

NOTE

POINT BLANK

This note explores the impact on English design of neo-classical houses with doors in the middle of the principal front. It introduces the idea that geometry was used as a design tool even by apparently 'informal' designers.

Suppose one were to design a landscape for a great Palladian or neo-classical house with the sole constraint that it was to be free of French influence.¹ One might first decide like Alexander Pope ('Window to y^c 2nd floor, to reflect gardens')² that the views out were important, and next that a house which is itself symmetrical should generate symmetry in the landscape that is composed around it, and hence around the front door at its centre.³ In fact, the front door looks like the obvious starting point for a landscape at any time.⁴ So, when he set out his garden design at Cassiobury, Moses Cook began his line of stakes there,⁵ and in his Kimbolton correspondence John Vanbrugh criticized the mason Coleman, whom he superseded, because 'he had not brought the door of the house into the middle of the front', while the new room that Vanbrugh himself proposed 'falls so right to the garden that the door is in the middle of the room, and takes exactly the middle walk and canal'.⁶

Yet these simple assumptions immediately introduce a problem, because the view from a neo-classical front door can seldom have given satisfaction. On most days of the year the open door will have let in a terrible draught and in consequence one might expect it to be kept closed,⁷ and worse, there would be nowhere to sit – and that is not all: in a perfect world, the front door will also face over parkland, so saving the trouble of opening and shutting the gates for carriages on the way through a sequence of courts and garden enclosures, such as were often drawn by Leonard Knyff and Johannes Kip at the beginning of the century.⁸ In the same perfect world the best rooms will also face over parkland, where the most elegant and extensive views are likely to be, but the combination of best rooms and approaches was definitely not satisfactory, for the dust and dirt, smell and noise of the gravel approach had a wholly deleterious effect on the view from the windows.⁹

Humphry Repton cannot have been alone in finding it absurd that a landscape laid out at a

cost of thousands of pounds should only be seen on high days and holidays or when the door was opened to visitors too unfamiliar to know that the family usually came in round the back. It is no surprise, therefore, to find that in his mature work Lancelot Brown came up with a number of solutions to this problem. One might begin with the observation that Brownian design did not make Repton's strong association between entrance, view and best rooms, and this eased the difficulty. However, solutions for the view straight ahead, that is, at point blank,¹⁰ could be architectural: a portico in front of the front door for example could make a pavilion where people could sit and take in the view; so Nattes showed the portico at Stowe full of potted plants and benches in the nineteenth century, and Repton made a similar recommendation for Woburn in 1804. Among works more certainly attributed to Brown, William Dean's evidence in his account of Croome is outstanding because he described the portico as 'a magnificent Pavilion' and gave a sense of its role as the pivotal spot from which the parkland south of the house was to be seen: 'here [the stranger] will pause with delight ... expanding before the eye, is seen – a vast plain of delicious verdure'.¹¹

Equally one might keep the state rooms upstairs, above the front door (though this was unfashionable in the eighteenth century), or one might use a bay, as Repton did in his late Red Book for Leigh Court (1812). There he proposed one so as to provide two 'much more interesting' oblique views, while remedying 'the point blank view' of a 'large staring yellow house' as he called it, by means of a 'Central groupe' of *Robinia pseudacacia* planted close to the front door on the sight-line between the two houses.

The Leigh Court Red Book also introduces the idea of blocking point blank with planting to give symmetry and balance to a composition without relying on a view from the front door, but no end of odd phenomena crop up at point blank in Brown's landscapes. At Stowe, for example, the front door offers a classic view out to the Corinthian Arch (which post-dates Brown, but is entirely in his style).¹² However, the South Lawn (which Brown made with the spoil excavated from the Grecian Valley) is a biplane in cross-section, and the break of slope is so placed as to hide the water in views from the bottom of



Figure 1. The clump at point blank at Swynnerton divides the view into two, with Stafford Castle as the subject of the right-hand vignette, and the Wrekin of the left



Figure 2. The Column of Victory at Blenheim divides the view with Woodstock on the right and High Park on the left vignette. When George London and Henry Wise's avenue was still intact, the column would have appeared from the house to stand in the middle of a large symmetrical clump, the whole composition being akin to that of Swynnerton



Figure 3. Claude Lorraine's *Seascape with Aeneas Landing in Latium* (above) and *Pastoral Landscape with the Arch of Titus* (right) (both at Longford Castle). When hung together the pair makes a single landscape with a middle ground clump and long vistas off on each side of it. Courtesy: Photographic Survey of Private Collections, Courtauld Institute of Art, London, B88/357 PS and B88/358 PS

the steps and confine the classic view to the front door and the portico.

One might think terracing of this kind anomalous, but it crops up again (at Broadlands, for example), and more often still the water was entirely hidden at point blank. So when Repton swung into Moccas Court twenty years after Brown, chuckling and chatting, he found, to his wonderfully naïve delight, that at the cost of removing a few barrowfuls of earth he could open up a view of the river in front of the house.¹³ The interesting point here is that despite having paid for Brown's advice, Sir George Cornwall had not done this work before, preserving instead the oblique views from his bay with their long symmetrical reaches up and down the Wye. There are a number of other Brown sites where point blank is blocked as dramatically as at Leigh Court: at Swynnerton, for example, the middle-ground clump concealed the village (later moved) and made a goose-foot to Stafford Castle and the Wrekin (Figure 1); while at Burton Constable, Mill Avenue, which runs at point blank off the east front of the house, was simply planted across. A single lime tree at point blank at Himley is a

very different, yet analogous, treatment of the problem. This tree divides the view, with the lake on one side, and the rocky pleasure ground on the other. In fact there was a range of solutions to point blank, from the use of earthworks to control a view or determine a viewpoint (at Stowe and Broadlands) to their use more or less to block a view (at Moccas, and, using trees instead of earthworks, at Himley).

To solve the front door problem by doing away with the view from it altogether by means of middle-ground clumps and terraces is one way of confronting any taint of the French taste for avenues and vistas at point blank but, on the face of it, the plantings at Swynnerton and Burton Constable are petulant responses, more of a 'punch on the nose' than a thought-out response. To understand why it was done and see it as a constructive rather than a desperate measure, it will be helpful to turn to the French painter Claude Lorrain.

Each of Claude's pictures was painted as half of a pair. Each pair was usually, and unsurprisingly, sold as a unit, though all have since been split up – most within a generation of the sale. Art



historians have puzzled over the pairings. They have noted that there was no correlating either the subject-matter or the objects painted (with or without ruins, shepherds, temples, water, etc.), but have long been aware that in compositional terms each picture was the mirror image of its pair, or pendent.¹⁴ It seems that these pairs were intended for the state rooms of Europe, and that since each is in itself unbalanced they had to be hung in pairs. The asymmetry of an individual picture was resolved in a formal room by the complementary asymmetries of its pendent, while the unconnected subjects of the paintings would prevent the room from being dominated by the imagery of the two pictures combined. As Adam Smith observed:

in the correspondent parts of a room we frequently hang pictures of the same size; those pictures, however, resemble one another in nothing but the frame, or, perhaps, in the general character of the subject: If one is a landscape, the other is a landscape too.¹⁵

However, a pair of Claude landscapes hung together create a panorama with much of the space and force of a Brown landscape, with a similar angle of vision (about 100°) and with a middle-ground clump (Figure 3).

Brown himself could never have seen a Claude with its pendent, since he never went abroad,¹⁶ and there were no complete pairs in Britain in the eighteenth century.¹⁷ Furthermore, Richard Payne Knight wrote, presumably with some authority, that Brown knew nothing of painting,¹⁸ so it seems that while his landscapes were inspired by Claude, Brown's middle-ground clumps and terraces may have paralleled Claude's invention without being directly influenced by it – nonetheless the parallel is uncanny, and can even be found at Brown's most famous work, at Blenheim.¹⁹ At point blank from the forecourt of the palace,²⁰ the eye travels along Vanbrugh's bridge and down the triple elm avenue (as was) to the Column of Victory. However, the scale of the avenue and column stops up the view as surely as the middle-ground clump at Swynnerton and, rather than fix on it, one looks aside to the more rewarding landscapes to left and especially to the right, where the walled town of Woodstock sits over the rising ground like a Tuscan city. In this view it looks as though it is the town and not the deer park that is walled (and Brown designed a massive Gothick wall for the town to add to the effect). This composition is itself divided by the Lombardy Poplars on the island, the effect of which is to give the view on this side of the column one short and one long horizon.

The symmetrical view left of point blank

takes in the peninsula where the Plantagenet palace, Rosamund's Bower, stood. The water itself plays little part in this view, but on the far side the land has been cut away for several hundred feet into the steep falling slope, which is crossed by a drive, properly ducal in its width and conspicuous expense. The scoop of the earthwork opens a view up through the trees and away to High Park. The foreground, on the near side of the lake, is framed on the left by a group of beeches which have spread a little from their line over time (Figure 2). At a number of landscapes, however, Brown developed point blank still further, and one of the most striking is Heveningham, where Robert Taylor's house offered him an *enfilade* of state rooms facing north over the valley, with no bay and no portico – something still more difficult to design for than the front door at point blank because to make a view from one window might seem to deny it from another.²¹

Brown's response at Heveningham, however, seems to have been a lordly refusal to take up Taylor's gauntlet – his design implies a flat topography and a house with a single room, or a hall with one room on each side. At point blank he put up the dam between two of his lakes, and planted it over with limes.²² These trees conceal the dam and make the two pieces of water look like one, but that is not the extraordinary point – trees do conceal dams, the extraordinary point is that the dam is at point blank, the last place, one might think, to hide anything. These trees also comprise a middle-ground clump, but it is planted without respect either to the length of the house and its internal arrangements, or to the fact that the slope down to the valley floor is such as to allow you to see over the trees, even today when they are mature. The clump does not actually break the view into two, even though there are entirely symmetrical views on each side of it – one to Huntingfield Hall, the fine old red brick second house of the Vannecks, and one to Brown's Gothick farmhouse, now survived only by the tremendous earthwork (presumably spoil from the lake) on which it was lifted into view. In short Brown has attached a single-point landscape, subtended from point blank, to a parade of rooms, each of which had at least one window overlooking the park, so giving a pair of composed views, Claudian in plan, but at odds both with the architecture of the house and with the topography.

This analysis lays Brown open to the charges of a shamelessly formulaic approach and of drawing up designs in London and shipping them to site in a cart, as Joseph Cradock pretended.²³ It is a bleak thought but one that can be contended by invoking the eighteenth-century idea of the imagination.²⁴ In brief, fancy is associated with the classical as opposed to the romantic, in that it is the means by which we make available to ourselves the arts and taste of the classical era.

By means of the fancy we essentially reproduce feelings, opinions, tastes already known. Fancy is indeed formulaic; it has, as Samuel Taylor Coleridge put it, 'fixities and definites' to play with, it is 'a mode of memory'; it does not require any direct relationship with the real world. So 'fancy' goods can be copied and mass-produced (hence Josiah Wedgwood's fascination with machines)²⁵ and Thomas Gainsborough's 'fancy' paintings were regarded as not requiring the creative input of the imagination. The imagination on the other hand enables us to see the whole of a human face, when we have only a side view; it makes sense of our perceptions, and hence 'exhibits ideas of many objects which we never perceived', and because it supplies us 'with finer and more delicate perceptions, than any which can be properly referred to our external organs' it is the foundation of good taste.²⁶

The imagination had been explored as a means of reading landscape by other eighteenth-century philosophers before Coleridge. Joseph Addison, following John Locke, had already proposed that through cultivating a 'polite imagination' the faculty of pleasure could be added to ordinary perception and the world seen 'as it were in another Light'.²⁷ Smith in particular had noticed the readiness with which the 'eye of the mind', or the consciousness, interprets the image of a landscape through a habitual imaginative displacement. From the little window of his study he could see 'an immense landscape of lawn, and woods, and distant mountains ... out of all proportion less than the chamber in which I am sitting'. He could compare the scale of the two 'in no other way, than by transporting myself, at least in fancy, to a different station, from whence I can survey both at nearly equal distances, and thereby form some judgement of their real proportions'.²⁸ William Gilpin was also an adherent of this idea:

it is not from this *scientific* employment, that we derive our chief pleasure. We are most delighted, when some grand scene, tho perhaps of incorrect composition, rising before the eye, strikes us beyond the power of thought – when the *vox faucibus hæret*; and every mental operation is suspended. In this pause of intellect; this *deliquium* of the soul, an enthusiastic sensation of pleasure overspreads it, previous to any examination by the rules of art. The general idea of the scene makes an impression, before any appeal is made to the judgment. We rather *feel*, than *survey* it.²⁹

The imagination, in Coleridge's words:

dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events

it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (*as objects*) are essentially fixed and dead.

In the hands of the creative artist, both fancy and imagination have their place, but, for Coleridge, it was imaginative power that elevated the poet:

Like a green field reflected in a calm and perfectly transparent lake, the image is distinguished from the reality only by its greater softness and lustre. Like the moisture or the polish on a pebble, genius neither distorts nor false-colours its objects; but on the contrary brings out many a vein and many a tint, which escape the eye of common observation, thus raising to the rank of gems what had often been kicked away by the hurrying foot of the traveller on the dusty highroad of custom.³⁰

Whether poet, painter or musician, an artist uses his imagination to animate the world, to become one with it, and to communicate his attentiveness to others. But an artist must also rely on the willing suspension of disbelief – that is, the imagination of those who read, see or hear the work to make it their own. The imagination, therefore, has three bridges to build, one between the artist and the world, another between the artist and his materials, and a third between the artist's work and its audience. So, by the time he got to Heveningham, Brown had probably realized that the imagination works like a gyroscope on a well-balanced landscape, and that the memory of each view already seen constantly corrects and informs what is about to be seen. It is not that the eyes of the painting follow the passer-by, but, in Brown's work, the eyes of the passer-by faithfully follow the painting, which remains somehow constant, balanced and composed from every point of view. Perhaps Brown had learnt that he did not have to position every viewpoint in a technically perfect manner, as he did in his early work at Croome and Wotton. He had realized that he could apply a single point (front door) view to a parade of rooms and still have his effect.

Berrington has what can be considered an irrefutable example of Brown's use of the imagination. There, from the lake itself not only does the house dominate the scene, but it does so in such a simple setting (a plain lawn running down to the water) that it seems quite inconceivable that the reverse should not also be true.³¹ Our imaginations are more persuaded by the strength of Brown's design than by the evidence of our eyes. Such observations lead to the proposal that once we recognize that a design is derived from a language, a set of grammatical rules such as geometry, it is more readily embedded in the mind, and this releases the imagination to capture the coherence of the

whole even though the relationship between a given structure and its setting may otherwise be chaotic. A piece of geometry can play a role in stimulating the vision of a Claudean landscape even when it does not directly play a part in the composition of a view – as we become even subconsciously aware of this geometry, the whole landscape becomes congenial.³²

Brown, however, went a good deal further than this, and further than Smith, in recognizing both that the imagination of the viewer could bless his landscapes with a coherence that was not inherent in them, and that the reverse could be equally true: the imagination could grant his landscapes an incoherence that was not inherent. To return to the single lime at point blank at Himley; this has its equivalents elsewhere – an ancient sweet chestnut does the same job at Basildon, a cedar does it at Compton Verney, for example, and, like the middle-ground clump at Heveningham, a single tree cannot really be said to deny or divide the view at point blank, any more than the single tree in Raphael's *Scipio Africanus* (c.1504) carries conviction as a division between the two parts of his painting (Figure 4). It is simply not strong or fat enough. Instead, Raphael's tree is better explained as metaphoric, that is as requiring an engaged imagination on the part of the viewer, so as to be read as a more



Figure 4. In Raphael's *Scipio Africanus* (also known as *An Allegory* or 'Vision of a Knight'; c.1504) a single tree divides the landscape into two vignettes, much as Lancelot Brown was to do at Himley. The single tree can be used both to divide and make less coherent an essentially homogeneous topography, and (as at Himley) to give equal weight, and hence coherence, to two essentially heterogeneous landscapes. Courtesy: National Gallery, London; NG213

substantial division. It does not actually break the panoramic range of the view but allows Raphael to place *virtus* on one side and *voluptas* on the other, each represented by a divine woman to help the soldier hero make his choice.³³ It also allows Raphael to make two views that are, at the same time, one (though one is dominated by shadows, castles and forts, the other by light, water and civilisation, both are clearly parts of a single panorama).

In just the same way Brown was introducing something like a language to landscape, something that one had to have acquired culturally before being able to read and understand landscape; something that, once acquired, would colour any spontaneous response.³⁴ His planting was at least testing the spectator with a joke that could only be appreciated by those who had seen and noticed his larger middle-ground clumps elsewhere, but it sits with the much older imagery of moral choice as a fork in the road. This can be found in *The Odyssey* with Homer's doors of Ivory and Horn; and eight hundred years later in Plato's *Republic*, where on entering Hades the just were to take the right path, and the unjust the left. The metaphor was to become a long running theme of Italian garden design. It was adopted into England, and recorded in Watson's account of Nonsuch³⁵ and in the eighteenth-century layouts of Medmenham, Rousham, and Stowe *inter alia*.³⁶ According to Oliver Goldsmith it also played its part in the gardens of China.³⁷

Thomas Whately and other commentators explicitly described Brown's work as expressive rather than emblematic, appealing directly to the senses, rather than through any allegorical device. We should not, therefore, reduce the middle-ground clump simply to an emblem of moral choice (the baronial hall, representing hunting the untamed, versus the Gothick farm, representing domestic English agriculture, at Heveningham for example).³⁸ Nonetheless, the idea of choice is matched by the eighteenth-century ascription of gender to certain rooms, hence attributing qualities to the views from

them, not exactly of *virtus* and *voluptas*, but of masculinity or femininity.³⁹

William Marshall was particularly alive to this idea, proposing not only that the hunting box should have a *masculine* style, but also that in any house:

the view from the drawing-room should be highly embellished, to correspond with the beauty and elegance within: everything, here, should be *feminine* – elegant – beautiful – such as attunes the mind to politeness and lively conversation. The breakfasting room should have more masculine objects in view: wood, water, and an extended country for the eye to roam over: such as allures us, imperceptibly, to the ride or the chace.⁴⁰

For Marshall the best-run houses would have been so organized that from the men's rooms (the library, the dining room) the view would be distant, while from the ladies' rooms (the drawing room, the parlour)⁴¹ it would be more intimate. At Berrington, for example, the library (men's) has the longest view over Wales, while the drawing-room (women's) has a shorter horizon dominated by the parkland to the north-west and with a flower border close to the house. It is a short step for the architect to design his front door with a masculine room on one side and a feminine one on the other, and for the landscape gardener to use the middle-ground clump to divide the views from their windows.

Brown's geometric treatment of point blank is, therefore, obvious and so makes a useful introduction to the alternative geometry by which he and his contemporaries established the English Landscape school.⁴²

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REFERENCES

¹ For the anti-French impulse in English gardening, see John Phibbs 'The Englishness of Capability Brown', *Garden History*, 31(2) (2003), pp. 122–40.

² British Museum Add. MS 4809, 66"; cited by Morris R. Brownell, 'The gardens of Horatio and Pope's Twickenham: an unnoticed parallel', *Garden History*, 5(2) (1977), pp. 16–17.

³ For a sense of the well-nigh instinctive appreciation of symmetry as beautiful, see, for example, William Shenstone, 'Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening', in *The Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone Esq.*, 2 vols (London: R. & J. Dodsley, 1764), II, pp. 132–3. Also Adam Smith, 'Of the Imitative Arts', in

Essays on Philosophical Subjects by the Late Adam Smith, LL.D. ... (London: T. Cadell Jr & W. Davies, 1795), p. 134; Thomas Hope, 'On gardening as an Art of design and Taste by the late Thomas Hope' [first published c.1820], *Gardener's Magazine* 17 (1841), pp. 160–1.

⁴ Even at Aston, where none of the principal rooms faced in the same direction as the front door, Humphry Repton had to acknowledge in his Red Book (July 1793) that 'the view from the Hall door of a house should always be considered'. Note that Repton wrote more perceptively about the organization of the surrounds of a country house than any other eighteenth-century authority, and his comments

apply equally well to early eighteenth-century design.

⁵ Moses Cook, *The Manner of Raising, Ordering, and Improving Forrest Trees* [1676] (London: D. Browne, 1724 edn), p. 183.

⁶ Duke of Manchester (ed.), *Court and Society from Elizabeth to Anne* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1864), II, pp. 227–8.

⁷ As Repton commented in his Warley Red Book (March 1795), ‘the principal living rooms ... are continually chilled in winter by the intervention of a hall or vestibule’.

⁸ See, for example, Repton’s Red Book for Sufton (1 July 1795): ‘It may be necessary that the hall door should be open to the park, because the gate of a garden enclosure so near the house is frequently dangerous and inconvenient’.

⁹ Repton first addressed the problem head on in his Red Book for Claybury (20 July 1791): ‘I need hardly mention the contrast betwixt looking from this apartment [‘the great Room’ on the south side of the house] on a close mown turf, with only a convenient gravel walk, or on a broad expanse of dusty scalding gravel such as the principal approach for Carriages requires’. For a second contemporary view of the problem, see George Mason, *An Essay on Design in Gardening* [1768] (London: Benjamin & John White, 1795 edn), p. 98.

¹⁰ ‘Point blank’ is a military term whose eighteenth-century meaning was not ‘at very close range’, but ‘at zero degrees’ or ‘straight ahead’.

¹¹ See Humphry Repton, Red Book for Woburn Abbey (1804); and Nattes’ view of the South Portico at Stowe. For Croome, see William Dean, *Historical and Descriptive Account of Croome d’Abitot, the Seat of the Right Hon. the Earl of Coventry; with Biographical Notices of the Coventry Family: to which are Annexed an Hortus Croomensis, and Observations on the Propagation of Exotics* (Worcester: T. Eaton, 1824), pp. 47, 49ff.

¹² Comparable compositions are to be found in Brown’s designs for the view west at Burton Constable, north at Wimpole, east at Compton Verney, south at Highclere, etc.

¹³ Humphry Repton, *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (London: J. Taylor, 1803); repr. in John C. Loudon (ed.), *Landscape Gardening and Landscape Architecture of the late Humphry Repton, Esq.* (London: Longman & Co., and Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1840), p. 139. He was at Moccas c.1793.

¹⁴ Humphrey Wine, *Claude the Poetic Landscape* (London: National Gallery, 1994), pp. 57ff.

¹⁵ Smith, ‘Of the Imitative Arts’, p. 135.

¹⁶ The author believes this to be the case, although, of course, he did design landscapes

for the mainland, one in France, Richmond in Germany, and Shoonenburg (Laeken) in the United Provinces.

¹⁷ Claude drew copies of each of his paintings to prevent forgery. These very detailed sketches were bound into a book (the *Liber Veritatis*), which was brought to his Piccadilly house by the Duke of Devonshire at some time shortly after 1720, and in Brown’s day was kept at Chiswick. For its influence on William Kent, see John Harris, ‘William Kent’s drawings at Yale and some imperfect ideas upon the subject of his drawing style’, in John Wilmerding (ed.), *Essays in Honor of Paul Mellon* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1986), pp. 136–53 (esp. pp. 143–4). In the 1740s the enthusiasm for Claude and Gaspard Dughet was given wider currency by the publication of a series of forty-eight landscapes by Arthur Pond and the Knapton family, this included ten Claudes and thirty Dughets; Timothy Clayton, *The English Print, 1688–1802* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1997), p. 157. Brown may have seen these prints, and is very likely to have seen single Claudes in the houses of his clients, but no pairs.

¹⁸ Richard Payne Knight, *The Landscape* (London, 1795 edn), bk II, n. to ll.200–25; Uvedale Price, *Essays on the Picturesque* (London, 1810 edn), I, pp. vi, 31, 243, etc.

¹⁹ Thomas Hinde, *Capability Brown: The Story of a Master Gardener* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), p. 12, reports a story that Brown was the natural son of his early employer Sir William Lorraine, and I wonder if the coincidence of the names gave Claude a particular resonance for Brown.

²⁰ One has to be upstairs to get the view, or still better, downstairs at the outer edge of the forecourt – such is the scale at Blenheim that the place where one stands hardly affects one’s perception of its grand symmetry.

²¹ Repton made this point very clearly in several Red Books, as at Stoke: ‘[Windsor Castle] ought not to be ... in the principal view, from the windows of a large house; because it would only have its effect from one window, out of many, and consequently the others must all be sacrificed to this single object’; Humphry Repton, Red Book for Stoke Park (2 June 1792). Brown’s client, Lady Mary Coke, was as critical as I am of Taylor’s insensitivity to landscape: ‘the windows [at Harleyford] seem contrived to exclude as much of the beautiful views as possible ...’; J. A. Home (ed.), *The Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke*, 4 vols (London, 1889–96), II, p. 316.

²² Point blank runs through the north end of the dam.

²³ Joseph Cradock, *Village Memoirs* (London, 1774), p. 127; *ibid.*, 3rd edn

(London: T. Davies, 1775), p. 75. Joseph Cradock much admired Shenstone, and was promoting the idea of the owner as designer.

²⁴ Imagination and fancy were discussed most lucidly by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in the *Biographia Literaria* (London: Fenner, 1817; 1975 edn), I, chs 4, 13, but he had opened his innings in the seventh of his celebrated 1808 lecture series; R. A. Foakes (ed.), *Literary Lectures – Lectures 1808–1819: On Literature*, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), I, pp. 492–3.

²⁵ ‘Nothing can contribute more effectually to diffuse a good taste through the arts than the power of multiplying copies of fine things, in materials fit to be applied for ornaments: by which means the public eye is instructed; good and bad works are nicely distinguished, and all the arts receive improvements’ (Josiah Wedgwood), cited by Jenny Uglow, *The Lunar Men* (London: Faber & Faber, 2002), p. 305.

²⁶ Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Taste* [1759] (Gainesville, Scholar’s, 1963 [repr. of 1780 edn]), pp. 30, 152; also pp. 1–2; and *idem*, *An Essay on Genius* (London: W. Strahan, 1774), pp. 39ff.

²⁷ Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, no. 477 (6 September 1712).

²⁸ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Edinburgh: A. Kincaid & J. Bell, 1759, 2nd edn, 1761), p. 210.

²⁹ William Gilpin, ‘On Picturesque Beauty’, in *Three Essays* (London: R. Blamire, 1792; 2nd edn, 1794), pp. 49–50.

³⁰ Coleridge, *Biographia literaria* (1975 edn), II, ch. 22.

³¹ Many of The National Trust staff there have known the estate for years and have looked out of the windows in all weathers. Yet when the author visited in 1994, they believed that they could see the body of the lake from the state rooms of the house (in fact all one can see is the channel along the east side of the island).

³² ‘Facility in the conception of an object, if it be moderate, gives us pleasure’; Gerard, *An Essay on Taste* (repr. of 1780 edn), p. 29.

³³ For an eighteenth-century account of the story, see Joseph Spence, *Polymetis* (London: R. Dodsley, 1767), p. 141. The painting was interpreted by Dr Susan Gordon in a memorable lecture to The National Trust gardeners.

³⁴ More common types of language embedded in landscape are usually emblematic and include the political (often clandestine, e.g. the Jacobite’s tradition at Bramshill expressed by the planting of Scots pine there; the fortified farms of Greystoke, responding to the War of Independence, and, of course, the political messages at Stowe) and the philosophic (also at Stowe, and elsewhere, apparent particularly

as the Virgilian pilgrim of Dante and Bunyon, in *picaresque* landscapes such as the Leasowes and, perhaps, at Painshill and Stourhead).

³⁵ ‘But stay your step; there is a snake in the grass. If you veer to the right, you will enter upon a tortuous path and fall in to the hazardous wiles of the labyrinth’; also ‘Turn your steps and your eyes to that theatre of the gods ... the other walk ... is thought to have been designed for the woodland gods and fauns ... to voice their opinion on the rustic Pan-festival’; Martin Biddle and John Dent (eds), *Watsoni Magnificae* ... [c.1600] (Ewell: Nonsuch Palace Excavation Committee, 1960), pp. 4, 9 (trans. Colin F. Ball and Albert W. Carr).

³⁶ John Wilkes recorded the inscription by Venus’s cave at Medmenham, which translates, ‘here is the place where the way divided into two: this on the right is our route to heaven; but the left hand path exacts punishment from the wicked, and sends them to a pitiless Hell’; Sir Francis Dashwood, *The Dashwoods of West Wycombe* (London: Aurum, 1987), p. 31. For Rousham, see the Latin poem in *The Museum* (London: R. Dodsley, 1747), III, pp. 204–5; for Stowe, see Richard Wheeler, ‘The gardens of Stowe and West Wycombe: paradise or parody?’, *Apollo*, no. 422 (1997), pp. 3–7. Like the book itself, the garden of the *Pilgrim’s Progress* also had paths that offered alternative routes; R. C. Turner, ‘Mellor’s gardens’, *Garden History*, 15(2) (1987), p. 161.

³⁷ Oliver Goldsmith, ‘The Citizen of the World’, in *The Public Ledger* (18 April 1760), letter XXXI.

³⁸ In gardens such as Painshill and the Leasowes, which had a single route round, the designer can control the sequence of effects, and hence can much more easily make an emblematic narrative than a designer like Brown who provided a number of routes.

³⁹ This tradition persisted well into the nineteenth century, and Robert Kerr, *The Gentleman’s House; or How to Plan English Residences, from the Parsonage to the Palace* (London, 1864), divided rooms into masculine and feminine, the drawing-room (female), the billiard-room (male) and the dining-room (male).

⁴⁰ William Marshall, *On Planting and Rural Ornament* [1785] (London: G. & W. Nichol, 1803 edn), I, pp. 278, 285.

⁴¹ Brown was also concerned for Lady Bruce’s peep from the study window at Tottenham; Mark Laird, *The Flowering of the Landscape Garden English Pleasure Grounds 1720–1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p. 277.

⁴² John Phibbs, ‘Projective geometry’, *Garden History*, 34(1) (2006), pp. 1–21.