

Hortus Conclusus: A Psychoanalytical Study of Robert Frost's Mending Wall and Andrew Marvell's The Garden

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In the beginning the whole creation of the environment is considered as one whole garden, where human is found to hem in with nature in the Garden of Eden. As a penalty, when Adam and Eve were hounded out from the garden God did not fully disconnect human and nature; they were made to sustain life from nature through cultivation and Gardening. Crossing epoch, nature adds more than one kind of 'meaning' and the meaning given by poets depends on a good deal more than the quality of an individual soul. The experience and the description of nature differ, not only from individual to individual but also from era to era. In the beginning of the English poetry Chaucer did not see nature precisely; during his age the writings were inked on what he perceived in nature. In the seventeenth century, Robert Herrick influenced Johnson and the classics in an elegant treatment in the theme of earthly transience. Subsequently, Clare's view spins from the object to what it tells him in detail.

The early seventeenth century poets John Donne, George Herbert, Andrew Marvell and so on were more specific in their awareness of objects, but still, the sensuous qualities of things are not valued for themselves. According to these writers, "all [i.e. their "bright objects] in their brightness are representative of other virtues. Never do they poetize brightness as a specific poetic equality for perception" (Miles 769). Pope continued the trend "from the poetry of human relation to the poetry of physical array" (770) with two major developments taking place in the second half of the century, a kind of poetry got elevated where the emphases were shifted from human relationships, and universal moral questions, to the physical environment. This revolution created certain characteristics in the making of poetry. Poets started looking at nature with new eyes. From the start of the seventeenth century a paradigm shift took place in condensing nature to Garden demonstrating it as beauty and love. Garden then was considered as a socially constructed environment. Groening and Schneider comment that gardens convey a comprehensive social meaning.

During this age, the perspectives, ideas, resources and cultural values of gardening brought a change in human activities. Consequently, Hoyles suggests that gardens symbolize the aspects

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of culture and politics in the widest interpretation. At this era, humans started to question everything around them. Just like how Eve was curious about the forbidden fruit, human beings were beginning to look at things differently, and that is how new inventions and technology started to raise. People became very economical and materialistic. They wanted profit and benefit in everything they touch and see. Garden was no exception. The bond between human beings and garden started to deplete as humans lost their humanism as the garden were isolated. Humans and garden depend and nurture among one another. But when people started to lose their touch with nature, it was left to defend on them. Not only did humans neglect garden but also they became the major destroyer of the garden. Robert Frost, a leading modern American poet of nature and rural life phrases life as he sees. It is true that nature and Frost are synonymous as his lines are constant polishers in recording the connectivity of both nature and humanity. Besides his poetry has a specialty in making the readers relate it to their own life, as it witnesses the poetic voice interpreting nature and humanity as a whole. Being a close observer of both nature and people his poetries are so simple structured, basic and fundamental. "Mending Wall" is a classic example to be understood as a sympathetic satire against building of walls: "something there is that doesn't love a wall" (1) shows a human reaction to human nature's processes.

Even though records are found for the rivalry feeling of nature against man, the natural progress of nature seems to be getting lowered with human activities. In "Mending Wall", the picture of spring on a farm depicts the time when walls are patched up because "something that doesn't love a wall" (1) has been fit to spill the "upper boulders"(3). These walls are a portrayal of separation between human and garden. Nature is troubled to maintain its own border. Consequently, the limits encircle gardening based on the purpose and value of the human. "Good fences make good neighbors" (27) states that fence or walls are good on a farm to halt the cows or goats in entering the apple orchards. This usage of words reflects the poet's work as a universal quality in sensing humanity to run the poetry. The psychological study of the rural people on gardening is obsessed by some sort of a problem in limiting the landscape. Frost's friendly satire against building of walls shows his human quality and sympathetic attitude towards men. Human desire to progress in all the fields he explores in without a downfall, no change is endured. Flourishing on one part brings wither on the other segment. The natural elements work throughout to

Spill the upper boulders in the sun;

And makes gaps even two can pass abreast . . .

Something there is that doesn't love a wall

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That wants it down . . . (3-36)

The above lines state that the landscape for gardening gets reduced on wall building. This construction of walls not only brings separation between neighbours but also bring partition in humanity.

In “The Mending Wall”, Frost is not bitter against the man by any means, but he is rather sorry that he cannot shake the man from his straight laced way of thinking. With the strong impact “Good fences make good neighbors”(27) the poet attempts to bring closer the compassion of humankind; as spring approaches the two men go forth to repair the damages done to the wall, by the “something there is that doesn't love a wall”(35) depicts the refusal of nature on human's activity towards the condensing of the garden. There are no cows here, only apple and pipe trees seemed to be supported towards the wall where the trees planted in a compact zone squeeze the comfort zone of nature replicates in the human activities. Human builds walls/fences and make garden packed; in contradictory humans become lazy with their works wrapped within their shelter.

Andrew Marvell is the most enigmatic of English writers. His poem “The Garden” is pre-eminent among a host of poems exploring the delights of rural retirement and contemplation in the seventeenth century. During Marvell's life, England was experiencing a political and pastoral disruption. It is arguable that this destruction within the public realm of day to day life was a motivating factor and this draws an interest for Marvell from society into the shady, cool, comfort zone. His description of garden adds merits and attention on the theme of landscape.

“The Garden” begins with a rejection of the hectic temporal pace of the world focusing on the private sphere. Marvell creates a *hortus conclusus* kind of garden in this poem. *Hortus conclusus* is a term that literally means "enclosed garden". In the world of landscaping, it means that a 'garden' is cut off from the natural world by a barrier called a 'wall'. With the lines:

How vainly men themselves amaze
To win the palm, the oke, or Bayes;
And their incessant Labours see
Crown'd from some single Herb or Tree
While all Flow'rs and all Trees do close
To weave the Garlands of repose. (1-8)

Marvell's usage of the plant image embodies a space of garden as “scared plants”(13). With the words “fair quiet”(9) and “innocence”(10) it is evident that he has a passion for

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“delicious solitude” (16) which he seeks in vain among busy people in the world, but finally finds among the easy plants in the garden. Associating with garden, man to an extent realizes that the external world does not bring ecstasy, but the serene happiness is experienced only from the internal mind. In fact, the external natural garden seems to be a projection of the internal human mind which is aspired for a tranquil life where the plant images preview the external natural garden enclosing to a peaceful place. From the beginning of the seventeenth century garden is designed to be domestic and enclosed within a particular sphere; while in literature the ink of poets began to associate plant images with human beings as perennial themes in their works and they circulate in symbolizing both their soul relating from birth to death. A garden is metaphorically the narrative of human life which is more human than natural. The life cycle of a human being is brood in the garden, from cradle to tomb says James Elkins in “Writing moods” Landscape Theory. Every individual runs away from social commitment in protecting the natural gift (garden), but in the end of life cycle, the human is rested in nature’s hand tiring the garlands.

In the poem the first five stanzas addresses the body’s physical longings towards the garden, while in the last three stanzas the lines represent the soul’s longing towards the garden. Marvell exclaims “what wondrous life in this I lead!” (32) and proceeds to describe the lush, sensual fruits and foliage at the garden. The change from human beings to plants is not presented by comparison but also the growth of plants in a closed landscape is represented in the fifth stanza. With the spatial description of the growth of the five mature fruits- apple, grape, nectarine, peach and melon, Marvell paints the sensuous richness of the garden where this special description of the growth of fruits hints at a good order which is essential for the human to construct the garden. According to Susan Stewart, the garden there by is connected with other means of ordering life “codifying and ritualizing social time and space, creating political orders and social hierarchies-including the organization of military order, or structures of force” (111). Paradoxically, the garden is no longer a private sphere but a public sphere where social order is highly emphasized.

The garden, which the poet aspires, is a garden of solitude which is totally dissimilar from that of pleasure for which most of his contemporaries pine. This solitude transcends these counterparts, creating another world. Destruction and transformation of thoughts into the green are created within the green garden which is supposed to be a symbol of contemplative life. In such a secure retreat, the mind successfully attains to a genuine serene state, which is stated in the poem as:

My soul into the boughs does glide:

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There, like a bird, it sits and sings. (52-53)

The poet uses a simile to compare his soul's freedom. In terms of description of a garden, Marvell imperceptibly reveals his philosophy of leisure and seems to be an "easy philosopher" says Chris Fitter in *Poetry, Space, Landscape: Toward a New Theory*. Marvell's three-dimensional philosophy of nature in "The Garden" not merely makes his garden a literature which is not only mysterious and fundamental but also paradoxically unveils his aspiration for relaxation.

In this poem the poet regards the garden as a place of repose and longs to have a solitary garden to relax. His longing for a garden of solitude is so implicated that he does not point out that 'here' is 'garden state' until the eighth stanza:

Such was that happy garden –state
While man there walked without a mate
After a place so pure and sweet,
What other help could yet be me! (57-60)

The lines here echo the poet's pining for a garden of solitude. This solitude images isolates human from another human being. With the Biblical allusion, the poet distinguishes his garden where he wanders alone from Eden where Adam is required to coexist with Eve. In the Garden of Eden, both Adam and Eve served the whole nature as one single garden. In the beginning, they were the first couple to experience togetherness with nature, after committing the sin and the couple's departure from the garden made them feel detached from the whole nature. Time is endlessly moving and shifting certainly and the shift in time makes the humans change in their perspectives, especially with the garden and nature. The changing accounts the development and languishing of plants. In the last stanza of "The Garden", the mutability of time menaces the beautiful garden; the beauty of herbs, flowers and parts of nature paradoxically measures the passing of time. The poet proposes a special vision in the last two lines:

How could such sweet and wholesome hours
Be reckoned but with herbs and flowers? (71-72)

Donald M. Friedman claims that the herbs and flowers have proved themselves "a real means of conquering time through natural beauty" alongside "the proper setting for contemplation and the approach of wisdom" (100). Simultaneously the beauty of nature is able to get its victory over the change of time. The love for nature remains the same throughout the decades. But the perennial state of the garden changes from decade to decade. The value, landscape and the usage

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get modified based on the human evolution. In “The Garden”, the description of the natural phenomena in the garden reveals the philosophy of nature. Marvell not only expresses his relish for nature but also proposes his objection to the destroyer of nature by the means of vicious habits and skills.

In “The Garden”, man’s devotion to public life in politics, war and civic service is reflected as vanity and inferior; whereas in “Mending Wall” Frost expresses the friendly antagonism between man and nature. A paradise is more paradisiacal when a man can walk alone in a paradise. Man needs a place like a garden where it is pure and fertile to keep him sane and humane. But the way humans go behind science and technology make them less human and more mechanical. They lack the fruitful and natural way of living following the man-made and harmful orders. Truly, the Garden is the symbolic place where human and nature join together for amazement, bonding both body and mind. Human evolution leads to drastic changes where the man believed in themselves and their trust towards nature abridged, resulting in the separation from their neighbours and nature. It is not nature working against a man at all times in a mean way, but the people’s reaction to natural process are abbreviated and smashed. With psychoanalytical analysis the blend of two elements- nature and humanity is portrayed equally realistic in Robert Frost’s “The Mending Wall” and Andrew Marvell’s “The Garden” with humanity seem to be more important on the surface.

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