ADRIAN SEVILLE

THE GARDEN OF THE GOOSE

The Game of the Goose *is an important Western European board game, with late medieval origins. Its iconography often incorporates an image of a garden as the end goal of a race driven by the throw of dice along a spiral track – the Garden of the Goose. It is argued that the game represents a spiritual journey towards this 'paradise' garden. In the later examples of the game, which are found up to the present day, the image often shows evidence of developing trends in the design of real gardens. A different kind of garden appears as the goal of a variant game, the* Game of Cupid. *Here, the goal is the Garden of Cupid, represented as a* hortus conclusus, *implying loss of virginity when it is penetrated. The track is laid out on the body of a crowned serpent, which represents habitual sin. The garden symbolism is discussed in relation to belief systems in the fifteenth century, which shaped the formation of these games.*

THE *GAME OF THE GOOSE*

This article is concerned with the symbolism of an important European board game, whose iconography often includes an image of a garden. The game – known as the *Game of the Goose* – is recorded in Italy from the late medieval period, but was diffused throughout many of the countries of Western Europe from *c.*1600 via the medium of printing, where it is known, in translation, as *le jeu de l'oie*, *il gioco dell'oca*, *het ganzenbord*, *das Gänse-Spiel*, etc.[1] This game has also spawned literally thousands of variant race games, one of which – the *Game of Cupid* – has highly significant garden imagery, to be considered below. First, though, we consider the parent game.

The *Game of the Goose* is a simple race game in which the movement of the players' distinctive tokens along a spiral track is determined entirely by the throw of dice, without choice of move, as seen in an Italian example printed in 1598 (Figure 1). Several spaces on the sixty-three-space track are favourable, resulting in forward movement. These are marked by the image of a goose, hence the name of the game. Others are unfavourable, resulting in missed turns or backward movement. These 'hazard' spaces bear particular images: the bridge, the inn, the well, the labyrinth, the prison and – most feared – death, where the instruction is to start again. The aim is to arrive exactly at the final space, number sixty-three. These are all features of what may be called the classic form of the game, with a playing structure that appears in many countries of Europe essentially unaltered through several centuries – in some countries, even to the present day.

The iconography of the active spaces – the goose and hazard spaces – likewise remains remarkably constant. However, the decorative iconography, such as appears in the corners and the centre, is not determined by the playing requirements and is therefore much more variable. In the Italian example of 1598 (Figure 1), the end of the track shows two men drinking. The game, usually played for stakes whether large or small, was often associated with gambling in taverns, and indeed the earliest mention of the game is a prohibition against playing it issued in 1463 by Borso d'Este in Argenta, near Ferrara.[2]

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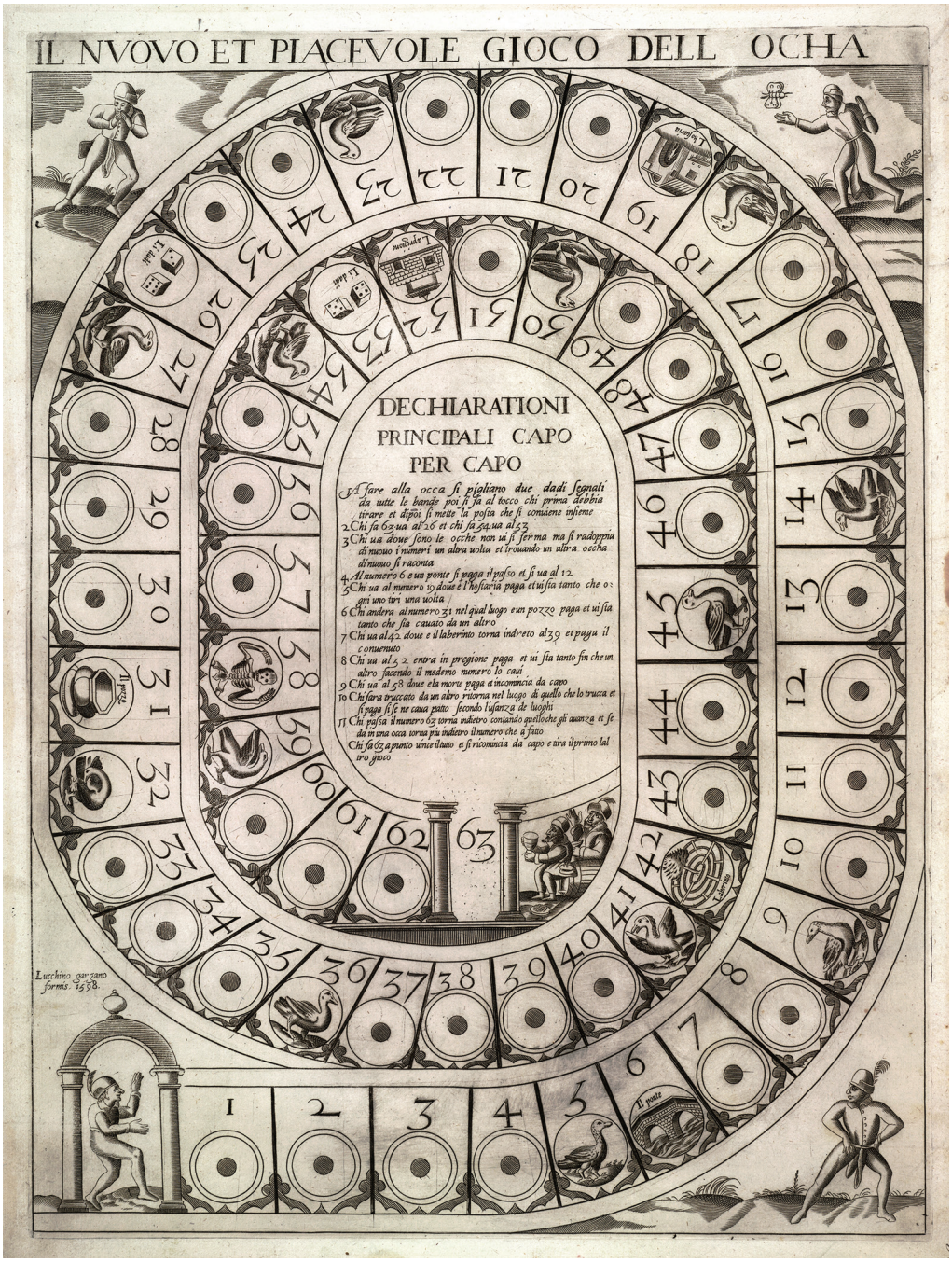


Figure 1. An early Italian *Game of the Goose*, Lucchino Gargano, Rome, dated 1598. Courtesy: © The Trustees of the British Museum, London, 1869,0410.2465.+

However, certain other examples, though they largely share the iconography of the active spaces, have as their central decoration the image of a garden, as in a seventeenth-century Spanish game (Figure 2). The track is almost identical in arrangement and iconography to that of the Italian game. As well as a garden, the central space shows coins, indicating where the stakes were to be placed. The garden iconography is known in games of other

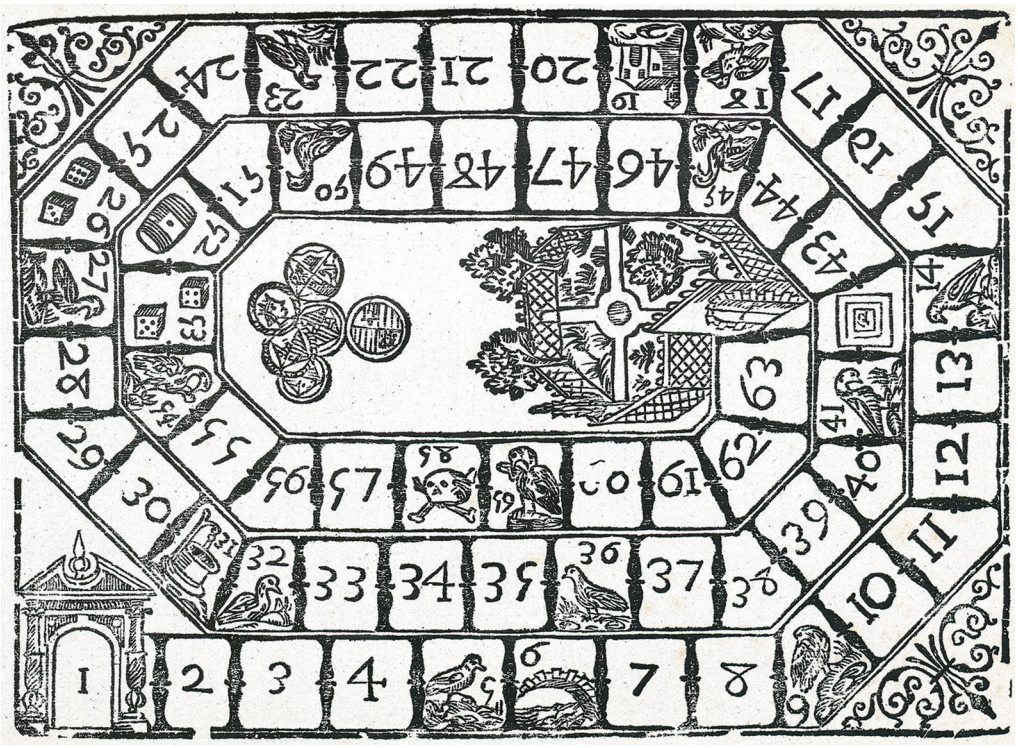


Figure 2. A seventeenth-century Mallorcan *Game of the Goose* printed from the original woodblock. Courtesy: Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona, op. 339 70868 1052056

countries, being particularly common in the centre of French games, where it is normally incorporated into the winning space, with the image of a goose. Indeed, that space is generally referred to in France as *le jardin de l'oie* (the garden of the goose) as will be explored below.

THE ORIGINS OF THE GARDEN ICONOGRAPHY

No records exist for the origin of the *Game of the Goose*, so any interpretation of the iconography must necessarily be speculative. The game was well established in Italy by the mid-fifteenth century, a period when both symbolism and numerology were highly important in prevailing knowledge systems. From this viewpoint, the game takes on deeper meaning. The number of spaces, sixty-three, was a significant number in this period, representing the Grand Climacteric of human life, which was thought to be governed by a series of crises (climacterics) every seventh year, of which that at age sixty-three was the most crucial. If it were passed successfully, wisdom and serenity were the reward. Though this theory was known from ancient times, it received additional support from the Platonist philosopher Marsilio Ficino when in his volumes on human life (1480–89) he advanced an astrological model to account for it.[3] Another number significant in the game is nine, being the spacing of the favourable geese, in each of two overlapping series. This, the Trinity of Trinities, is emphasized in Dante Alighieri's *Vita Nouva* as symbolizing the path to Heaven. Viewed in this way, the spiral track of the game becomes a path symbolizing progress of the soul towards Paradise, overcoming earthly hurdles on the way. The garden at the end can thus be interpreted as a representation of Paradise. This theory is supported by a seventeenth-century Catalan *Goose* game, not of classic form, which clearly represents in its final spaces the passage from death (space one

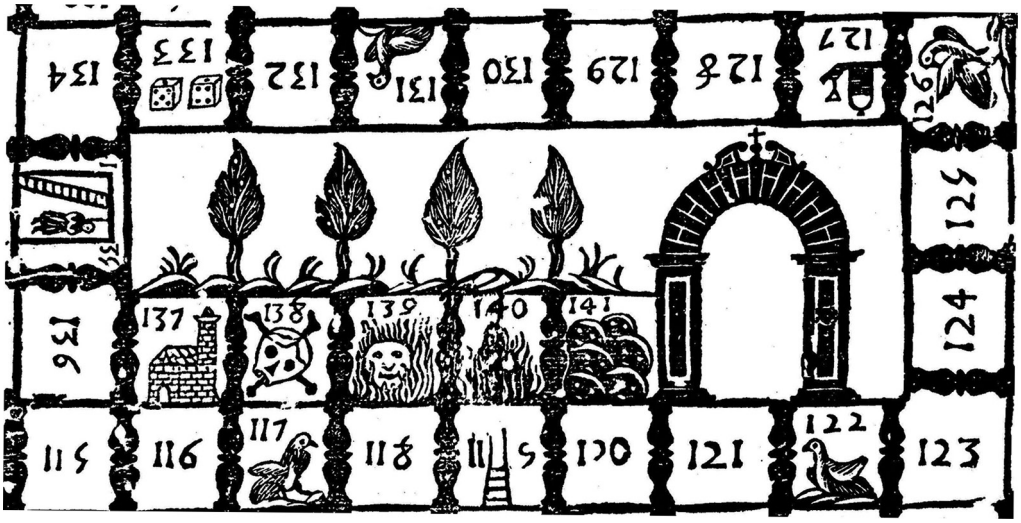


Figure 3. The earliest known Spanish *Game of the Goose*: detail of the centre.
Courtesy: Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona, op. 339 70868 1052056

hundred and thirty-eight) through purgatorial fires, Hell and limbo towards Paradise, here represented as a garden with trees and low-growing plants (Figure 3).

Indirect support for such an interpretation of the *Goose* game is found in the *Game of Cupid* discussed below, which bears a printed explanation that is undeniably numerological and spiritual in nature, though there the path leads to a different garden. It is also true that within the Christian tradition the use of board games for spiritual instruction and enlightenment is of early date, the earliest being the 'virtuous' dice and board game invented *c.*965 by Wibold, Archdeacon of Noyon, later Bishop of Cambrai.[4]

DEPICTIONS OF THE GARDEN IN EARLY SPANISH GAMES

In considering the garden iconography as a representation of Paradise, it has to be admitted that early modern designers of examples of the *Goose* game might not have had any such representation in mind, but might well have copied from an earlier version of the game or could simply have taken an image of a garden *tout court*. Nevertheless, it is striking that the garden depicted in the Spanish version (Figure 2) has several of the elements traditionally associated with a Paradise garden in the Late Medieval period (Figures 4 and 5). Take, for example, these depictions of the Garden of Eden. Both in the World Map of Hanns Rüst and in the leaf from the Boucicaut Master, the garden is of hexagonal shape, more or less as in the Spanish game (Figure 2), though there the garden is fenced rather than walled. Both show the Tree of Life, mirrored by a prominent freestanding tree in the game, though without the figures of Adam and Eve, an expected omission if the garden shown in the game represents a paradise to be attained, rather than one lost. Of course, there was no uniform pan-European depiction of the Garden of Eden in the Late Middle Ages – the examples given merely indicate that the image in the game would not be thought inappropriate as that of a Paradise garden.

Rüst's depiction shows the four rivers of Paradise flowing out from the garden and watering the whole Earth (Figure 4).[5] By contrast, in the Islamic tradition, the rivers flow out from the central fountain, making a quadripartite division of the garden, similar in geometry to that found in the Spanish garden. The 'Garden' carpet in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, made in the eighteenth century, but to a much older traditional design, provides a significant illustration (Figure 6).[6] The museum's catalogue note says:

Figure 4. World Map of Hanns Rüst, Augsburg, 1480: detail of the earthly paradise; from a facsimile published by L. Rosenthal, Munich, 1927. Courtesy: Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps

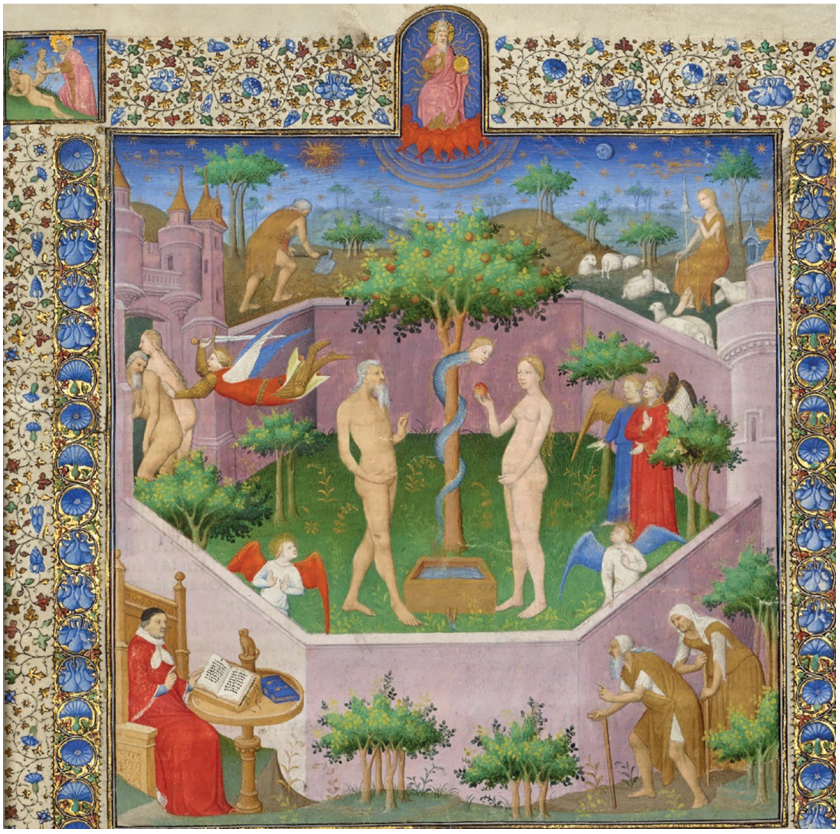


Figure 5. Boucicaut Master, *The Temptation of Adam and Eve* (detail); from *Concerning the Fates of Illustrious Men and Women* (Paris, *c.*1415). Courtesy: J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. 63, f. 3

Figure 6. The 'Garden' carpet, eighteenth century. Courtesy: Victorian and Albert Museum, London, cat. no. T.10-1924

> This design is a bird's eye view, or a map, of a classical Persian garden divided into four beds by two intersecting channels of water. The garden is actually depicted from two points of view at once: from above, giving the architectural plan, and from the side, showing the trees and shrubs in profile.

However, it would be carrying an already-speculative interpretation too far to identify a Moorish connection with the garden depicted in the Spanish game on the basis of the quadripartite geometry, which is found in many gardens, including those of Spain.[7]

Turning now to the central section of the Spanish game (Figure 3), the presence of Hell and Purgatory images in the penultimate spaces is strong evidence that the central decoration is intended as a representation of Paradise, evidence strengthened by the presence of a Christian cross on the final archway. The iconography of trees spaced by low shrubs is quite similar to that of the carpet's border, possibly indicating some Moorish influence. The importance of trees in Paradise is well recognized in the three main Abrahamic religions, but especially in Islam.[8] Depictions of non-earthly states, for which 'paradise' is an inadequate translation, as the goal in games emanating from other religious traditions are well known, for example, in Eastern games of snakes and ladders, from which the much later Western versions derive (Figure 7).[9]

LE JARDIN DE L'OIE

As indicated above, the winning space of the *Game of the Goose* is generally referred to in France as *le jardin de l'oie*. The usage is found in the earliest compendium[10] giving rules for the game and confirmed more than a century later in the encyclopaedic *Dictionnaire des jeux*.[11] This usage compels us to confront the difficult question of the symbolism of the goose in these games. The most common hypothesis is that in Italy, where the game originated, the goose is considered 'lucky'. However, demonstrating this as a medieval

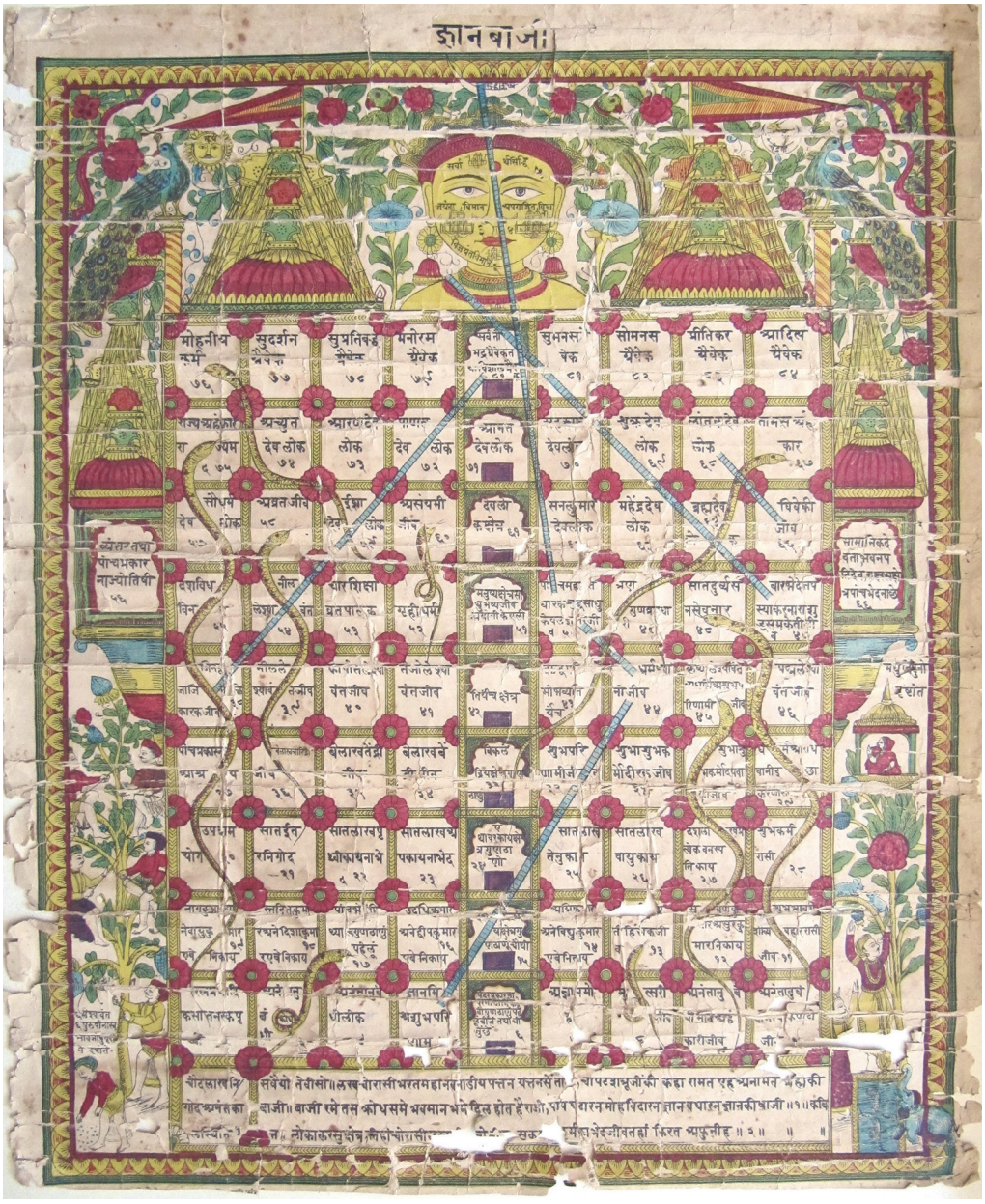


Figure 7. *Jnan Bazi* (The Game of Knowledge), a Jain version of the Indian game of snakes and ladders. Hand-coloured lithograph. Chitrottejak Press, Mumbai, 1903/04. Courtesy: Jacob Schmidt-Madsen

belief that might have influenced the original choice of symbol is not straightforward. The goose is described by Ovid as *sagax anser* on account of its well-known vigilance.[12] However, Donatino Domini, reviewing the classical references, concludes that the bird was regarded primarily as a symbol of victory. He also mentions the association of the bird with divination, with astrological and cabalistic links that would have had resonance in Renaissance Italy.[13] Whether these considerations are sufficient to explain the use of the symbol on the game is doubtful.

A second hypothesis, which Domini prefers, is that the goose was a symbol of

Figure 8. The Holkham Bible Picture Book, Norfolk, *c.*1327–35. Courtesy: The British Library, London, Add. MS 47682, f. 3^{v}

prosperity and good fortune through its importance to the economy of the medieval household: what better prize? Certainly, the iconography of many Italian *Goose* games would support this hypothesis. A frequent image is that of the hunter successful in shooting his prey, or that of the goose being the centrepiece of a fine meal.[14]

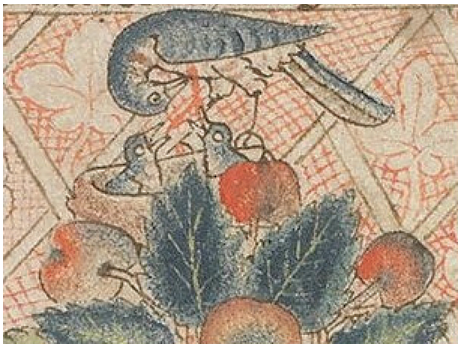
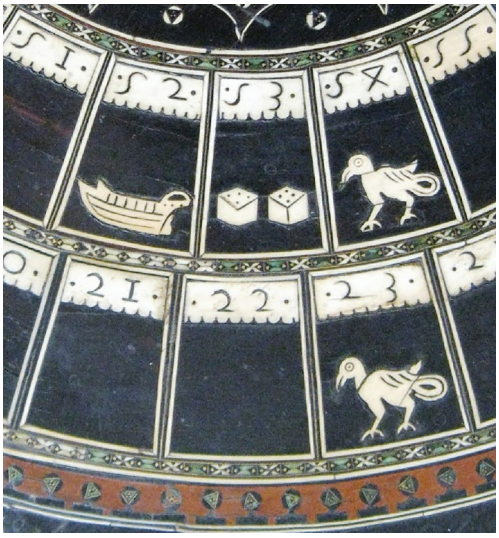


Figure 9. Detail of Figure 8 showing the 'Pelican in her piety'



(RIGHT) Figure 10. The earliest known Goose board (detail). Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, acc. no. 62.14; photo: © Author

A third hypothesis, put forward by the present author, controversially aims to place the symbolism squarely within a supposed spiritual interpretation, noting that the goose spaces contribute advancement along the path of spiritual development.[15] This would be easy to understand if the goose, as originated in medieval Italy, were in fact a pelican: a well-known symbol for Christ.[16] Some limited support for this idea is given by the fact that, as late as the nineteenth century, the formal taxonomic scheme used in Italy for birds included the 'Order' of the geese, the pelican being one of its genera: an '*oca pelicano*'. The medieval depiction of the pelican did not include its large throat pouch, so a confusion of symbols is possible. The legend of the pelican that makes it a symbol of Christ is that it revives its offspring by giving them blood from its breast, as seen in The Holkham Bible Picture Book, in which the 'Pelican in her Piety' is shown nesting at the top of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden (Figures 8 and 9).[17] This can be compared with a detail of the earliest surviving *Goose* board, thought to have been made in Northern India to an Italian design (Figure 10).[18] The resemblance of the birds on spaces twenty-three and fifty-four to the medieval pelican is striking, there being no sign of the long neck that characterizes the goose. The sharp bill common to the images both in the manuscript and in the board is also not that of a goose, instead being suited to striking blood from the bird's breast. The birds in the early Spanish examples described above similarly lack the normal characteristics of a goose. If this bold hypothesis is correct, it would imply that the medieval game was conceived originally with pelican images but that over the years the association was forgotten and replaced by the goose imagery in the Early Modern period. The presence of the pelican in the final 'garden' would of course elegantly have symbolized finding Christ in Paradise.

The earliest French *Goose* games are mostly from provincial printers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The earliest of 1598 shows a blank rusticated arch as the winning space.[19] Most of the later versions show a single bird, with one notable exception, which shows a bird tending its offspring, strongly reminiscent of the 'Pelican in its Piety': there is the suggestion of a walled courtyard behind (Figure 11a). Other examples show how the representations mirror changing fashions in garden design. These include the axial extension characteristic of grand French gardens of the eighteenth century and earlier (Figure 11b); a game sheet copiously decorated with garden and sylvan scenes, including much classical ornament (Figures 11c–f);[20] and the 'Chinese'

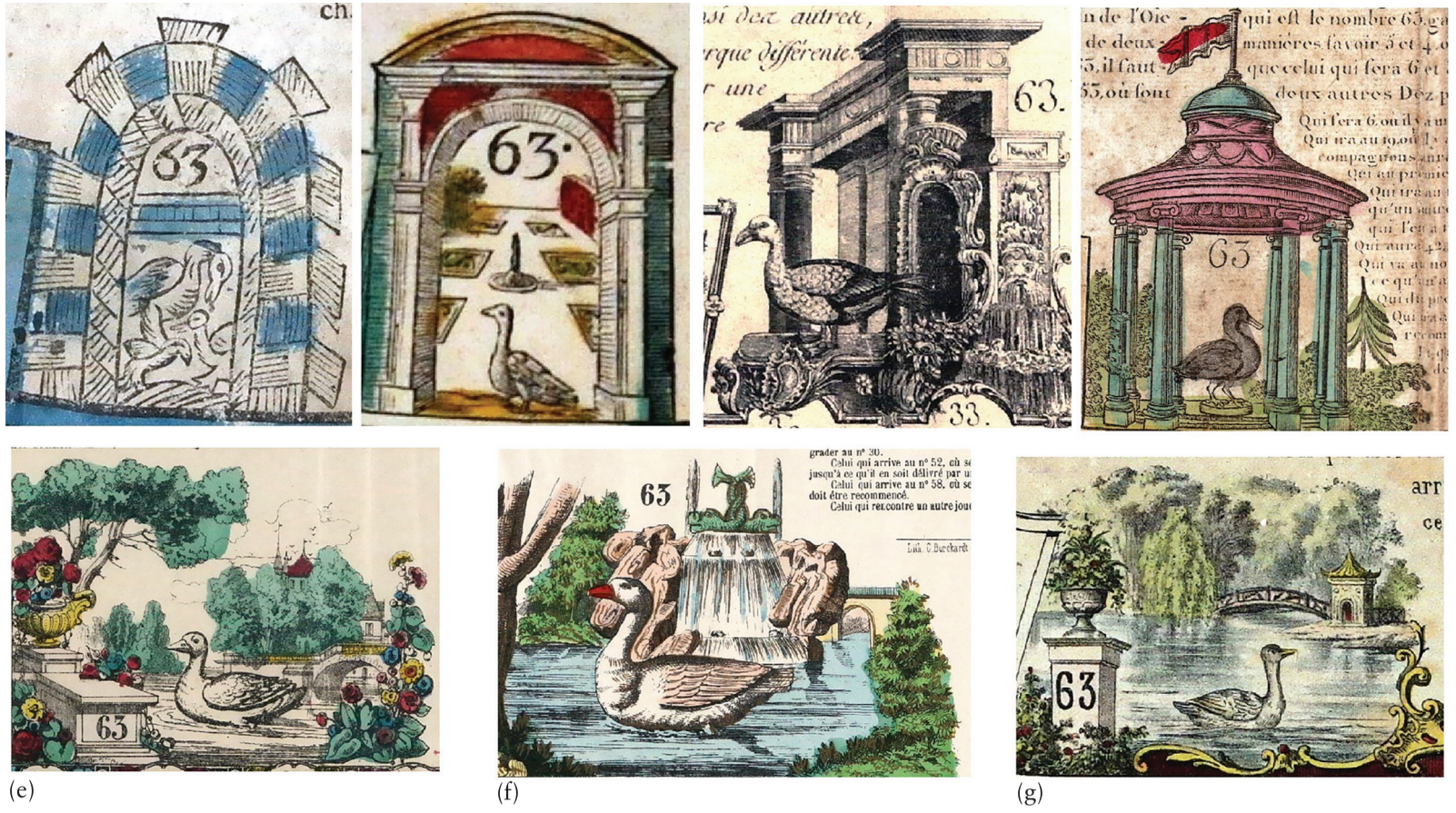


Figure 11. The final spaces of several French *jeux de l'oie*, with approximate dates: (a) Letourmy, Orleans, 1750; (b) Peyrane, Toulouse, 1750; (c) Daumont, Paris, 1750; (d) Basset, Paris, 1825; (e) Pinot Sagaire, Epinal, 1865; (f) Burkhardt, Wissembourg, 1875; and (g) Watilliaux, Paris, 1890. All author's collection

influence (Figure 11g). The series confirms that the goose in her garden was a long-lasting feature of French *jeux de l'oie*.

This recurrent symbolism is not found in the *Goose* games of other countries. In English games, the end decorations (if any) are associated with the tavern, as in the Italian example (Figure 1). Such gardens as occasionally occur in the central decoration of German games do so as background to a scene of social enjoyment. Games from the Low Countries rarely show a central garden scene except where the game has French antecedents or connections.

THE *HORTUS CONCLUSUS*

A full study of the *hortus conclusus* would range too widely for the purposes of understanding the symbolism of the garden iconography found in board games. Here, just three of its symbolic aspects have been selected as particularly relevant, ignoring all the aspects concerned with its realization and use.[21] Also, the focus is on the belief systems of the fifteenth century that have shaped the symbolism of the games.

The symbolism represented by the *jardin de l'oie* is the most basic aspect of the multivalent *hortus conclusus*. That particular symbolism derives initially from the Persian concept of the garden as a paradise on earth (*pairidaeza*, a Persian word meaning 'surrounded by walls'), which later developed into the Islamic *chahar-bagh*, an enclosed quadrangular garden with central perpendicular paths or canals dividing it into four equal sections, as in the Spanish example (Figure 2). The idea for gardens on this pattern came to Europe in the Early Middle Ages through Islamic gardens in Spain, Italy and Sicily. Such gardens were then realized throughout Europe and the symbolism of the earthly paradise was attached to them. By the fourteenth century, with improvements in geographical knowledge and cartography, difficulties in identifying a suitable earthly location for the lost Garden of Eden were coming to the fore and a gradual transition in belief towards a heavenly Paradise took place.[22] Without knowing when the *Game of the Goose* was invented, it is not possible definitively to locate it within that transition, though the representation of the game as a spiritual progress is more consistent with the belief in a heavenly Paradise than in the earthly version. Certainly, by the date of the earliest accounts of the game in the fifteenth century, that belief was widely accepted, though not universal.

A second aspect of the symbolism of the *hortus conclusus*, distinct from the first, derives from the Vulgate Bible's Canticle of Canticles 4:12: 'Hortus conclusus soror mea, sponsa, hortus conclusus, fons signatus' (A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up). This is understood as signifying virginity and was adopted by the Christian Church as an attribute of the Virgin Mary. The theological problem of the Virgin Birth was a live topic in the Middle Ages.[23] A fifteenth-century German metal-cut shows a symbolic interpretation of the Mystery of the Incarnation, where the Virgin is protected by the surrounding palisade of her garden (Figure 12).[24] Three noble hounds, entitled *veritas*, *humilitas* and *castitas* (truth, humility and chastity) are in pursuit of a unicorn, the emblem of purity, which has taken refuge at the Virgin's knees.[25] The theme of the Annunciation has been combined with the *Hunt of the Unicorn*, a theme popular in secular art. The importance of preventing a breach in the palisade is emphasized by the placement of the lower end of Gabriel's staff, blocking the hounds' pursuit.

A third aspect of the symbolism of the *hortus conclusus* derives from literary sources such as the *Roman de la rose*, the allegorical dream poem, the first part written by Guillaume de Loris *c.*1230, the second by Jean de Meun *c.*1275. The first part of the poem is set in a walled garden – a *locus amoenus*, a place of safety and delight. Although

Figure 12. *The Mystery of the Incarnation*, where the Virgin is depicted in the *Hortus conclusus* with a unicorn before her and surrounded by the emblems of her perpetual virginity, all described on scrolls. Germany, *c.*1450–65. © The Trustees of the British Museum, London, 1851,0530.6; from A. M. Hind, *History of Woodcut*, 2 vols (London: Constable, 1935; repr. Dover, 1963), I: p. 177

the poem is concerned with courtly love, the transposition of the Garden of Pleasures into a Garden of Love seems a natural step (Figure 13). Rod Barnett gives an insightful account of the development and significance of the medieval Garden of Love.[26] He points out that though this concept came to its height in the Late Middle Ages, it is not a sudden invention of that period, for it draws on a long tradition in literature and art from ancient Greece through Persia, the Holy Lands and the countries of the southern Mediterranean in the time of the Roman Empire. Regarding the ambiguous nature of courtly love, he quotes Paolo Cerchi: 'The real paradox is that Eros and moral perfection, far from being contradictory, live together in a subtle process of amalgamation.'[27] We shall see in the next section to what extent that amalgamation was achieved in the *Game of Cupid*.

Figure 13. *Jardin d'amour*, Florence, *c.*1465–80. Engraving on copper.
Courtesy: bpk/Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. 169-24;
photo: Jörg P. Anders

THE GARDEN OF CUPID

The *Game of the Goose* has a protean structure that lends itself to thematic variations, several of which date from before the end of the sixteenth century.[28] An important variant is the *Game of Cupid*, the earliest known being a unique print published in rue Montorgeuil, dating from *c.*1640, but made from an earlier block (Figure 14).[29] In this game, the track arrangement is based upon the number seven, rather than on the number nine as in the *Game of the Goose*. Text on the sheet explains that the number seven is favoured by Venus, presumably because it is the union of male and female numbers three and four. Thus, the favourable spaces – each bearing the image of Love as a winged Cupid – occur on spaces seven, fourteen, twenty-one etc. up to the winning space at sixty-three. That space depicts a formal walled Garden of Love, in which promenading couples are targeted by the arrows of Cupid from on high. The hazards are reminiscent of the *Game of the Goose*: for example, the tomb acts similarly to death in that game.

A remarkable feature is that the track is set out along the body of a crowned serpent. The text explains that this is because: 'Love in the guise of a serpent slips into the hearts

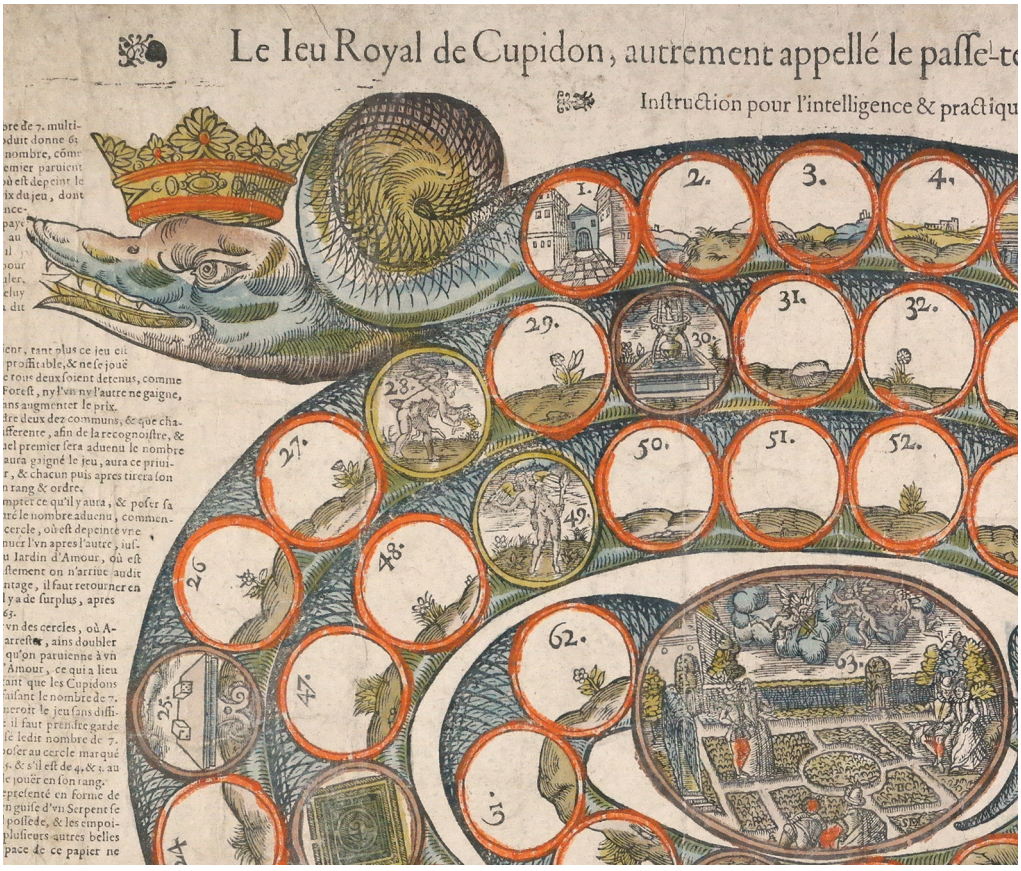


Figure 14. *Le Ieu Royal de Cupidon, autrement appellé le passe-temps d'Amour*, Veuve Petit, Paris, *c.*1640 (detail), but from an earlier block. Author's collection

of those it possesses and poisons with its venom; and for several other reasons for which there is not space.' The unstated reference is to a line in the Vulgate Bible: *de radice enim colubri egredietur regulus* (From the root of the serpent there shall emerge a ruler).[30] This text is interpreted by Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) as meaning: 'This serpent is habitual sin, which secretes a venom that will nourish a ruler over the soul and bring it to eternal death.'[31] By this 'ruler' is meant the basilisk, a serpent which carries a crown on its head. It can kill a man with one breath or even a glance. In the state of habitual sin, one breath of a temptation, or indeed one glance from a woman, will lead to a sinful act. The game thus sets the attractions of reaching the Garden of Cupid against the fatal consequences for the soul.[32]

The fact that this game has a spiritual interpretation gives weight to the theory that the *Game of the Goose* had a similarly deep message for the medieval and early modern mind. The iconography of the game includes a rarely seen decorative scheme for the non-active spaces: a stylized open landscape with an undulating horizon that runs from space to space. The cultivated central *hortus conclusus* contrasts with the wilderness outside the walls, emphasizing its role as a *locus amoenus*. This garden, though, is no emblem of virginity: indeed, the image of the serpent's body appearing to pass through it suggests that the defences have been breached.

A Garden of Love is pictured in a few other games, for example as the winning space of Francia's *Il dilettevol giuoco del pellegrinaggio d'amore* (the Pleasant Game

Figure 15. *Il novo et piacevol gioco del giardin d'amore* (detail).
Courtesy: © The Trustees of the British Museum, London, 1869,0410.2467

of the Pilgrimage of Love).[33] Of particular interest is that shown in the pay-or-take dice game *Il Giardin' d'Amore,* published in Italy by Giovanni Antonio de Paoli between 1589 and 1599 (Figure 15). Here the garden is guarded by an archway surmounted by the figure of Liberalita[34] and bearing the motto: 'LASSATE OGNI VIRTUTUE O VOI CH'ENTRATE' (Abandon all Virtue, you who enter). Evidently the Garden of Love was associated in the Early Modern period with licentious pursuits: the implied reference to Dante's entrance to Hell would have been obvious.

Versions of the *Game of Cupid* were produced in several countries of Europe over many years, mostly showing a *hortus conclusus* at the centre, though occasionally showing Cupid in a wider garden landscape. The Spanish-language version printed in Antwerp by Pieter de Jode has very similar iconography to the game of 1640 version (Figure 14) and repeats the warning about Love as a serpent.[35] Later versions of the game omit the warning about love and the explanation of the numerology, giving only the playing rules. The 1625 print by Visscher is the earliest of these (Figure 16).[36] The centre space shows a couple dancing in a *hortus conclusus*, apparently serenaded by Cupid. However, Cupid's fiddle and bow are a grid-iron and tongs – and the couple are distinctly ill-favoured. So far from celebrating their union, Cupid is humiliating them with 'rough music' (German *Katzenmusik*, Dutch *ketel musiek*). The ritual of 'rough music', or *charivari*, was practised across Europe in the Early Modern period and constituted a carnivalesque form of public shaming. Peter Burke observes that:

> It was not only the old man married to the young woman (or vice versa) who might be the object of the charivari, but anyone marrying for the second time, or a girl marrying outside the village, or a husband who was beaten or made a cuckold by his wife.[37]

The term 'rough music' was first applied to the *Cupid* games by Eddie Duggan, who notes:

Figure 16. The centre space of a later version of the Cupid game: *Het Nieuw Slange Spel, anders genaemt Koninclycke Tytkorting van Cupido* (The New Game of the Snake, otherwise called the Royal Pastime of Cupid), Claes Janz, Visscher, *c.*1625. Courtesy: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-77.369

Figure 17. The centre space of a later version of the Cupid game: *The Royall Pass-Tyme of Cupid, or The new and most pleasant Game of the Snake*, John Garrett, London, *c.*1690. Courtesy: Houghton Library

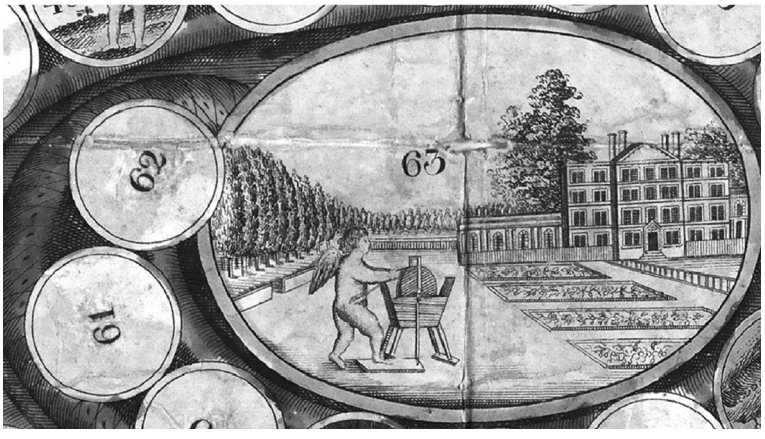


Figure 18. The centre space of a later version of the Cupid game: *The Royal Pastime of Cupid, or Entertaining Game of the Snake*, James Lumsden and Son, Glasgow, *c.*1810. Author's collection

> Visscher's Cupid appears to have some justification for playing rough music, as the couple are represented as a cuckold and a hag. The 'hag' is evident from the facial profile of the female figure while the cuckold is apparent from the two-feathers in his hat, a symbolic representation of the cuckold's horns.[38]

The negative moral consequences of entering Cupid's Garden are being emphasized.

The earliest surviving English version, by John Garrett, *c.*1690, is similar to the 1625 print by Visscher, which may have inspired it (Figure 17). However, the dancing couple are no longer repellent, though they are carrying drinking vessels and may well be drunk.

By the end of the eighteenth century, when Laurie & Whittle published the game, the significance of the snake and its moral lesson were forgotten.[39] The central design is the same as that used by James Lumsden early in the next century (Figure 18). Now, Cupid is shown honing his arrows, while his garden is no longer a *hortus conclusus* but that of a substantial Georgian country house: the symbolism is no more.

Reviewing the symbolism of these various editions, it is evident that, in the earliest, the crowned serpent served as a warning of the sinful consequences of entering the Garden of Love. This serpent is not the serpent of the Garden of Eden, though, as a manifestation of sin, it is related to it. There is no suggestion that Eros and moral perfection can be experienced together – rather, they are symbolized as contraries. In the Visscher example, though there is no explanation of the specific symbolism of the crowned serpent as representing the insinuating nature of love, a negative moral implication is still clear. Here, though, the warning is against the adverse social consequences of an ill-chosen alliance. This is not carried over into the peasant dance of British examples, where the Dutch iconography may have been regarded as too unsavoury. The 'rough music' element is retained, though whether its force would have been appreciated is uncertain. Finally, with the image of Cupid sharpening his arrows, we are left with a pleasant conceit rather than a moral.

THE LEGACY OF THE GARDEN IMAGERY

Though the *Game of Cupid* did not survive beyond the nineteenth century, the *Game of the Goose* certainly did, though not as a game of spiritual enlightenment. Nonetheless, the garden imagery continued to influence its iconography. In France, traditional *Goose* games were produced well into the twentieth century and these often had as their winning space a semblance of a garden, complete with goose. Such an image might also be found in advertising games of the interwar years that used the goose theme in conjunction with promotional images, for example in a game promoting Chocolat Menier, or one promoting Gibbs' soap.[40] However, perhaps the most vivid survival is in traditional Catalan games, where the *Juego de la oca* often shows the grand fountain in Parc de la Ciutadella in Barcelona – though the geese have somehow become swans (Figures 19 and 20).[41]

BOARD GAMES AS MIRRORS OF CULTURE

Games based on the *Game of the Goose*, though having the simplest of playing mechanisms, are sophisticated objects. Their playing structure is ingenious and evidence of considerable thought in development. Their origin is in a learned culture where coded symbolism and numerology were enjoyed as intellectual challenges. It is therefore not surprising that these games can carry powerful messages – sometimes concealed, sometimes overt – taking advantage of the medium of printing to display an infinitely adaptable iconography.

The symbol of the enclosed garden is just one of the means by which these games are used to convey a message – and its use in the two games discussed here is strikingly

Figure 19. The fountain in Parc de la Ciutadella, Barcelona. Photo: Bernard Gagnon, GNU FDL, 2009

Figure 20. A twentieth-century Catalan game depicting the fountain in Parc de la Ciutadella as the winning space (cf. Figure 17). Courtesy: Dr Luigi Ciompi

different. On the one hand, we have the path of spiritual progress towards Paradise and, on the other, the downward path along the serpent of habitual sin, to a place of erotic licence. Perhaps the second game was deliberately conceived as a contrast to the first. Many other games based on *Goose* convey powerful messages, including some of the earliest. For example, the *Filosofia cortesana* game, invented by Alonso de Barros of Spain, printed in Naples in 1588, admonishes the aspiring courtier in these terms:

> I represent here a discourse about ambitious men, with the most common means, which are Liberality, Adulation, Diligence, Work [...] there are the risks of oblivion and 'what will they say', false friendship, changing ministers, death of the helper and misused fortune, what will others think, and poverty. Going through some of those, you sometimes get to the palm-tree of your desire, but not without a price.[42]

It is significant that the winning space represents a palm tree – the garden is not far away!

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[3] Marsilio Ficino, *De Vita*, Bk 2, ch. XX, quoted in *Three Books on Life*. Critical edition and translation with introduction and notes by Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark (Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies with Renaissance Society of America, 1989), p. 231.

[4] For a realization of the game, see Balderic, Bishop of Noyon and Tournai (ed. George Colvrneer), *Chronicon Cameracense et Atrebatense, sive historia utrisque ecclesiae, III libris, ab hinc DC sere annis conscripta. Nunc primum in luce edita, & notis illustrate* (Douai: Jean Bogard, 1615).

[5] A very similar depiction of the Garden of Eden is found in an illustrated *Vita Christi* manuscript with devotional supplements, made in East Anglia *c.*1490; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. 101 (2008.3), ff. 7^{v}–8.

[6] Victorian and Albert Museum, cat. no. T.10-1924, http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O67300/carpet-unknown/.

[7] For example, the 'Jardín de la Sirena' in the botanical garden of El Retiro; José Antonio del Caizo, José Antonio Mejías and S. F. Barthélemy-Horvath, 'El Retiro, Malaga, Spain', *Botanic Gardens Conservation News*, 1/7 (1990), pp. 14–19.

[8] John Macdonald, 'Paradise', *Islamic Studies*, 5/4 (1966), pp. 331–83.

[9] I am grateful to Jacob Schmidt-Madsen for the image of the game of snakes and ladders shown in Figure 7 and for his comment: 'The highest heavens are represented as Vimanas, or flying citadels, located in the face of the cosmic man. The winning square is the resting place of liberated souls located in the crescent shape at the top, with a ladder leading up to it. The nature imagery is evocative of bliss and tranquillity rather than being a direct representation of any specific plane of existence.'

[10] La Marinière, *La maison academique: contenant un recueil general de tous les jeux divertissans pour se rejouyr agreablement dans les bonnes compagnies/par le sieur D.L.M.* [*de La Marinière*] (Paris: chez Robert de Nain et Marin Leché, 1654). It explains: 'le dit Ieu est fait de nombres depuis 1 iusqu'à 63 & celuy qui premier atteint à ce nombre final, gagne le Ieu: Mais on n'arriue pas aysement au Iardin de l'Oye, c'est à dire, au nombre 63 [...]' (the said game [of the Goose] is composed of the numbers 1 to 63 and he who reaches the final number first wins the game; but it is not easy to reach the Garden of the Goose, that is to say, the number 63 [...]).

[11] Charles-Joseph Panckoucke (ed.), *Dictionnaire des jeux* (Paris: chez Pancoucke, Hôtel de Thou, rue des Poitevins, 1792), p. 187. This was a supplementary volume to *Mathématiques*, which was issued as volume III of Pancoucke's *Supplément* (1776–77) to the *Encyclopédie méthodique*.

[12] The *Dictionariolum latinum ad puerum commoditatem italice interpretatum* (Venice: Valgrisi, 1564) glosses this as: 'oca sagace, perche sente di subito ogni strepito' (wise goose because it immediately hears every sound).

[13] Donatino Domini, 'Il Gioco dell'Oca', in *La Vita e il Vino nelle carte di gioco e nei giochi di carta*, exh. cat. (Torgiano: Fondazione Lungarotti, 1999), pp. 35–40.

[14] The well-known game by Carlo Coriolani of Venice (*c.*1640) embodies both aspects.

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[17] The Holkham Bible Picture Book, Norfolk, *c.*1327–35, The British Library.

London, Add. MS 47682, f. 3^{v}.

[18] Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, acc. no. 62.14. The relative crudity of the designs, by a supposed Indian artist unfamiliar with Western representations, makes the comparison problematic.

[19] [no title, but a Game of the Goose] (Lyon: par les heretiers de Benoist Rigaud, 1598).

[20] Henri R. D'Allemagne, *Le noble jeu de l'oie* (Paris: Librairie Gründ, 1950), pl. 3.

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[30] Vulgate Bible, Isiah 14:29.

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