‘may indicate that the omnipresent death in an agricultural arcadia is a precondition for civilization: ‘deep harvests’ that bury all, and ‘laughing Ceres’ that reassumes the land. In this way, it develops an implicit criticism of the progressive Whigs policy which negated the land’s mortality and productivity.

The Roman ideology of reciprocal exchange became associated with Arcadia in Virgil’s Aeneid. The eighteenth-century British elite evoked the imagery of Arcadia—a sea-walled garden and this connotation with a moral reciprocal economy—in order to support their own engagement in global trade (a rapprochement between the feudal past, associated with aristocratic landownership and the new mercantilism associated with global trade). The evocation of Greco-Roman Arcadians—the perspective vision of sails on the Thames seen in Pope’s grotto—was helpful for the poet to construct a moral image for the elite’s economic activities, which they wanted to differentiate from the middle ranking mercantilist’s monetary culture.

The years between 1760 and the 1820s are the years of ‘improvement.’ To

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transform/ adapt to the new mode of capitalism or the entrepreneurial system, the landed class actively adopted new ways (e.g. enclosure, technologies) to enlarge their landed estates and to improve the productivity of the land. The rapid spread of ‘Enclosure’ and ‘Improvement’ damaged the interests of both the landless and the traditional community. Suffering the most from enclosures, the poor and the ‘little farmers’ voice was not consulted in the parliamentary acts. Meanwhile, agricultural economy and agrarian society were also facing the threat of commercialization. For the elite, wealth, acquired by means of the new economy and the displacement of the old agrarian establishment, contradicted the conventional notion of a moral economy and, thus, jeopardized the ideal of British liberty.

Availing itself of Arcadian imagery, Chambers’ Dissertation addressed both these issues. The Arcadian imagery of blissful woodlands in the winter and spring scenes, on the one hand, delivered the architect’s support for—unlike traditional Tories—Enclosure and new technologies, for implementing agrarian improvements. On the other hand, however, the Arcadian bliss also implied Chamber’s criticism of the landlords’ lack of public spirit and sensibility towards their social obligations. The frugal, virtuous Arcadian farmers, which contemporary readers would have understood, provided a valid moral standard to which self-interested landlords would have been compared and morally criticized. Similarly, Arcadia as a utopian agrarian landscape also allowed Chambers to highlight the excessive commercial landscape of eighteenth century British society in an unfavourable light. As in the summer scene, his depictions of the luxurious commercial gardens characterized a problematic national ethos and a corrupted upper class who were obsessed with the luxury of excessive improvement. The Arcadian vision of the cyclic pattern of civilization also underpinned Chambers’ narrative which employs a seasonal structure— the degenerate, melancholic autumnal scenes—succeed the summer (commercial) scene, which, in turn, succeeds the winter and spring (agriculture) scenes. Thus, Chambers proposed an alternative view of the development of civilization in opposition to the progressive Whiggish idea of commercial society as its highest form.

One point not brought out in Chapter Two, which is worth mentioning here, is that the Arcadian myth also served as an imperial mythology that defended British colonial adventures. To reduce the vast cost of importing agricultural products from other countries, the British government, from the late eighteenth-century, introduced the policy of growing crops in the lands of its colonies. This vision was clearly presented in Chambers’ Dissertation. For example,

On the borders of their lakes are seen extensive galleries, and many detached buildings, of different forms and dimensions, surrounded with plantations, seaports with fleets of vessels lying before them, sorts with flags flying, and batteries of cannon; also, thickets of flowering shrubs, meadows covered with cattle, corn lands, cotton and sugar plantations, orchards of various fruit-trees, and rice grounds, which project into the lakes; leaving, in the midst of them, passages for boats: and, in some places, the borders consist of lofty woods, with creeks and rivers for the admission of vessels . . . (DG, 47)

The imagery of Arcadia as a magic land transformed from a desert to an Eden, a recurring motif in classical literature, served the colonialists in their claims of the right to cultivate the ‘waste’ and therefore ‘unowned’ land. As Chambers presented, the traveller in the final stage of his journey in the oriental garden (an allegory of British colonies), with his magic and virtues, transformed a land from the wildness, where ‘serpents and lizards’ crawled upon the ground, into an Arcadia where there were extensive recesses surrounded with ‘arbours of vine and roses,’ and where ‘Tartarean damsels’ present him with ‘rich wines, mangostans, ananas, and fruits of Quansi.’ (DG, 30) The mythical land of Arcadia, was no longer limited to the British isles, but rather extended to the whole world. Thus Arcadia served the colonial imagination and supported colonialism.

5.1.2 Aesthetics and politics

The idea of landscape as a ‘sacred silent language’ promulgating ideologies is nothing new. The English landscape movement as propaganda for the Whig’s idea of liberty has been much discussed. Recently scholarship has started to pay attention to the Opposition’s use of landscape imagery in criticism of early eighteenth-century Whig domination. William Kent’s Temple of Ancient Virtue (1734) amidst the Elysian Fields at Stowe landscape gardens, for example, was a symbolic construction with such intent. Investigating the funereal imagination of the three artists and architects, I have demonstrated how funereal Arcadian imagery, a much neglected language, was used by the elite to appropriate and articulate their ideology of classical republicanism and constitutional politics under modern conditions.

In the case of Alexander Pope’s Twickenham garden, the Arcadian mysteries were employed

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as a model for the imagined funeral for King Charles I and the Stuart dynasty. The immersing swan is a persona for the dying regime. The visions shown in the opaque underworld and the broken mirrors decorating the grotto indicate an old body politic dismembered and a society without material substance. The imagined ritual performed at the shell temple in the Twickenham garden symbolized the rebirth of Apollo, the god of the sun—Charles I.

The inspiration for the Arcadian mysteries underlying the Twickenham landscape was not limited to the level of individual, emblematic elements. With reference to ‘rites of passage,’ the spatial experiences of the Twickenham garden were skilfully integrated into the three stages of the mysteries of death and regeneration. By this ritual-psychological structure, the poet orchestrated a journey which actively engaged the visitors’ imagination—the journey of visions impressed it, disoriented it, and transformed it. From mourning the death of the Stuart dynasty via the waterborne journey, to contesting democratic policies in the opaque subterranean grotto, and to anticipating a new moral regime’s regeneration in the garden, the Twickenham landscape provided a channel to release the suppressed emotions of the Opposition party and their associates, to negotiate with the dominating parliamentarian power, and for the Opposition to assert their redemptive ideologies.

Half a century later, Britain was faced with different political situation. Whilst the regime of George I and Robert Walpole had passed, the constitution was facing more complex challenges from both within and without. Progressive Whigs and radicals, following the Lockean liberal paradigm, questioned the legitimacy of the elite as a ruling class among different social groups. Externally, after the Seven Years War, the patrician was also confronted with the challenge of administrating its immense colonies. The post-war British empire needed new levels of control for its social educational machinery.

Against this background, the elite evoked the theme of the sublime, nurtured by the Virgilian Arcadian tradition, as an instrument to inculcate values. As Burke clearly articulated, the sublime is connected to the idea of power. He recognized that whilst there is a necessity for an awe-inspiring source of absolute authority in society (an ultimate source that can regulate human affairs) to maintain a traditional moral order, this source cannot be any ancient institutions, but may be expressed in the aesthetic. As Terry Eagleton has discussed, the aesthetic that emerged in the eighteenth-century signalled an historic shift on the part of enlightened absolutism in terms of the exercise of power: from coercion to

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British politicians and pro-romanticists exalted the sublime as a new kind of political requirement in a world in which the centralised structures of absolutism had been dismantled and where a substitute for absolute power needed to be constructed to mould people’s minds. Since Baroque times, Death, an absolute and universal limit on human conditions, which is omnipresent in Arcadia, was not a mere sign of memento mori. Illustrating the view of nature as a state of perpetual strife, life as suffering, ‘death in arcadia’ challenges the hubris that life is a benign condition in which rational individuals realize autonomous rule. In line with this Baroque tradition, the sublime entered the late eighteenth-century aesthetic discourse with ideological associations, representing the idea of coercive power in liberal British society.

5.1.3 Moral reintegration

Eighteenth-century Britain witnessed rising speculative rationalism, which divorced the union of religion and morality in traditional societies. Arcadia, as an age when religion and morality, [reason, sense and passion], virtue and happiness are in union, afforded a vision of moral integration. Reflecting on the classical literary tradition, intellectuals proposed to reunify religion and morality through poetic sensibility. Through the medium of the arcadian landscape, engineered into various hermetic ritual devices, artists engaged in the process of the British elite’s moral reintegration.

Religiosity and humanity

In contrast to the Lockean picture of the mind as a ‘dark room,’ Pope’s grotto is filled with ‘imaginary appearances.’ ‘Dark and full of Confusion,’ it is hardly receptive of pure Ideas, of ‘simple intellectual Truths.’ The show of phantoms, in line with the vision of the Eleusinian mysteries, may be seen as the poet’s reaction to the trend of speculative philosophy that emphasizes a clear demarcation of reality and illusion, or the conviction of the Enlightenment project, its hostility towards dark spaces.

In Twickenham grotto, appropriating the theological-moral associations of ‘perspective’ from the Renaissance, Pope’s ‘landscape way of seeing’— the perspective

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vision of the garden and sails through the channel—provides an example of how the linear perspective applied in early modern landscape design does not necessarily involve a ‘detached observer being beyond and outside, standing aloof from what is happening in the objective world.’ But rather the Twickenham perspective, with the renaissance theological association of death and regeneration of the soul, was a propagandistic instrument of Stuart restitution.

The final vision in the grotto—‘a thousand pointed rays’ in the sepulchral grotto might be viewed as a variation of the marvellous light at Eleusinian mysteries under which the goddess of death gave birth. The grotto, as a miniature of earth (or geocosm), is imagined as the subterranean world where the dead (atoms) is transformed to living. ‘The thousand pointed rays,’ as light of the dead or the ancients demonstrates the poet’s ideal of the reanimation of ancient genius, by following principles of nature.

Whilst Pope explored optical visions as a hermetic way of approach to truth, Chambers focused on the role of ‘scenes’ in theatres to reconstruct the virtues of the British elite. From the sensationalist perspective, Chambers, as well as Burke, emphasized the evocation of the tradition of Greek tragedy to cultivate poetic sensibility (identified with religious sentiment) in British citizens. According to Aristotle, the misfortunes that afflict the characters of tragedy are related to the flaw allegedly annexed to their virtue. In the new condition, tragedy depicting the suffering of others, as Burke’s theory holds, may be used as a device that produces sympathy, which counteracts selfish desire and ego-centrism. As we have shown, the representation of the devastated situation of the poor and the colonists in the scenes of the terrible, are meant to evoke sympathy, a natural ‘restraint’ on the free will of the upper class, who may then initiate reforms. The sublime here functions to reduce the expanded ego, and to strengthen fellow feeling among different classes in society.

**Martial values**

The constitutional crisis is mingled with the sense of national decline, as the deepening commercialization was perceived to have enervated the elite class’ martial values, the core of republican virtues. Adapting the ancient Arcadian rituals, Chambers contrived a passage through a ‘trial of elements,’ a pseudo-military expedition, with references to wars. The pseudo-military passage’s conception was also derived from the Stoic philosopher, Seneca,

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who considered *virtus* as an intrinsic quality against fortune, most characteristically displayed under battlefield conditions. Chambers’ pseudo-military passage, by giving the body painful and disturbing stimuli and bringing it ‘to the verge of pain,’ gave the otherwise languorous nerves labour and exercise, as if to put the body through the purification of war, immunizing it against the corrupting effects of the luxuries produced by commercial society. Thus the passage creates a new martial identity, a reflection of the Stoic idea of life as a moral journey.

Chambers further proposed to apply the military passage to urban landscapes, aiming to transform everyday traveling experiences into pseudo rituals for building moral-military character. The city is a key notion in classical republicanism. It provides the environment—a public space—for human fulfilment in terms of participation in public affairs for the common good. For the eighteenth-century elite, London, as the *axis mundi* of the British Empire, maintained a rather unsavoury reputation for political corruption, mob violence, and crime. It is to the end of transforming and restructuring social morals that Chambers proposed his ‘landscape city’ project, disguised behind a Chinese mask. According to his imagination of ‘the surprising,’ the irregular, the uncertain, and the adventurous experiences of landscape are not about pleasing the eyes, but rather they awaken the senses from the languor that results from the enjoyment of luxury, from the soft feelings of love and grief, and from what Burke called ‘the sink, that melting, that languor’ of the beautiful. The transportation system, the city, or even the country per se, built as a landscape garden, thus comes to act as Burke’s ‘homeostatic device,’ a kind of displacement of the rigors of military experience, by which the state implements a sort of ‘imperceptible control,’ and whereby the moral effects of the latter are translated into the context of modern commercial society.

### 5.1.4 National memory

**Death for the fatherland**

In post-Glorious Revolution Britain, religion no longer offered a place for an afterlife. Collective secular identities, such as country or nation, instead, were invented as compensations for the erosion of the transcendental horizon. An aggregation of values including republicanism, ‘liberty,’ franchise and ‘country’ emerged as a new collective entity to which individual beings were assimilated.

Death, sacrifice and devotion, echoing Greco-Roman heroism and the Christian legacy of martyrdom, are forged as a noble idea and the greatness of duty to which the elite
are committed. The conventional social bond of loyalty to the king and the elite class, accordingly, was increasingly replaced by ideas of ‘death for country,’ an idealized sacrifice and devotion to republican values. Emphatically men of rank and title, Homer and Virgil’s Arcadian heroes’ sacrifice of their lives for the sake of honour and country served as the elite’s models. The descriptions of battlefields in epics provided the source for British artists’ imagination of a landscape associated with sacrifice and devotion to the glory of one’s ‘country.’ Death for the fatherland was not only to defend the elite’s status and honour, to reintegrate the fragmented social, moral structures (previously used by authority and religions to undergird the structures) into a heroic span of views, but also to provide a shared national memory which could provide a unified sense of ‘Britishness.’

As an admirer of the military scenes of Homer, Pope extolled the ‘most picturesque imaginable’ visions of battlefields: the pastoral vision of sails on the Thames river in his imagination might have been compared to the crude battle scene in *Iliad* in which the Greek ships were set on fire by the Trojans. Such imagination integrated into the Twickenham landscape itinerary brought the Greco-Roman heroics of sacrifice and heroism into the British here and now.

But the idea of ‘death for the fatherland’ was more exalted in monuments. The British elite were aware that war monuments or memorials are mnemonic devices. They particularly availed of this role of monuments to materialize and commemorate British military and naval victories. In this way, they manipulated national memory, which, as Burke holds, ties together the various faculties of the mind—sensibility, imagination and judgment.

Both Chambers and Soane proposed that statues, memorials, and monuments of war heroes should be placed in grand landscape settings to reinforce their public impact. In Chinese disguise, Chambers envisioned ‘the banks of dull moving rivers, whose shores are covered with sepulchral monuments, under the shade of willows, or in the mountains, on each side of these imperial roads, erected great memorials of national heroes, ‘at the expense of the state, and furnished with nervous inscriptions, … giving an account of the lives and actions of those they commemorate.’ (*DG*, 289) Similarly, Soane, following Chambers, his Royal Academy master, called forth at his lecture, ‘Let us hope that the young professors of the fine arts, … will be called upon to erect churches, palaces, and national edifices commemorative of the glorious achievements of our Nelsons and Wellingtons.’

For these architects, the monument—as we discussed in the Introduction—replaced the history of expansionist England and Britain, creating a sense of a shared past as free

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British men’s defence of republican values and liberty. One recalls Chambers’ re-performance of Aeneas’ visit to the underworld, which has the aim to impress the collective memory of a republican past upon contemporary citizens’ minds. Thus the monument brought a new coherence of definition to British identity.

The imperial expansionism inscribed in memory/history as ‘Posthumous Fame’ (1806) or ‘Funeral and Sepulchral Honours’ (1811),\(^\text{10}\) was commemorated and celebrated as sacrifice and devotion to the republic and liberty. For the citizens, the experiences of monuments in the City are consolidating episodes and tendencies that were likely to assist them in adopting equable, coalescent views of their new union. Thus the visits to war monuments were an active exercise of British citizens’ new nationhood. The Arcadian heroic landscape—by commemorating the moment of death—thus played a key role in the regeneration of social moral values, and the cultivation of national cohesion of the British ruling class in the eighteenth-century.

**Imperial Grand Tourism**

Since the seventeenth century, the imagination of Arcadia has attracted the elite class to the lands of antiquity whence they were to acquire the final touch of education. Along with Grand Tourism prospered antiquarianism. All sorts of artefacts and material culture of Greece and Roman were collected and displayed in private collections and museums. I discussed that the imagination of Roman Arcadia offered the elite class a shared Roman memory, and the desire to re-construct Arcadia promised a common future.

Grand Tourism, keenly practiced by the British elite in the eighteenth century, may be seen as an essential part of the elite’s project of making Roman memory. Readers of Cicero and Quintilian, the elite, were familiar with the art of memory which was commonly practiced by Romans in the late Republic and early empire. The travel experience in the land of Antiquity, for the elite, would have been like a structuring, expanding and enriching of their Roman memory. As I discussed in the case study of Soane’s text and museum, Soane deliberately arranged the travel itinerary that he would take during his Grand Tour. Visiting those buildings with which he had already been familiar through his years of training in England, the travel to Rome was to provide the ‘opportunities of seeing,’\(^\text{11}\) to be in ‘intimate

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\(^{10}\) These are titles of essays that won the Chancellor’s English prize at Oxford in the early nineteenth century. The authors are, respectively, Edward Garrard Marsh and William Attfield. Quoted in Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT: London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 168.

distance’ with the original artworks, so that he might seize the ancient’s spirit, becoming a real artist ‘who would do what the ancients would have done,’ not be a mere copyist. Paintings, drawings, prints, statues, casts as ‘souvenirs’ of these experiences, were brought back to London, where they were reassembled, as in the case of Soane’s house-museum. The emergent museums—private collections—are such reminiscences of the elite’s Grand Tour experience, and implicitly, are mnemonic theatres where they can practice the art of memory. Thus, through travelling, collecting, and displaying, the elite structured, and practiced their Roman memory. Such activities, as pointed out above, were politically supported and politically motivated. Imperial Grand Tourism was used to authenticate the history of the united empire.

It is important to note, as I have discussed, that in Soane, as in many other British contemporary connoisseurs’ collections, the artefacts are not organized within a conceptual frame of evolutionary, temporal and stylistic development and thus reflecting a growing historical consciousness. But rather they appear as a random ensemble/assemblage, a method that was often called the Neo-classical method. Soane’s text reveals that this seemingly random sequence rather follows what was perceived as the most natural, original principle of creation, namely, the ‘first principle.’ Soane identified the first principle with the movement of the Earth, as simultaneous creation and erosion, as Athanasius Kircher’s model of ‘geocosm’ holds. This principle reflects Hermetic-Neoplatonic ideas of the process of the universe. Rather than a linear process, the Hermetic-Neoplatonic view of the universe is a process of degeneration, achieving regeneration following deterioration. This view was influential in Renaissance Arcadian literature, a Baroque secular exposition of history. As Walter Benjamin summarized, it is a cyclic history punctuated by violence and wars, history as the suffering of the world. This sensibility of the Arcadian catastrophic tradition underpinned the ahistorical [Neoclassical] assemblage of collections and museums in eighteenth-century London.

This ideology was exploited by British imperial power to legitimate both its cultural roots and imperial appropriations. This cyclic catastrophe—a history of invasions and violence—was used to construct British prehistory. As we read in Soane’s fabulist text, buildings and cities of Semiramis, of Roman Vestal Temple, and of a monastery in ancient


Greece were all conjectured to be buried underneath his house-museum. This vision echoes the Renaissance antiquarian view that the prehistoric development of Europe had been stimulated by the diffusion of culture from the Near East. The successive waves of invaders and settlers in the British Isles were portrayed as having brought fresh ideas to Britain and constituted the ‘British past.’ The national greatness of Britain, as so constructed, was not attributed to its ethnic and cultural purity, but rather, to its heterogeneous roots. Such a syncretic identity based on heterogeneous cultural roots was useful for the construction of a cosmopolitan identity in the late eighteenth-century multi-ethnic empire.

In reverse, this catastrophic view of history or memory supported contemporary Britain's imperial strategy of invasion and cultural imperialism. Identifying creativity with the law of Nature/Earth — destruction and regeneration out of fragments, the British removal of artefacts in Greece, Egypt, the Near-East and other parts of the world that was taking place at the time, which Soane termed ‘barbarian archaeology’ gained legitimacy. As Soane states, Rome obtained its high achievement in arts ‘not from Roman talent, not even love of art,’ but from its spoils. A contemporary writer, Soane's friend, Barbara Hofland’s articulation is more expressive, commenting on the sarcophagus in Soane’s museum, she writes,

> to remove, is not to desecrate; and if the spirits of the departed
> hover round their ashes, neither the matron nor the warrior whose
> dust reposes here have cause to bewail their destination; —in a land
> of freedom, arts, and arms, they rather have regained than lost the
> country worthy of their love and their adoption.\(^\text{14}\)

The artists were convinced that the removal of artefacts from other countries is a preservation of the world, and hence, British memory. As these artefacts will be so carefully studied and assembled by scholars in the ‘land of freedom, arts, and arms’ that the ancient imagination within these artefacts can be reanimated to inspire the creation of new wholes. In this way, the imagination fulfilled its Neoplatonic cycle and transformed into the perfection of art style which contributed to the cosmopolitan identity of the new British Arcadia.

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5.1.5 Beyond binary subjectivity

The thoughts of the three artists/architects discussed in the thesis are loosely associated with the issue of ‘subjectivity.’ Reacting to current events and modern assumptions, these three artists were noted for scepticism toward the foundations and structures of knowledge. Below I summarize how the Arcadia myth functions as a medium for the elite to contemplate and question the existing binary oppositions concerning matters of subjectivity, e.g. conscious and unconscious, man and nature, mortality and immortality.

Conscious and unconscious

‘Et in Arcadia Ego’—the inscription on the tomb in Arcadia suggests that the ‘ego,’ which existed in the past, is in absentia. In the Roman tradition, a house is a burial place, a monument to the owner. In Renaissance imaginings of Arcadia, the monument as a sign of the ego, the ‘One,’ is, however, a ruin. The idea of landscape thus seems indicate the idea of perfection as incompleteness, a process of fragmentation.

The identification of the self with the house is clearly seen in Soane’s vision. The entombed vestals, the petrified magician, and the architect who died from persecution, all are possible owners of the house. As I have shown, they are all the plural personae of Soane himself. The immense archaeological landscape at Lincoln’s Inn Fields is an aftermath of a dilapidated house, the ‘One’ fragmented, and an ego dismembered. In Soane’s mind, the archaeological landscape results from the release of the imagination—the creative force which comes from the subterranean convulsions. Death in Arcadia, for Soane, may be seen as the architect’s play, rather than suffering. The ritualistic dismembering, for Soane, is the means of releasing the imagination/unconscious from the constraints (the vertical, closed architectural system, that is associated with neoclassic formalism), and the imagination can extend into an infinite past through processes of association. The Arcadian ruin, here the archaeological landscape, represents not a nostalgic desire to emulate golden ages, but rather a celebration of the destructive yet formative power of the subterranean convulsion, the regeneration of the monument/sign, and the ego. In this way, the Arcadian archaeological landscape may represent the dangerous enlightenment conception of subjectivity. Empowered by undirected and unlimited subterranean energy, the self was construed as limitless, producing a version of human infinitude where the conventional limits of law and politics are simply eliminated.

But the ruinous landscape also represents the ambiguity of the architects’ personas. A product of the era of transition (from enlightenment to romanticism, as often noted, or from
traditional society to modernity), they all exhibit a persona as a ‘liminar,’ betwixt and between. In both their writing and their works, one observes contrary impulses existing side by side. ‘Created half to rise, and half to fall,’\textsuperscript{15} Pope’s ‘Man’ hangs between two states of being; Chambers, a man of strong principle and scrupulous artistic conscience, adhered staunchly to the classical traditions, yet exhibited wild imagination when being ‘Chinese’; Soane’s inconsistency between his Royal Academy lectures—a conservative classical approach and his innovative, if not subversive, practices, embodied in the two voices of the narrative—the doctrinal and the imaginative; conservative and revolutionary in \textit{Crude hints}.

The ambiguity of their subjectivity is illustrated in the half-sunken image of their works: the subterranean grotto, the ruinous arch, and the unfathomable catacombs beneath the ruined house-museum. Instead of standing alone monumentality, their shared half-sunken image recalls the sphinx, an image in \textit{Crude hints}. Hegel described the sphinx as a symbol of a primitive ‘sign.’ Half animal and half human, the sphinx, for Hegel, represents the self-conscious that is struggling to break away from its roots in the unconscious; or reconciling with its lower selfhood. But what the Arcadian artists showed was an opposite tendency: rather than struggling to break away from the unconscious, they exhibited a ‘fatal attraction’ towards a union, a return, to the unconscious, or death. Pope’s grotto, a misty underworld filled with confusion, precisely resembles what Geoffrey Harpham has characterized as the unconscious, ‘a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations.’\textsuperscript{16} The recurrence of the scene of Aeneas’ visit to the underworld in both Chambers’ Chinese gardens and Soane’s antiquarian imagination, represents modern subjects seeking the primitive experiences of the human species. These subterranean experiences indicate the possibility of such a descent into the unconscious depths making a reconciliation of ‘the cloudy strife’ of the ego consciousness possible. And this depth, moreover, includes a unifying and collective element, a ‘One’ common to all individuals. And, as we see in Soane’s imagination of the house as an unfathomable ‘ruin upon ruin,’ that ‘One’ at the psyche's bottom even served the Romantics as the ultimate core of the cosmos, as the ultimate essence of Nature itself.

\textbf{Man and Nature}

In \textit{Techniques of the observer} Jonathan Crary has discussed the relation between western concepts of ‘subjectivity’ and the camera obscura. ‘What is sacrificed to the frame of the camera obscura … is the flux and mortality of nature.’ What is gained from the subsequent

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Essay on Man}, II, line 15.
separation of 'knower and known' is 'the appearance of a new model of subjectivity ... a figure for both the observer who is nominally a free sovereign individual, and a privatized subject confined in a quasi-domestic space, cut off from a public exterior world.'

Subjectivity thus emerged as a condition that involved separation from nature and a hardening of the self. The Arcadian monument, however, permitted an alternative approach to the construction of subjectivity, because the tomb, in its simultaneous erosion and preservation, inspired ideas of seeing the relation between man and nature, words and things. At the invocation of death, the monument is not a representation of the hardening subject—rather it melts the boundary between man and nature, word and things.

The invocation of pain and death, as I have shown, gripped the mind with fear, thus overwhelming the ego. It has a rhetorical capacity to denounce subjectivity. The Arcadia myth provides the very occasion for pain and death (as the real) erupting in their most traumatic forms in what is otherwise a landscape of ‘estrangement’: on the one hand and ultimately, they represent the unspeakable and unimaginable experience of death itself; on the other, pain as that experience of the subject as an organism whose content cannot be remembered and adequately represented or transmitted by language. The Arcadian artists’ attention was drawn to pain and death: the ‘brown horror’ that enveloped the transient landscape; the encounter with pale images of ancient kings in subterranean tombs, and the dragons yielding flames in dark passages; petrifaction, as in the examples of—both fictional and real—the ammonites, Lot’s wife, and the magician—Apollo Belvedere. Originally natural objects, a living being, became an auto-monument in its petrification. The boundary between sign (art) and object (nature) in classical aesthetics was blurred at death.

The myth of death in Arcadia provides a channel to release the dissatisfaction with the neoclassical formalist model of culture as well as the conventionalist view of reality, as if the real, repressed in classicism, had returned as traumatic. As Terry Eagleton insisted in his critique of the excesses of textual constructivism, it is through the body’s suffering that we are most incontrovertibly unsettled by an awareness of the limits of our ability as individual subjects to comprehend and determine our existence. Conversely, the most real representation of the self is not anything abstract or transcendent, but is the (dead, real) body of its own. As an object that literally, both is and is no longer the real individual it represents,

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the auto-monument collapses the difference between signifier and signified; and thus disturbs normal assumptions about art and things.

**Mortality and immortality**

The eighteenth-century was an era that witnessed the mortality of a dynastic ideal. The revolutionary energy, a force that was once applauded for breaking traditional rules and releasing creative energy, turned out to be out of control. Soane is a witness/victim of this radical turn in revolutionary power. A revolutionary himself, he reflected deeply on this radical turn. His son, George, revolted against his father’s wish that he become an architect. As a Professor of the Royal Academy, Soane deeply felt the mortality of architecture. The ruin was no longer a celebration of the creative imagination, and liberated subjectivity, but rather the ruin became a monument to failed dynastic ambition. As shown in *Crude hints*, Soane imagined his death as ‘fall from rock,’ an image of patricide, recalling the fragments (a foot and a hand) of the colossal statue of Constantine that are mentioned. Furthermore, he is deeply concerned with mortality and the possibility of being forgotten without trace. This fear was betrayed in the image of the house as a ruin, a dilapidation, which fell into oblivion after the architect’s death.

In its simultaneous erosion and preservation, the Arcadian monument emerged as a redemptive order for the dissolving dynastic ambition. The house-museum, an Arcadian monument, came to represent what Göran Blix referred to as an ‘urgent archival impulse that reflected the period’s sense of its own mortality.’ \(^{21}\) Collecting as a magic science is capable of undoing the work of erosion and rescuing even the most traceless beings from amnesia. And in that capacity collecting offered an imaginary guarantee that nothing was truly lost and that every life left some kind of legible trace. In this way, Soane’s house, ‘petrified’ as a museum, in theory, preserves the owner’s being.

But Soane’s museum reflects more than simply an archival impulse of the owner; it reflects a desire to retrieve control of a dynasty imagined. To borrow John Elsner’s analysis of Soane’s model room, one can see that the museum is an imaginary world created by the owner as a whole. \(^{22}\) The models and drawings of models, while constantly parading their formal and stylistic reference to the past, ignore the real chronology, but subject to the architect’s mind. Interiors within an interior, the models, miniatures of Soane’s ideal

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constructions, or the ego, gesture to an infinite series of centres within centres.

The twin spectacles in the model room at the end of the itinerary are revealing: the real city displayed by a series of spectacular views of London through the windows, and a fantasy world comprising a cornucopia of antiquity’s proudest buildings in little models arranged on a pedestal in the centre of the room. The juxtaposition of the twin spectacles may be seen as a modern version of ‘Et in Arcadia Ego’—a wonderfully self-reflexive Soanean joke. It reveals the subject’s desire—a spatial recession or descent into ever more interior space and archaeological recession into ever more ‘remote antiquity,’ where utopian ideals and hopes for a dynasty may be preserved. But as mausoleum in the cosmopolitan city, the museum is itself liable to future plunder.

5.2 Summary of findings

The thesis focusing on the theme of ‘Et in Arcadia Ego’ employed two innovative research approaches:

1. examining the mythology of Arcadia in its social, political, and cultural context— one that is receptive to Hermetic-Neoplatonic thoughts— an important, but neglected strength of the western humanist tradition; and

2. interpreting the western idea of ‘landscape’ (e.g. seeing and journeying) as evolving through practices of the rites of initiation, or ritualistic performances, which are interwoven with social, political and cultural practices.

Contextualizing the mythology of Arcadia in the imagination of the elite class during the period of social transition in eighteenth-century Britain, this thesis reveals an innovative, transformative dimension of landscape— namely, the early modern pastoral landscape did not emerge merely as a bourgeois, individualist exercise of power over space, but rather the landscape was a ritual instrument through which the elite constructed their economic, social-political, and cultural strategies as distinct from those of the bourgeoisie.

These strategies of the elite, as discussed above, may be summarized as below.

1. The Arcadian myth of an agricultural civilization of the Golden Age vindicated the elite’s economic policy of emphasizing agriculture and a free trade economy. Applying the myth in their landscape gardening and city landscaping, the ruling class promoted social imaginaries associated with the development of agriculture and free trade, as opposed to the bourgeoisie’s marketing economy, thus ensuring their social-economic interests.

2. The classical republican paradigm of Arcadia functioned as a counter-value to democracy during the discussed period. Spatial expressions of classical republicanism, ‘rites
of passage’ and the theme of sublime (terror) were evoked as instruments of ritual to construct moral-based hegemonies which consider communal interest.

3. Aesthetic-ritualistic performances in landscape, reinvented from classical literature, were introduced to both the elite and the public. Such performances were aimed at re-integrating the fragmented social and moral order as well as reconstructing citizens’ republican virtues amidst the new commercial society.

4. In the context of eighteenth-century Britain, the Arcadian tomb, or monument over which the funeral rites were performed, became the locus for shaping new concepts of citizenship and nationhood. As nexus of emotions, monuments provoke both feelings of the loss of love and contemplations of the meaning of death for the country. Visits to monuments, continuing the role of the Eleusinian Mysteries in Greek-Roman society, were an active practice to hold the people of the country together.

The Grand Tour—seeing the landscape of the land of antiquity may be considered as a ritualistic journey (appropriating the rites of initiation in ancient mysteries) for shaping the elite’s Roman memory and imperial identity; collecting and displaying the cultural artefacts of antiquity, that were organized along routes approximating the initiatory itineraries, indicate their role in provoking imperial memories and shaping cosmopolitan identities.

5. Landscape has previously been explored as a way of seeing/experiencing the external world by which modern subjectivity was constructed. This approach neglected an earlier, long-standing tradition associated with Hermetic-Neoplatonic philosophies, which were derived from antiquity through the Renaissance and lasted into the early nineteenth century. Focusing on this tradition, the thesis illustrates how seeing and experiencing landscape functioned as a medium for the elite to contemplate questions regarding man and nature, consciousness and unconsciousness, mortality and immortality, all contesting the legitimacy of the emerging speculative and mechanistic systems.

By situating landscape in the context of the rituals of initiation and ritualistic performances, and by noting the influences of Hermetism-Neoplatonism woven into the European cultural fabric, this thesis not only makes an important contribution to the studies of landscapes, gardens and architecture, but also includes landscapes, gardens and architecture within the broader discussions of applied social anthropology. Whilst this innovative inclusion paves the way for future studies of the mythologies of landscape in

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relation to the processes of spatiotemporal social or individual change, in several ways it reveals a potential interest and new directions for landscape and architecture studies.

## 5.3 Implications for future research

Several landscape concepts and terms have been reoriented towards new directions for future research. For example, the concept of ‘geocosm’ sheds new light on eighteenth-century notions such as ‘nature,’ ‘first principles,’ and the ‘picturesque.’ Attention to the practices of the art of memory combined with ritualistic performances among the eighteenth century British elite provokes a rethinking of cultural phenomena such as the cult of ‘ruin,’ antiquarianism, and museumology. The demonstration of ‘having seen’ as a higher stage of the Eleusinian mysteries and as a desirable Greek form of existence provides a new platform for understanding the idea of ‘landscape as a way of seeing.’ These important landscape concepts and terms merit further investigation following these new directions in order to enrich our cultural understanding of landscape.

This thesis selected the Arcadian funereal imagination of the elite and the making of eighteenth-century Britain’s imperial identity as the two main objects of research, but the reorientations suggest a range of future directions for landscape gardens and architectural studies of the early modern period in Europe. In particular, the approaches to landscape gardens in terms of their being instruments of rituals and cultural strategies to counteract the bourgeoisie and individualist exercise of power may be rich avenues to follow. Applications of such approaches in which rituals and cultural strategies become forms of resistance to capitalist expansion may also shed new light on the landscape exchanges (e.g. *chinoiserie* and ‘Egyptian revival’) that occurred between Europe and other countries during the early modern period.

Whilst an inter-disciplinary approach is hardly novel in contemporary academic research, this study re-emphasises that connecting landscape studies with other scientific fields of endeavour may indeed be fruitful. As the thesis has demonstrated, the study of the Arcadian landscape may be taken up not only in connection with conventional artistic disciplines, such as architecture, poetry, and painting, but may go beyond the arts and humanities, to constitute a new comprehensive and integral scientific discipline.

As a cultural practice, landscape imagination interacts with a wide range of fields such as optics, geology, archaeology, physiology, anatomy, and cosmology. A social, economic, and political discourse, landscape imagination is associated with the development of social economy, city construction, moral integration, and the development of the state. As
a ritualistic performance, landscape imagination is nurtured by not only speculative philosophies, but also by mythical thoughts such as Hermetism and Neoplatonism, and was informed by the ritual and cultural activities of the Academies and Societies such as those of the Freemasons. Students of landscape imagination may therefore benefit from enquiries into the above fields, and accordingly, their novel research will make important new contributions to such disciplines.

A better understanding of the early modern funereal landscape imagination, which was a conscious reaction to the advent of the crises of modernity, will provide inspiration to contemporary landscape education, by provoking very different perceptions of the environment from those produced by the dominant commercial picturesque. Such a better understanding will inform us to move beyond modernity and use the resources of funereal imagination to contribute to solutions to shared environmental and ethical-social problems (e.g. detachment/estrangement, decreasing landscape diversity, loss of identity). As the investigators of ‘Landscape and Imagination’ 24 exclaim, whether seen from a natural, linguistic, ideological, social or cultural point of view, milieus (relationships between society and its environment) and space subconsciously but substantially influence our ways of being, seeing and acting in the world. The contemporary significance of the Arcadian funereal landscape imagination may also be viewed from this direction.

References to the most frequently cited sources are incorporated into the text and are listed in the Abbreviations above. These sources are not repeated here.


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