



Gardens in Literature: Looking Back from an Anthropocentric World

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Abstract

From the famous poem *The Garden* by Andrew Marvell, to that of Seamus Heaney's *Digging*, gardens have been depicted as idyllic places, as in classical pastoral poetry and Renaissance poetry and symbolic of ideas about identity, the past and memory. In what is now suggested by the scientists as the appropriate term for the controversial last geological period, some starting it with The Industrial Revolution and some dating it as early as the Agricultural Revolution and the Neolithic Age, "the anthropocene", the human outlook on gardens and nature as a whole has to be reassessed. The globally catastrophic threat of the immanent extinction of humans as a species loudly drawn attention to by Slavoj Žižek in his 2012 text *Welcome to the Anthropocene*, calls for a further repositioning of the human than the ecocritical approaches up to now. In this light the whole world can be seen as Eden, the 'Garden of Bliss' about to be lost by humans who have inextricably doomed themselves in capitalism. This paper will look at the depiction of gardens in various examples of literature such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, religious poems, Romantic Poetry, Bacon's Essay on Gardens, Shakespeare's plays and Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland within an anthropocentric framework.

Key Words: anthropocene, gardens, planet earth, Eden, nature

Gardens in Literature: Looking Back from an Anthropocentric World

We must protect the forests for our children, grandchildren and children yet to be born. We must protect the forests for those who can't speak for themselves such as the birds, animals, fish and trees.

Qwatsinas, Hereditary Chief Edward Moody, Nuxalk Nation¹

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1. Qwatsinas, 'Chief Spirit of The Raven', was an indigenous Canadian activist who was prisoned several times for his defense of the land against loggers. For more detailed information on Qwatsinas and his struggles see Edward Moody, "Between the Lines. Remembering Chief Qwatsinas".
http://www.nuxalk.net/media/remembering_chief_qwatsinas.pdf . Web 15.04.2017.

I. Introduction

From the famous poem *The Garden* by Andrew Marvell, to that of Seamus Heaney's *Digging*,² gardens have been depicted as idyllic places, as in classical pastoral poetry and Renaissance poetry and symbolic of ideas about identity, the past and memory. In the light of what is now suggested by the scientists as the appropriate term for the controversial last geological period, the "anthropocene," (Kolbert,2011) some starting it with the Industrial Revolution and some dating it as early as the Agricultural Revolution and the Neolithic Age, the human outlook on gardens and nature as a whole has to be reassessed. (Monastersky, 2015, March 11). The globally catastrophic threat of the immanent extinction of humans as a species, loudly drawn attention to by Slavoj Žižek in "Welcome to the Anthropocene," in his renowned book *Living in the End Times*, (chap. 4) calls for a further repositioning of the human than the ecocritical approaches up to now. In this light the whole world can be seen as Eden, the 'Garden of Bliss' about to be lost by humans who have inextricably doomed themselves and the planet earth to extinction under the capitalistic economic system based on profit and materialistic interests. Looking from this perspective, the whole world indeed is 'Xanadu' in which there were

gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Emfoling sunny spots of greenery. (Coleridge, 8-11)

to be written in the past tense.

That the earth is comparatively insignificant in relation to other planets has been pointed out as early as Cicero's *Scipio's Dream*. (Ciceronis, *De Amiticia; Scitio's Dream*) Envisioning in his dream "a vast panorama of the 'Milky Circle', the Roman general Scipio sees that '... all the stars were vast far beyond what we have ever imagined...The earth itself indeed looked to me so small as to make me ashamed of our empire, which was a mere point on its surface'"³ (Ciceronis, par. 4).

This sufistic realization, seemingly anachronistic, connects to the philosophy at the back of the anthropocentric views concerning worries about humans cutting the very branches on which they sit. It is, however, not Carthage, or the innumerable empires or the symbolic Garden of Eden or The Vineyards of Babel that exist no more, but the whole planet that is at stake with Marvell's "nectarine and curious peach" , Shakespeare's, "... little western flower" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* upon which "the bolt of Cupid fell turning the milk-white flower into purple with love's wound which maidens call love-in-idleness" (2 .1.538-540), and Wordsworth's

2.The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.

Earth tilled for livelihood is also used by Heaney metaphorically for the history of Ireland and people's identity shaped by land.

Seamus Heaney, "Digging". <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47555/digging> . Web.18.Sep.2017.

³ I am indebted to Güven Çağan , Ph.D. Candidate of Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey for this reference to Scipio's Dream albeit in another context. "Teachings of Cosmic Unity through Vertical Journeys in *The Magus* and *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*." MA Thesis, Istanbul University. 2016.

... host of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. (1807/1815)

Both the secular and religious approaches to humans' relationship with nature and the warnings concerning the destruction of the only planet⁴ have been full of insight and foreboding long before the coining of the word 'anthropocene.' The poems, essays, novels and short stories are replete with the reverence and awe for the beauty of the world and regret at its destruction by natural forces as well as by the hand of humans. The aim of this paper is to draw upon a wide range of secular and religious literary material from different centuries as a tribute to the hailing of the beauty of nature by humans, pointing out to the immanent danger of the extinction of what up to now is found out to be the only inhabitable and inhabited planet in the fathomable parts of the universe. As the quotes are meant to show, it is a certain sensibility that should be sustained in order to uphold the consciousness needed for the preservation of 'home'.

The English poet and hymn writer Dorothy Frances Gurney depicts the Garden of Eden in her poem *God's Garden* as "laid down by the hand of God" where "hawk" and "wren" nest together peacefully as in Heaven. As a Catholic, Dorothy Frances Gurney feels, like the Muslim mystics, the sufists, who feel close to God in nature that one is nearer God's heart in a garden. As the great sufist poet Rumi says :

Behind the beauty of the moon is the MoonMaker.
There is Intelligence inside the ocean's intelligence
Feeding our love like an invisible waterwheel.(Abdelhamid, 2014, July 2014)

II. Nature versus 'Civilization' Created by Humans

One of the most famous poems of the Seventeenth Century, Andrew Marvell's "The Garden" (1681) is both a poem and a painting, narrative and representational at the same time. Spinning fine threads with words, Marvell refers to the famous stories of antiquity and classical mythology that have been the subject of both literature and art concerning the importance of gardens and nature over civilized life. The bliss of "quiet", "innocence" and "delicious solitude" is to be found in the company of flowers and plants and trees away from society. Trees are wounded as if they are humans of flesh and blood when men carve their lovers' names on their barks. Humans' interference with nature is no different from wounding other humans because trees are part of the same life force as humans. However, as Marvell continues further on in the poem, the most passionate lovers of mythology like Apollo and Pan cherish their lovers most when Daphne turns into a tree and the nymph chased by Pan turns into Syrinx, a reed. Hence, immortalization of humans lies not in the destruction of nature but in its glorification. The mythological gods' lovers symbolically turn into trees such as daphne giving 'laurels' as natural crowns and reeds emitting music:

When we have run our Passion' heat,
Love hither makes his best retreat.
The *Gods*, that mortal Beauty chase,
Still in a Tree did end their race.

Apollo hunted *Daphne* so,
Only that She might Laurel grow;

⁴ The motto of the Discovery Channel.

And *Pan* did after *Syrinx*'s speed,
Not as a Nymph, but for a Reed. (Marvell, 1681)

Printed posthumously in *The Miscellaneous Poems* in 1681, Marvell's poem is a homage to nature reminiscent of the *Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh* dating from Third Dynasty of Ur (circa 2100 BCE) about Enkidu who lost his "innocence" and "fair quiet" when he left nature and went to the city-state Uruk to befriend King Gilgamesh. Enkidu's killing of Humbaba, the God of Nature, in the forest no human has entered before, has brought his own death, foreshadowing the anthropocene of today's world. According to scientists the calamity has, in fact, started with man's sparking the first fire. The so-called 'civilization' caused humans to disrupt the 'entanglement' they were a part of and turned them against nature.

Finding a parallel between the fertility of women and the fertility of the earth thousands of years back, human communities thought of the creator as a goddess. In Greek mythology Gaea (Gaia) the earth goddess gives birth to "the heavenly Gods through her union with Uranus, the sea-gods through her union with Pontus (Sea), the Gigantes (Giants) from her mating with Tartaros (the Pit)" and mortal creatures were born directly from her earthy flesh (together with Chaos and Eros she was one of the primal forces, the mother of everything. Her Roman name was Terra ("Gaea", 2017, Jan.3).

In *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, it is the Goddess Aruru who has created Gilgamesh. Although he was expected to be wise and "the shepherd of his people" (Sanders, p.4), he took away the wives of nobles and the newly-wed. At last the people cried to the gods for help. The creation of Enkidu as a mate for Gilgamesh sets the man of nature against the civilized man, the man of the city-state as a sort of early warning for man's disconnection from nature:

His body was rough, he had long hair like a woman's; it waved like the hair of Nisaba, the goddess of corn. His body was covered with matted hair like Samuqan's, the god of cattle. He was innocent of mankind; he knew nothing of the cultivated land. (Sandars, 1972, p. 4)

This innocence of 'the cultivated land' and of 'mankind' recalls the idyllic past before humans built dams and city walls and temples taking nature within their control, thus destroying nature in the name of 'civilization' cutting down the cedar forests in Lebanon as the first steps of deforestation. The quotes from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* are given at length since they provide the most revealing testimony in literature for the scientific explanations concerning the beginnings of the disentanglement of humans from nature and their negative agency in its destruction:

Enkidu ate grass in the hills with the gazelle and lurked with wild beasts at the water-holes; he had joy of the water with the herds of wild game. But there was a trapper who met him one day face to face at the drinking-hole, for the wild game had entered his territory. On three days he met him face to face, and the trapper was frozen with fear. He went back to his house with the game that he had caught, and he was dumb, benumbed with terror. His face was altered like that of one who has made a long journey. With awe in his heart he spoke to his father: 'Father, there is a man, unlike any other, who comes down from the hills. He is the strongest in the world, he is like an immortal from heaven. He ranges over the hills with wild beasts and cats grass; he ranges through your land and comes down to the wells. I am afraid and dare not go near him. He fills in the pits which I dig and tears up my traps set for the game; he helps the beasts to escape and now they slip through my fingers.' (Sandars, p. 4)

Enkidu's loss of innocence from spoiling the traps in order to save animals from the trappers, to his destruction of the forest, with King Gilgamesh for fame, disturbs the balance of nature, 'disentangling' the harmonious order, leashing chaos and destruction unto the world angering Enlil the God of Creation. Anthropocene could not have been more forcefully expressed in literature. The forest, before Gilgamesh and Enkidu cut the trees down, was full of cedars providing beautiful and comforting shades with greenery of the brushwood pleasing to the sight:

Together they went down into the forest and they came to the green mountain. There they stood still, they were struck dumb; they stood still and gazed at the forest. They saw the height of the cedar, they saw the way into the forest and the track where Humbaba was used to walk. The way was broad and the going was good. They gazed at the mountain of cedars, the dwelling-place of the gods and the throne of Ishtar. The hugeness of the cedar rose in front of the mountain, its shade was beautiful, full of comfort; mountain and glade were green with brushwood. (Sandars, p.9)

Looking at the might of the forest and the mountain Gilgamesh said:

'If we touch him the blaze and the glory of light will be put out in confusion, the glory and glamour will vanish, its rays will be quenched.' Enkidu said to Gilgamesh, 'Not so, my friend. First entrap the bird, and where shall the chicks run then? Afterwards we can search out the glory and the glamour, when the chicks run distracted through the grass.' Gilgamesh listened to the word of his companion, he took the axe in his hand, he drew the sword from his belt, and he struck Humbaba with a thrust of the sword to the neck, and Enkidu his comrade struck the second blow. At the third blow Humbaba fell. Then there followed confusion for this was the guardian of the forest whom they had felled to the ground. For as far as two leagues the cedars shivered when Enkidu felled the watcher of the forest, he at whose voice Hermon and Lebanon used to tremble. Now the mountains were moved and all the hills, for the guardian of the forest was killed. They attacked the cedars, the seven splendours of Humbaba were extinguished. So they pressed on into the forest bearing the sword of eight talents (Sandars, p.11)

Enlil's rage at the killing of Humbaba the symbolical protector of the forest long before the Christian God's expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden is more meaningful from an anthropocentric viewpoint to use today's terminology, as it concerns humans' devastation of nature for human vanities such as leaving an immortal name behind. Behind it lies openly the cutting of the trees for cedar wood to make boats for trade on the Tigris and Euphrates and erect temples for supernatural powers they have created in their own imagination attributing their own assets to them:

They uncovered the sacred dwellings of the Anunnaki and while Gilgamesh felled the first of the trees of the forest Enkidu cleared their roots as far as the banks of Euphrates. They set Humbaba before the gods, before Enlil; they kissed the ground and dropped the shroud and set the head before him. When he saw the head of Humbaba, Enlil raged at them. 'Why did you do this thing? From henceforth may the fire be on your faces, may it eat the bread that you eat, may it drink where you drink.' Then Enlil took again the blaze and the seven splendours that had been Humbaba's: he gave the first to the river, and he gave to the lion, to the stone of execration, to the mountain and to the dreaded daughter of the Queen of Hell. (p.11)

In his essay “Welcome To The Anthropocene” in his much acclaimed book *In The End Of Times*, the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek comments at length on the uncontrolled capitalistic greed and how it will bring the end of the world (2010) or as Elizabeth Kolbert, the Pulitzer winner of 2015 for non-fiction for her book *The Sixth Extinction* and the staff writer for *The New Yorker*, has labelled it, ‘The Age of Man’ (*National*, 2011).

The Garden has a vivid description of the sensual pleasures of an idyllic garden that yields its fruits just like the Tree of Life in the Garden of Immortality before the patriarchal turn of the creation myth according to the Bible (Campbell 13). In solitary silence, in this garden, will Marvell taste “ripe apples” that “drop about [his] head”:

The Luscious Clusters of the Vine
Upon my Mouth do crush their Wine;
The Nectaren, and curious Peach,
Into my hands themselves do reach;
Stumbling on Melons, as I pass,
Ensnared with Flow'rs, I fall on Grass. (Marvell, 1681)

In this garden Marvell creates in his imagination another garden of the mind which is full of images from real nature. His mind is like ‘ocean’ and his soul perches like a bird and sings on the boughs of a fruit tree, feeling blessed to live in his mind’s paradise, all by himself:

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
Withdraws into its happiness;
The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find,
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas;
Annihilating all that’s made
To a green thought in a green shade. (1681)

The imagination of Marvell as a Metaphysical poet caused him to describe the garden as an earthly paradise where he found “fair quiet” and “innocence” in its solitude away from the company of men. In contrast “society is all but rude” (15). The allusion made to the Garden of Eden before Eve was created away from the company of women and away from the pressures of society is analyzed elsewhere as a psychological supplementation of Marvell’s disillusionment in his private love world and public life causing him to invent an imaginary ‘hortus closus’ where he closes himself up (Creaser 150). However, although autobiographical information about Andrew Marvell allows for such an interpretation, it is also apt to read the poem within the pastoral tradition which self-reflexively creates a paradise of the imagination that is only possible in the innocent quiet of a “green garden-state.” Contrary to John Creaser’s assertion of confinement, Marvell finds himself in liberty as an artist in the state he describes in *The Garden*:

Such was that happy garden-state,
While man there walk’d without mate
After a place so pure and sweet,
What other help could yet be meet!
But ’twas beyond a mortal’s share
To wander solitary there:
Two paradises ’twere in one
To live in paradise alone. (1681)

Unfortunately for Marvell, this blissful immortal state before Eve was created was not meant for “a mortal.” If he could retreat forever to the silence of the paradise and the paradises which his own intellect would create, that would indeed be double paradise for him. To the Romantic imagination, a sufist-like state of solitude was a *sine qua non* for the creation of one’s own flow of time and existence. Marvell’s poem is imbued with religious sentiment. Although he later spoils it by creating a ‘mate’, nature is “sacred” and God is the skillful Gardener who offers humans and all creatures the Paradise where they can live without life’s disappointments amidst “green thoughts” (Marvell, 1681).

Coleridge’s masterpiece *Kubla Khan* remains unsurpassed as a poem of pure imagination which carries the reader to Xanadu where Kubla Khan had a pleasure dome built, “a sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice” (1816) :

And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Emfoldd sunny spots of greenery. (Coleridge,1816)

Kubla Khan’s gardens in the vast territory enclosed with walls fragmented the nature outside, wild and uncontrollable, like the Mogol Emperor Kubla Khan himself. Alph, the sacred river ran tumultuously and uncontrollably with a life of its own:

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher’s flail:
And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river. (Coleridge, 1816)

In *Kubla Khan* nature overflows man’s desire to enclose part of it within its walls. True to the ‘anthropogenic’ views of the world, man cannot measure each of its recesses. Humans cannot control nature completely despite their efforts to enclose it whimsically. As Robert Frost has so succinctly put it, in nature

Something there is that doesn’t love a wall
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast. (Frost, 1914)

Humans should be thankful for this idyllic paradise and marvellous nature on earth so revered by poets and artists, savouring each moment with joy.

However, instead of being thankful, they enter the Cedar Forest to cut down the trees, disrupting the harmony of nature, killing the spirit of nature (Humbaba), angering Gods and drawing their wrath. The continuation of deforestation with the cutting of the Amazon rainforests is its culminating example as a threat to the very existence of the planet, definitely a threat to the existence of all livelihood since these forests are ‘the lungs of the planet.’

The harsh reality of urbanization intertwined with brutal capitalism, devastating humans and nature alike, is vividly conveyed by Arthur Miller in his 1949 Pulitzer and Tony award winning play *The Death of A Salesman*. The average American cannot escape from urbanized city-life to Walden like Thoreau, but has to endure, like the salesman Willy Loman, the loss of the natural surroundings he grew in that crushes his spirit and turns him into a miserable

depressive creature suffocating in the space surrounded by huge apartments just as Willy Loman's once spacious house with a garden now is. As the play starts:

A melody is heard, played upon a flute. It is small and fine, telling of grass and trees and the horizon. The curtain rises. Before us is the salesman's house. We are aware of towering, angular shapes behind it, surrounding it on all sides. Only the blue light of the sky falls upon the house and forestage; the surrounding area shows an angry glow of orange. As more light appears, we see a solid vault of apartment houses around the small, fragile-seeming home. (Arthur Miller, 1961, p.3)

Arthur Miller's vivid depiction of the contrast between the natural beauty of the garden now surrounded by apartments which have spawned as a result of urbanization give us another literary description of how capitalism has destroyed the beauty of not only the trees and plants but the horizon as well, recalled into memory by "a melody, played upon a flute" (Miller, p 3). Arthur Miller thus gives us the literary version of Slovak Zizek's criticism of capitalism as a system in the destruction of natural surroundings.

III. Bacon's Essay on Gardens

Known for his treatises on empirical natural philosophy, Francis Bacon saw nature as a thoroughly complex system waiting for the natural philosopher to unravel its secrets. He described nature as having a language distinct from those of God and man and advocated the scientific approach to decipher the language of nature. (Stanford. 2003).

Scientific endeavours for the interpretation of nature, together with Charles Darwin's revolutionary *The Origin of Species* published in 1859 with his vision of the natural world as a struggle for survival between competing species, has brought new understanding to the decipherment of this language. Scientific facts and methods that show the paths for the saving of earth's ecology address humans' reasoning faculties. It is, however, a change in the Weltanschauung and the sensibility towards nature that will do the magic trick if at all.

In the "Essay on Gardens" that he wrote in 1625, Francis Bacon laid down the outline for Renaissance gardens. This essay was an important source for the literature of the Renaissance poets and writers including Shakespeare. It is in itself important for the rich variety earth gave humans as a gift to be enjoyed and cherished. The fact that the gardens were enclosed by the aristocracy is yet another sign of humans' efforts to control nature and confine it within limits. These gardens were spacious enough to enclose forests. They were royal gardens suitable for palaces. Like Dorothy Frances and Gerard Manley Hopkins, Bacon says that:

God Almighty first planted a Garden; and, indeed, it is the purest of human pleasures; it is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of man; without which buildings and palaces are but gross handy-works: and a man shall ever see, that, when ages grow to civility and elegancy, men come to build stately, sooner than to garden finely; as if gardening were the greater perfection. (Francis Bacon, 1625, para. 1)

According to Bacon gardens should be seasonal, i.e., different flowers should be planted for each season since each flower yielded a unique smell and sight appropriate to their peculiar season Bacon's gardens appealed to both the senses of smell and sight. They are much like the medieval gardens depicted in 'Roman de la Rose', those by Boccaccio and Dante as well as the gardens in Chaucer's works. Chaucer's awareness of the non-human world and a scope of the

universe much wider than the earth is explicit in his *Parlement of Foules*. The rich catalogue of trees, as Simone Alias shows in her doctoral thesis titled *An Ecocritical Approach to Chaucer. Representations of the Natural World in the English Literature of the Middle Ages* is proof of Chaucer's rich knowledge and depiction of nature in his works:

The byldere ok, and ek the hardy asshe;
The piler elm, the cofre unto carayne;
The boxtre pipere; holm to whippes lashe;
The saylynge fyr; the cipresse, deth to playne;
The shetere ew, the asp for shaftes pleyne;
The olyve of pes, and eke the dronke vyne,
The victor palm, the laurer to devyne.
(PoF, 176-182 qtd in Alias, p.175)

Bacon does not advise ponds to be constructed in gardens because of frogs and flies but fountains are refreshing:

For the Heath, which was the third part of our plot, I wish it to be framed as much as may be to a natural wildness. Trees I would have none in it, but some thickets made only of Sweet-Briar and Honeysuckle, and some Wild Vine amongst; and the ground set with Violets, Strawberries, and Primroses; for these are sweet and prosper in the shade; and these to be in the Heath here and there, not in any order. (para. 6)

There should be alleys for shade and the main garden should have fruit trees on the side roads. (para. 7-8)

Bacon's wish to 'tame' even heaths according to humans' desire is a striking sign of the psychological make-up of the Anthropocene.

IV. Shakespeare

In *Measure for Measure* Isabella describes the medieval garden enclosed and ready for the meeting of lovers secretly:⁵

⁵ The walled garden played an important symbolic role in medieval art and literature, both religious and secular. Christians saw the enclosed garden - in Latin, the 'hortus closus' - as a symbol of the perpetual virginity of Christ's mother, Mary. The metaphor derived from a verse in the biblical 'Song of Solomon': "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed."

The secular equivalent was the 'hortus deliciarum', the garden of pleasure. It too was an enclosed space protected from the rigours of everyday life, a place where the wealthy, particularly women, could enjoy cultural amusement and intellectual inspiration.

Both gardens usually had flower-strewn lawns, sometimes called 'strews', rather than beds of flowers. The grass was often raised to form turf seating. Trellises with grape vines and climbing roses were popular, and many gardens had decorative fountains or fish pools at their centre.

Tree branches were trained to form shady arbours where ladies could enjoy the air without fear of compromising their fashionably pale complexions by exposure to the sun. Tanned skin was the sign of the labouring classes: wealthy women aspired to having skin as pale as alabaster.

All these features appear in the idealised garden of the 'Roman de la Rose', which is planted with date palms and spice trees, as well as peaches, quinces, cherries and nuts. It's carpeted with flowers of every colour and season, and inhabited by gentle creatures of the forest: the hart, rabbit and squirrel - each having symbolic associations with femininity or fertility.

See more at:

<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/roman-de-la-rose> Web.10.04.2017.

ISABELLA. He hath a garden circummured with brick,
Whose western side is with a vineyard back'd;
And to that vineyard is a planched gate,
That makes his opening with this bigger key:
This other doth command a little door
Which from the vineyard to the garden leads;
There have I made my promise
Upon the heavy middle of the night
To call upon him. (4.1. 1825-1833)

These gardens were formal and artificial with ‘knots,’ deviating from nature, “tortured” into whimsical shapes as Addison described them in his famous essay in *The Spectator* in 1712: “Our British gardeners, instead of humoring Nature, love to deviate from it as much as possible. Our trees rise in Cones, Globes, and Pyramids; we see the mark of Scissars upon every plant and bush” (Addison). In *The Winter’s Tale*, William Shakespeare has Perdita and Polixenes comment on nature and artifice. Leaving aside the metaphorical references of this dialogue to Perdita’s adoption and identity, the focus within the scope of this article will be on Polixenes’ idea that nature is by far the greatest art:

PERDITA. The fairest flowers o' the season
Are our Carnations and streak'd Gillyvors,
Which some call nature's bastards: of that kind
Our rustic garden's barren; I care not
To get slips of them.

POLIXENES. Wherefore, gentle maiden,
Do you neglect them?

PERDITA. For I have heard it said
There is an art which in their piedness shares
With great creating Nature.

POLIXENES. Say there be;
Yet Nature is made better by no mean,
But Nature makes that mean: so, over that art
Which you say adds to Nature, is an art
That Nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentle scion to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race: this is an art
Which does mend nature, change it rather, but
The art itself is nature. (4. 4, 1950-1972)

V. Through The Looking Glass

In the dreamlike world of ‘Wonderland,’ another example from fantastic literature, a human child, Alice, can communicate with flowers and the insects and animals just like Enkidu could, before he encountered other humans upon which the animals would not come near him. The harmonious unity in a paradise-like garden and forest takes us back to the Eden of Christian mythology of creation before humans tasted the fruit of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge in Eden that caused their fall, indeed to the innocent state when there was the Tree of Life from which both gods and goddesses could equally take their share (Campbell, p.13).

That was before humans' agricultural settlement, their taming the animals and exploiting natural resources beyond the endeavour to provide merely for their livelihood. The Anonymous Wintu Woman of the Winnemem Wintu tribes, who lived in the 19th Century, significantly said:

When we Indians kill meat, we eat it all up. When we dig roots, we make little holes. When we build houses, we make little holes. When we burn grass for grasshoppers, we don't ruin things. We shake down acorns and pine nuts. We don't chop down the trees. We only use dead wood. But the white people plow up the ground, pull down the trees, kill everything. ... the White people pay no attention. ...How can the spirit of the earth like the White man? ... Everywhere the White man has touched it, it is sore. (Magoc, p.50)

Lewis Carroll in *Through the Looking Glass* magnificently sets the 'house,' a human construct, which can be read as a symbol of the anthropocene on Alice's path to keep her from reaching the hill from where she can get a good view of the garden. The text speaks for itself; it ranks with Shakespeare in its depiction of Nature as the natural habitat of all life forms including humans if they can "only connect" (p.198), to adapt E. M. Forster's famous dictum from *Howards End* (2001):

'I should see the garden far better,' said Alice to herself, 'if I could get to the top of that hill: and here's a path that leads straight to it — at least, no, it doesn't do that ... This goes straight back to the house! Well then, I'll try it the other way.'

And so she did: wandering up and down, and trying turn after turn, but always coming back to the house, do what she would. Indeed, once, when she turned a corner rather more quickly than usual, she ran against it before she could stop herself.....

'Oh, it's too bad!' she cried. 'I never saw such a house for getting in the way! Never!' (p.155).

Human made constructs keep "getting in the way" (p.155), obstructing the path to nature, disconnecting and alienating humans from the rest of the natural habitat. Determined to go into the garden Alice, the wonder child, tries another way whence:

.... she came upon a large flower-bed, with a border of daisies, and a willow-tree growing in the middle.

'O Tiger-lily,' said Alice, addressing herself to one that was waving gracefully about in the wind, 'I wish you could talk!'

'We can talk,' said the Tiger-lily: 'when there's anybody worth talking to.'

Alice was so astonished that she could not speak for a minute: it quite seemed to take her breath away. At length, as the Tiger-lily only went on waving about, she spoke again, in a timid voice — almost in a whisper. 'And can *all* the flowers talk?'

'As well as *you* can,' said the Tiger-lily. 'And a great deal louder.' (Carroll, pp. 155-56)

Not only do flowers and nature have a language of their own but they do not need any human intervention for survival. They suffice unto themselves for survival. "Aren't you

sometimes frightened at being planted out here, with nobody to care for you?” (Carroll, p.157) asked Alice. “There’s the tree in the middle, said the Rose, what else is it good for?” (p. 158).

VI. Conclusion

Humans’ speaking the same language with flowers and animals, just as Enkidu did before he lost his innocence by moving to the city of Uruk, is not a dream but a fact in the American Indian cultures whose mythologies are replete with folk tales about their ‘entanglement’ with nature. The American native Indians had similar ideas about the humans’ relations with nature ; they reprimanded “the white man’s” loss of sensitivity in this respect.

An anonymous Turkish folksong, attributed to one of several folk singers by the name of İrfani who lived in the 19th century, says: Tread carefully and wisely on earth /so as not to not bruise it. ‘Uz’ or ‘us’ bas kunduranı yer incinmesin: ‘uz’, in Turkish, has a double-entendre, meaning both ‘intelligence’ i.e. ‘wisdom’ and ‘usulca’, that is, slowly and carefully (Sözce, n.d.). This sufist folksong is in the same spirit as Gerard Manley Hopkins’ poem *God’s Grandeur* that conveys vividly and with intense feeling the tragedy of how humans have callously disrupted its beauty and have grown insensitive to its riches:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod. (1877)

However, with his Catholic sensibility, Hopkins feels that if day is following night it is only because God is protecting nature with ‘warm breast’ and ‘bright wings’

The “dissociation of sensibility” (T.S.Eliot, 1921) has reached its peak and catastrophe after catastrophe will hasten the total annihilation of planet Earth, ‘the lonely planet’ and the only Garden of Eden.

The alienation of humans from nature and the loss of their mythological, mystical and romantic outlook in the capitalistic web that they have found themselves entangled in, as poets Theophilus and Theophilact, the father and uncle of the great Victorian poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, have so succinctly expressed in *Pietas Metrica*, has caused them to become ‘backward’ (p. 68). It is their wrong economic system and Weltanschauung -the loss of “the feeling of piety with external nature and our daily thoughts” (vii):

Alas for man! day after day may rise,
Night may shade his thankless head,
He sees no GOD in the bright, morning skies
He sings no praises from his guarded bed. (p. 68)

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