



New Interdisciplinary Approaches to Early Modern Culture: Confluences and Contexts

THE POEM AND THE GARDEN IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

**RIVAL MEDIA IN THE PROCESS OF
POETIC INVENTION**

Deborah Solomon



THE POEM AND THE GARDEN IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

This book draws attention to the pervasive artistic rivalry between Elizabethan poetry and gardens in order to illustrate the benefits of a trans-media approach to the literary culture of the period.

In its blending of textual studies with discussions of specific historical patches of earth, *The Poem and the Garden* demonstrates how the fashions that drove poetic invention were as likely to be influenced by a popular print convention or a particular garden experience as they were by the formal genres of the classical poets. By moving beyond a strictly verbal approach in its analysis of creative imitation, this volume offers new ways of appreciating the kinds of comparative and competitive methods that shaped early modern poetics. Noting shared patterns—both conceptual and material—in these two areas not only helps explain the persistence of botanical metaphors in sixteenth-century books of poetry but also offers a new perspective on the types of contrastive illusions that distinguish the Elizabethan aesthetic.

With its interdisciplinary approach, *The Poem and the Garden* is of interest to all students and scholars who study early modern poetics, book history, and garden studies.

Deborah Solomon is an assistant professor in the Department of English at Auburn University and specializes in early modern British literature and culture. She has published on manuscript and print culture, Milton's use of the pastoral mode, and Shakespeare's garden imagery.

New Interdisciplinary Approaches to Early Modern Culture: Confluences and Contexts

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The Poem and the Garden in Early Modern England

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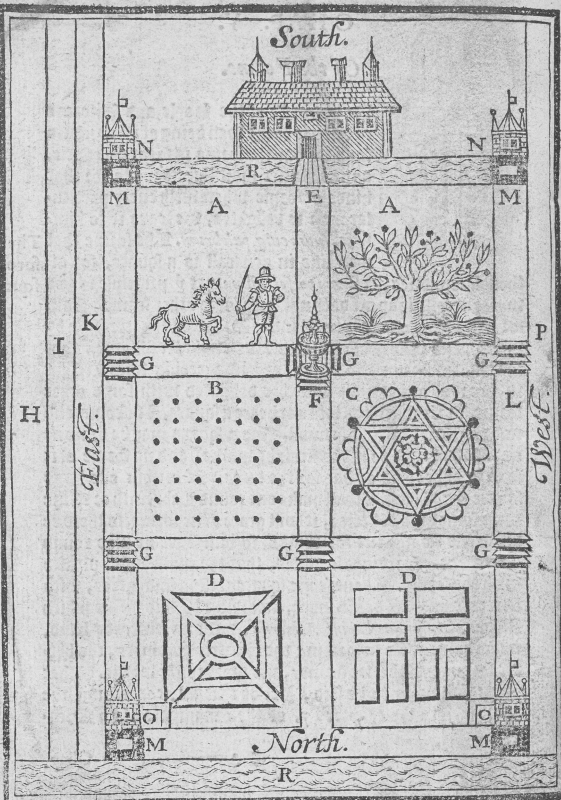
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FRONTISPIECE William Lawson's *A New Orchard and Garden* (1618), STC 15329

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To my magician,
who always knows how to help.

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INTRODUCTION

Commonplace Concerns

Scroll through the titles of sixteenth-century English printed works and a pattern will very quickly emerge of poetry masquerading as choice garden growth: *A Hundreth sundrie Flowres bounde up in one small poesie* (1573), *A Posie of Gilloflowers* (1580), *Brittons Bowre of Delights* (1591), *The Arbor of Amorous Devices* (1597), *Englands Parnassus: or the choysest flowers of our modern poets* (1600), and *Bel-vedère, or, The Garden of the Muses* (1600). As Rebecca Bushnell observes, “the most frequently cited metaphor for the book in early humanist pedagogy was that of the garden.”¹ Yet, the very prevalence of such garden imagery has too often rendered it invisible, particularly to modern readers, for whom the “commonplace” tacitly equals the “trite.” To miss this widespread convention of comparison, however, is to miss a vibrant trans-media exchange of art between garden and poem—one that resonated deeply throughout the larger aesthetic debates of the period, including that of print culture. Frequent metaphors of the poet as gardener signal certain notions about authorship and creativity, while metaphors equating poetic material and garden matter, such as those in the titles above, signal particular habits of experiencing lyrics and collections of lyrics. Consider the convergence of poetic and horticultural art in the Tudor court alone: while Henry VII made extensive changes to his royal estates, including “goodly gardeyns” and “galeries” “uppon the walles,” Skelton, his poet laureate, in *A Goodly Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell* planted the poet’s work (both process and product) within the *locus* of the garden.² Henry VIII so ambitiously extended his father’s garden legacy that his reign began what Roy Strong has called the “cult of the royal palace,” within which atmosphere his court poets transformed the English lyric through the adoption of the sonnet form.³ Queen Elizabeth’s iconic progresses from one aristocratic garden to another encouraged the image of an idyllic garden nation, so that the poets seeking her favor, notably Gascoigne, Sidney, and Spenser, responded lavishly with a body of work that celebrated her person and the nation’s literature through

2 Introduction

garden tropes. Both resonant with classical authority, gardens and poetry concurrently became distinguishing features of a cultured, cultivated life. But what are the implications of acknowledging an aesthetic relationship between these two art forms? How might spatial compression in the formal garden relate to syntactical compression in couplets and epigrams? What about the influx of biblio-botanical tropes in printed works? How might the elaborate, interlaced knots of the Tudor garden correspond to the distinctive print conventions of the 1590s sonnet sequences? Can one unacquainted with the intricate patterns of a knot garden fully appreciate George Puttenham's description of rhyme as a kind of "knot ... more or lesse busie and curious, all as the maker will double or redouble his ... concords and set his distances farr or nigh"?⁴

This book addresses such questions by analyzing a wide range of early modern uses of garden imagery, focusing in particular on poetic invention as a trans-media process. More specifically, it examines how garden features (such as floral ornamentation, enclosures, and parallelism) offer meaningful new ways of reading lyric's stylistic conventions (both in terms of *mise-en-page* and verbal figures). Underlying the many aesthetic distinctions and conflations between garden and lyric can be found a courtly discourse of floral duplicity and display. Poetic allusions to flowers and vegetal metamorphosis represent both the female courtier's "transformation into an aesthetic object" as well as the male courtier's role as a "cultural ornament to the court."⁵ Also symbolized in the metamorphic qualities of these garden images is the poetic process of transformative imitation, in which each new rendition of an image or theme adapts to changes in genre or style. In fact, the highly modish tendencies of garden and lyric creation pose useful questions about the purpose of lyric and its significance in a given culture. In "Reading Wyatt for Style," Jeff Dolven explores the sixteenth-century lyric experience in terms of its "fashion"—that which "excites imitative desire."⁶ A similar attention to style as a means of social distinction governed the creation of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century gardens, as evidenced by the popular herbals and gardening manuals of the day, whose titles routinely advertised plants and patterns of the "latest and rarest fashion."⁷ But the metaphor of the garden as a book of poetry—of flowers as pieces of poetry—was more than just a favored trope for a handful of poets who enjoyed garden imagery. It was a deliberate and politically inflected metaphor used to advance the larger humanist project of recreating a distinctively English golden age, through both horticultural and literary means.

One way to understand the full significance of the garden and poem as rival media is through their shared participation in Ovidian mythology. Picture the iconic scenes of poetic origin in classical mythology. Zeus and Mnemosyne (Memory) bring forth the nine Muses to describe the beauty of the world and celebrate its history.⁸ For their home, the Muses choose to inhabit a garden, or perhaps gardens appear wherever the Muses reside; the flowers that grow in these gardens double as textual ornaments, and those who manage to pick them or sip their nectar never lack for eloquence. The hoof of the winged horse Pegasus

strikes the ground of their idyllic home on Mount Helicon and a fountain springs up; all those who bathe in this fountain or drink of its waters find immediate inspiration. Of course, naturally occurring spaces of beauty also participated in these scenes of poetic origin. Daphne flees through her woodland haunts from the leader of the Muses, Apollo. When she cries out for help, she is transformed into a laurel tree just as Apollo's hand reaches her hardening skin. Apollo then breaks off one of her limbs as an ornament for his lyre and a symbol (or is it the cause?) of his poetic skill. In another wood, another nymph—Syrinx—flees from Apollo's rival, Pan. When Syrinx cries out for help at the edge of a river, she is transformed into a reed just as Pan's arms surround her pliant form. Pan then creates musical pipes from her newly metamorphosed body in order to replicate the sound his sighs made when shaking her green stems. Elsewhere, Philomela innocently follows her brother-in-law into a dark forest, where he violently robs her, first of her virginity and then of her tongue. When she and her sister Procne take revenge, they are transformed into songbirds (a nightingale and a sparrow, respectively), forever captivating their audiences, but forever lacking the words to articulate their emotion. In yet another sylvan scene, Echo falls in love with Narcissus, who eventually scorns her love; the young nymph pines away until nothing is left of her but a mimicking voice, echoing among the trees and rocks. Narcissus pays dearly for his arrogance; he falls in love with his own reflection in a pool of water and languishes on the green-shaded bank until, in turn, nothing is left of his body but a "yellow floure with milke white leaues."⁹ Orpheus sits upon a hill, "Fayre gréene with grasse," to mourn the loss of his wife through music.¹⁰ The song he composes is so beautiful that it moves the immobile, speaks to the inarticulate, and touches the insensate; the very ground around the poet transforms itself as an audience of trees, birds, and stones gather to listen.

Assembled here in this short litany of originary tales can be found some of the most familiar concepts and strategies of early modern poetry. The fact that Zeus creates the Muses for a specific purpose signals the occasional nature of lyric poetry and the systems of patronage by which its topics were chosen. The Muses' first harmonious compositions indicate the civilizing power of poetry as both mimetic and mnemonic. The culling of various kinds of rhetorical "flowers" from the Muses' gardens symbolizes the practice of gathering snippets of wisdom or poetry into miscellanies—also called "florilegia" or "sylvae"—a practice central to the larger humanist project of transplanting material from one cultural environment to another. The story of Apollo and Daphne represents the love lyric or courtly verse traditions, Pan and Syrinx the pastoral modes of solitary lament, Philomela and Procne the complaint genre.¹¹ The figure of Echo becomes a model for entire strains of repetitive genres, such as echo poems and response poems.¹² Narcissus becomes an emblem of the poet's complicity in the dangerous seduction of earthly beauty.¹³ The marvelous variety of botanical metamorphoses—next to the laurel, the reed, and the narcissus may be added the poplar, oak, linden, sunflower, crocus, myrrh, lotus, pine, anemone, hyacinth, and wild olive—all helped shape the elegiac, epideictic, and commemorative functions of love poetry.¹⁴

4 Introduction

Such moments of transformation also represent some of the early modern period's most recognizable stylistic features, such as prosopopoeia (feigning the speech of another personality), metaphor, allegory, and paronomasia—tropes that function by manipulating audience perception, by shifting focus from one thing to another in order to make a point. In Ovid's *Fasti*, of course, all these previously human plants comprise Flora's garden where, in congregate form, they pose a challenge to her eloquence, thus illustrating some of the key strategies used in the art of vivid description, including avowals of inarticulacy, verbal abundance (or *copia*) imagined as a garland-making exercise, and the use of mimesis as a defense against time's ravages.

Of all the observations one could make about these scenes of poetic origin, however, perhaps the most obvious is their remarkable emphasis on objects and locations of green beauty. In these few tales alone appear five of the most celebrated features of the early modern garden: water (both flowing and still), trees, shade, flowers, and songbirds. Yet crucially, the stories are set up in such a way that distinctions between cause and effect keep dissolving: is the transformation of human to plant a reward or a punishment, an imprisonment or an escape? Are these stories about the origin of a particular genre or a particular type of wildlife? Poetry seems to conjure the green world into existence, but it is the green world that provides the inspiration and instruments for creating poetry. Observing Ovid's delight in his environment, we might well wonder with Marvell if:

Apollo hunted Daphne so,
Only that She might Laurel grow.
And Pan did after Syrinx speed,
Not as a Nymph, but for a Reed.

Ultimately, Marvell's signature green love, for all its sense of novelty, reflects a long and venerable tradition of pairing poet and idyllic landscape. Ernst Curtius, for example, traces the use of place-description as a rhetorical feature all the way back to Homer, while Terry Comito tracks a trio of garden-located and genre-defining activities—poetry, love, and philosophy—to the formative works of Plato.¹⁵ Yet, as Stephen Hinds notes, it was Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, by virtue of its popularity, that played the largest role in the “establishment” of this idyllic green formulation.¹⁶ Furthermore, gardenists repeatedly cite Ovid as one of the richest sources of reference for early modern garden art. In fact, John Dixon Hunt doubts “whether any garden of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries avoided some appeal, specific or general, to Ovid's poetic world.”¹⁷ Yet, this Ovidian tradition of green-sourced poetic inspiration enjoys a fairly meager representation in early modern reception studies.¹⁸ This book argues that to understand the full import of the pervasive garden imagery in early modern poetry, these classically derived traditions must be acknowledged as more than just verbal commonplaces but as part of larger trans-media competitions of aesthetic form.

For example, one of the most distinctive features of the English garden was its topiary figures, molded to be so lifelike that they frequently drew expressions of wonder from foreign visitors. Both Thomas Platter and Baron Waldstein offer enthusiastic descriptions of these vegetal sculptures in their travel diaries. In 1600, Waldstein cited the “most interesting object” at Lambeth gardens to be “an English girl, done in topiary,” while Hampton Court received his particular interest because of its “large number of growing plants shaped into animals,” including “sirens, centaurs, sphinxes, and other fabulous poetic creatures portrayed here in topiary work.”¹⁹ In 1599, Thomas Platter gives the knotwork of Hampton Court particular mention:

There were all manner of shapes, men and women, half men and half horse, sirens, serving-maids with baskets, French lilies and delicate crenellations all round made from the dry twigs bound together and the rosemary all true to the life and so cleverly and amusingly interwoven, mingled and grown together, trimmed and arranged picture-wise that their equal would be difficult to find.²⁰

The poetic significance of these Ovidian mutated forms (*mutatas formas*) can hardly be overstated, particularly given Petrarch’s Laura/laurel pun and its adoption by successive sonneteers into the metaphoric triad of text-as-body-as-plant. In addition, works like Geofroy Toré’s *Champ Fleury* or Field of Flowers (1529) provided printers with a theory of letter design that not only claimed derivation from mythological sources but also used those sources as justification for creative fusions among human body, flower, and printed letter.²¹ Poets counted on their readers to bear these visual influences in mind so that a cleverly worked reference to garden matter could simultaneously invoke all three forms of the triad. In the poem “Theorello,” for example—second entry in the popular anthology *Englands Helicon* (1600)—verbal cues present the beloved’s body as both a text and a labyrinth: “On thee (ô *Cosma*) will I gaze, /and reade thy beauties euer: Delighting in the blessed maze,/which can be ended neuer.”²² Through this layering effect, poets could gesture toward the beauty of their own poetry in print even as they paid tribute to a beloved whose beauty rivaled their first source of inspiration—the garden.²³

However, garden imagery was also deeply implicated in a rhetoric of competition and poetic judgment, especially when it came to matters of taste (discrimination) and matters of smell (sometimes referring to pleasure, sometimes to authenticity). In fact, mocking the pretenders to the craft of poesie became something of its own genre in the sixteenth century, as evidenced by the notorious exchange between Thomas Nashe and George Harvey. Thus, along with the metamorphic creations mentioned above, we must also bear in mind the iconic contests that take place in the green habitats of poetry. When the nine daughters of Piërus enter the Muses’ gardens and challenge them to a poetry contest, the mortal women not only lose the contest but are transformed into chattering magpies,

forever performing, forever annoying. The location for Pan and Apollo's competition is a glade on the lushly wooded mountain Tmolus, and their judge its eponymous deity who dutifully "ridds his eares/From trées" in preparation.²⁴ Another rival to Apollo's laureate status appears in the satyr Marsyas; after discovering an abandoned flute, Marsyas invites Apollo to a contest judged by none other than the Muses themselves. Again, Apollo wins, only this time, he flays the loser alive and nails his skin to a pine tree—an act which produces so much weeping among the inhabitants of Mount Olympus that a river is born of their tears. Not to be outdone, Pan also kills one of his rivals. In *Daphnis and Chloe*, Longus relates how Echo lived with the Muses and their nymph companions, learning to play all kinds of instruments.²⁵ Pan heard her music and fell in love, but Echo (following the virgin Muses and Diana) refused to be seduced. Angered by her impertinence and jealous of her skill, Pan set madness upon his shepherds, causing them to tear her body apart and scatter the pieces across the earth. But the earth, in sympathy, sought to preserve the nymph's music by burying her "still-singing limbs," thus allowing her to live again through the songs of others.²⁶ Longus ends his tale with an interesting detail: now whenever Pan hears her echoing voice, he "leaps up and chases [it] through the hills ... just to find out who his hidden student is."²⁷ An important analogue to this version of Echo is Orpheus, who was also torn apart, but not by a jealous deity. The rout that kills Orpheus is made up of human women, followers of Bacchus according to Arthur Golding's sixteenth-century version of the tale, who work themselves into a frenzy of anger not just because he perpetually shuns their advances but also because his music of mourning is so beautiful that their husbands and sons have lost interest in women. Tellingly, the wood and stone weapons these women throw at Orpheus refuse to hurt him as long as the "swéetenesse of his song" can still be heard.²⁸ It is only when their drunken clamor drowns out the sound of his music that they are able to harm him. Like the nymph Echo, however, Orpheus's music continues to resonate in the green world, even when fragmented; Golding's version of the story describes how the stones and trees "bewayled" his death while the river banks "in moorning wyse made answer" to the "lamentable" sounds that his "liueless toong" continued to make.²⁹ In these myths of competition, the location or setting takes part in the experience of lyric performance, thus becoming a signifier of form as well as of lyric's metamorphic potential.

For early modern poets, the rivalry between Apollo and Pan generated a number of contrasts that influenced poetic composition both stylistically and ideologically. Pan's wild woodland realms and his association with Bacchus, Venus, Cupid, and the figure of the half-human satyr are often read as a counterpart to Apollo's ordered garden realms and his association with the Muses, Diana, Minerva, and the figure of the virgin nymph.³⁰ In early modern poetics, Pan often represents the kind of plain-spoken critiques associated with the pastoral mode, while Apollo represents the kind of courtly wit one might find in sonnets, redolent with rhetorical flowers. Thus, string instruments, representing Apollo and his lyre, were often described as "sweeter" and more apt for lofty themes than the

wind instruments associated with Pan and his pipes. In John Lyly's *Midas* (written 1589, printed 1592), which is a dramatization of the contest between the two musicians, Pan declares, "Believe me Apollo, our groves are pleasanter than your heavens ... our rude ditties to a pipe than your sonnets to a lute."³¹ Furthermore, while Apollo's courtly style was often associated with conventions of praise or elegiac commemoration, the pervasive but false etymology linking "satyr" to "satire" in Elizabethan England influenced the association of Pan with verse forms involving mockery, vituperation, or censure. Puttenham, in his *Arte of English Poesie* (1589), writes that satire began as a form of impersonation: those who disguised themselves as "satyrs or sylvans" to protect their identities and to make their "reproofs" more effective became known as "satirists."³² William Scott's *Model of Poesy* (1599) shares Puttenham's assumption that satire takes its "name from feigned rustical and boorish divinities," but appears somewhat less willing to advocate a genre that deliberately emphasizes "the evil-favouredness of any fault or crime" in such an "open, odious, or scornful manner."³³ At the end of his section on satire, in what might be an allusion to the highly publicized feud between Nashe and Harvey, Scott notes, "We have of our times and in English very riotous wits in this kind."³⁴ The studied ambiguity of early modern personas, particularly those like Spenser's politically attuned pastoral characters, illustrates the kind of role-playing that Puttenham and Scott link to social critique.

However, while these ideological contrasts certainly hold value, attempting to adhere to them too strictly proves a mistake. After all, one of Apollo's nine Muses—Euterpe—presided over pastoral poetry and its "sweet-voiced flutes."³⁵ If we look at the work of Spenser, whom Michael Drayton calls the "prime pastoralist of England," we find that he deliberately joins the worlds of Apollo and Pan in more than one of his works, as though to redeem the pastoral genre from being relegated to laughable performances on wind instruments or the humorous flaying of fools.³⁶ In *The Tears of the Muses* (1591), a series of prosopopoeic utterances by the nine Muses lamenting the state of poetry in England, Spenser not only indicates that shepherds belong in the habitat of the Muses, the "pleasant groues" and "arbors sweet" of their garden, but he also makes a distinction between the shepherds who sing "Pastoralls" and the satyrs who destroy poetry by laying waste its inspiration, the garden.³⁷ In the June eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579), the same *locus amoenus* (place of beauty) that Hobbinoll describes to Colin as the perfect place for making poetry attracts both the nine Muses and "Pan himself"; furthermore, Hobbinoll reverses the outcome of the competition between Pan and Apollo, claiming that when Colin's "oaten pype began to sound," the Muses laid down their own instruments ("yvery Luyts"), and followed the sound, only to discover "halfe with shame" that a shepherd could "outgoe" them in their own "art."³⁸ Finally, in his depiction of the three Graces, Spenser includes two classical traditions of origin—one in which they are "sister goddesses" to the chaste Muses (see the April and June eclogues of the *Shepheardes Calender*) and one in which they are the daughters and handmaids to the amatory Venus (see *The Faerie Queene* [1590], 2.8.6 and 6.10.8–9). Even the structure of

The Faerie Queene participates in this merging of the high and low through its joining of pastoral and epic traditions.³⁹

Thus, when it comes to conventions of contrast, what we find when we read early modern poetry is an apparent delight not in contrast for its own sake but in patterns of transformation and reversal, in making one thing appear as something else. These playful rhetorical tricks can involve descriptions of place (naturally occurring beauty so perfect that it seems artificial, or artificial beauty so well-conceived that it appears natural), manipulations of generic features (a pastoral narrative transformed by epic furniture, or a sonnet sequence transformed by pastoral tropes), representations of character (an obscuring of the lines between fair and foul, man and woman, courtier and shepherd, rich and poor), or even the design of printed books (as when poetic miscellanies routinely pose as choice garden growth). In practice, these patterns of contrast and illusion tend to emphasize trans-media textures in ways that serve to vivify the interactive nature of poetic imitation. Ovid's green world certainly influenced this aesthetic extensively. Note, for example, the sensory contrasts in the myths listed in this introduction alone: the exquisite, endlessly captivating song of the nightingale set against the raucous, endlessly annoying chatter of the magpie; the image of bark torturously taking over warm skin set against the image of cold, bloody skin covering live bark; the movement of sound through landscape (via the resonating bodies of Echo and Orpheus) set against the movement of landscape by means of sound (as when the trees move through the earth to gather around Orpheus); or the visible inscription of grief on a flower set against the invisible sound of a sorrowful echo. As these examples (all taken from separate tales) illustrate, Ovid's own use of imagery is recursive, creating of his text a landscape that resonates with sense-altering echoes.

This distinctive association of green life and poetic life permeated early modern practices of composition, not just in terms of how garden imagery was used but also in terms of how poets reflected on their art, their role as creators of poetry, and even their aspirations for fame. When Shakespeare uses the verb "ore-green," for example, it can be read as a plea to all those complicit in keeping his work from withering into obscurity: "For what care I who calles me well or ill,/So you ore-green my bad, my good allow?"⁴⁰ In this context, the transformative action of "greening" a text signals the kind of readerly interaction that generates new interest through new variations. Furthermore, if we read the term as a reference to the story of Daphne and Apollo, we might say Shakespeare has effectively performed his own "greening" of Ovid even as he appeals to his readers for the same treatment. A quick look at Ovid's presence in print during the sixteenth century illustrates just how densely such an allusion could echo. The first English translation of Ovid was a grammar-school text titled *The flores [flowers] of Ouide* (1513). This reference book offered a selection of quotes from the *Ars amatoria*, among them a number of distiches on the topics of flowers, water-worn stone, tree limbs, birds, and fish—typical features of the sixteenth-century pleasure garden.⁴¹ Readers of early modern lyric may find the opening phrase of distich 38

particularly noteworthy as variations of it appear in the sonnets and epyllia of the 1590s: “Neyther the violetis be freshe continually ner the lilyis floreshe alway stil in there feyre whyte coloure.”⁴² Three of the first tales from the *Metamorphoses* to be printed separately—*The fable of Ovid treeting of Narcissus* (1560), *The pleasant fable of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* (1565), and *Orpheus his Journey to Hell* (1595)—all derive from moments in the original text framed by a *locus amoenus* and Ovid’s signature “*est locus*” formula. Thomas Watson’s Latin *Amyntas* (1585), translated into English by Abraham Fraunce in 1587, revives and anglicizes the elegiac quality of Ovid’s floral metamorphoses by imagining the death of Sidney (Amyntas) as the origin of a flower: the amaranthus.⁴³ Spenser and John Milton both return to this fiction and enhance it with Ovid’s inscription trope. In Spenser’s Garden of Adonis, “*Amintas* wretched fate” emerges legibly in the “purple gore” of the “*Sad Amaranthus*,” and in Milton’s “*Lycidas*,” “every flower,” including the “*amaranthus*,” a “sad embroidery wears.”⁴⁴ When George Chapman imagines Ovid’s first glimpse of Corinna in *Ovid’s Banquet of Sense* (1595), he chooses to set the scene in a lush garden and then fills his work with rhetorical “flowers,” many of which out-grow the main text to sprout from the margins as glosses or side-notes.

Yet, while scholars have long recognized the ideological significance of the green world to the early modern literary imagination (thanks to the formative work of A. Bartlett Giamatti, Stanley Stewart, Terry Comito, Roy Strong, John Dixon Hunt, and Thomas G. Rosenmeyer), comparatively little attention has yet been paid to the aesthetic implications of the garden as a material parallel to poetry or to how the two art forms developed as rival media in the sixteenth century.⁴⁵ Several significant interdisciplinary studies can, however, be found that draw attention to the intersection between sixteenth-century texts and landscapes. In *A Culture of Teaching* (1996), Rebecca Bushnell devotes two chapters to the role of horticultural rhetoric in pedagogical practices—in one, exploring the nature/nurture debate; in the other, exploring the implications of the book-as-garden metaphor.⁴⁶ In her ensuing book *Green Desire* (2003), Bushnell turns her attention to the genre of the gardening manual and what it can tell us about the motives of early modern garden lovers. While the emphasis may not be on poetry, Bushnell nevertheless offers some useful observations on the shared “social aesthetics” of labors such as painting, gardening, and poetry writing.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, Alison Findlay and Jennifer Munroe have drawn attention to the role of women in early modern garden culture—Findlay through an instructive chapter on the garden as the stage for female poets, and Munroe through a more sustained examination of how early modern women took part in the creative acts of both gardening and writing garden poetry.⁴⁸ For those interested in gardens and garden rhetoric as expressions of political power and nationhood, Amy Tigner’s *Literature and the Renaissance Garden from Elizabeth I to Charles II* (2012) and Lynn Staley’s *The Island Garden* (2012) offer substantive discussions—with Tigner focusing on garden design as a form of political expression and Staley on the longevity of the garden image in England’s construction of national identity.⁴⁹

My own interest in the trans-media manifestations of common poetic tropes necessarily derives much of its vigor from the work of scholars in visual and material culture, such as Anna Riehl, Mary Hazard, Ann Rosalind Jones, Peter Stallybrass, and Patricia Fumerton.⁵⁰ Of works that focus primarily on the intersections of garden matter and literary matter, I have been greatly inspired by Hester Lees-Jeffries's *England's Helicon* (2007) and Leah Knight's *Of Books and Botany in Early Modern England* (2009).⁵¹ Both demonstrate convincingly that gardens and garden objects can offer valuable insight into the early modern experience of reading and writing poetry. Knight does this by exploring the genre of the herbal and its relationship to both books of poetry and real garden spaces—all three sites functioning, in one way or another, as botanical collections or gatherings. Lees-Jeffries does it by combining historical readings of real fountains with literary readings of fictional fountains in order to illustrate the “associative density” that such a combination affords.⁵² She argues that “the ‘missing piece’ needed to make sense of a passage in a play, a poem, or a prose romance could be a fountain, a conduit, a well ... or even a specific, known garden.”⁵³ Both scholars offer numerous examples of duplications in media, particularly between books and gardens, and it is this emphasis on what Lees-Jeffries calls the “vital interconnectedness between the textual, the visual, and the material” that informs my own approach.⁵⁴ However, instead of focusing on a single feature of the early modern garden as Lees-Jeffries does, or on reference genres as Knight does, this study focuses on the aesthetic interchange between gardens and poetry, in particular on the shared commonplaces that indicate a playful trans-media competition or *paragone* between the two art forms. In this context, the term “commonplace” extends beyond its specialized meaning as a collectable verbal aphorism; I deliberately use the term’s broader meaning, which includes any recurrent image or stylistic feature, regardless of its medium, that becomes familiar enough in a literary culture to function as a kind of meme. This idea of the commonplace facilitates the establishment of a broad, syncretic framework of reception, such as Michael Baxandall’s “period eye” or Hans Robert Jauss’s “horizons of expectation.”⁵⁵

Indeed, among art historians the concept of rival media carries a long and venerable critical history, particularly in terms of the visual and verbal arts. It reaches as far back as Plato’s *Republic*, Aristotle’s *Poetics*, and Simonides’ reference to painting as mute poetry, poetry as a speaking picture. Horace’s later rendition of Simonides’ comparison, *ut pictura poesis* (as is painting, so is poetry), took on a life of its own over time, eventually signifying the contest between the arts at large.⁵⁶ In his *Laocoön*, a work still being theorized today, G. E. Lessing famously argued that these two “sister arts” cannot be compared with any precision because poetry is an art form experienced in time while painting is an art form experienced in space; the former concerned with objects, the latter with actions.⁵⁷ A number of later scholars took up this concern over media specificity, including Irving Babbitt, Clement Greenberg, Michael Fried, W. J. T. Mitchell, and Marshall McLuhan, thereby providing a theoretical basis for what became known as interart studies.⁵⁸ Other scholars, such as Jean Hagstrum, E. H. Gombrich, Mario Praz, and

Leonard Barkan, have explored the complicated reception of Horace's dictum over the years, calling for a renewed attention to the reader's cultural expectations of a given art object.⁵⁹ In terms of English art during the sixteenth century, the work of Clark Hulse, David Evett, and Lucy Gent has provided important contributions in defense of interart comparison.⁶⁰ Most relevant in terms of this particular project, however, are the various arguments for expanding the categories of the sister arts. While these generally focus on music and dance,⁶¹ at least two scholars—John Dixon Hunt and Stephanie Ross—have promoted gardening as one of the sister arts. Both Hunt and Ross even offer titles that playfully transform Horace's dictum, Ross choosing "Ut Hortus Poesis" and Hunt "Ut Pictura Hortus."⁶² Yet, in their discussions of the topic, neither of these scholars reach back earlier than the eighteenth century; Hunt offers a thorough history of the term "picturesque," while Ross concentrates on Walpole's designation of the "Three Sisters" as Poetry, Painting, and Gardening. This book turns instead to the Elizabethan period (an important precedent for the eighteenth-century revival of interest in the sister arts), focusing in particular on the shared commonplaces cultivated through garden/poem pairings and how such intersections of media can help illuminate the period's stylistic penchant for comparison, illusion, and contrasts of texture.

My use of the term "commonplace" within this context of interart comparison also deserves some further clarification. In most scholarship, it refers specifically to the aphorisms, or verbal "flowers," culled from the garden of one's reading matter. Working from this strictly textual definition, scholars have productively explored how such *sententiae* were indicated in printed works, whether by quotation marks, manicules, or leaf motifs, while others have discussed the practice of commonplacing itself and how it changes our understanding of authorship and audience agency.⁶³ As such research accumulates, it becomes increasingly evident that the notion of literary value for these early modern poets involved something quite different from post-Romantic models of originality.⁶⁴ Although commonplacing made the "line between copying and poetic 'making' ... difficult to discern, if not altogether illegible," the more often a commonplace was cleverly used, the more richly nuanced and thus more meaningful it became.⁶⁵ As Catherine Nicholson argues, commonness itself, in this culture of creative imitation, becomes "the paradoxical ground of excellence."⁶⁶ Nicholson's view bears repeating in full as it articulates the kind of playful manipulation of opposing concepts so valued in both garden and lyric art:

To think of Shakespeare's own poetics as commonplace—that is, as kin to an extremely widespread set of literary practices and as overtly committed to the value of use and reuse—prevents us from moving too quickly or thoughtlessly to our preferred metrics of originality, novelty, and radical inventiveness. That isn't to say that Shakespeare's poems and plays place no premium on rarity or novelty—Troilus is, after all, advertised as a "new play"; the 1609 Sonnets are advertised as "Neuer before imprinted"—or

that there is nothing rare or novel in them, but rather that, within the texts, the values of rarity and novelty are attenuated by, and often subordinated to, a prior commitment to abundance and commonality.⁶⁷

This “commitment to abundance and commonality” reflects one of the key qualities shared by early modern renditions of gardens and lyrics—the ability to display *copia* and variety within a prescribed or confined space. In fact, the prevalent metaphor of the pollen-gathering bee as the phrase-gathering poet identifies both the garden and the commonplace book as places distinctive to what Nicholson refers to as a “poetics of increase,” in which isolated, self-contained pieces are judiciously gathered and arranged to be used later for the “increase” of a larger pattern or argument. Recognizing the process of poetic *inventio* thus situates the scattered nature of lyric poetry within an equally significant process of gathering or reassembly.

Broadening this definition of “commonplace” to include any manifestation of a particular theme or concept, regardless of its medium, also encourages an expanded view of the process of literary invention itself (often described by early modern theorists as the search through gathered commonplaces to find material appropriate for new contexts). This expanded approach to the process of invention is historically justified: when Thomas Elyot, in *The Boke named the Governour* (1531), argues that children should be allowed to follow any art “commendable concerning invention,” he and his readers understood that poetry writing was only one among many.⁶⁸ In fact, Elyot offers his readers a list of such art forms—including painting, embroidery, carving, engraving, and printing—all of which conspicuously require a trans-media approach to the reinterpretation and recycling of set designs and figures. Crucially, for writers and poets the most pervasive metaphor for the process of invention was garden based, that of imagining the poet as a bee (after Seneca, Horace, and Petrarch), tirelessly browsing through gardens of anthologies (“florilegia”) to create the honey of eloquence from the pollen of wisdom.

Appreciating the different media in which garden commonplaces appear also allows for a renewed appreciation of the kinds of comparative processes fundamental to early modern educational practices.⁶⁹ In fact, sixteenth-century poetry, as Dolven and others have demonstrated, was profoundly informed by pedagogical practices; to read one inevitably invites consideration of the other.⁷⁰ Bushnell thus identifies the familiar “ambivalence” found in the contrasts and paradoxes of early modern poetry as a “theoretical category” from which to understand early methods of pedagogy. She defines this ambivalence as “contradiction set in motion—a fluctuation between opposites.”⁷¹ To read early modern exercises for this “functional ambivalence” means “to see where one tendency of early modern humanist pedagogy always allowed for the realization of an opposite one, without undermining or effacing itself in turn.”⁷² On a very basic level it is easy to see how the practice of commonplacing would encourage comparative readings, whether deliberate or not, as each new placement calls to mind previous uses; yet,

Bushnell's examination of the rhetorical model of contradiction *in utramque partem* (on both sides of a question) suggests a purposeful engagement with rival perspectives, languages, genres, and media.

The following chapters as a whole seek to answer questions that developed from my curiosity at finding so many references to gardens in Elizabethan poetry and so many books of poetry posing as garden matter. What can the metonymic relationship between location (*locus*) and event (*poesis*) tell us about early modern poetics? How does the garden itself as well as the proliferation of biblio-botanical metaphors during this period contribute to practices of imitation and invention, particularly in relation to lyric materiality, print culture, and intertextuality? Thus, in the opening chapter, I pair descriptions of Elizabethan gardens with descriptions of Elizabethan poetry. First, I address what sixteenth-century writers themselves had to say about the gardens they experienced, using gardening manuals, travel diaries, and accounts of the queen's progresses. Then, I move into a discussion of how sixteenth-century poets and critics used garden imagery to make claims about poetry and to justify its very existence. Both gardens and poetry were understood as sites of sensual pleasure that demanded a savvy reader, one capable of gleaned their benefits while at the same time avoiding their dangers.

The next chapter explores how poets and printers took up the arguments of the poetry defenders in the paratexts of their books, using variations of the book-as-garden metaphor to appeal to both goal-oriented and recreational readers of poetry. Since the pleasures of poetry made it suspect in a way that seemed to require preparatory, instructive frameworks, the garden metaphor, with its long-revered academic ties to practices of invention and of enjoying and recreating experiences of *copia*, offered a singularly apt solution for justifying such pleasure. The very capaciousness of the metaphor, as will become clear, could encompass the three main humanist strategies of *translatio*, *imitatio*, and *inventio* (the author is imagined transplanting foreign material into English culture or culling flowers from others' gardens to graft in new literary contexts), but it could also address the concerns that developed with the democratization of printed pleasures, specifically the pleasures of poetry. As print increased the readership for poetry, it also increased its critics. Framing a collection of poetry as a garden of mixed material thus offered an instructive and vivid metaphor for teaching an audience potentially unversed in humanist models of reading how to enter any given text prepared to encounter (and distinguish between) both good or beneficial and bad or harmful material.

To further illustrate these various issues of readerly pleasure and agency, I turn in chapter 3 to the ways in which Spenser's iconic garden scenes in the first installment of *The Faerie Queene* function as critiques of poetry and the reading of poetry. Noting, for example, how his creative modifications of the botanical print conventions of the period draw attention to the pleasures of poetry and thus the need for a discerning reader—one capable of recognizing (and profitably navigating) the potentially deceptive qualities it contains. His idyllic green spaces also function as commentaries on the state of poetic composition and consumption during this period, both affirming and challenging the sense of chaos his

contemporaries describe as the “multitude” of “Rymers” purchasing their wit from printed reference works or *florigelia*.⁷³ Furthermore, by focusing on the multiplicity of green spaces in Spenser’s text (rather than offering an examination of one or two in isolation), I draw attention to the labyrinthine quality of the poem and its various metapoetic values. Thus, the accumulation of green idylls and their cyclical motifs produce a recursive reading experience that mimics the effects of poetic imitation while also framing rhetorical complexity as a readerly pleasure.

Chapter 4 shifts focus from the labyrinth to the knot garden as a source of poetic inspiration, both conceptually and structurally. As in chapter 1, I approach the topic first from the perspective of the garden and then from that of poetry; what emerges from this comparative reading is an understanding that practices of pattern reproduction in both gardening manuals and books of poetry shared a number of crucial interests, including novelty, diversity, and *copia*, as well as an emphasis on discretion in choosing elements of design. The final section of the chapter draws attention to some specific examples of garden patterns in the poetry of the period—the interlaced knot patterns of correlative verse, for example; the quincunxes of shape poetry; and the quadrilateral shapes of the fleuron-heavy print conventions of sonnet sequences. Through such comparative readings, I explore how even typographical markers participated in the aesthetic interchange between gardens and poetry.

Finally, the epilogue considers the implications of a trans-media approach to reading early modern poetry. As cultural studies scholars have long argued, material experience matters when it comes to understanding past literary artifacts; in fact, material experience matters not just in terms of a text’s medium (as in the famous McLuhan equation) but also in terms of its influence and how it gets replicated, transformed, and remediated in particular, localized contexts. As the readings in this book demonstrate, recognizing the aesthetic interchange between verbal tropes and their vibrant counterparts in painting, music, architecture, gardening, or embroidery can help us better understand the allure that certain commonplaces held for early modern readers. And while the Elizabethan garden-of-verse trope is hardly the only case by which such comparative systems of invention can be studied, it certainly offers an apt space from which to begin, since it contains varied textural contrasts central to the lyric genre: singing human voices set against birdsong and mute trees, human skin against veined marble and blooming petals, ephemeral vegetation against epitaphs in stone, lifelike topiaries against moving limbs. Even aerial views of the knot garden, such as those from upper-level windows and artificially created mounts, participated in contrastive display by mimicking the foliate-bordered pages of sonnet sequences. Both media—that is, the tangible garden and the poetic page—offer a series of visual artistic experiences, framed separately to accentuate patterns of repetition, symmetry, and compression. Ultimately, the mutability inherent in garden imagery offered poets an aesthetic model that could allow them to express deep anxieties about poetic mortality while at the same time retaining a sense of exuberant wonder at the continual regeneration of art, life, and a life of art.

Notes

- 1 Bushnell, *Culture of Teaching*, 135.
- 2 Colvin, *King's Works*, 4:17; Skelton, *Goodly Garlande*. For a discussion of Skelton's use of garden imagery, see Brownlow's introduction to his modernized edition of *Book of the Laurel*, especially 75.
- 3 Strong, *Renaissance Garden in England*, 25.
- 4 Puttenham, *Arte of English Poesie*, 72.
- 5 Quint, "Courtier, Prince, Lady," 185.
- 6 Dolven, "Reading Wyatt for Style," 66.
- 7 See, for example, the full title of Gervase Markham's *The English Husbandman: The first part: containyng the knowledge of the true nature of euery soyle within this kingdome: how to plow it; and the manner of the plough, and other instruments belonging thereto. Together with the art of planting, grafting, and gardening after our latest and rarest fashion*.
- 8 Hesiod's account in the *Theogony* describes the Muses' birth as an act of wisdom, "a forgetting of ills and a rest from sorrow"; see Hesiod, *Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, 83–84. In Aelius Aristides' account, Zeus creates the Muses as a response to a request: "upon Zeus asking the gods if they desired anything, they requested that he create for himself gods who would honor in words and music these great deeds and all of his preparations"; see Behr's translation in Aristides, *Complete Works*, 1:145.
- 9 Golding, *Metamorphosis*, 38 v.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 124 v.
- 11 On Apollo and Daphne as "the dominant myth" of the *Rime sparse*, see Braden, "Ovid, Petrarch, and Shakespeare's *Sonnets*," 101.
- 12 For more on the figure of Echo and imitative poetic practices, see Hollander, *Figure of Echo*; and Enterline, *Rhetoric of the Body*. An alternate echo myth, but one that occurs less frequently in the English poets, can be found in the story of Hylas; see Heerink, *Echoing Hylas*.
- 13 Kilgour offers an excellent discussion of Milton's use of the Narcissus myth in *Milton and the Metamorphosis of Ovid*, chap. 3.
- 14 For the poplar, see *Metamorphoses*, II.429–458; for the oak and linden, VIII.795–909; for the sunflower or heliotrope, IV.311–328; for the crocus, IV.343–346; for the myrrh tree, IV.260–310 and X.550–590; for the lotus or "lote tree," IX.411–469; for the pine or "pineapple," X.110–113; for the anemone, X.832–863; for the hyacinth, X.191–231; for the wild olive, XIV.581–600.
- 15 Curtius, *European Literature*, esp. chap. 10; Comito, *Idea of the Garden*, esp. chap. 2.
- 16 Hinds, *Metamorphosis of Persephone*, 26.
- 17 Hunt, *Garden and Grove*, 42.
- 18 Hinds offers some excellent discussions on the aesthetics of Ovid's landscapes from a classicist's point of view in *Metamorphosis of Persephone* (esp. 25–50), and "Landscape with Figures." Hunt offers some discussion from a gardenist's perspective in *Garden and Grove*, esp. chap. 4. However, the topic of Ovid's green spaces as a locus of inspiration in early modern English poetry remains largely unexplored. Among the key scholars who have explored Ovid's influence on early modern English poets, very few have addressed his botanical motifs directly as a component of their arguments. Moss, in *Ovidian Vogue*; Kilgour, in *Milton and the Metamorphosis of Ovid*; Lyne, in *Ovid's Changing Worlds*; and Brown, in *Metamorphosis of Ovid*, all address Ovid's green world without directly arguing for an Ovidian garden culture. Enterline, in *Rhetoric of the Body*, provides a highly instructive analysis of early representations of Ovidian gender and desire, but only temporarily directs attention to Ovid's landscape through a discussion of echoes and breezes. Bate, in *Shakespeare and Ovid*, includes some tantalizing observations about landscape in *The Winter's Tale*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *The Tempest*, but for the most part the green world (whether garden or woods) plays an ancillary role in his arguments. Likewise, in Barkan's influential study *Gods Made Flesh* there is mention of how medieval and Renaissance writers typically place Ovid's characters in "gardens of love" (174) and how Petrarch