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What reflections of Eden do we find in a garden?: An analysis of illusionary constructs that seek to establish identity with the 'ideal' garden

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**What Reflections of Eden do we find in a
Garden? – An Analysis of Illusionary Constructs
that Seek to Establish Identity with the 'Ideal'
Garden**

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Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of BA Honours
(Visual Arts)

**School of Contemporary Arts
Faculty of Communications and Creative Industries
Edith Cowan University
June 2003**

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ABSTRACT

Gardens are retreats that offer sanctuary from the tensions of modern life. Spiritual needs have stirred the Western psyche the most to embellish myths that account for the inconsistency of life. The original myth of the Garden of Eden has represented the ideal paradigm between imperfect nature and human nature, accounting for human frailty and anxious yearnings for a utopian perspective. In attempt to improve human nature, throughout time humans have aspired to transform or improve the natural environment, thus making every garden an image.

As an art form, that draws on the past as it looks to the future, a garden is a visual statement of the relationship between humans, their cultural values and their natural environment. In order to locate a sense of place and establish identity with nation, 'high culture' gardens employ symbolic features that represent the needs of society whether social, political or spiritual. However, nature intersects with culture to conceptualize new meanings for promoting invention and sustaining tradition through local and imported agendas. The results are often illusionary worlds that attempt to satisfy determined dominant ideologies, but often produce contradictory forms.

Hence, created illusions are mediated on culture and not on natural conditions, therefore, generating tensions that challenge the concept of nation. While the processes of society change with time, the life processes within nature remain the same. It is these life processes that can be an indispensable world of metaphors that can reconcile the individual with nature, rather than the embellished stories of myths and dominant ideologies within society.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

A garden is a retreat from the hustle of the outside world, instilling the idea to create perfection in order to balance those parts of our life that are imperfect. As one of the most ancient forms of humankind's arrangement of space, Jay (1998, p.7) states a garden is a partnership with nature. Accordingly throughout time, gardens have transcended their utilitarian role, purposely becoming mirrors of humanity, creating an idealized order of nature and culture. In this role, gardens have captured people's imagination over the ages, reflecting humankind's earthly and universal search for the ideal. Consequently, Brown (1989, p. 9) claims different cultures have demonstrated a different attitude to this relationship, often in endless and contradictory forms.

This is evident in gardens of 'high culture'. Unlike personal gardens, these gardens are creations of landscape architecture. Schaffer (1990, p. 18) claims they express a discourse of meanings regulated by ideologies and power relations within society.¹ It might appear that gardening activity is linked to natural materials derived from the natural environment, yet historical experience says otherwise. By taking familiar objects from the broader realm of nature and abstracting their autonomous forms into vehicles carrying specific meanings, they satisfy determined aesthetic criteria, communicate messages and are testaments of their own time. While natural features inspire, garden creations contribute towards the affirmation of the social forces capable of creating something new, through the adoption of symbols and illusions. Ogrin (1993, pp. 18, 19) consolidates their position in society by ascribing the difference between countries to the social, political and cultural circumstances rather than to natural conditions.

Although the way in which the landscape is shaped and humanized depends partly upon the physical opportunities and cultural conditions, far more depends upon humankind's

¹ An example would be the English Landscape style, extolled as a symbol of freedom that promoted the progressive forces in confrontation with the conservative court (Ogrin, 1993, p. 19).

spiritual needs. Literary scholars express the idea that a religious system usually encodes another system, the system of social relations within a group. Couliano (1991, p. 2) claims the conception of a myth can be seen as a 'dramatic rendering' of the fundamental ideology of human society, asserting as Levi-Strauss states, myth is a story of 'the way things are in a culture' (Layman & Stannage, 1989, p.2). However, the autonomy of religion and myth, whose structure does not depend on fundamental ideology, is the functioning of the 'psyche' in a given environment. Consequently, it is the same human mind that produces religion, society and artifacts, and in the same mind the productive processes are inseparable (Couliano, 1991, p. 3).

Spiritual elements often surface in gardens, where different cultures have embellished stories of survival, identity, power, the nature of nature and even stories of origins and creations (Spirm, 1998, pp. 48, 49). There are some themes of such eternal durability that they are truly archetypal, persisting amid variations from age to age. According to Robertson (1989, p. 84), they correspond to a configuration of emotional responses in the minds of those who are stirred by the theme. One such theme, defined by classical poets as an enclave of the Golden Age, is the fable of the Garden of Eden. Its promise of peace and harmony in a bucolic setting has represented an ideological model in many cultures (Heartney, 1998, p.5; Spivey, 2001, p. 175).² Many garden representations fulfill mythological functions, but Layman and Stannage (1989, p. 2) point out that myths also account for the paradox with which humans have been faced, such as the fable's vision of 'Paradise Lost'.³ As a result, Schaffer (1990, p. 18) explains myths have provided a vehicle through which cultural concepts and values are transmitted, disrupted and transformed, tracing the continuity and constancy of common patterns of

² A common thread in many cultures expresses the idea of the garden as representing 'Paradise on Earth' (Jay, 1998, p.7). This is specifically what I will be talking about – the garden as ideological construct, to express human hopes, in order for humans to improve themselves.

³ This will be considered later when the common citizen was 'implanted' with themes from myths to support the nation's involvement in war.

dominant cultural traditions.⁴ However, they can also be understood as shifting and undefined in their meanings.

Professor Seddon (1998, pp. 176-181) claims many forces influence the cultural meditation of gardens. To gain insight into the complexities of Western cultural history, it is important to consider one set of concepts that is expressed through a group of related words: Eden, Paradise, Arcadia and Utopia. While their definition will always shift and change, all are used with a Utopian context, in the sense of being ideals. 'Eden' has a Hebraic origin and is associated with the meanings 'earthly' and 'delight' – hence the garden of earthly delights. 'Paradise' or 'delightful abode' (also Middle Eastern), describes its original meaning to that of a large park, usually elaborate landscape parks for the nobility. An example of this is the English park enclosed for hunting or keeping game. Whereas 'Arcadia' (or 'Arcady'), is the product of the Greek and Roman cultures, even though it overlaps in meaning with 'Paradise'. Drawn from a real place in the Peloponnese, it is the myth of a pastoral economy, idealized by city dwellers as a wooded place, and the realm of Pan with his sweetly haunting pipes, therefore seen as an escapist fantasy.⁵

Utopia makes explicit a characteristic, depicting a perfect social, legal and political system. By highlighting the imperfections of the world, it strengthens the will to improve them. However, the 'Utopian scheme' is seen as impractical and unattainable,

⁴ The myth of Arcadia with all the heroes and paraphernalia of the classical world was transformed into the myth of the Anzac heroes to provide a continuing dominant tradition. This will be discussed later. Also in reaction to the precursors of industrialism, England's adoption of heroic inspired paintings of myths imported from Europe was an adoption of 'similar status of a conquering people'.

⁵ Arcadia is the myth of the pastoral economy, idealized by city dwellers, and the countryside has always been celebrated from the security of a hobby farm, from which writer / painter does not have to draw full sustenance. The Augustan poet Virgil drew his income from Rome, but wrote his poetry in the hills of Rome. Similarly, in China, urban civil servants celebrated the minutiae of the natural world in their country retreat (Seddon, 1995, p. 211).

making attitudes to the unattainable diverge. Seddon (1998, pp. 176, 177) states they can lead us astray and long for something we can't have, thus making us get on with the realistically attainable. While on the other hand, it can be the dream that drives us to achieve more, even though perfection always remains beyond our grasp. It is this spiritual impetus that gives the gardens of 'high culture' a continuing character, behind the political and social circumstances. Ogrin (1993, p. 19) claims, as a branch of art that uses natural living materials, these garden creations have always been humanity's inspiration to transform or improve nature in the hope to improve him / herself. This has allowed humankind to create out of the real world of nature, an indispensable world of illusions, a world of escapism, where one could resort to find spiritual peace and balance.

The focus of this research is to identify how gardens impact upon the human psyche in relation to identity with nation, reflecting the social and political ideologies. Two case studies of 'high culture' gardens will be considered, primarily Kings Park in Perth and The Fern Garden at the National Gallery in Canberra by artist Fiona Hall. The reason for this analysis is that both settings contain a spiritual impetus behind the dynamic relationships. By enclosing symbolic forms into spatial and poetic structures, ideological representations of identity are placed in order to define a sense of place (Spirn, 1998, p. 80).

Chapter 1 will consider the historical analysis of Kings Park. This is necessary to establish the pastoral myth of Arcadia in the early colony, and then relate this to its current function as a site of ideological power, while at the same time taking into account the invasion. The site at Mount Eliza was and still is expressed as the ideal, by two opposing positions on the notion of 'Paradise'. While the European belief was to create communication through images as part of the process of inventing the concept of

nation, the indigenous Australians, through their own beliefs were sustained by the land.

Reference will be made to Ian Hamilton Finlay, in that his work sets up to question differences, while challenging the dominant social and political ideologies.

Chapter 2 will present the Fern Garden in Canberra, with historical reference as to the establishment of the garden. In echoing Eden's concept of 'earthly delights', it conveys different meanings and challenges that are not inherent within Kings Park. The Fern Garden contains different discourses and images that identify with the concept of nation, while through the use of metaphors, also challenges what the garden reveals about nation. Reference is again made to Ian Hamilton Finlay, where a garden may be described as a retreat, but the features used question the social and political structure of society, and it should therefore, not be seen as a retreat only for passive consumption.

The analysis of the vocabulary of forms in the two gardens respond to particular cultural and political values of their time, through symbolism and metaphors of 'lived life' and enduring human needs within society. In an attempt to create the ideal garden, both share the same objective. According to Swinscow (1992, p. 73), they disregard the accidental, irregular forms of nature, in order to reveal the underlying 'ideal' form. This helps fulfill the needs of society, whether it is physical, intellectual, social or spiritual - 'nature in a state of perfection' (Clifford, 1967, p. 213). Consideration will be given to the natural elements that stand in juxtaposition to human constructs. While nature is constant and changing at the same time, it contains metaphors that relate to human life, without placing particular time frames of ideology. Through metaphoric depictions, illusions and ideals can transcend the stereotypes of gardens, giving us expressive form into the mysteries of time, chance, change and so on. The offered insights may be in effect potent transformations that reconcile us to nature and not the perceptions of Eden.

Chapter 2: KINGS PARK IN PERTH

2.1 Sense of Place

Just as the common aim of grafting is to provide a good contact between the actively dividing cells of the scion with those of the rootstock, so too the gardens overlooking Perth city at Kings Park have been 'grafted from the parent' and inscribed by the myths of culture, for the new aerial part of the plant (Alexander, 1986, p. 5, 6; Schaffer, 1990, p. 174). In as much as the master navigator, Columbus, described the 'earthly paradise' of the New World with political motivation – to name was to bless; to bless was to appropriate, by right of hallowed destiny - the English according to Spivey (2001, p. 175) were equally pragmatic. The 'high culture' gardens of the New Worlds, such as those at Kings Park, can be seen as a tool of imperial power. Seddon (1998, p. 181) states part of taking possession and putting your own stamp on the land, often meant wiping out the qualities that made the place so outstanding in the first place, in an attempt to reproduce the gardens and landscapes that were left behind.

At the height of convictism, Perth became another province for England's gentry. Fleeing from the industrialized chaos in the English cities, Seddon (1995, p. 211) claims the new arrivals were looking at sustaining tradition and fostering invention, through capturing the imagination. The efforts of the Reformation meant a shift away from the great noble households, to success in new administrative fields through education. Many of the royal powers were delegated to local squires, binding them financially, administratively and psychologically to the Crown. Those who came to Australia were the 'newcomers' of the elite, the rising gentry of office holders, who left no permanent imprint on county society. Such were the individuals who came seeking to create their own ideals, as their counterparts had done in England (Stone & Fawtier Stone, 1995, pp. 66, 278).

The settlers extracted into Perth the 'pastoral' myth, because the possessive manner of the gentry viewed the location, as below the surface, a Garden of Eden. This was because, the enigmatic quality of the setting was to function with no visible means of support (Seddon & Ravine, 1986, p. 59).⁶ The graceful vision of Arcadia, without the industrial chaos of the cities was the kind of countryside admired by the gentry in England, where the myths of the past and their counterparts could feel at home. The nymphs and shepherds, the gods and the heroes with all the paraphernalia of classical Arcadia had become the stock-in-trade of poets and artists. This distinguishing characteristic surfaced from the mid 18th century onwards, when the poetic garden was changing into the English Landscape Movement of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. Rather than imposing on the ground projections of the mind with architectural trappings, Turner (1985, pp. 18, 37) emphasizes that the approach identified 'the genius of the place'.

Wishing to encompass the entire landscape, including 'borrowed scenery' with the invisible line of the ha-ha, nature was 'improved' to carry openness and connotations of liberty. This identified with the gentry's power and concepts towards their land, in reaction to the forerunners of industrialization.⁷ Van Zuylen (1995, p. 89) claims Brown's technique of great serpentine lines, was accordingly attuned to the great landowners' quasi-religious attitude towards nature at the time (see figure 1).

⁶ The developing city of Perth was to depend on imported capital and handouts from London, as well as sources of wealth quite remote from Perth itself. For example, the export of timber, wool, wheat, beef and gold came from the hinterland as well as handouts from Canberra, and finally the resources boom of the later part of the 20th century. This 'invisible support', was the admiration of the setting. Thus Arcadian in a sense, because it was the idealized country life of the Augustan poet Virgil, who did not draw his primary income from his country estate, but since he made his life in the city, he could play at farming (Seddon & Ravine, 1986, p. 59).

⁷ When the Whigs seized power at the end of the 17th century, political liberty was the order of the day, because the new ruling class comprised of the middle class, the nobility and the court. Land reforms saw the enclosure of pastures, due to the modernization of farming. This gave more power to the ruling class, who were at the same time, the landowners. The English Landscape Movement, extolled as a symbol of freedom found its inspiration in classical mythological settings and the idea of a rural retreat in Arcadia (Ogden, 1993, pp. 124, 125).

From the historic vantage point of Mount Eliza, Seddon (1998, p. 83) states the view constituted a sense of possession to the early settlers, as the landed elite would have viewed their properties in England. The encompassing view from Mount Eliza identified the 'genius of the place' because it defied enclosure and carried connotations of liberty. With 'borrowed scenery' (the Ranges in the distance) and the ha-ha (Swan river) the setting was to fulfill the sense of possession in the new land. Stannage best analyzes the symbolic view at Kings Park:

"The scene itself is an Arcadia – a statement of the ancient pastoral of Virgil and the landscapes of Claude and his British and colonial romantic followers through to the city planners of the last quarter of the twentieth century. As Stirling has described Swan River in the picturesque language of the Romantic Era, so Perth has been described in word and picture ever since. In short, Swan River forms part of the great Western tradition of the pastoral idyll, a tradition which was central to the gentry's quest for internal peace and belief in a harmonious society where 'men' were at one with each other and with nature" (Stannage, 1979, p.329).

To invent new stories and recover old ones by relating them in new landscapes, Spira (1998, p.262) claims was to cope with threats to survival, such as the reaction to 18th century industrialization or the paradox offered in the Garden of Eden.

To the settlers the location and view at Mount Eliza would define the place as 'their' world and reinforce their ideals (see figure 2). As much as the mythological, social aspirations, and the concept of long term economic benefits played their part in the development of large scale landscape, Plumptre (1993, pp. 12-15) claims a growing element of status and national identity equally reflected their possessive manner as a way of life.⁸ Nature was positioned as a cultural construct, and conceptualized with new meanings. Willis (1993, p. 62) states that through webs of sustaining tradition and fostering invention, the aesthetic of the local intersected with imported cultural agendas.

⁸ For the English, the dual tendency in adapting the need for intimacy and the urge to dominate space, came from the Romans – reflecting the ethos of a conquering people, as bent on safe-guarding their civilization as they were on imposing it (van Zuylen, 1995, p. 22).

The once home to the Aborigine, animals and plants of the wilderness, Mount Eliza was cleared of such features as it entered its career as a city-viewing point, and was later named Kings Park. The belief in Arcadia, of that harmonious 'middle world' between the city and the wilderness, became a reality (Stannage, 1979, pp. 19, 330).⁹

2.2 Symbolic Features

Since settlement, a passion for neatness has been and is the most predominant characteristic of Australian display gardening, either private or institutional. Our 'house' and its immediate surroundings are but few areas where we have real power to make decisions and practice them.¹⁰ According to Seddon (1998, p. 161) the concern with appearances was strengthened in Australia by the awareness of the convict background, where respect was fought for, because outward signs of disorder might signal the chaos brought out from England. This concept was best generated through the front garden and not the domestic functions that were met in the back yard.¹¹ To the viewer the landscaped gardens at Kings Park presented with fine manicured lawns and flowerbeds, with the view across the river, arose to represent the 'front yard' of Perth¹² (see figure

⁹ As discussed previously, Arcadia is the myth of the pastoral economy, and is an expression of urban culture, idealized by city dwellers. The countryside has always been celebrated from the security of a hobby farm, from which writer / painter does not have to draw full sustenance. The Augustan poet Virgil drew his income from Rome, but wrote his poetry in the hills of Rome. In China urban civil servants celebrated the minutiae of the natural world in their country retreat (Seddon, 1995, p. 211). The situation was similar in the new settlement, where the major source of income came from overseas, the hinterland and from the capital of Canberra (Seddon & Ravine, 1986, p. 59). Thus far, we have not considered the invasive settlement through the eyes of the displaced Aborigines, as this will be discussed later.

¹⁰ Here, 'our house' is meant to establish the stereotypes of dwellings, whether it is the individual's 'house' or an institutional 'house'.

¹¹ The back yard will be discussed with Fiona Hall's Fern Garden later.

¹² On the other hand, equally attractive is the natural bushland of the park, the true reflection of the living environment before the arrival of the Europeans, which attracts so many visitors annually (Gilmour, 1995, p. 6). I see the proportion of the landscaped gardens and natural bushland at Kings Park is like 'reading' the Australian flag. The 'front' of Kings Park, a symbol of British dominance is the Union Jack, while the natural bushland that signifies a sense of place, is the majority of the flag with the Southern Cross. In a sense, the dominant 'front yard' displays the face of the dominant ideology.

3). However, Carroll (1992, p. 155) alleges that a new understanding of national identity, new myths, or recycled ones appeared.

World War 1 provided Western Australia with the first significant opportunity for nationalistic rhetoric and for 'testing' the moral fabric of the nation, in the collective preparedness to make the ultimate sacrifice (Willis, 1993, pp. 159, 160). The establishment of the new identity is similar in effect to the forerunners of the Industrial Revolution, when the English countryside changed its appearance.¹³ By politically influencing the estates in the deep country, the gentry placed emphasis on worshipping the nation, which according to Jellicoe (1975, pp. 193, 205) brought about conditions that were ripe for a complete reversal of the philosophical and aesthetic approach to landscape design. Plumptre (1993, p. 28) declares, an ideal was being presented to potential garden makers of a profitable landed estate where classical architecture existed in perfect harmony with nature. To accommodate both verbal and visual extremes in art, Paulson (1975, pp. 9-12) claims, meaning in the object was replaced by aesthetic appreciation in the viewer. This was because creative imagination came from English writers, while visual stimulation was imported from abroad, in the heroic inspired landscapes of Claude Lorraine and Nicholas Poussin (see figure 4). In reaction to the economic changes of the time, art derived from classical mythology, evoked the atmosphere of a lost Golden Age with moments of perfection and grandeur (Turner, 1985, p. 32). As a result, the English garden had become 'as allusive a structure as a poem', and was described by Brownell (1978, p. 246) as a 'symbol making activity, giving outward form to inward states of mind' by means of a complex iconography.¹⁴ By abandoning constricting boundaries, Plumptre (1993, p. 27) affirms the 'painterly'

¹³ As mentioned previously, land reforms by the ruling classes, saw the enclosure of pastures, due to the modernization of farming and expanding manufacturing industries (Ogrin, 1993, p. 124).

¹⁴ The Picturesque developed from the Poetic garden, derived from classical Roman and Greek inspiration (Ogrin, p. 125).

view of nature, extolling her qualities in an idealized, romanticized way was taken into account.

Parallel to this was the Empire's need for soldiers, transforming the image of the bushman to suit the demands of a new era. The Anzac legend, layered with stories found in bush literature by Henry Lawson, announced according to Schaffer (1990, pp. 41, 115) the cultural code upon which Australian nationalism was built. 'Lawson' stood for a utopian social vision, where a positive attitude was embodied in the struggle against a hostile landscape. This optimistic national perspective was often referred to as the 'Whig faith in progress' (Schaffer, 1990, p. 41). Together with the visual form in paintings such as Tom Roberts *Shearing the Rams*, the Anzac soldier became seen as a specific type: an improved variety of Englishman, a variant of the 'frontier type'. Willis (1993, pp. 160, 161) claims that through the sacrifice to the modern formation of nation-state the Anzac hero, the ordinary citizen, was offered a chance at immortality.

Presented as transcendental and connected to the values of a mythological past, the nation became into being as immortal. Similar to Turner's prototypes of the common man, where past connected to present, the men of Anzac were compared to Greek Gods.

The gardens at Kings Park that overlook Perth, are derived from both the Picturesque and Landscape styles from England, with symbolism similar to that of the Romantic painting tradition, in relation to content and mood. According to Koerner (1990, pp. 26, 141), the Romantic philosophy of 'qualitative potentializing' fashioned each feature as if it were the bearer of some higher significance, allowing abstractions to carry emotional loading, presupposing a metaphysical connection between visible appearance and invisible meaning. Bann (1984, p.69) claims, Alexander Pope and William Shenstone, the most noted representatives in the tradition of poet-gardeners, saw the creation of a garden as a way of enshrining their beliefs. Pope's concept was

psychological rather than physical in appearance, resulting in the triumph of the Picturesque becoming a metaphor of the imagination, advocating as Shenstone declares, that 'all gardening is landscape painting' (Brownell, 1978, p.58).

The setting at Kings Park became a creation of symbolic forms projected into spatial and poetic structures. However, to place ideological representations of identity, Spirn (1998, p. 80) emphasizes that contradictions often surface with the aesthetic. This is demonstrated through the features used in communicating meanings within the park. Such is the case with the symbolic trees as Seddon (1998, p. 84) states, stand to attention in front of Queen Victoria, who gazes imperiously from her pedestal over Perth water to the young city (see figure 5). In as much as the lemon scented eucalyptus gum trees appear impressive and authentic to the time frame of the war, they were not planted after World War 1. Gilmour (1995, p. 8) argues that the original plantings of oaks and plane trees (imports from Europe) in 1919 did not survive the tough conditions, and that in 1937 the now standing eucalyptus trees were planted, proving more successful (see figure 6). In a general move to establish a national identity, North (1999, p. 23) affirms, the concept of planting native gum trees coincided in further questioning the domination of European natural features. Far too many gardens are simply copies of other gardens, repeating the planting schemes of their contemporaries, or in this case reproducing patterns that had their origins in the cultures of past centuries.¹⁵ When the declaration becomes dogmatic or patterns are copied without returning to the original for inspiration, Spirn (1998, p. 197) argues that the meaning can be lost, hence missing the sense of original discovery. If the initial plantings of oaks and plane trees, symbolizing the sacrifice of Australian lives, had survived, Swinscow

¹⁵ Mythological heroes and the intention that trees represent life are common stories, but are not necessarily Australian, such as the Greek myth of Apollo and Daphne. To escape Apollo's clutch while chasing her, Daphne changed into a tree. The application of such myths is as foreign as the adoption of foreign trees like plane and oak trees, even though they symbolize long life (Bulfinch, 1998, p. 23).

(1992, pp. 61, 62) confirms their originality would have been no more decorative than a flight of china ducks on a wall.

A feature of authority through the landscape is the road (Fraser Avenue), which according to MacCannell (1993, p. 94) does not merely represent power, but divides the landscape, keeping apart the elements on either side, while assuming full directive control over those who follow it. Another authoritative feature is the lawns spread out below, representing 'freedom to the eye'. Seddon (1998, pp. 179, 182) claims the lawns are an Arcadian remnant once nurtured by the pastoral economy in Britain, and remaining as a symbolic tool of Imperial power, are the slowest to loosen their hold. Their triumph in the Landscape Movement was that, success in growing lush grasses is based on the theory of prolific dew formation in temperate climates. In this case, because of the costly and labour intensive care given, Thomas (1984, p. 45) argues that lawns do not represent 'freedom' to Western Australia, due to the lack of water resources in a dry climate (see figure 7 & figure 1).

Swinscow (1992, p. 41) claims the perspective across the Swan River is another symbolic feature, as 'borrowed' scenery from the distant Ranges, draws on the philosophy of the ha-ha, for nature to be brought into closer intimacy with culture.¹⁶ This compels the viewer to be 'pulled out' into the distance, as though looking into the future. Here, the symbolic trees committed in the subject matter of national spirit stand immovable, as 'lived lives' providing the 'foundation' on the future (see figure 5). Like

¹⁶

1. River scenes frequently depicted in classical paintings noted space that could ease the eye into depth (Koerner, 1990, p. 114). Rivers are boundaries / barriers, but can be bridges that mark passage, real and mythical, like the passage from life to death in Greek mythology (Spim, 1990, p. 140).
2. The ha-ha was a sunken wall used in 18th century Landscape Movement, which allowed an uninterrupted view of the natural world beyond the house and garden (Thomas, 1984, p. 129). It was extolled as a symbol of freedom, and used successfully as an instrument for the promotion of the dominant progressive forces (Ogrin, 1993, p. 19) (see figure 13).

a stage set out of Pope's picturesque designs, endowed with animation by the power of the 'mythological eye', the landscape at Kings Park was transformed to serve its traditional literary purpose as mirror of human emotions Turner (1985, p. 18). In the endeavour to attain the ideal and enshrine beliefs in nation whether politically, socially or spiritually, Paulson (1975, pp. 24, 25) claims the intention is similar to the iconographic garden at Stowe, in England. Here the Temple of Ancient Virtue separates the British Worthies by the Styx River, and the valley called the Elysian Fields (see figure 8 & figure 9). However, modern attempts at virtue from the ancient ideal are refuted by the unchangeable fact of death that separates them, thus politically locating the ideal in the past, whereas contemporary vanity is in shambles. Similar symbolic portrayal of the heroic lives at Kings Park are described by Ernst Curtius, when he states, "Descending Gods have found Elysium here" (Brownell, 1978, p. 75). In effect, according to Stannage (1979, pp. 332, 333), the attractive location of Kings Park that was already a sacred place by the indigenous people, was transformed into another translation of a sacred place, and the view which never failed to excite the imagination, was seen through the filter of social and political experience.

2.3 Contrasting Cultures

Such mythology, singular and unique, according to Kapferer (1996, p. 11) is always coming up against the equally well-developed and well-protected mythologies of other cultures, forever prodding at the situation that keeps questioning identity. Design or art that evinces a 'sense of place' respects local context, but context can be interpreted both physically and socially and the two may conflict. For example Seddon (1995, p. 211) argues that the policy of National Parks' intention was to rid the land of introduced plants in order to protect the integrity of the environment. The irony is that their charter is mostly to conserve both our natural and social heritage, leading to question - whose

place? Seddon (1995, p. 13) further stresses, although Arcadian images of the colony were used heavily to promote the new land in Britain, instead of promoting the care and management of the natural 'local Eden' that was found there, it was replaced with an alien one. This ponders on Sir Thomas Browne's claim where, "the masters have left such frigid interpretations...that there is little encouragement to dream of Paradise itself" (Robertson, 1989, p. 77).

The first inhabitants of the south west of Western Australia were the Aborigines, and the best hunting grounds for these people often coincided with their sacred sites, which were found in close proximity to permanent water supplies.¹⁷ Markey (1977, pp. 1-5) claims, not only is Mount Eliza sacred ground for Aboriginal beliefs, identity and survival, but their occupancy made the land more productive than it had been before the early settlers' arrival. As an agency of geographic change their process known as 'fire-stick' farming, was consciously aimed at increasing the food production in an area, mainly to afford new grasslands to the kangaroo. Park-like in appearance, this modification of the original environment was of enormous significance to the initial Europeans. Subsequently, incapable of offering a serious threat to the impending occupation and the new comers' appraising eyes, the 'fire-stick' farming method guaranteed the Aborigines expulsion to make way for the new occupancy, who constructed through their own myths and cultural identification.

According to Gerritsen (1994, p. 266), both cultures view Mount Eliza as sacred and as a place for renewal, but the perceptions if ideals are diverse, and translating these would

¹⁷ Of spiritual significance is the area under the brow of Mount Eliza, where the old Swan Brewery stands. According to Aboriginal beliefs, the mythic snake, the 'Waugal', is part of the natural spring water at the site, and emerging at Mount Eliza and crawling its way to the sea, has created the Swan River. Excluding this belief, and recognizing the value of having land with natural spring water, the Europeans soon established a small brewery. Although none of the original buildings have survived, the political argument continues between Perth's 'nouveau riche' entrepreneurs, the government and Aboriginal claims, as response to any other battle for power or property. In addition, the Aboriginal Lands Trust's push goes on for the land to be turned over to the Aboriginal keepers, who embrace the land symbolically as a matter of life or death. (Ansara, 1989, pp. 1, 2, 5, 14)

be impossible, for mutual understanding. This is demonstrated in the contrast between the two utopian viewpoints of the 'ideal'.¹⁸

For the Europeans, different discourses and images form part of the process of inventing nation. More often this is entangled with the desire for it. Even though nation as a totality does not exist, invoked imagery can correspond or contradict circumstances, resulting in mythology to be seen as a projection into space (Broadribb, p. 225; Willis, 1993, p. 156).

On the other hand, Willis (1993, p. 156) argues in the Aboriginal appeal to affirm things 'nation' is meant to stand for, their environment as a whole carries abstractions and degrees of emotions that cannot be pinned down and demonstrated according to Western philosophy.¹⁹ This is because Aboriginal myths project collective psyche material into matter. Broadribb (1995, pp. 225, 227) explains, Aboriginal dreaming myths did not limit creation to the past, for present in the land in accordance to their beliefs, is a continuing source of life or spirit that is dependent upon humans for its release.

Ian Hamilton Finlay, a 20th century landscape designer and poet continues the tradition of poet-gardeners in his garden at Stonypath, Scotland. Finlay brings out the polemical force in his work by delving back and examining the ways in which the creation of gardens had been implicitly bound within the value systems of former times, in what he has called the "neo-classical rearmament of the garden" (Bann, 1984, pp. 69, 70). (see figure 10). In bringing together the different strands of culture and tradition, he forms an

¹⁸ Foremost, the Western concept of land division for occupation was and is held through force of wealth, whereas an Aborigine is 'owned' by the land. Interacting with their environment, defined by ongoing religious and cultural traditions, ensured their continuing support by the land (Broadribb, 1995, p. 222).

¹⁹ The Fem Garden invokes images through its features as part of a process to describe nation. This will be discussed further on.

implicit challenge to the dominant values of contemporary culture, by questioning at its base the ideology which helps to validate and sustain it. It is not his desire to merge art with the forces of nature, but rather the need to put its rhetorical energies to the test.²⁰ Paulson (1975, p. 8) claims that while language conveys meaning within Finlay's work, it is images to which meaning is given. This advocates Pope's philosophy that the transaction between object and viewer is what the mind sees. In a similar effect, this is carried through to the Fern Garden in Canberra, where familiar constructions appear to be traditional to the garden, but by evoking areas of reference to the social and political, the features communicate and challenge images of identity with nation.

²⁰ His contribution to concrete poetry engages a genre involving minimal linguistic elements, based on metaphorical play. For example, I perceive the words 'fire' and 'young' (or rebirth) are far removed in context between the English / Australian and Aboriginal perceptions. Within the considered timeframe, the Aborigines consciously used fire to release the life source for the rebirth (young) of grasslands to sustain their food chain. The Europeans however, helped sustain the spirit in creating the necessary elements for the formation of nation, by sacrificing the 'young' (of their birth), through war ('fire') (Bann, 1984, pp. 69, 70).

Chapter 3: THE FERN GARDEN IN CANBERRA

3.1 Sense of Place

Away from the gardens at Kings Park on the other side of the Australian continent is the 'Garden City' of Canberra. Johnson (1996, pp. 2, 3) states that while dreaming, ideals and realities are the themes of global structures, the idea of a 'garden city' begins with a historical precursor of the Australian town and suburb. From the earliest days of white history, the expansionist and confident British Empire shaped the economy and sociology of Australian cities. Davison (1996, p. 109) maintains, this was in reaction to the crowded gardenless urban terraces of Europe, resulting in a quest of the conception of a 'garden city', where the Australian suburb would develop into a spacious residential parkland.²¹ However, in the later half of the 19th century, gold discoveries signaled the beginning of a profound change in the social, economic and political structure of the colonies. According to Baskin and Dixon (1996, pp. 26, 27), the rapidly expanding towns produced an assorted infusion of influences that can be seen in many Australian gardens today. This massive growth and social polarization of the larger Australian cities provided the setting for the bush to be eulogized, as was the building of the long pastoral tradition in Western Australia. But after World War II conditions were more complicated with massive suburbanization of the population (Johnson, 1996, p. 6). The city and its suburbs became sites of divergent meanings, fractured experiences and a population united, not by the uniformity of the suburb, but by idiosyncratic diversity.²²

²¹ The 'City Beautiful' movement (displayed at the Chicago Fair of 1893) was proposed for Canberra, by Walter Burley Griffin, emphasizing civil design, a system of highways and avenues, great parks and the planning of public buildings around formal water features. An emphasis where streets, dwellings and private gardens all compliment one another without the interference of fences, was also an influence by the English 'Garden city' movement, which urged picturesque irregularity in suburban planning (North, 1999, pp. 124).

²² This is a focal point, of the struggle to locate the social and political ideologies in order to create the ideal image of a garden. From ancient times to the present day, humans have coaxed private or illusionary worlds of peace and tranquility to overcome the inconsistency of life, and because no two gardens are alike, the ideal dream remains timeless (van Zuylen, 1995, p. 127).

Just as Europe sought to escape crowded urbanization, the idea of locating a 'garden city' within a landscape, away from the larger congested cities, was inspired for the national capital (North, 1999, pp. 121-127). However, the original plan intended for Canberra as 'ideal city' was never fully implemented, due to the fact that the location lies in a valley with dry inland conditions that are not easy for gardening. In spite of this, Canberra has some motivating gardens, such as the National Botanic Gardens, the courtyard roof gardens at Parliament House (not open to the public), and situated at the back of the National Gallery of Australia, is the Fern Garden created by artist Fiona Hall²³ (see figure 11).

Unlike the vast spaces and predominant viewing location that incorporates the social vision of the dominant culture at Kings Park, this smaller site, surrounded by concrete buildings is equally layered with fertile interactions between plants, elements and human existence (Hart, 1998, p. 204). To give an account of 'sense of place', Hall stimulates reflection about the nature of both the physical and cultural context of society. Willis (1993, p. 89) claims a number of divergent processes through the adoption of symbols and illusions have to be considered that have contributed to history, place, narrative and culture for several generations, helping to demonstrate the common and the rare alike.²⁴ While traditions, values and policies may change, design that reveals and agrees with deep context is likely to be more functional and sustainable over time, and this remains key to the history and future of a place (Spirm, 1998, p. 181).

²³ The 'Ideal Garden City' plan did not develop because of the inland conditions - the roof gardens growing in pure sand, and incorporate a technology known as sand based construction, where water / nutrients are carefully monitored. Also as part of the development, street tree planting, of both exotic and native species did not prove suitable due to the harsh climate (North, 1999, pp. 123, 125). This was similar in asserting the dominant ideologies at Kings Park where the original plane and oak trees did not survive.

²⁴ Many of her works speak about the compromising and complex processes and history of colonization, as in her work *A Folly For Mrs Macquarie* at the Botanic Gardens in Sydney. Hall explores the concepts of importing and implanting of bodies, human and plants, entangled in misconceptions, knowledge and hopes (Edwards, 2001, pp. 264, 266).

Similar to the work of Ian Hamilton Finlay, Fiona Hall uses traditional garden features but invokes them with images that correspond or contradict the dominant concepts of nation. Firstly, how do we identify the 'Australian' garden?

Defining a 'typical' Australian garden style would be complex, because Australia is both topographically and climatically a mix of opposites. North (1999, pp. 22-24) argues Queensland's tropical north cannot be grouped with the cooler climate of Tasmania or arid central regions of Alice Springs. Even further, Perth is different from Fremantle. Then there is the question of our ethnic diversity. Although gardens have changed over the years, not all were or are the same, except that identification through function is the key, and the vegetable garden has shown the greatest variation. Seddon (1998, pp. 154, 155) claims, in time not all reflected the practice of the early settlers – narrow paths around rectangles mounded with compost, mulched with straw and bordered with bricks. The Chinese / Asians have always sought to cultivate every inch of land available to them, and to this day, the southern Europeans (Greeks and Italians) often grow vegetables in their front yard as well as their back, in inner city suburbs. In addition the other variation was social, where despite the status level, whether a larger vegetable garden, stables, tennis court or more fruit trees, the domestic functions still had to be met through the garden.

As an ideal representation, the Fern Garden is presented as a symbolic 'utilitarian Eden'. This is because national identity is a cultural construction and the features used represent the 'notion and function of Australia'. Willis (1993, p. 89) points out that relation between artistic vision and place cannot render true meaning or serve for national meaning in landscape, therefore processes connect and overlap - the organic and inorganic, through ethical and aesthetic intentions, inscribing the garden as Hart (1998, p. 208) states with cultural history, values and visions. This reinforces illusions

to be created as Howett (1993, p. 255) states, where nature provides the materials while the designer artfully manipulates, orders and forms.

Landscape design has almost always dealt with illusion, as Francis and Hester (1993, p. 186) state, such as making an estate seem bigger than it is, like the extended 'progressive' views of the English estates, or pretending water is plentiful when it is scarce, as in the desert oasis of the Persian gardens.

Professor Jay Appleton's theory of prospect / refuge symbolism can be applied to the Fern Garden in that the division is not presented as hard-and-fast, as Swinscow (1992, p. 43) claims both prospect and refuge can vary in degree, and may exist in different parts of the same landscape.²⁵ Each feature skillfully makes a distinctive statement, yet symbolically shelters a concept. When the parts are placed in the overall design, they further symbolically extend the field of vision. This design technique with its richness of visual impressions, creates a big world out of a small garden (Ogrin, 1993, p. 168). As an art design and an extension of the 'house' (figuratively the National Gallery, and Australia), the Fern Garden is at once a microcosm and cosmos, a landscape of paradox.

3.2 Symbolic Features

Spirn (1998, pp. 126, 160) claims territory, path, gate, gathering place, boundary, refuge, prospect and sign are all settings that encompass a common heritage that every culture embroiders upon, inventing forms to express its distinctiveness, even as they

²⁵ By prospect Appleton means any feature, object or situation which directly facilitates observation or indirectly suggests an opportunity to extend the field of vision. An example of prospect symbolism would be the distant view obtainable over a ha-ha. In contrast a refuge includes anything which affords or symbolically suggests an opportunity to hide or shelter. An example of refuge would be the 'hortus conclusus' or secret garden (Swinscow, 1992, p. 41). The 'garden enclosed' or secret garden was within a garden, where features were powerful religious metaphors in the Middle Ages (van Zuylen, 1995, p. 38).

connect to the larger world. By employing metaphors between the natural elements and the visual connections, Fiona Hall gives the garden a character that carries messages within the framework of social and political development.

Firstly, the space can symbolically represent the 'back yard' (see figure 11). This is because statements of various kinds are made by the way the land around the house is used, as both front and back yards are a dialectical pair and define each other negatively (Seddon, 1998, p. 160). The front yard neatly displays the appearance of the house, as Kings Park does for the city of Perth, passionately presenting a grand front of cultural inheritance and national spirit. Whereas the back yard reflects the domestic functions of the house, as the Fern Garden does for the National Gallery and the broader context of Australia.

Seddon (1998, p. 155) claims the suburban back yard has and still serves as a play space for the imagination that could become many things for the householder.²⁶ In the idea as garden construct at the back of the National Gallery at Canberra, this space could figuratively represent 'Australia's' back yard to the viewer. As part of traditional and modern social thought, Francis and Hester (1993, pp. 2, 4) acknowledge it can be seen as a new geometry of ideas. Today's trend is that the backyard has become back garden for recreation and display space for entertainment. Seddon (1998, pp. 159, 160) claims it has added a public function to its private one, and thus acquired the characteristic of the front garden. In becoming a display space, the features demonstrate the ideologies of the 'house' just as the front yard would, therefore, carrying messages that constitute the framework of social and political development of the nation.

²⁶ To some extent, the function of the 'typical' Australian backyard, suburban or rural, can be known easily from a list of its contents, such as a clothes line, the universal lemon tree, a water tank, an old oil drum for burning rubbish or a chicken-house, the list is endless (Seddon, 1998, p. 153).

Before entering the path to the garden, wrought-iron gates designed to represent the female reproductive system, greet the observer (see figure 12). But why does Hall use the female image? Schaffer (1990, pp. 77-82) claims that nationalistic history imagines Australia's self-representation and identification, as a discourse with reference to the 'masculine'. With this view, the dominant concept of national character has often portrayed land settlement as a 'history of progressive mastery' (Schaffer, 1990, p. 78). As an ideological construct it underlies British imperialist interests and shapes the Australian tradition, making the inscription of the subject into culture possible, only to result in a tradition of social comment and criticism. The male figure tends to be perceived as individual, even when being used to express a general idea. For example, Warner (1985, p. 12) describes that in the myth of the Anzac hero, men are individual, they appear to be in command of their own characters, their own identity, living inside their own skins, not including women in their symbolic embrace.

On the other hand as an 'other' (in this case the land as the feminine), Schaffer (1990, pp. 77, 78) argues the perception of the female form has been signified as generic and universal, to be shaped, conquered and civilized by man. But entrance through the gates (female form) and into the garden (representing the land) allows the viewer to be caught between the ideal and the general, the collective prototype. That is, Warner (1985, pp. 12, 13) explains the gates do not refer to particular women, nor describe women as a group, neither identify with a particular character or nature, yet we can live 'inside the gates' skin', and for that reason they stand for us regardless of gender, because all citizens shape the country. Its symbolism holds through gender relationships in rhetoric and imagery. As suggested by Schaffer (1990, p. 79), perhaps Hall allows the viewer to rethink and question the authorial man who comes to represent the national character, in registering the metaphor of woman in the landscape.

Then there is the notion of 'Mother Earth', as Hart (1998, p. 209) describes the sense of entering a womb-like space within the confines of the gallery. With the many transformations of nation along the way, humans seem to have lost their intimate connection with the earth, because while the earth has become an object of exploitation, the notion of Mother Earth can no longer be conceived. By stepping into the 'heart' of the site, a new story of contemporary life in Australia renews the metaphor in the garden. Marcus (1993, p. 28) states we may strongly relate to the tangible notion of matter - the 'mothering' ground of our lives, the land we walk (in this case the winding path), but we need to keep sight of its metaphoric meaning in our lives, that is, it signifies our 'life' along the way.

The path and fountain hold many expressions. Firstly, as a line of movement the path is a potential link between different entities – plants, water, and people. Spirm (1990, p. 170) declares people follow paths as well as make them. In order to experience the garden, the viewer must move through, catching more views within the field of vision. This creates fertile ground for the imagination, which is in harmony with the 18th century poet-gardeners' philosophy, where each viewer brings a different response. Ogrin (1993, pp. 166, 168) suggests this unique design with its richness of visual impressions, creates a big world out of a small one. In this case, the main path spirals towards the center, curving characteristically as the labyrinths of old depicted a 'journey through life'. Legend has it that entry and exit of the labyrinth depends on the possession of special knowledge or power, which makes the path to become 'The Path', a metaphor for the journey the viewer makes through life (Spirm, 1990, p. 20; Swinscow, 1992, p. 130). The path is designed not to dominate in a straight line, but mimics the natural unfolding of a young fern frond, symbolically allowing the viewer to 'unfold' his / her own path, while it corresponds to the unfolding process of nation.

MacCannell (1993, p. 94) explains that small paths end at something surprising or creative, as here the overall movement is towards the fountain, the centerpiece of the garden that acoustically dominates the space (see figure 11). This feature finds its physical expression mainly in enclosed gardens, especially as the Paradise symbol of life in Islamic gardens, while at the same time coinciding as an oasis of Australia's harsh desert. Ogrin (1993, pp. 20, 239) claims the reduced possibilities of survival in the dry desert zones have called forth the image of the best possible world, where water used as a restorative feature, symbolizes life. In this case, the model of the garden does not depict existing nature, but rather presents an idealized structure that can satisfy humans' material and spiritual requirements. Hall sets the elements of the 'oasis' with elevated symbolic components, where the water and the tree ferns depending on it are the pre-condition of life, and therefore identify as life within the nation.

In similar pursuit, Ogrin (1993, p. 18) explains the appearance of any actual tree is always a reminder of something definite, some reality seen and experienced before. There is real pleasure in recognizing features and vegetation that are genuinely Australian, such as the elevated status of Australian-ness that the Heidelberg painters and their works have claimed. Willis (1993, pp. 80, 82) states their popularity is based on the process of recognition, on acquiring object / images as part of the strong appeal to the landscape. This dissolves what is before the viewer, into remembered images. An example is Frederick McCubbins *Lost*, where more attention is given to the texture and colour of the peeling bark of the eucalyptus tree in the foreground than to the figure of the child.

As the garden was for the National Gallery of Australia, it was appropriate to choose native species. Seddon (1998, p. 139) argues the concern today with the uniform effects of international technology and production has led to a renewed concern for the locally

distinctive. The tree ferns signal part of the 'identity' of Australia, expressing a sense of place, but they are out of character with the surrounding natural landscape, questioning the articulation of adequate criteria for distinguishing between valid and deceptive expressions. The trees chosen specifically for the site are one of Australia's most ancient plants, *Dicksonia antarctica*. Since Canberra has a dry inland climate, Hart (1998, p. 209) argues a critical factor was whether the plants would grow in the area, because the species flourish in the cooler climate south of the Australian continent.

In as much as there is a sense of pleasure in recognizing genuine Australian vegetation, there is also a potent pleasure of recognition pulling in the opposite direction. Willis (1993, p. 80) argues that the extreme repetition of the tree ferns places emphasis on one specie, only to down play the importance of others.²⁷ When losing their natural spatial characteristics within ecological diversity, Ogrin (1993, p. 18) claims they are transformed into another dimension of reading, demonstrating that in order to establish symbolic connotations in garden art, a transmuted environment needs to be created. Standing in stillness with trunks like strange sentinels, the tree ferns do not specify a particular time frame of 'lived life', it is as though they have always been around. Watching over the garden as timeless custodians of the land, they reinforce the concept of illusions that are part of the constructed nature of gardens. Robertson (1998, pp. 83, 84) suggests their archetype presence excludes anything else that is not 'native' to the land, signaling a fundamental appeal resting on the evocation of an archetypical theme – the original land, 'the Garden of Eden' that the indigenous people discovered. By including a triple naming system: the botanical name, the common name and the language group to which it belongs, Hall acknowledges the indigenous peoples' connections with the land and plant life (Hart, 1998, p. 210).

²⁷ Alexander Pope ridiculed gardens where repetition was taken to the extreme for the sake of visual effect, because ecological diversity was not depicted, thus creating a conflict between the practical and the metaphorical (Spim, 1998, p. 222).

As with culture, individuals provide context and meaning, because without a sense of past and future, Spirm (1998, p. 18) acknowledges there can be no present. Fiona Hall memorizes lost friends by inscribing their names in the pebble paving, honouring a memory not of significant heroes, such as the Anzac heroes remembered at Kings Park, but the everyday citizen that contributes to nation (Hart, 1998, p. 210). But they are female names and connect to the female form on the gates, and can therefore represent the 'other' of the patriarchal society²⁸ (see figure 12). While recognizing that contemporary Australian cities are built by and for men, Hall agrees with Johnson (1996, p. 6) in seeing scope within existing physical structures and regulations for women to achieve less oppressive social and spatial outcomes. That is, if the garden represents the 'Australian back yard' as discussed previously, this distinction between wall ('house') and space, renders relationship between architecture and subjectivity (Lozanovska, 1996, p. 194). It is women, especially migrant women, within suburbia that have to fit into a new language and a different symbolic order in which they are lesser or 'other'. Johnson (1996, p. 7) argues this new order and language are usually seen in patriarchal terms, but through the use of female names, the maternal or 'other' remains within this order to disrupt it.

In the manner of 18th century poet-gardeners, Ian Hamilton Finlay has declared in one of his 'Unconnected Sentences of Gardening' that certain gardens can be described as 'retreats when they are really attacks' (Bann, 1984, p. 69). In similar terms to the Fern garden, far from being a refuge from the urban world, his garden at Stonypath forms an implicit challenge to the dominant values of contemporary culture. For instance, Bann (1984, pp. 69, 70) claims that Finlay uses certain forms of construction that are traditional to the garden, like the sundial, but by suggesting the erratic actions of Time,

²⁸ In the past, Chinese gardens contained complex allusions to poetry, with clues inscribed on rocks, gateways and windows, even subtle poetic references that were treasonous political statements were concealed by the seeming innocence of the garden (Spirm, 1998, p. 78). But the understanding of ethics and aesthetics, through symbols or proverbs was dissociated in the West (Clifford, 1967, p. 114).

he evokes areas of reference to the cultural and political. By connecting to the poet-gardeners of the past, who saw the garden as a symbolic recreation of nature to enshrine their values, Finlay demonstrates literary and figuratively, 'a place to stand'. To facilitate this, Fiona Hall uses the female names through symbolic recreation to disrupt and challenge the visual appeal. By doing so, she locates the 'female' in the primarily male dominated space of the 'back yard', whether as a private or national statement Seddon (1998, p. 159).²⁹ In representing the human form (names) as part of the evolution of place and culture, metaphors flow through both natural phenomena and cultural artifacts (Spirn, 1998, p. 148). The potency of the distinguishing features locates the visual appeal of identity with nation, while the metaphors challenge the 'nature' of what the garden reveals about nation.

²⁹ This is evident where the back yard is used as a functional space and service yard especially in country towns. Such as maintaining the vehicle or trailer, working on the boat, or stripping paint off doors, etc. The atmosphere is usually male, casual, untidy, and relaxed (Seddon, 1998, p. 159).

Chapter 4: CONCLUSION

The original myth of the Garden of Eden, accounting for our experience of human frailty and anxious yearnings for a better world, makes every garden an image. However pale in its reflection, of that utopian perspective for which humanity searches, it suggests working through archetypal patterns of gardens, in order to shape a place in which the ancient estrangement might finally be overcome. The Landscape Movement, a foundation for our own time, became a focal point of lively philosophy and ideological debate, where the garden's structure had become the arena for human viewpoints and the expression of desires. But contradictions marked the 'grafting' of new ideas onto old ones, further questioning the dominant ideological criteria through which society is sustained. The results often demonstrated the inadequacy of any model of garden as 'ideal construct'.

It is the concept of the Garden of Eden, not the real world of nature that imbues gardens with their special character. In order to recreate this, art has taken over from nature. There was no art in the Garden of Eden. Art is seen as a consequence of the 'Fall' functioning to bring humans into harmony with the world around that is often in discord with their destiny (Swinscow, 1992, p. 100). However, perceptions are challenged and contradictions occur when establishing one's own territory or the concept of nation. This has been demonstrated by the two gardens examined in this thesis, as both testify the ideology of society in their own time.

Kings Park in Western Australia, firstly installed the pastoral myth of Arcadia on settlement in an endeavour to escape the chaos of industrialization in England. When establishing identity as nation, the concept of 'Paradise' or 'delightful abode', through myths and heroes, was 'implanted' in open parkland and vistas, to project political visions. But through such measures to attain the ideal, the gardens imposed on another

culture's view of the ideal, where 'Paradise' and 'earthly delights' were a way of life and survival. With similar effects, the Fern Garden in Canberra functions as a practical Eden. Autonomous features indicate symbols of 'earthly delights' to identify and describe the contents of nation, but the seemingly innocent features are used as metaphors, meditating and challenging ideologies that construct culture and society. In the attempt to construct the ideal or 'perfect' garden that is able to fulfill a variety of social needs while bearing specific messages, both are imperfect, because life itself is incomplete and unresolved. This is because, as a product of their own time that indicates life's experiences, the concepts that were reproduced since their inception have changed with time.³⁰

Some issues are slow in their development, such as the concept of the 'masculine' in identifying nation in both gardens. Through myths of the 'masculine', the Anzac soldiers were glorified as Gods without embracing the sacrifice of women. Equally, nationalistic history portrays the national character as 'masculine', while the concept of land, signified as 'feminine', is to be shaped and civilized by man. Even to this day, the function of the back yard has been and still is perceived as the domain of the 'masculine'. Apart from gender issues natural features also, are slow to loosen their nationalistic hold. For instance, lawns were once symbols of the Landscape Movement in England, but can be politically incorrect in climates with water shortages. Also, should one species of tree ferns symbolize nation, when in fact the idea of nation consists of a vast diversity of peoples, as seen in the representation of the Fern Garden? Then again some matters remain unsolved. When identifying with the appraisal of 'nation', both the Europeans and Aborigines view Mount Eliza as a 'Paradise'.

³⁰ The 'modern day' ha-ha, is an example of gardens being products of their own time, and concepts of the ideal change with time. The Landscape Movement used the invisible border of the ha-ha for incorporating the views as part of the progressive concepts of landowners. Nowadays it is the opposite, where fences are the new borders that reverse the prospective views with the desire for privacy. (Swinscow, 1992, p. 42)

Constructions of the 'ideal' will continue to develop. By disregarding natural conditions and creating a garden that defines the social and political, attempts are always made to meet the physical and spiritual needs of humans and society.³¹ Yet gardens can be resonant with associations of all kinds even for those without the processes / experiences of owning a garden, or agreeing with dominant ideologies. Connecting to the wider world of nature both cognitively and imaginatively is in essence what we tie ourselves to, whether we are aware or not. Buying and utilizing plants and flowers from gardens of various types and locations, can be equally as instructive as visiting gardens, or working within one.³²

The concepts of 'high culture' gardens are simply copies of other gardens, demonstrating repeated patterns and features that denote symbolic context of human freedom or experience. However, their culturally bound visions are constructions and are not part of the nature of things. The fact remains that genuine nature is shaped and evolves according to its own laws, and is thus seen as 'wild' and in need to be custom-made in order to satisfy human measures. The irony is, while society's needs change with time, nature's life processes are constant. Nature is indifferent to the political, social or spiritual aspirations that variously influence society. It stands on its own terms, outside of human perceptions. To learn the secrets of nature as they really are, and not as we are inclined to judge them according to society's criteria, sets our own lives into a wider perspective. This approach into the concept of what the elements of a garden reveal, is more likely to reflect the truth that our own lives participate in, becoming an indispensable world of metaphors.

³¹ Such as with the initial plantings of plane and oak trees at Kings Park, or the notion of 'Garden City' as the national capital in a dry inland location.

³² In reference to this, the Age of Enlightenment has ingrained the movement of plants and trees between the different environments and continents, demonstrating the experimentation of shaping the ideal garden with the availability of diverse vegetation (Watkins, 1996, pp. 43-50).

Most contemporary garden designs aim to recover an otherworldly beauty and appearance, just as the 'great' gardens were inspired, that form part of our cultural heritage. But our idealist vision has blinded us to the possibilities of an aesthetic that acknowledges and embraces those realities of time, chance and mortality that have served as foundations for poetry and art. Giving us expressive form to the mysteries of time, change and mortality may be in effect a potent transformation, reconciling us to nature. This can offer a transition, to what is beyond our understanding, of the 'normal' perceptions of a garden (Howett, 1993, pp. 255, 257). For instance, the lotus flower is symbolically pure, and although it is rooted in mud, it deceives us by showing its beauty (see figure 14). This can figuratively represent 'the true nature of virtue unstained by the mud of world', leading us to speculate on the meaning of appearances in relation to reality (National Gallery, 2001, p. 52).

Therefore, gardens as creations of society are not the same as a 'spiritual' garden or the metaphoric natural elements within a garden. That is, a 'spiritual' garden demonstrates perception and a deeper understanding that the garden's life can be the secret of our relationship with the natural elements that reflect human life. The elements observed within such a garden individually 'speak' to *each* beholder. In questioning who has the best transaction with the natural elements and the reflections of the Garden of Eden, the answer can be 'everyone' or 'no one' (Holmes & Horioka, 1988, p. 114). Each person's understanding of life is different, whereby having their own capacity to perceive life through their own psyche, as Alexander Pope has claimed, 'the transaction between object and viewer is the product of a mind' (Brownell, 1978, p. 241). Some gardens challenge our understanding as they point in a certain direction, but the 'spiritual' garden itself has no location, neither social or political identification: it lies in the soul of each of us.

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Appendix



Figure 1: Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown, *Serpentine Lake*, (Ogrin, 1985, p. 156), c.1755, construction comprising clumps of trees, rolling surfaces of lawns and water, Petworth, Sussex, England.

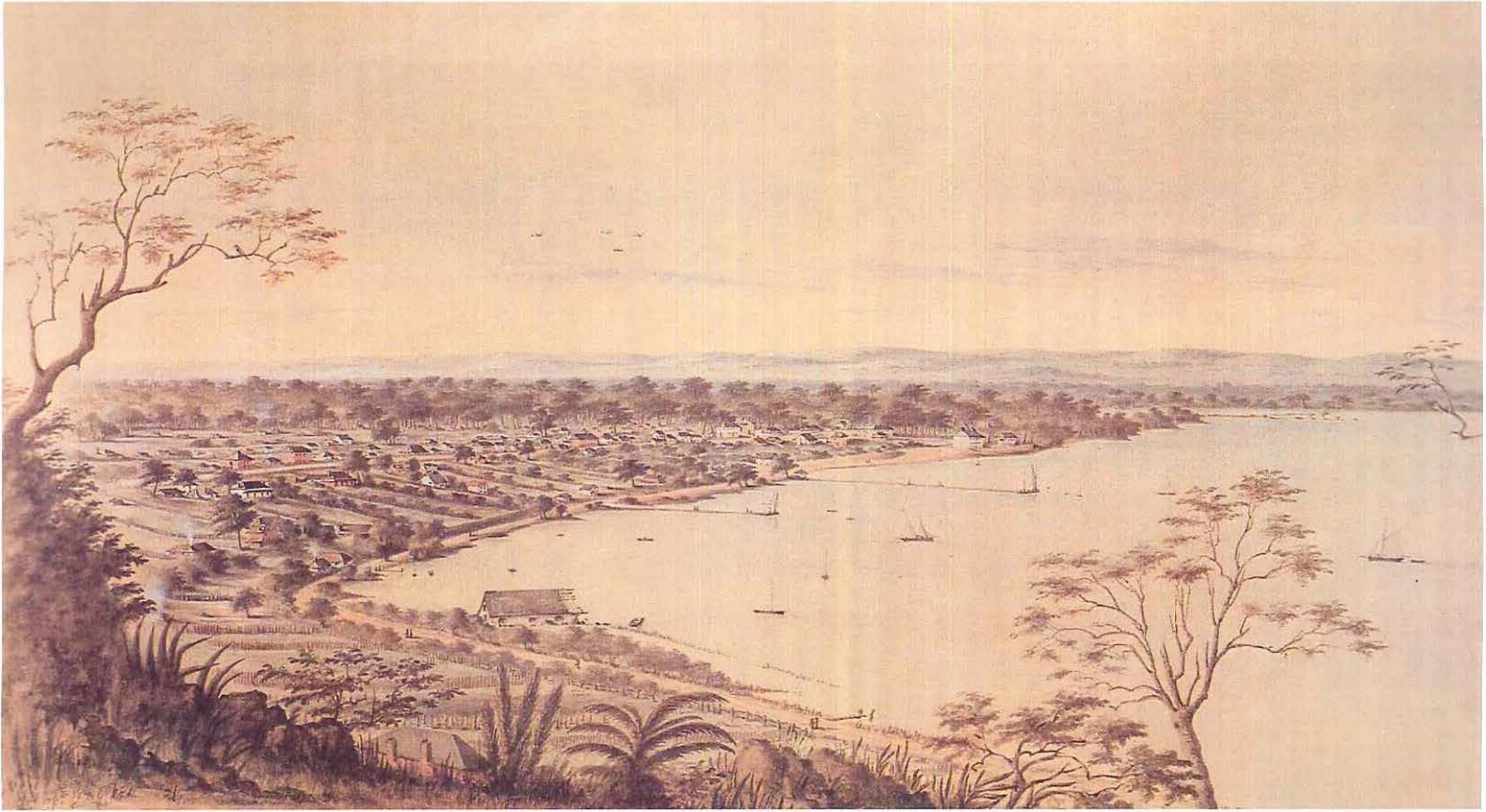


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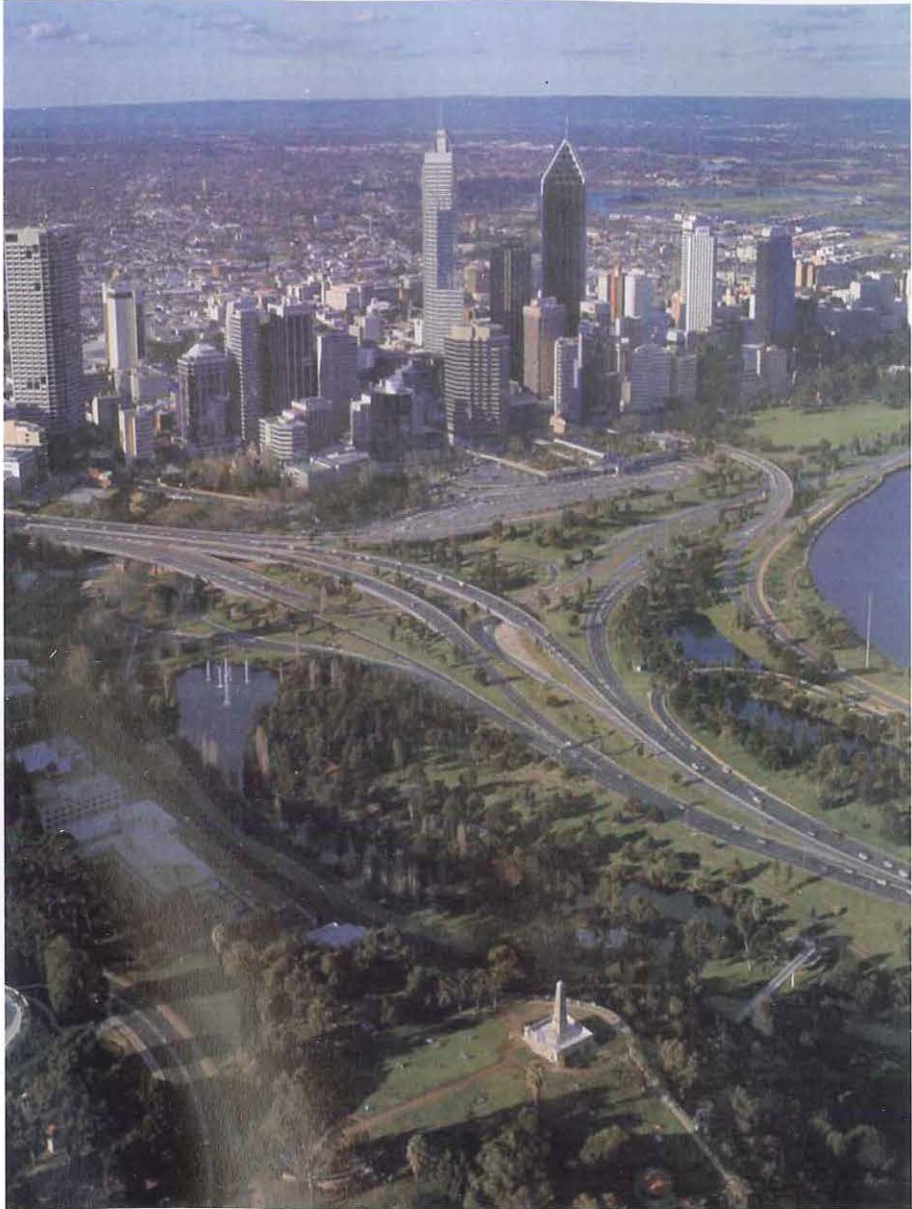


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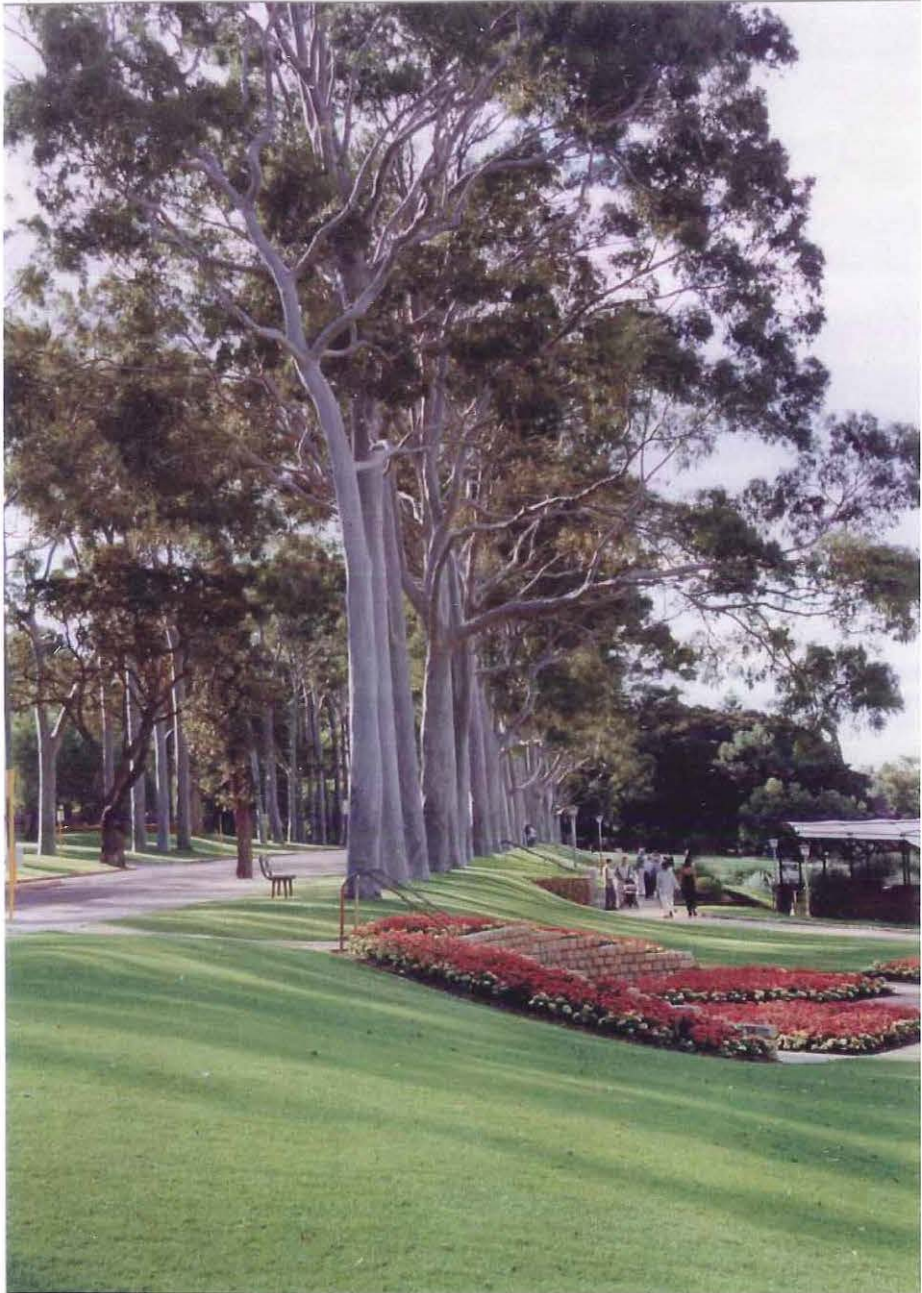


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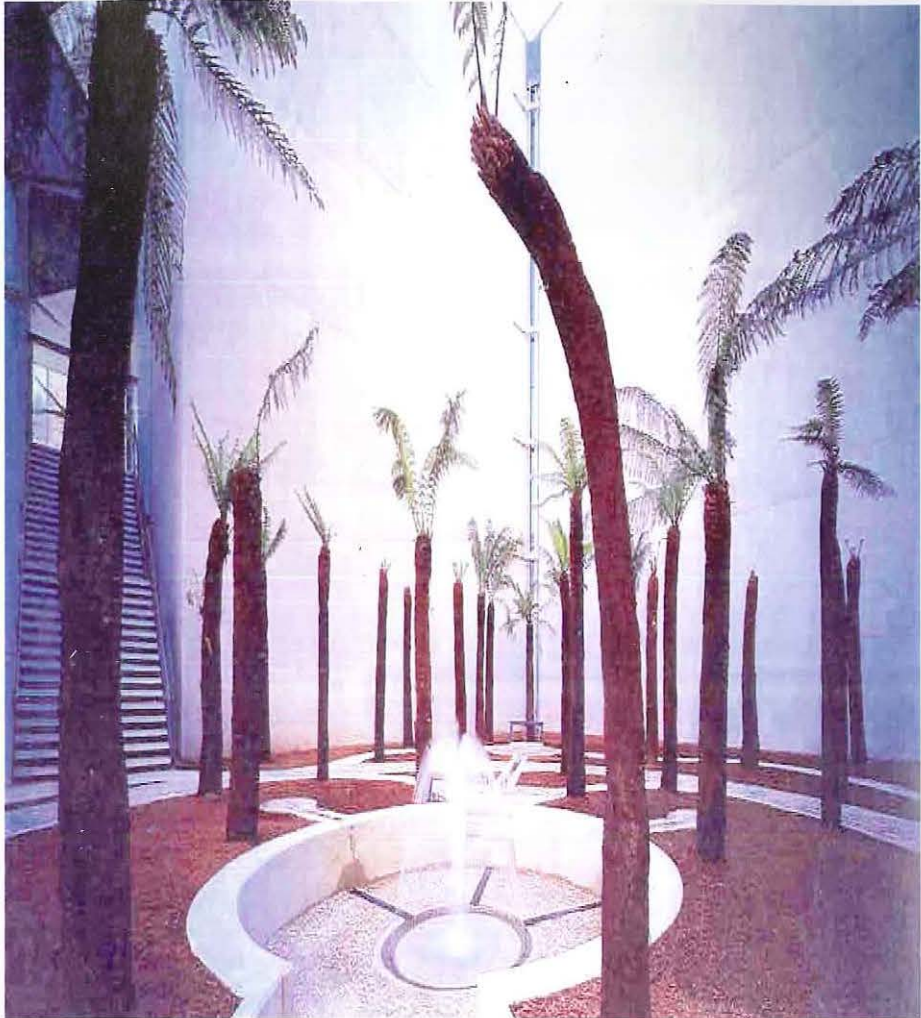


Figure 11: Fiona Hall, *The Fern Garden*, (Hart, 1998, p. 202), 1998, installation comprising tree ferns, pebble paving, concrete, water fountain, and wrought-iron, approx. 25 m x 35 m, National Gallery, Canberra.



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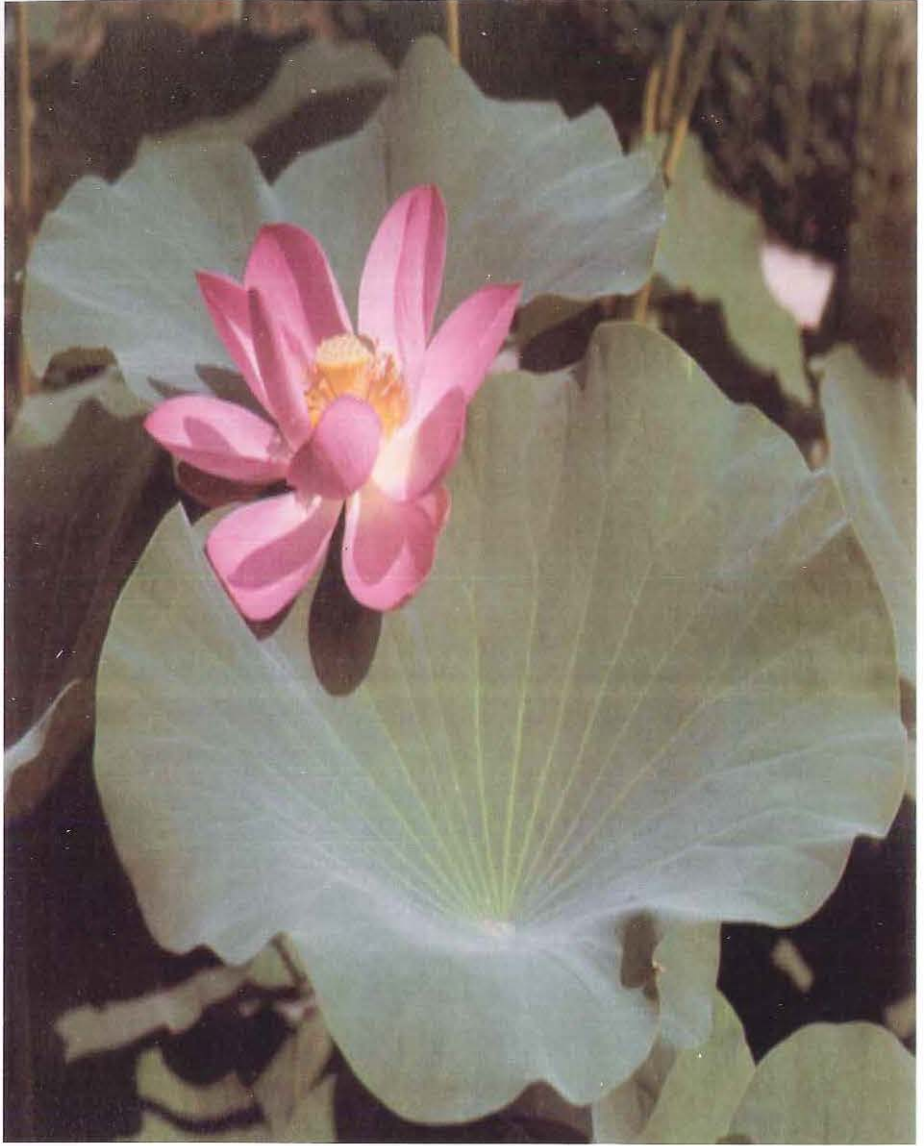


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