

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AS A HISTORIC PROJECT:
THE CENTRAL ROLE OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT IN THE EMERGENCE
OF THE DISCIPLINE IN ENGLAND AND NORTH AMERICA

A Design Thesis

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by

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between landscape architecture and politics has in the past decade or so been the subject of much discussion within the discipline. Recent articles on this matter argue for the discipline to recover its engagement with politics, mostly in the form of the Green New Deal, legislation, advocacy, and policy. However, many of those same scholars have noted the difficulties of the discipline achieving just ends within the context of capitalism. This thesis attempts to situate landscape design as a professional body which has historically mediated the outward consequences of the central contradictions of capitalism while lacking an analysis which posits their abolition. The intention of the thesis is to begin with a historical analysis that provides the basis for the larger argument that the discipline can and should attempt to overcome its limitations within capitalism by allying itself with and contributing toward the collective and emancipatory political project of socialism.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Andrew Curtis graduated from Susquehanna University in 2015 with an undergraduate degree in History and a minor in philosophy. He attended Cornell University in the MLA program from 2019 to 2023.

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PREFACE

This thesis has changed and evolved remarkably from the first outline in the fall of 2022 until what it is now in May of 2023, a year after the intended submission date. It began as a design thesis, in which there would be a demonstration of the connection between left wing politics and landscape architecture through the act of drawing, image making, and the presentation of “alternative futures”. It began in part because of my political activity outside of the MLA program at Cornell, primarily in trying to establish a visible and relevant left with other activists and organizers locally. Despite Ithaca having the image of a progressive city, it is largely a particular sort of progressivism that is thoroughly entrenched in liberalism. At the time of my arrival in 2019 for graduate school, there was hardly any effective or *organized* left in Ithaca.

I had been familiar with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) since roughly 2016 and an active member of the Denver chapter since in 2018. At the time, DSA, in my opinion, represented the most cohered and effective left organization in the United States post the 2016 elections. Therefore, my first inclination was to join the local chapter which unfortunately appeared as languishing and in need of some sort of reinvigoration. Myself and a number of other individuals who shared similar concerns about the Ithaca chapter of the DSA met regularly to discuss ways in which to reorganize the chapter and transform it into a relevant force in challenging the local liberal status quo and to offer an alternative. After months of this work within the chapter, the Ithaca DSA chapter had the capacity to finally embark on what was our first chapter priority campaign, local elections for Ithaca’s Common Council. This was a shared effort between Ithaca DSA and the Ithaca Tenants’ Union, which had formed

in the wake of COVID in response to the issues that arose concerning rents and housing therefrom, where we fielded three different candidates in three separate wards. Each candidate was united under a slate or shared political platform that was basically socialist in nature, called the “Solidarity Slate.” Although the word “socialist” or “socialism” was not used, at least one member of the Slate, Jorge Defendini and current council person for ward four, publicly identifies as a socialist and is also an active member of the Ithaca DSA chapter.

While I was not directly involved in the running of the electoral campaign beyond social media posting and a limited amount of canvassing, my area of greatest contribution was the behind the scenes administrative work for the DSA chapter including revising bylaws, social media, internal communications, and redesigning the chapter website, among other things such as the occasional action or rally and what seemed like endless amounts of meetings. It was certainly a collective effort. Ultimately, two out of the three candidates were elected to Common Council, another DSA member elected to the Tompkins County Legislature, and as of 2023, three additional candidates fielded for the 2023 Common Council elections, again, under the banner of the Slate. Although in many ways this is modest progress compared to what is needed to accomplish larger goals, it was a strong beginning. Most notably, the chapter continues to live on and has since introduced other campaigns such as making the county public bus system, TCAT, expanded and fare free, as part and parcel of pushing for the city government to follow through on Ithaca’s municipal Green New Deal resolution which was passed in January of 2019, and to additionally steer public

discourse and local policy towards incorporating aspects related to class, race, and equity.

This to me was an exciting but rough example of how collective action could work towards building a better, more ecological and humane society, even if locally, and how that might work towards a reconfiguration of space and the broader landscape. This imagination was in part stimulated because of my conversations with other activists and organizers with whom I worked with. I would imagine the possibilities of community land trusts in Ithaca, where they might be placed, how they would be governed; a reorganization of the city's public housing agency and the prospect of creating a community development corporation in order to provide quality non-market housing for all; the idea of neighborhood or ward outdoor/indoor assemblies where democratic deliberation could take place; incubators for local worker owned and managed cooperatives. What might the downtown Commons look like under a radically democratic and socialist municipality? What would the waterfront look like? How do we attenuate flooding Ithaca by protecting and expanding wetlands up and down the watershed while preserving its dual function as a public park? How does public housing interface with the public realm? Could the municipality establish a composting system which works with a network of local agricultural cooperatives to provide healthy nutrient rich soil, producing food at negotiated prices so as to be affordable for the community and beneficial to the farmers? The list goes on.

Indeed, some of the topics we would discuss either informally or at our educational chapter events called the "socialist night school" included the historical wonder of Red Vienna (1918-1934), the ideas of social-ecology and Murray Bookchin, and other

forms of municipal socialism that may apply to our efforts locally in Ithaca and the region. Thus these sorts of imaginative ideas were constantly circulating in my head throughout my time at the Cornell MLA program and wanted to get them down on paper in some sort of way. The thesis provided me an opportunity to do so.

I began by doing recorded interviews with some of the organizers with whom I had worked previously and asked them a series of questions about the quasi-socialist political platform of the Solidarity Slate and how that may relate to public space. Specifically, I asked them to select a site in Ithaca or locally, to describe how it is currently and to then imagine how it might be transformed under such a political platform. My intention was then to draw these visions out in a design thesis.

While deriving some interesting answers and ideas, this caused a number of issues mostly by way of how the first few drafts of the work were received. Firstly, there is no shortage of “alternative futures” in design that could describe and show quite interesting visions of what sort of world we could live in, or at least how a particular site could be transformed. This is used as a design method usually in the context of the climate crisis: which way do we choose to go? There are alternative routes that we can take and here is an idea of what that could look like instead of the doom and gloom of the worst possible scenario. I have no opposition to such methods, but I was having trouble differentiating the act of future making generally speaking and the thesis’ embeddedness in socialist politics that I believed - and still believe - is the only way that we can even begin to make that sort of world building in design possible. I was having trouble making the explicit connection to left politics beyond the sort of critical scholarship that had already existed for decades, which I felt made excellent criticisms

but did not analyze capitalist society in its totality in relation to the biosphere, space, and design. In short, critical design scholarship provided an academic analysis, but not an analysis which prompted action and a coherent political program in response. This was in part what I was trying to contribute. Out of all these “alternative futures,” that I have seen, so far none have shown a world built on the basis of socialism, as far as I know.

The second issue arose from the fact that this first thesis attempt was basically utopian in nature. This posed a problem on two fronts. One is that, historically, utopian thinking is typically not seen as helpful within the left, or even worse, it is derided as bourgeois - a plaything for middle class intellectuals. On the other hand, utopianism is typically criticized from a liberal perspective as being the gateway to an intolerant society in the manner of Karl Popper's famous critique, or as the vision of political fanatics who put ideology above all else. Even still, the focus of the thesis then shifted to the idea of the utopian tradition within design and to additionally try to carve out a space for something I was calling landscape utopianism. However, this required a lengthy contextualization and defense of utopianism from a left perspective, partly influenced by the writings of Ernst Bloch (1885-1977), while nonetheless noting the importance of material conditions in society as argued by Friedrich Engels in his book *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*.

This in turn led me to search for examples of utopian thought within landscape architecture of which I found little in its explicit sense of the term. What I did find, however, was the way in which the discipline of landscape architecture itself acted as a form utopianism - in both the positive and negative conception of the term - insofar

as they historically attempted to mediate the relations of society with the natural environment through a variety of different ways including ecological site planning, urban planning, park systems, culture, gardens, art, and so on. But critically, they acted out this mediation in classic utopian fashion where the profession had a tendency to focus on the outward manifestations brought about by the contradictions and recurring crises of capitalism instead of addressing the core of the issue: the social relations of (re)production under capitalism and the mass action needed to change those conditions. The very structure of economic and social relations themselves. Instead, many chose to focus on industrialization, technology, or rapid urban growth *per se* rather than the conditions which gave rise to those phenomena in the first place, or the social control over such phenomena. Others tended to focus on ideological reasons, dualism, the enlightenment, or what we might call scienticism rather than the alienation from and exploitation of nature *as required* under a capitalist mode of production. The analysis either fetishized technology or focused on mental conceptions and was essentially idealist. I wanted to provide a materialist analysis which is what this thesis begins to do.

Thus the thesis had spiraled into an indigestible amount because I felt the need to explain and clarify my premises in a successive order, working backwards from images and drawings, that ultimately led me to a historical analysis through a marxist lens in order to explain what landscape architecture was really all about. But through this journey of reading widely in landscape history and theory, I came to the conclusion that one could not adequately understand landscape architecture without understanding the central role of capitalist development. This analysis, in turn, would

provide the foundation of the “political program” of the discipline and mark a return to the relevant discussion in contemporary debate vis-a-vis politics and design. It would also help to underline the type of utopianism or “alternative future” making that I was trying to express - one that would contribute to the collective socialist imaginary as well as landscape architecture itself. The following thesis has turned into a small part of a much larger, arguably life long, project of uniting the socialist and left wing traditions with the discipline of landscape architecture. If I had two additional theses to write, the next one would be dedicated to utopianism and the third proposing a way out of current conditions and toward a better world. Although in a certain way incomplete, hopefully this thesis will provide at least some basis on which to move forward, particularly for other landscape designers who also belong to the left.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:

THE LIMITS OF LANDSCAPE AS A CULTURALLY CRITICAL PRACTICE

Since the 1980's, both scholars and practitioners of landscape architecture within the North American and European context have noted the crisis of identity in the discipline.¹ Beginning with figures such as Steven R. Krog, who in 1981 asked the question of whether or not landscape architecture was art (as opposed to a science), or landscape historian John Dixon Hunt, who lamented the lack of theoretical production within the discipline in a number of his writings,² landscape architectural discourse has certainly advanced since those early years of "crisis." While much of these earlier soul-searching questions revolved around questions of art versus science, generalist or specialist, or the separation between theory and practice, in other words, debates premised on dichotomies, discourse by the late 1990's and early 2000's entered a time of more nuanced discussion, working between the polar ends of any given dualistic proposal. As landscape theorist and historian Alison B. Hirsch describes it, this was a time in which there was as an attempt to, "[situate] landscape architecture as a productive and dialectical middle ground," instead of languishing in "simplistic binaries (i.e., art v. science, city v. landscape, etc.) that contributed to the field's stagnation."³

In many ways, this collective realization prompted new avenues of discovery, new interests, and more fluid, non-rigid thinking within the discipline, creating a rich

¹ See Steven R. Krog, "Is It Art," *Landscape Architecture* 71, no. 3 (1981): 373–76; Patrick A. Miller, "A Profession in Peril?," *Landscape Architecture* 87, no. 8 (1997): 66–88; H Hohmann and Joern Langhorst, "Landscape Architecture: A Terminal Case? An Apocalyptic Manifesto," *Landscape Architecture* 95 (April 1, 2005)

² See John Dixon Hunt, "10. The Picturesque Legacy to Modernist Landscape Architecture," in *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (MIT Press, 2018): "[Christopher Tunnard's] ignorance or cavalier disregard of history is part and parcel of a larger poverty of discourse; as Steven R. Krog has written, landscape architecture is 'a discipline in intellectual disarray' and with a 'deficiency of theoretical discourse.'"

³ James Corner and Alison Bick Hirsch, eds., *The Landscape Imagination: Collected Essays of James Corner, 1990-2010*, First edition. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2014), 18.

ground of ideas and practice. Ultimately, it introduced an arguably still persisting paradigm that argues for conceiving of landscape architecture as a “critically cultural practice” wherein practitioners are encouraged to see landscape design as a cultural agent that seeks to effect change.⁴ In other words, not to think of the discipline as a thing - what *is* landscape architecture: is it an art, is it a science, is it a mimicry of nature, is it functional ecology, is it site planning - but what does it *do*?

Landscape architecture as a critically cultural practice ought to be active and have agency within culture through impression, phenomenon, and meaning, as opposed to only engaging ecology or planning alone. As such, we might recall James Corner’s argument put forth in his 1991 article *Sounding Depths* that, “as the great mediator between nature and culture, landscape architecture has a profound role to play in the reconstitution of meaning and value in our relations with the Earth.”⁵ The “meaning” and “value” that Corner speaks of is fundamentally a cultural construct that ought to be engaged with in a creative and mythopoeic way, according to landscape as a culturally critical practice. It is in fact the strength of landscape architecture that it blends these aspects of culture, aesthetics, ecology, etc, into a single practice as opposed to, say a scientist who studies population ecology, usually within an even more discrete silo of expertise. Landscape architecture as a culturally critical practice also reintroduced the idea of form, phenomenon, and impression upon those who experience the site, which moved closer back to the realm of design as opposed to something closer to engineering.

⁴ See James Corner, *Recovering Landscape: Essays in Contemporary Landscape Architecture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999): 1-26.

⁵ James Corner and Alison Bick Hirsch, eds., *The Landscape Imagination: Collected Essays of James Corner, 1990-2010*, First edition. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2014): 17.

Although this idea of cultural agency sought to overcome the near exclusive fixation on ecological performance alone of the previous decades, the connection between the profession and the ambitious desire to be “stewards of the biosphere”⁶ as Ian McHarg (1920-2001) once said, nevertheless remains a core of the discipline. We have entered the 21st century under the looming crisis of climate change and the general ecological destruction that attends it, with amplified environmental and social consequences that McHarg could have only imagined back in the mid 20th century. Twenty years on from the paradigmatic revolution of cultural critical practice in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s, we still struggle to find an adequate response to climate change in a serious way from the standpoint of the profession if we are seriously striving for McHarg’s dictum. The climate crisis forces us back into the position of asking these soul searching questions that go to the core of landscape architecture. In the context of the climate crisis and ecological destruction, these sorts of questions invariably take on a political role, not only a cultural one, given that combating such problems require a vast mobilization of funds, resources, and labor - that is, a political response. As of now, landscape architecture as a culturally critical practice appears insufficient in relation to the *potential* that practitioners have to effect greater societal change. Meaning and value in our relation with the natural environment is certainly important, but is this an adequate response to such daunting tasks before us?

One premise of this thesis is that there appears to be an inflated role of the cultural in striving to achieve our goals. Put another way, there is a severe

⁶ Ian L. McHarg, *Design with Nature*, [1st ed.] (Garden City, N.Y.: Published for the American Museum of Natural History [by] the Natural History Press, 1971): 6. As quoted in Billy Fleming, “Design and the Green New Deal,” *Places Journal*, April 16, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.22269/190416>.

over-estimation in the concept of landscape agency in its effectual capacities, which produces a chasm between the profession's *aspiring* goals and its *actually existing* role in society. Much of the reason for this is political in nature, as proposed by Billy Fleming in his 2019 essay entitled, *Design and the Green New Deal*, covering what he sees as the disconnect between the ambitions of the discipline and the neoliberal conditions that restrain them from being realized. A profession whose practice is currently characterized as being, "an apolitical affair, organized around relationships with clients and projects, mainly serving the interests of an economic elite," leads him to argue that landscape architects ought to advocate and support a Green New Deal, which Fleming describes as the following: "... revitalizing the constellation of alphabet agencies devoted to the design and management of the built environment," which additionally, "...presents a unique opportunity to create alternative models of practice in landscape architecture."⁷ In short, landscape architecture must be much more than client driven if it is to be relevant in the collective struggle against the climate crisis; to not necessarily be *the* steward of the biosphere, but rather one of many stewards, albeit hopefully with a leading role.

Fleming's argument rings true historically speaking, in terms of the balance of private to public sector employment and the leverage the latter brings to the average landscape architect in achieving more for the public good as opposed to what is effectively private returns on real estate development. Historian Phoebe Cutler, for example, notes that before the New Deal in the 1930's the vast majority of employment came from mainly wealthy clients, with a corresponding predominance

⁷ Billy Fleming, "Design and the Green New Deal," *Places Journal*, April 16, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.22269/190416>.

on estate and garden design, while after federal government programs were instituted, roughly 90% of professionals were employed in the public sector, corresponding to more large scale projects with more social use such as parks, planning, housing, and more.⁸ As laid out in the argument of *Design and the Green New Deal*, there is clearly a necessity of addressing politics and policy within design if we are to ever advocate for what is essentially an ecologically informed social democratic program.

Unfortunately, landscape design practitioners are too hamstrung by our own ideology and policies, as argued by Fleming:

Too many leaders in our field occupy positions of incredible power and prestige while maintaining that they must make the best of a bad system. But we cannot be content with merely narrowing the gap between our ideals and our reality. The politics of design belong at the center of landscape architecture, and our institutions have an obligation to do more.⁹

Fleming uses the example of the Rebuild by Design competition in 2013 in which various architecture and landscape architecture firms were invited to propose new creative solutions for the fortification of the New York City shores in the wake of Hurricane Sandy. However, the competitive nature of the project was not conducive to climate and socially responsible outcomes. Many of the proposed projects that were accepted were also “stalled or curtailed” in subsequent years while most of the projects that are going through are largely centered around the financially important

⁸ Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985): 85. "Signaled by such changes, the 1930's saw the transition from private to public patronage [within landscape architecture] and a continental drift west of the innovative spirit."

⁹ Keeping with the lessons of the 1990's however, to center the political at the heart of the discipline is not to displace the importance of cultural agency. Nor are we to consider the political and cultural on either ends of some strategic spectrum. In fact, it is the two working in concert with one another, the political and cultural, to release the true potential of the latter from the former, and to engage the former with the imaginative capacities of the latter.

centers of the city instead of ensuring that nature based solutions to extreme weather events are equitably distributed across the area.

Nonetheless, climate experts acknowledge that many of the core strategies to combat climate change involve nature based solutions as a central part of that program, providing an obvious and fertile ground for landscape architecture to realize its potential for the betterment of society and the earth.¹⁰ Considering the tasks that lie before us regarding climate change, including addressing sea level rise, protecting vital waterways, urban heat island, habitat destruction, rapid biodiversity loss, aging gray infrastructure, etc., it is hard to argue against the centrality of politics in the discipline moving forward. At the same time, it is difficult to imagine what that might look like given the profession's technical capacity and professional boundaries. Again, Fleming asks us to realize that while, “we may yearn to impart systems-level change... we are working on discrete sites, with incrementalist tools, within structures that produce injustice.”

Landscape architecture itself is not thought of as a political movement, but a design profession. In a very plain sense, this is undoubtedly factual. But our present predicament of currently existing professional boundaries and political necessity begs the question: although politics clearly ought to be engaged in the profession, is landscape architecture an *inherently* political project? Furthermore, does it simply

¹⁰ Riahi, K., R. Schaeffer, J. Arango, K. Calvin, C. Guivarch, T. Hasegawa, K. Jiang, E. Kriegler, R. Matthews, G.P. Peters, A. Rao, S. Robertson, A.M. Sebbit, J. Steinberger, M. Tavoni, D.P. van Vuuren, 2022: Mitigation pathways compatible with long-term goals. In IPCC, 2022: Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, R. Slade, A. Al Khourdajie, R. van Diemen, D. McCollum, M. Pathak, S. Some, P. Vyas, R. Fradera, M. Belkacemi, A. Hasija, G. Lisboa, S. Luz, J. Malley, (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA. doi: 10.1017/9781009157926.005

require political engagement in the context of climate change where we clearly need immediate policy and legislation changes to tackle the problem? Although Fleming does argue that landscape architecture has always had a political and social role, as it stands, the sort of argument prompted by *Design and the Green New Deal* is mostly contingent in nature since the bulk of what prompts political action from the profession is described as coming from the external circumstances of the climate crisis. Roughly, it could logically be broken down as the following: in order for the profession to achieve its goals of social and ecological welfare, and if social and ecological welfare requires collective action largely through federal bodies due to the size and scope of climate change, then it follows that the discipline of landscape architecture must engage in politics, especially on the federal level. The Green New Deal is a political project that attempts to secure this welfare. The argument of *Design and the Green New Deal* thereby tangentially implies that the discipline is political insofar as external conditions require it to be, the external conditions being the climate crisis.

While the primary argument in this thesis is that landscape architecture is indeed *inherently* political, I also argue that its defining goals are incompatible with the governing logic of capitalism and capital accumulation which is premised on environmental exploitation and alienation with the natural world as much as it is premised on class exploitation. Therefore, there cannot be a healthy mediation between nature and culture if our political economy rests on the former's degradation - no amount of cultural critical practice will change that fact. But to be clear, the

original proponents of landscape as a cultural critical practice never claimed to provide the *sole* answer to such issues. At the same time, that framework does nonetheless present certain inadequacies theoretically and practically.

But if it is the case that landscape architecture is inherently political, then we must be able to answer why this is so. I will be arguing that in order to demonstrate this inherent political quality to the discipline, that it is necessary to critically reexamine its history as a fundamental baseline as well as a starting point for future studies into the topic. This is explained in the usefulness of understanding landscape architecture as a social and historic project - one that historically mediates our antagonisms with the natural world brought about by capitalist contradictions under each of its historic forms. That the fundamental differences between garden art or what we might retroactively call landscape architecture in pre-capitalist history, and landscape architecture *proper*, as a profession, is found in its reaction to the birth of the industrial revolution. It is worth noting that this way of understanding landscape architecture within the 19th century is a common argument among historians and landscape historians alike - that it existed as an amelioration to the horrors of industrialization and rapid, uncontrolled urbanization.¹¹ This argument is hardly new. However, my argument will go further in two ways. One, that there is not sufficient differentiation between industrialization and capitalism as a mode of production; both are frequently used in a way that the one naturally presupposes the other or that one

¹¹ See more recently Sonja Dümpelmann, "Introduction" in *A Cultural History of Gardens: In the Age of Empire*, vol. 5, ed. Michael Leslie and John Dixon Hunt (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016): 17-18; see similar arguments stretching back to the 1970's from social and cultural historians without design backgrounds or training such as Ross L. Miller, "The Landscaper's Utopia versus the City: A Mismatch," *The New England Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (June 1, 1976): 179-93.

cannot exist without the other.¹² So while it is relatively uncontroversial to argue that the profession of landscape architecture principally contended with industrialization in its earlier days, it is more accurate and perhaps less common to say that it was more specifically a reaction to industrialization *under the capitalist mode of production* than industrialization per se.

The second aspect of my argument is that this era of the industrial revolution, roughly the mid to the latter quarter of the 19th century, was only one manifestation of capitalist contradictions in which the profession played a very obvious and clear role, namely in terms of urban parks. Instead, landscape architecture continued and still functions in a similar, fundamental way, only under different forms of political-economic conditions. That is, the discipline historically reacts to capitalist dynamism and its outward consequences in whatever form it makes its appearance¹³ instead of engaging with the economic, social, and ecological contradictions at its core. In doing so, the discipline constantly needs to readdress the more superficial elements of its theoretical basis, creating a near disorienting situation in which it is being pushed in a number of different directions, corresponding roughly to the latest problem to be surmounted within capitalist society taken in its totality. Taking stock over the past few decades, we might include tangentially some of the ideas in new urbanism, landscape as cultural critical practice, landscape agency, and landscape urbanism, as the main currents that each address particular issues within the discipline

¹² While a capitalist mode of production would invariably lead to highly productive forms of labor such as in the factory system, due to the reinvestment of profits in higher rates of productivity, this does not follow in the reverse case. That is, industrial technology does not necessarily posit capitalist relations of production although historically they have certainly been intertwined.

¹³ E.g. mercantile capitalism, competitive capitalism, fordism, keynesianism, monopoly capitalism, and neoliberalism to name a few.

and society, many of which have nonetheless contributed positively to the field as far as discussion, ideas, and debate goes.

A third aspect of this historical argument is that there is a tendency both within the historical literature on this era of landscape architecture and the contemporaneous theoretical tracts to focus on the technological aspects of industrialization and its outward manifestations instead of the social relations of production which define the social control over such technology.¹⁴ Part of this discussion will be guided through a rereading of the framework laid out in cultural historian Leo Marx's, "Machine in the Garden" first published in 1964. Here, Marx analyzes the relationship between early 19th century American literature and the pastoral landscape, noting how these authors were coming to terms with the contradictions then burgeoning in the young United States between its status as a vast garden, the "new world", and its rapid development of industry and technology. In this rereading, I argue that historically landscape practitioners have fixated on the "machine" - technology itself - instead of the systemic qualities that dictate how that technology is used.

As the garden historian John Dixon Hunt has argued, the discipline of landscape architecture is still operating in the world defined by the "rupture of modernity" around which for him, "constituted the watershed in landscape architecture... we still exist in a world that was determined by what happened around

¹⁴ See, for example, Sylvia Crowe, *The Landscape of Power* (London: Architectural Press, 1958); Additionally, it's notable that nearly all the early landscape modernists (e.g. Eckbo, Kiley, Rose, Tunnard, Steele) took explicit issue with the old guard of the profession in the latter's insistence that the modernist school that had been growing within architecture for decades at that point was irrelevant for landscape architecture because it supposedly didn't concern itself with technological innovations in materials and construction as architecture did.

1800.”¹⁵ This rupture occurred during the turn of the 18th century into the 19th and was characterized by the phenomenon of industrialization, urbanization, the rise of capitalism, and its myriad consequences in society, including all, “social, political, aesthetic, and psychological attitudes.”¹⁶ It radically transformed the cultural landscape and our relationship with the natural world, namely in how raw nature, natural resources, and energy sources were regarded in the newly dominant mode of production. The cultural response to such a revolution, especially within landscape architectural practice and theory, was greatly varied based on time and place, but nevertheless took on general trends in its evolution. While far from being clean and chronologically pristine, one can identify reactions to capitalist development throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries as beginning from a fundamentally conservative bent, ultimately ending in a position of acceptance and embrace by the 1930’s and 1940’s when landscape modernism made its first appearance and theoretical arguments, represented by individuals like Fletcher Steele, Christopher Tunnard, Garrett Eckbo, Dan Kiley, and James Rose. Differences of opinion and practice within landscape architecture between those 150 years took on a rich gradation ranging from outright rejection, found in the Jeffersonian pastoral aesthetic/ethic, to the amelioration of unplanned industrialization and urbanization such as Olmsted's Emerald Necklace park system (1894), bourgeois social reform in the beaux-arts City Beautiful movement, or the deliberate exaltation of machine by integrating it quite starkly within conventional picturesque park qualities, the most

¹⁵ John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (MIT Press, 1992): 285.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 285.

notable example being the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont in Paris (1867). It is my argument that by looking at historical and theoretical writings of the time, as well as contemporary literature on the famous built works of the time period, we can sketch out these different reactionary attitudes over time.

But as landscape historian Elizabeth Barlow Rogers has noted, “there is often a historical lag between the articulation of philosophical ideas and the creation of forms that manifest those ideas”¹⁷ and within the context of the concurrent development of landscape architecture and capitalism during the 19th and early 20th centuries, this certainly appears to be the case. The only difference being we are mapping the historic development of a mode of production and how its dynamics in large part form our ideas about nature, society, labor, and the built environment, while not necessarily focusing exclusively on philosophical ideas per se. That link between the “rupture” and its formal “manifestation” was made by the early landscape modernists around the 1930’s and 40’s by finally making the intellectual leap in recognizing that the material conditions of industrial society had fundamentally changed our relationship with nature in cultural, ethical, and productive ways, however, this recognition was made only after 150 years of capitalism’s original development and approximately 30 to 40 years after adjacent disciplines such as architecture had made similar revelations. John Dixon Hunt also sums up the lag between those conditions of modern society and their realization or at least reflectance in design, form, and built works by noting that, “The crucial moment of modernism occurred not circa 1900 but rather one hundred years

¹⁷ Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001): 20.

earlier,¹⁸ which is to say that it was only a matter of time before the proverbial horseless carriage took on its appearance as a car. Indeed, part of the task for those early landscape modernists was to demonstrate that those conditions that had revolutionized other fields were also applicable to landscape architecture which at the time had long been taught within the academy to be more of a static and universal form of art, dominated by styles, horticulture, and tradition.¹⁹

However, while landscape modernists made this critical leap in understanding that new material conditions of society were in fact very important to how landscape architecture looked and functioned, there was still the preoccupation with the technological and industrial aspects which had restructured society insofar as it was assumed that it was these aspects themselves had done the restructuring. The fundamental difference in modernism was the *embrace and use* of such technology in the landscape,²⁰ as well as the acknowledgment of the way in which a vast social division of labor in society brought about by the industrial system necessitated new ideas about how the average individual used their leisure time, domestically and publicly, and their connection to nature.²¹ The landscape modernists were not looking backward, or viewed industrialization as an inherently negative development, something to be restrained or provide respites from in the form of picturesque scenes, and instead they looked forward to what could be made out of it. In short they had moved a largely reactionary discipline into being a progressive one.

¹⁸ John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (MIT Press, 1992), 285.

¹⁹ See Henry Vincent Hubbard and Theodora Kimball, *An Introduction to the Study of Landscape Design*, Rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1929).

²⁰ See Sylvia Crowe, *The Landscape of Power* (London: Architectural Press, 1958).

²¹ Garrett Eckbo, Dan Kiley, James Rose, "Landscape Design in the Urban Environment," in *Modern Landscape Architecture: a critical review*, ed. Marc Treib (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1993), 78-79.

The opportunity to transform the practice of landscape architecture certainly made sense given the time of the 1930's and 40's in which public sector spending and federal planning was now a norm in society. Landscape architects at the time took jobs in either design or project management, in federal land management, the Tennessee Valley Authority which brought electrification and much needed development to the southern interior of the United States, but did so in ways that balanced hard infrastructure and what we now call green infrastructure, albeit typically under a more social than specifically environmentalist character at this point in time. As a prominent example, Garrett Eckbo was hired by the Farm Security Administration in Central California immediately after graduation from Harvard in 1938, producing plans and designs for high quality worker housing in the agricultural sector, attempting to give the working class a taste of the good life. The sense of assuredness of this new society was strong;²² to turn back from this structure of economic regulation and federal planning of the time would have appeared to be attempting to turn back progress itself.

Yet for all the ambient optimism and prosperity of the postwar era as well as landscape modernism's more sophisticated theoretical basis, they still made the mistake of locating the perennial nature/culture or country/town antagonisms in technology and industry, and therefore implicitly as something inherent to human ingenuity. By extension we could add that they believed the advent of *capitalist* society was historically inevitable insofar as an industrial model of production was, objectively and technically speaking, more efficient.²³ The difference between the

²² Robert Riley, "Landscape for Living by Garrett Eckbo Review," *Harvard Design Magazine*, no. 6 (Fall 1998).

²³ Christopher Tunnard, "Modern Gardens for Modern Houses," in *Modern Landscape Architecture: a critical review*, ed. Marc Treib (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press 1993), 163.

landscape modernists and the practitioners of the previous generations was that they had a progressive view of such historic developments and that they could be harnessed for the betterment of society (as well as for the average individual). Their proposed reforms to these problems of capitalist society vis a vis their profession were adequate so long as the conditions of a strong welfare state and Keynesian economics were kept in place. Similarly to how the Keynesian state was interested in redistributive outcomes within society but not necessarily with the social relations of production itself, the basis of landscape modernism was interested in, “the technological aspects of industrialization and its outward manifestations,” and how they could be solved, “instead of the social relations of production which define the social control over such technology.” But it is precisely on these grounds that the landscape modernist design project ultimately failed in two critical respects.

One was failing to recognize that the material and economic basis of their theory behind landscape modernism required the existence of the public sector to act as scaffolding off of which these projects could be realized. While the belief that the private sector could act as a stand in for the public sector, as evident in the prolific work of suburban home gardens by Garrett Eckbo and Thomas Church which they saw as the mass democratization of the benefits of good landscape design, the retreat of the federal government starting in the 1970’s and the recession of “stagflation” also produced a crisis in landscape architecture.²⁴ The full throated attack on the working

²⁴ Peter Walker, “The Practice of Landscape Architecture in the Post-War United States,” in *Modern Landscape Architecture: a critical review*, ed. Marc Treib (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1993), 255.

class with the rise of neoliberalism further entrenched this trajectory which appeared to characterize the hope of modernism as the naïveté of yesteryear.²⁵

The second was a failure to account for the rapacious exploitation of the land and fossil fuels that gave possibility to the prosperity and economic growth within monopoly capitalism of the post-war era as well as the ultimate ecological limits of capital accumulation, the devastating consequences of which we now face. The United States' public concern over this central contradiction of environmental destruction made its mainstream appearance with the early environmentalist movements of the 1960's and 70's which had an important influence on the development of landscape architectural theory and practice of the time, notably through Ian McHarg who proposed a rationalized process of ecological planning using empirical data and mapping methods. While McHarg's technocratic ecological planning was certainly an advancement in terms of site planning and more rigorously incorporating the relevant fields of environmental science in practice, it was lacking theoretically in that it did not sufficiently address the political and economic conditions that were necessary for its realization and therefore put too much faith in the power of the single individual or team of planners who, if armed with the correct knowledge, would be able to provide a rational approach to development while still protecting the biosphere.

McHarg's famous Woodlands New Community development project outside of Houston, TX, for example, strove to be such an example of ecologically sound development on a massive scale and for a short while did clearly demonstrate its success in terms of retaining runoff, groundwater recharge, protecting the preexisting

²⁵ Martha Schwartz, "Landscape and Common Culture Since Modernism," in *Modern Landscape Architecture: a critical review*, ed. Marc Treib (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1993), 261-262.

pine forest, and sandy soils with high infiltration rates. Indeed, the Woodlands project traditionally forms much of the basis of effective site planning in action for landscape architects. However, the project itself was financially backed by developer George P. Mitchell who had nearly single handedly revolutionized shale gas extraction, making it economical for not only his own oil and gas company, but for the industry as a whole, opening up tens of thousands of wells. While Mitchell made use of a HUD's Title VII program for financial support, it was a program now fundamentally reliant on the private sector.²⁶ Furthermore, any of the environmental successes of the project early on were later reversed when Mitchell sold the 28,000 acre development to the Crescent Real Estate Equities and Morgan Stanley Real Estate Fund II in 1997, effectively converting the Woodlands into mere urban sprawl.²⁷

What this example shows is that, broadly speaking, even a rational process of ecological site planning runs up against the irrationality of the larger economic system. Insufficiently taking into account these dynamics can severely curtail the realized impact of the design, let alone the fact that the development itself was founded on the very destruction of the environment and the reinvigoration of an industry which ultimately profits off CO2 emissions. More specifically, it indicates a transition point of federal policy that makes more clear the context of contemporary practice, which is to say that federal policy was migrating from the public sector taking the lead in such projects for social ends toward private public partnerships that were increasingly in

²⁶ "US Housing Crisis: What Can Ben Carson Learn from Radical 1960s 'new Town' Plan?," *The Guardian*, January 10, 2017, sec. Cities, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/jan/10/ben-carson-trump-solve-us-housing-crisis-should-look-new-towns-late-60s>.

²⁷ Bo Yang, Ming-Han Li, and Chang-Shan Huang, "Ian McHarg's Ecological Planning in The Woodlands, Texas: Lessons Learned after Four Decades," *Landscape Research* 40, no. 7 (October 3, 2015): 773–94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01426397.2014.987223>: 781.

favor of profitability. Tellingly, it was the explicit policy of HUD at the time to, “rely to the maximum extent on private enterprise.”²⁸ Additionally, the HUD funds used in this project were some of the last used for large scale projects such as the Woodlands.

A second weakness of the McHargian method in terms of landscape architectural theory was McHarg’s insistence on the identification of our alienation with the natural world to be found in “western culture” which never seems to be adequately historically interrogated or substantiated. Although clearly provocatively rhetorical, McHarg even claims in a 1971 lecture given in Washington DC that such antagonisms have nothing to do with politics, race, or class, but instead exist because of a, “cultural inferiority complex.”²⁹ As I will argue in more detail later on, in this evolution from the anthropocentric landscape design³⁰ of the modernists toward more ecocentric design of McHarg, the antagonisms to be mediated by the landscape architect have at this point been merely supplanted by explanations of psychology in lieu of technology and industrialization as it was in the earlier generation. Both however, function the same way and both are problematic in that they fail to take into account the internal logic of capitalism as a system, the historic dynamics of class warfare, and the role of capital accumulation in favor of transhistorical abstractions such as the inevitability of technological progress or the collective psychology of the west.

²⁸ “US Housing Crisis: What Can Ben Carson Learn from Radical 1960s ‘new Town’ Plan?,” *The Guardian*, January 10, 2017, sec. Cities, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/jan/10/ben-carson-trump-solve-us-housing-crisis-should-look-new-towns-late-60s>.

²⁹ Ian L. McHarg, “Man: Planetary Disease. The 1971 B. Y. Morrison Memorial Lecture,” November 1971, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED061052>.

³⁰ See Eckbo’s Landscapes for Living. This concept was a key aspect in the functionalism of modern garden design.

Ultimately, it is my intention to argue against such assumptions that underlie the discipline and instead to argue for historical specificity insofar as the history of landscape architecture is fundamentally defined by its reaction to and its dialogical evolution with the historical development of capitalism. While landscape practitioners, authors, theorists, etc, have tended to opt either for a variety of different abstract explanations for our less than healthy relationship with the natural world and the broader landscape, or even against binary categorization itself as being a false construction,³¹ my hope is that a critical review of landscape architecture history through a materialist lens will not only help to identify the source of those antagonisms, but also to help clarify the political footing inherent to the discipline. If landscape architecture as a profession is to realize its goals of social and ecological welfare through the medium of design and planning, if it is to reach its greater potential, then we must look at what constrains us from successfully actualizing that project.

³¹ While the age-old binary of culture v. nature is of course a false construction and counters the contemporary scientific understanding of ecology, the author nonetheless does not think erasing such binaries is helpful in discourse, only because under the current mode of production there clearly is a violent antagonism between culture and nature. However, it is not simply humans writ-large, but it is more specifically capital. In short, capitalism reifies the culture nature divide even if it is not objectively true and further that it is irresponsible to dispense of these sorts of binaries when they are materially being played out in the real world. It is to academically skirt around the issue of the obscene violence and destruction of the biosphere.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

The thesis sets out to situate landscape architecture as a historic project and as such, I conducted a critical review of the seminal texts in landscape architectural history and theory in order to get a pulse on the *longue durée* of the discipline's history, with some of the history preceding the profession proper, largely discussing garden art in pre-capitalist European history. However, the argument more or less starts with professions concomitant rise with capitalist industrialization at the beginning of the 19th century in England and therefore, I try to avoid making claims before then. I use contemporary literature on landscape and economic history as secondary sources and for general information, however, there is also a degree of historiography that enters into the argument made in part one to the extent that one of the questions I attempt to answer is, "what are the differences found in how historic actors including practitioners and theorists saw themselves and understood their discipline of landscape architecture as opposed to what was actually going on considering the greater historical and material conditions at play?" Thus, the older histories on landscape architecture, which generally are not of academic quality, serve more so as primary sources, as indicative of how practitioners understood what the core values of the discipline were through time. Similarly, since much of the older texts oscillate between history and theory, my argument is as much a historiographical argument as it is an intellectual history of landscape architecture, however, one that is focusing on the question of the development of the discipline in relation to the development of capitalism, mostly in the United States, but to some extent in the European context as well, mainly the United Kingdom and Germany during the course of the 19th and 20th centuries.

I have chosen the *longue durée* method of historical analysis while at the same time recognizing its many shortcomings particularly regarding its neglect of specificities in favor of long term structural changes. However, the intention of the thesis is not necessarily to create journal-ready paper focused on a limited range of archival primary sources or to keep absolute fidelity to the standard method of the social sciences, but to offer a rough basis of a new way of thinking about landscape architecture through a historical materialist lens which allows us to draw out its explicit political positioning that is left undeveloped by other authors who argue for the centering of the political in landscape design. Since I seek to draw out basic trends in the history of landscape architecture through the development of capitalism, many of the topics discussed could easily be isolated and interrogated more fully. As of now, they mainly stand to bring into relief those broad evolutionary changes in the discipline that I want to bring our attention to.

There are some premises and claims made that are integral to my argument but exist outside the realm of landscape architecture and landscape history that I borrow from other fields. Most notably is the contention that the internal logic that governs capitalism and capital accumulation is inherently at ends with an ecologically sustainable future.³² That is, that the success of capitalism rests on the rapacious exploitation of our natural environment, on “cheap nature”,³³ as much as it does on

³² See Jason W. Moore, ed., *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016); Nancy Fraser, *Cannibal Capitalism: How Our System Is Devouring Democracy, Care, and the Planet - and What We Can Do about It* (New York: Verso, 2022); John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark, *The Robbery of Nature: Capitalism and the Ecological Rift* (NYU Press, 2020). Most of John Bellamy Foster’s work examines this question with scrutiny and has informed most of the theoretical background regarding ecological health and capitalism.

³³ See Jason Moore, “The End of Cheap Nature or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying about ‘the’ Environment and Love the Crisis of Capitalism,” in *Structures of the World Political Economy and the Future of Global Conflict and Cooperation*, 2014.

class exploitation. This is an argument that has been made in many other fields including political-economy, geography, political philosophy, contemporary marxist studies, and left wing authors and as such does not need to be rehashed in full in this thesis. It is not necessarily my concern to remake this argument, especially while other authors have worked on this task in far greater capacity and detail than the current author could describe in such a limited amount of space. Nonetheless, the conclusion is an important premise in the overall argument. A list of references and direct citations on this topic will be listed in order to substantiate this critical link in this thesis' argument.

It should be added that this same dynamic applies to some other issues including debates surrounding a contemporary, heterodox historical materialist method as opposed to the older, orthodox, "vulgar" variant which usually is the assumed version of historical materialism *prima facie*. I will lay out some of this theoretical background below to help orient the reader, but for further reading and more detailed argument, I will cite external references as much as is needed.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework used in this thesis' historical and theoretical analysis is generally Marxist in that I use a historical materialist method to help us understand the development of landscape architecture in tandem with the development of capitalism. However, since there is a tendency to view historical materialism as an economically deterministic model, I want to take the time to dispel some of those misunderstandings and to introduce other more fluid interpretations of historical materialism that informs this thesis' theoretical framework, mainly based on the work of Marxist historian Ellen Meiksins Wood and sociologist John Bellamy Foster. While the differences between the many different interpretations of the Marxist tradition could be a thesis in its own right, there are a number of main issues that are relevant for our purposes that I want to highlight briefly.

Traditionally speaking, the more conventional version of historical materialism understands the capitalist mode of production and its constant revolutionizing of technology as a necessarily progressive force in history. It helps to "train" the worker to work collectively within a complex industrial economy, namely how to work with others in the factory (i.e. in socialized production; a form of cooperation). As the technological factors and social relations of production develop together, they eventually create the conditions wherein the overarching forces of production are unable to be adequately managed by the capitalist class due to a number of internal contradictions (e.g. socialized production but with private ownership at its helm) and therefore lay the groundwork for a society organized along communist lines. Ultimately, the point that is of concern to us here is that orthodox historical materialism argues that capitalist development of the forces of production must occur

before any sort of emancipation can take place, realistically speaking and from a practical point of view. What this view tends to suggest is that there are so called “stages” to history in which one must by necessity follow the other. Furthermore, the more crude version of this view holds that each epoch, defined by its own particular mode of production, will invariably come up against its own internal contradictions, thereby setting the conditions for the next stage of political-economy (i.e. the now antiquated notions of Tribal, Ancient, Feudal, etc).³⁴ However, what is missing in this story is a number of factors:

(1) Historical materialism as a method:

One of the missing factors is that Marxism and its theory of history is a living, breathing tradition that varies based on time, place, and person.³⁵

³⁴ See the German Ideology. Although it should be understood that these sorts of texts were largely polemical in nature, in debate with other German socialists, idealists, and liberals of the day. Thus, Marx had little room to expound the ideas of historical materialism in full and instead tended to rely on shorthand, or general abstractions, which is in part where much of the confusion comes from. As even Engels once admitted, “[T]here is only one other point lacking, which, however, Marx and I always failed to stress enough in our writings and in regard to which we are all equally guilty. That is to say, we all laid, and were bound to lay, the main emphasis, in the first place, on the derivation of political, juridical and other ideological notions, and of actions arising through the medium of these notions, from basic economic facts. But in so doing we neglected the formal side—the ways and means by which these notions, etc., come about—for the sake of the content. This has given our adversaries a welcome opportunity for misunderstandings...”

³⁵ See for example, Karl Marx, *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx: (Studies of Morgan, Phear, Maine, Lubbock)*, ed. Lawrence. Krader, 2d ed. (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974). Late in his life, Marx was studying pre-capitalist history and ethnography in more detail which led him to certain ideas regarding different forms of emancipatory social organization found in different cultures, geographies, and times. Although unpublished until 1974, the Ethnological Notebooks marks a mature phase of Marx’s thinking in that it incorporated more fluidity as opposed to more rigid interpretations of historical materialism as presented by Engels. Among others, Marx analyzes agrarian Russian peasant communes, the Haudenosaunee, and ancient German villages and their revolutionary implications. Thus we can see even in the life of Marx himself that his conceptions and understanding of history was constantly changing although the basic materialist base remained. Another watershed moment frequently cited by scholars is the 1871 Paris Commune in which Marx had to rethink his initial understanding of revolutionary potential. Broadly speaking, this was largely because he had thought at the time that France was not “developed” far enough along in terms of industrialization, and hence a working class revolution could not possibly arise in France as the “conditions” were not correct.

Although there are shared, core concepts to that tradition, Marxism is not a monolith nor is it simply reducible to a series of propositional arguments principally because it is dialectical in nature; that it incorporates both the study of highly specific elements (e.g. surplus-value) but under the context of the totality of a system, meaning that each particular element is always to be considered as in conversation with a multitude of other elements that are always in motion (e.g. how we arrive at the concept of *relative* surplus value). As such, there are a number of different interpretations of historical materialism. It just so happens the most conventional and well known view is generally more rigid and deterministic in character, as represented most famously by Engels, and is in part where the “stagist” argument derives from. We might add that there has been a long standing debate regarding historical materialism by Marxist historians through the second half of the 20th century and which continues today.³⁶ Thus the “stagist” view is hardly the universally accepted face of either Marxism or historical materialism.

For our purposes, we are to understand historical materialism not as a preconceived argument or conclusion to be substantiated by the empirical facts of history but rather a *method* of analyzing those empirical facts. As the German journalist and socialist Franz Mehring once wrote on the topic, “Historical materialism is no closed system crowned by an ultimate truth; it is the scientific method for the investigation of processes of human

³⁶ Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999): 34.

development.”³⁷ If the purely “scientific methods” of the earlier historical materialism does not simply consist of teleological stages of history or mechanical economic determinism, what is its basis on which we ought to proceed or at the very least understand?

Historical materialism’s point of departure is the basic idea that humans are social animals and have always been found in relation to one another and that secondly, the very idea of social history is premised on securing the material conditions for sustenance and ultimately reproduction, or what Marx calls says in the German Ideology, “the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself.”³⁸ This entails working with others in the refashioning of nature to meet those ends in the form of social and political organization, in whatever character it may take, that is, a certain type of mode of production.³⁹ “The first fact to be established is the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature.”⁴⁰ Insofar as production is not only the means of subsistence, but also a form of expression, social consciousness, conceptions, and ideas , “...are conditioned by a definite [or, particular] development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these.”⁴¹ It is notable that this

³⁷ “Franz Mehring: On Historical Materialism (Part 2),” accessed May 10, 2023, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/mehring/1893/histmat/02.htm>.

³⁸ Karl Marx, *The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to The Critique of Political Economy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998): 47.

³⁹ Conventional Marxism places the forces of production as the ultimate determinant of this mode, based on the technology that a social body has available at the time.

⁴⁰ Karl Marx, *The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to The Critique of Political Economy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998): 37.

⁴¹ Ibid, 42.

argument does not suppose that ideas are *determined* by the so called “economic base”, as if historic actors are merely caught in the larger structure of a mechanical procession of history, but rather that it sets certain *conditions* upon the development of social consciousness, much in the way that while historic actors might have subjectivity, their basic reality sets conditions on what they can and cannot do.

Ultimately, what is important is the dialectical relationship that social consciousness, conceptions, and ideas have with the “material activity and the material intercourse of [humanity]” and whether or not that relationship involves self-consciousness on the part of the subject doing the mental production. To the extent that garden art or examples of built works within landscape architecture are considered cultural artifacts that can be read as formal and artistic modes of “ideological expression”, they must also be read in relation to the mode of production at the time. Thus, just as much as metaphysical conceptions are tethered to the material, gardens and landscape architecture are not independent categories that are autonomous from historical development or objective material conditions.

(2) Historical specificity and the “laws” of motion of capital:

Similarly, it is often held that historical materialism applies a schema of final causes over the course of human history both past and present mainly through the supposed inevitability of both capitalism and ultimately socialism. Indeed, this view has cropped up in debates among marxist historians who held

that, for example, mercantile capitalism and the discovery of the new world, the gradual dissolution of feudal relations, and the rise of the bourgeoisie, invariably meant that the impulse to “trade, truck and barter”, as the historian Ellen Meiksins Wood says, would finally have the breathing room to come to dominate the global economy. As if the impulse toward capitalism is innate, and that it only needs to be released from its fetters. This implicitly teleological view of history is subsequently often conflated with Marx’s insistence that there are laws of capitalism as he outlined in the three volumes of Capital and the Grundrisse. However, there is an important demarcation between the two; the laws of motion of capital, its systemic logic, and historical materialism.

The economic “laws” of capital are better understood as the laws of motion in the course of capital accumulation taken in its totality, i.e. the capitalist system. This includes things like reinvestment, expanded reproduction, the organic composition of capital, the exchange between different departments of capital, the rate of surplus value, and so on. While a critique of political economy necessitates that we understand economics in its relation to history as well, there are certain heuristics in the way in which capital moves but not laws regards outcomes per se as liberal economists do regarding price mechanisms or locating efficiencies and inefficiencies. Again, this is the importance of dialectics within the Marxist tradition in that everything is always in flux. However, the laws of motion of capital and its more structural elements cannot be applied as soon as we venture outside the historic development of capitalism, into different histories and different modes

of production which must be analyzed on their own terms. Therefore, the deterministic elements which make historical materialism when considering the capitalist mode of production are more or less strong depending on the extent to which the law of value⁴² has colonized life, literally or figuratively, in a certain time and place. Still, it is important to recognize that this tendency is never absolute.

Here, Ellen Meiksins Wood makes a critical point in her repositioning of the historical materialist method in that she locates it as having historical specificity. That is, that historical material does not assume the inevitability of capitalism in world history (or at least should not assume this, considering that other Marxists have made this mistake). She argues that its laws are not universal historical laws but particular to its own time and place. In some ways, this view of Wood was a recovery of past ways of understanding historical materialism. To quote Wood:

But the kernel of historical materialism was an insistence on the historicity and specificity of capitalism, and a denial that its laws were the universal laws of history. The critique of political economy was intended to discover why and how capitalism's specific laws of motion operated as laws at all - for example, to find the key to technological determination and the laws of the market as specific imperatives of capitalism instead of taking

⁴² The Law of Value in marxist terms simply means the inherent regulation of commodity exchange according to its market value but specifically under a privatized mode of production. In more contemporary liberal economic terms, it means that most or everything in society is governed by the price mechanism and distribution of the market. A commonplace exception to this is many state laws prohibiting price gouging during emergencies such as a regional black out in which people need to buy gasoline for home generators. As such, the law of value, and the extent to which it governs life of society is a political question. The deregulation of the neoliberal era would be an example wherein the law of value has been allowed to expand and increasingly colonize every aspect of life.

them for granted as inherent in human nature or in the laws of universal history.

However, once the laws of motion of capital do seed in the ideal and historically unlikely preconditions of international trade, exploration, colonization, the liberalizing of land leases, the enclosures, primitive accumulation, creating a competitive agrarian market which induced the first impulses of the coercive laws of competition and the constant reinvestment of profits into increasing productivity - all of which find themselves in Southern England during the 16th to 17th centuries - they increasingly tend to operate in a law like or even deterministic manner insofar as more and more aspects of everyday life have to submit to the necessity of capital accumulation. Often helped along by the political power of the state, the laws of capital accumulation then take hold and apply their internal logic onto wherever its mode of production dominates. In this way we can say that to the extent that the capitalist mode of production colonizes an area or market, there is a corollary increase in the rule of its internal logic. Hence the increasing governance of society and the economy by what feels like abstractions - the logic of capital. But again, this cannot be applied outside of this specific context, which is very important to note historically speaking, lest we become economic and technological determinists. As such, the relative autonomy that a cultural artifact such as the garden could enjoy in pre-capitalist times (for example the renaissance) slowly erodes as the logic of capital petrifies society and compels it “into its image”. Increasingly it becomes a reaction or response

to those conditions and contradictions brought about by capitalism, increasingly the autonomy and value of designed landscapes becomes more difficult to accomplish, more difficult to imagine different configurations of space, social arrangements, or a healthier relation to our natural environment.

This applies to landscape architecture because usually its history begins from a universal category of the broad activities usually associated with the discipline; leveling, grading, planting, etc. all done in an artistic way, but often considered more or less independent of the mode of production at the time.⁴³ Again, while this is likely more forgivable and less relevant for garden art or what we might retroactively call landscape architecture in pre-capitalist history, the link between ideology, conceptions, and ideals, of which are fundamentally a form expression in an artistic profession such as landscape architecture, and its material conditions vis a vis the capitalist mode of production is a critical and necessary link to make if we are to really understand the history and theory of the discipline.

(3) Historical materialism in relation to nature:

A frequent critique made of Marxist thought is the supposed promethean sensibilities that Marx promoted, most frequently cited in the *Manifesto*, where the constant revolutionizing of technological factors is,

⁴³ It is of course broadly understood that these sorts of activities which constitute landscape architecture can and do *reflect or mirror* economic arrangements of the time, but this is different from the question of independence and dependence. I am arguing that the discipline is invariably *dependent*.

again, presented as a progressive force.⁴⁴ Coupling this charge with historical examples from “actually existing socialist” regimes, this critique of Marxist thought being a hopelessly “enlightenment” project bent on the control and domination of nature proved to be quite popular. However, since the 2000’s in particular there has been a resurgence of contemporary Marxist studies in which less superficial readings of the Marxist tradition are given, instead arguing that one of great preoccupations of Marx was noting the critical preconditions of a capitalist society involving the separation of the peasantry from the land and alienation from nature.⁴⁵ In fact, they argue that the basis of Marxist critique of capitalist political economy is in destroying people’s relationship with the land, the commodifying of natural resources, and their continued exploitation. It is notable that landscape architects have hypothesized many reasons for our less than healthy relationship with the natural environment, yet the idea of this antagonism being located within such vagueries as western thought, the enlightenment, or dualistic thinking, scientific revolution, and so on, still remains dominatingly in currency.⁴⁶ While many landscape architects are sure to note the implications of globalization,

⁴⁴ John Bellamy Foster, *Marx’s Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000): 134.

⁴⁵ John Bellamy Foster, “Introduction: Ecology,” in *Marx’s Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000): 9-11.

⁴⁶ See Ian L. McHarg, “Man: Planetary Disease. The 1971 B. Y. Morrison Memorial Lecture,” November 1971, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED061052>: 5. “The views of man and nature which permeate the entire Western culture are the reason... Survival of man is contingent upon categorical rejection of this cultural inferiority complex that is the Western view, and its replacement with the ecological view man in nature.”; Barry W Starke, *Landscape Architecture: A Manual of Environmental Planning and Design*, Fifth edition. (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2013) is replete with references to either western “mindsets” or “complexes” or an uncritical acceptance of the proverbial original sin of humanity in regards to the destruction of the environment; Matt Dallos, “The Ecology of Unpredictability,” *Places Journal*, June 3, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.22269/210603>: “The interrelation of species has not changed, but Western views about those relations have.”

deindustrialization, or the need to center social justice in design,⁴⁷ there is a surprising lack of individuals arguing for an answer based on the historical development of the capitalist mode of production vis-a-vis our relationship with the natural world, and instead fall back on explanations focused on ideology, culture, or ethos - that is, notions born principally of the mind. In these hypotheses, capitalism may play a peripheral yet important role, but has not been argued to be central to our relationship with nature which the practice of landscape architecture routinely seeks to address.

Instead, there is in fact an important theoretical overlap between the conception of nature under historical materialism and the ecology informed views held by most within the landscape architectural discipline. The most critical overlap is the way in which our material conditions are both given by the raw material of the natural world as well as our social capacity to reshape that same natural world. That is, that the demarcation between untouched “wilderness” and culture is in fact less strict than usually thought - we create and condition nature just as much as nature creates and conditions us as social beings which ends up becoming what Marx is referring to when he talks about those material conditions that are so important to understanding history as well as the capitalist mode of production. John Bellamy Foster, a Marxist sociologist who specializes in ecology, writes about this dialectical character that humans share with their natural environment. He argues that in order to

⁴⁷ See JoLA’s 2019 issue on politics and Landscape Design: Greet De Block et al., “For Whom? Exploring Landscape Design as a Political Project,” *Journal of Landscape Architecture* 14, no. 3 (September 2, 2019): 4–7, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18626033.2019.1705568>.

understand historical materialism, we have to understand both the philosophical context on which Marx proceeded from intellectually speaking, and the importance that ecology plays in its formation.

Marx graduated in philosophy and law from the University of Berlin with a dissertation on the materialism of the ancient philosopher Epicurus who was one of the more radical proponents of materialism mainly by the fact that he drew out its implications in the rejection of the gods and toward the existential philosophy of hedonism.⁴⁸ At the same time, the intellectual milieu at the time in Germany was very much influenced by Hegel who formulated a very popular framework of dialectical idealism. Although originally considering himself an adherent of Hegel, who were called the young hegelians, Marx eventually came to reject the metaphysical and idealist conceptions deriving from Hegel's thought but retained the dialectical method. Interested and influenced in both dialectics and materialism, Marx began to combine both aspects which came to bear a novel, non-static form of materialism that was also deeply ecological.

The most conventional schools of thought within materialism, especially the French versions of materialism in the 18th century, could be described as an attempt to transcend the dualisms found in metaphysical philosophies in which the material, objective world was counterposed to the immaterial, subjective world; what Plato would call the realm of forms or what Kant would call noumena which is to be ascertained through the category of

⁴⁸ John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000): 36.

pure reason. Instead, materialism broadly proposed that this demarcation was faulty in its outset and in actuality all things consisted of material and their interaction, the by-product of which included the thoughts, ideas, and conceptions of the human mind (i.e consciousness). Taking cues from the burgeoning philosophy of science, the French materialism of the 18th century, most famously under the views of Baron d'Holbach (1723-1789), constituted a deterministic and mechanical form of materialism in which everything had a cause and effect.⁴⁹

A similar attempt was made by the German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) who sought to invert the Hegelian dialectic which was based on the interchange and conflict of ideas throughout history, "in which essence (mind) was separated from existence [nature], and in which the subsumption of all of existence under the development of mind was the philosophical end-result." Hegelian philosophy conceived of the objective natural world as an inactive and passive, a stage on which the subjective will (the spirit) exerts itself toward the ultimate historical realization of reason and human freedom. Through his general critique of religion, Feuerbach became increasingly influenced by the philosophy of science and materialist schools of thought, making the argument that in Hegel's schema, it was actually the other way around; that humans may believe their ideas to be derived from reason,

⁴⁹ While this form of materialism generally had atheistic implications, some aspects of mechanical materialism were taken up by later philosophers and theologians and gave birth to the rational creator or clockmaker argument, who sets the great machine of life in motion, but forever after abides by laws of cause and effect.

pure logic, mathematics, or theology, that were then reified into existence,⁵⁰ but it was actually their material, natural world and their view of themselves within that context that humans project into the form of religion. Feuerbach named this as “speculative philosophy”. His critique basically consisted of Hegel’s thought being a secular version of theological schemas. Feuerbach’s critique is sometimes known as anthropological materialism in that all forms of religion and metaphysical thinking are unwittingly the projections of humanity itself, only to be conceived of essentially instead of naturally (e.g. Hegel’s *world spirit*).

While Feuerbach’s critique greatly influenced Marx, he found it lacking in one minor and then one central respect. Firstly, that the former’s conception of materialism was still largely static in nature and did not adequately take into account its indeterminacy, considering evolution and natural selection as well as what we would now recognize as ecological flux. This was recognized both in Marx’s own interpretation of Epicurean materialism which incorporated chance in what was basically supposed to be the random swerving of atoms, laying the foundation for crude theories of evolution, but was also beginning to be recognized in the most up to date scientific research at the time, mainly in geology and biological sciences, which Marx was also deeply engrossed.⁵¹ The second and more central contention Marx had with Feuerbach’s materialism

⁵⁰ Such as the French Revolution which Hegel had supported (albeit the more moderate Girondist faction who stood to the right of the more radical Montagnards). For Hegel, the initial phase of the French Revolution also represented a revolution in history in which conceptions derived from reason were applied to society, to objective existence.

⁵¹ John Bellamy Foster, *Marx’s Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000): 122.

was too deeply set in a one sided view of the relationship between humans and their natural environment, in that the latter merely was impressed upon the former, but seemed to leave out the agency of people and their practice of transforming their environment in return. In short, Feuerbach's materialism, while releasing itself from "speculative philosophy" was nonetheless merely "contemplative" in nature in that it had no practical application both in terms of not considering the agency of humans in their *practical* reconfiguration of the environment for their own survival, but also in the political application toward the expansion of human freedom. This is where we get the famous aphorism of Marx in his *Theses on Feuerbach* in which he writes, "Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."⁵²

Thus we understand more clearly the dialectical thinking found in historical materialism which has less to do with the dialectics of epochal "modes of production" if we are to follow its crude "stagist" form,⁵³ than it does with the dialectical relationship and interchange of humans with their natural environment, whose activity constitutes history itself. Nature forms humanity as much as humanity forms nature. Similarly, the historical aspect found in historical materialism has less to do with it being a supposed "grand historical theory" in which a philosophical schema is overlaid on human history with all its intricacies, (ironically a very non materialist form of

⁵² Karl Marx, *The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to The Critique of Political Economy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998): 574.

⁵³ By way of the thesis, antithesis, synthesis model, used often in trying to explain Marxist historical dialectics.

thinking) as it is often assumed. Rather, is it that the bare fact of the reproduction of life and the struggle for existence of humanity fundamentally means the usage of tools and social cooperation in order to secure the continuation of life. This simplistic fact, which as Marx says in the German Ideology, is clearly verifiable empirically speaking by the simple reason that people everyday sleep, put on clothes, inhabit shelter, eat food and repeat this process. This fact presupposes social cooperation and the use of tools, hence the existence of society, and hence the existence of history itself. Thus the added appendage of history in historical materialism is to distinguish itself from Feuerbach's materialism in that it incorporates the aspect of the existence of human society, human history and its entanglement with the natural world which cannot be undone; they are inextricably linked. As such, the demarcation between culture and nature is in fact a faulty one.

At the same time, humans clearly have desires and needs that are only satisfied by things outside of themselves. As Marx explains, "...as a natural, corporeal, sensuous, objective being he is a *suffering*, conditioned and limited being, like animals and plants. That is to say, the objects of his drives exist outside him as *objects* independent of him."⁵⁴ There still exists the fundamental fact that external nature must still be used and consumed by humans, aided by their association with one another, whether voluntary or coerced. Humans are natural beings with naturally endowed powers (i.e. the intellect), and in a sense the distinction between culture and nature is a false one. On the other hand,

⁵⁴ John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000): 76.

when one picks fruit from a bush or hunts venison, one is clearly not eating themselves, but consuming things external to their body. Therefore, we cannot simply be content with theoretical or sentimental notions of the unity with nature, but to recognize that there is also a certain degree of consumption going on, however, the point is to keep such usage of natural resources under their ecological limits, whether those productive limits are extended by human agency (as much of the world is today) or otherwise.

If there is a contradiction between these two ends of the health and regeneration of the biosphere and the exploitation of its resources, we must look to the mode of production as to why this is so. However, in proclaiming the end to the nature v. culture binary and moving on from what are now considered passé academic debates, we are in danger of elliding over those contradictions and antagonisms which are central to the survival of most of the world's species and humanity itself.⁵⁵ Yes, it is true that the nature/culture divide is false, but at the same time, that divide has now been reified by the imperative of profit and capital accumulation. Both can be true at the same time, which is the core of dialectical thinking. This is additionally one of the main reasons why I choose not to dissolve such binaries in my historical analysis of theory within landscape architecture, in part because up until

⁵⁵ See John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (MIT Press, 1992): 299, where he criticizes the ecological tradition within landscape architecture, "One of the serious disabilities of the ecological tradition... is that it failed to acknowledge a fallacy it inherited from 1800: the fallacy consists in seeing only a conflict between art and nature, between which we must supposedly choose." Besides the fact that Ian McHarg, arguably the face of the ecological tradition within landscape architecture, explicitly argues against having to choose, there is an additional problem with this stance in that it is purely idealistic. It is true that the binary is false, as we have established. This does not however, preclude the fact that our political-economy often demands it and nonetheless makes it a reality.

relatively recently that binary has been the broadly accepted framework of understanding our relationship to nature and hence I cannot not talk about it when discussing various landscape architects of the past, and secondly because I still believe it is still a practical category to use, so long as we do not take it literally.

Ultimately, I hope to successfully argue the following: (1) That landscape architecture is a historically specific phenomenon, fundamentally defined by its historic relationship to the historic development of the capitalist mode of production; (2) that it is therefore different from akin categories of the past that are very similar insofar as the activities that reconstruct nature in artistic, creative, and even functional ways apply to both, including cultural landscapes, designed landscapes, garden art, and the English landscape garden; (3) that because landscape architecture is fundamentally conditioned by capitalism, landscape architecture as such is inherently political; (4) that analyzing the broad evolution of landscape architectural history and theory from the “rupture of modernity,” circa 1800 onward, through a historical materialist lens, allows us to have a better grasp on the specific political footing that is argued to be at the core of the discipline. Lastly, as a conclusive reflection, that landscape architecture must address and overcome the central contradictions of the capitalist mode of production if it is to ever realize its goals of social and ecological welfare vis a vis the mediation of our relationship with our natural environment in poetic, phenomenological, eidetic, social, and functional ways.

CHAPTER 3

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AS A HISTORIC PROJECT AND PRE-CAPITALIST GARDEN ART

One of the main preoccupations of conceiving landscape architecture as a historic project is to propose that the very concept of landscape architecture is not so much defined by the sorts of activities usually associated with its practice such as planting, regrading, establishing infrastructure for horticultural health, diverting and guiding hydrological flows etc., as much as it is the specific historic conditions under which those activities are undertaken. That is, landscape architecture is not a transhistorical category in which these activities in different places at different points in time were undertaken by people almost as a matter of immanent impulse toward cultural and ideological expression of our “attitudes toward the cosmos, nature, and humanity” as landscape historian Elizabeth Barlow Rogers has written.⁵⁶ It is not the case that the essence of landscape architecture existed throughout history only to be named and cohered into a professional body in the early 19th century, but that landscape architecture was a response to a specific set of new historical and social conditions. To a certain extent, this claim seems obvious and largely a matter of terminology. A history of landscape *architecture* implies its emergence around the beginning of the 19th century in which practitioners struggled to carve out a professional space for themselves that spoke of higher social standing and a higher quality of art as opposed to a lower form of craft; in part to elevate garden art and later the landscape garden onto a comparable plane of architecture, painting, poetry, and the like, as recent scholarship has shown us.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Rogers, Elizabeth Barlow. *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001: 20. See also Hunt, John Dixon. *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture*. MIT Press, 1992: 9.

⁵⁷ See Disponzio, Joseph. “Landscape Architect/Ur: a Brief Account of Origins.” *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 34, no. 3 (July 3, 2014): 192–200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14601176.2014.893796>; and Hunt, John Dixon. “Early Landscape Architects

Although the aspect of professionalization is relevant to this distinction between landscape architecture and garden art, the assertion of understanding landscape architecture as a historic project does not necessarily rest on this case; nor does it rest on normative descriptions that differentiate the two such as scope and size of work, its utility or otherwise (that gardens are smaller in scale and predominantly focus on horticultural and phenomenological qualities as opposed to, for example a reconstructed modern waterfront protected by oyster reef breakwaters).

Since many of these different terms, namely garden art as opposed to landscape design as opposed to landscape architecture, are used frequently in more comprehensive histories of landscape architecture such as textbooks or theoretical tracts,⁵⁸ we might begin with laying out the content of each term. Depending on the author, these terms are sometimes differentiated in their general use but it is at the same time uncommon for those terms to be defined in clear contradistinction with one another. In most cases however, all are understood as being under the same general umbrella, typically defined on the basis of the qualities of human activities in which we shape and reshape our natural environment in artistic ways that express our ideas about the world and cosmos; fundamentally a form of *ideological* expression. While we would certainly not label the workers designing, planning, and executing the massive earthworks and plazas at Cahokia (1050–1350 CE) in modern day Missouri as

Who Weren't 'Landscape Architects.'" *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 34, no. 3 (July 3, 2014): 254–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14601176.2014.893139>.

⁵⁸ This is notably less the case in historic literature in the form of journal articles or dedicated to specific topics within book anthologies. See Leslie, Michael. *A Cultural History of Gardens*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Vols. 1-6. See also Treib, Marc., ed. *The Architecture of Landscape, 1940-1960*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

landscape architects, we might say that they are doing something very close to what we now call landscape architecture, as this logical thread implies.⁵⁹

For example, Christophe Giroton's *The course of landscape architecture: a history of our designs on the natural world, from prehistory to the present* published in 2016, situates the history of landscape architecture within the more general realm of designed landscapes as does Elizabeth Barlow Rogers' *Landscape Design*, published in 2001 but which is still very influential today. To an extent, describing the history of landscape architecture side by side with the broader category of cultural landscapes is logical and has its value. Ultimately, there is a reason that comprehensive histories of landscape architecture and historically oriented university courses in landscape architecture programs include both garden art and designed landscapes as part and parcel of the overall history of landscape architecture. This reason is more or less based on the common ground that they share rather than focusing on what sets them apart. That small ground that differentiates them, however, is nonetheless critically important, just as much as their overlap is. To argue for landscape architecture as a historic project proposes that small yet critical ground of differentiation, in what some historians call the "rupture of modernity" such as art historian Yve-Alain Bois,⁶⁰ is to be located in the historic emergence of the capitalist mode of production and its subsequent acceleration and deepening of its central contradictions, particularly in its exploitation of the natural environment and the land.

⁵⁹ Rogers, Elizabeth Barlow. *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001: 32.

⁶⁰ Yve-Alain Bois, "A Picturesque Stroll around Clara-Clara," *October*, 29 (1984), 61.

Pre-Capitalist Garden Art:

How do we begin to clarify these terms beyond a descriptive or formal analysis, methods that are necessary but insufficient for our purposes? The most ambitious and comprehensive history on garden art, a six volume anthology titled *A Cultural History of Gardens*, edited by landscape and cultural historians John Dixon Hunt and Michael Leslie and published in 2016, invites a number of different scholars to contribute articles within each volume on a certain theme and time period of garden art, assigned based on each individual's area of expertise. Notably, the volumes extend to "the modern age" (vol. 6) and as far into history as the 1990's, thereby reiterating the overlap and relevance that most scholars see connecting ancient or prehistoric landscape design, garden art, the landscape garden, and modern landscape architecture. A careful reading of this anthology and ascertaining the arguments of the wide number of different scholars can help us bring into focus the particular differences between these different "epochs" traditionally included in landscape architectural histories.

However, before moving into this discussion, it is important to note that the scope of this thesis does not allow us to fully investigate what is *not* landscape architecture in pre-capitalist European or Near East history, the geographic areas that most of the articles in this anthology are interested in, however we can start to piece together some semblance of the general definitions of these different categories of pre-capitalist gardens. Instead, this discussion will largely serve as a ground level

basis that brings into relief what *is* landscape architecture given the historical conditions that are radically different from pre-capitalist history.

In line with the general argument put forth by John Dixon Hunt about the readability of the garden as a cultural artifact that expresses certain ideas and worldviews about the past, the overarching theme of the anthology presented by each author is that their particular area of study yields such conclusions but under specific times and places. For example, according to Elizabeth A. Augspach, that the *hortus conclusus* (enclosed garden) exemplifies the ways in which English society during the High Middle Ages saw both women and nature based on common horticultural selection during that time and the readings of a number of popular mythologies featuring the garden;⁶¹ or as Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis notes, the act of constructing massive gardens on one's estate by the patrician class in the Late Roman Republic and opening it up to the public in order to gain political favor among the masses.⁶² Both examples demonstrate areas in which gardens express gendered views and power relations in medieval English society and the dynamics of politicking during the Late Roman Republic, respectively, and hence helps us to understand something about that particular society as well as about the particular gardens in question. Each chapter of each volume adds to the richness of garden history and the larger society in which the site of the garden or gardens existed, citing various historic conditions that had influence over gardens such as political, economic, gender, cosmological, environmental, and philosophical reasons.

⁶¹ Elizabeth A. Augspach, "Meaning," in *A Cultural History of Gardens in the Medieval Age*, ed. Michael Leslie (New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016), 114-115.

⁶² Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis, "Uses and Reception," in *A Cultural History of Gardens in Antiquity*, ed. Kathryn Gleason (New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016), 109.

While these examples are of course numerous, it helps to demonstrate a point about gardens and garden art being different from landscape design or even the landscape garden of the early 19th century insofar as it is read as a discrete object, albeit an object whose context is critical to understand, much in the same way that an art historian reads a piece of art. With reference to the two examples given above, both are either a literal enclosed garden with walls so as to look inward toward the soul, to rest or to contemplate; or in the Roman example, to exclude others by means of property unless it is politically convenient for one to allow the public to picnic in their estate but only on the property owners discretion. As John Dixon Hunt describes it, “gardens may arguably offer a more refined, more acute, and more intricate expression of human experience,” where:

deliberately constructed milieu invokes selected forms and materials to express, often in a concentrated fashion and certainly in a special way, some human response to and recognition of an environment; this environment will be physical, topographical, but it will also include less tangible, spiritual values.⁶³

Gardens, in other words, are concentrated forms of expression of individually or collectively held values, typically separated from the greater landscape. Considering the location of the garden as broadly a non-utilitarian form of nature-art that requires time, labor, and wealth, much of these gardens are cultural expressions as filtered through the upper stratum of any given society.

There are exceptions and important qualifications to this broad idea of the garden that we are constructing. The more functional gardens of everyday life of likely

⁶³ Hunt, John Dixon. *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture*. MIT Press, 1992: 9.

lower classes have been acknowledged by historians to have almost certainly existed; however, the evidence is slim given the quick decay of organic plant matter. The recent advances in the methodology and technological capacities of archaeogenetics still mostly focuses on agriculture or purely functional gardens⁶⁴ in which artistic and ideological expression is either non-existent or not the particular concern of the author.

On the other hand, in the instances where a functionality exists side by side with the more non-utilitarian aspects of the garden, it is usually done so in representational ways as opposed to genuinely satisfying material needs. For example, in the Roman Empire, it was popular to pollard fruit and plane trees in the townhome urban courtyards of the upper classes as a way of representing the *rustic* of the latifundia economy of the Romans. As Lena Landgren concludes on Roman horticultural practices, “it seems clear that prestige and economic value (wealth) were among the motivating factors behind this trend [of rustic gardens within the urban center]”⁶⁵ That is, the rustic garden set in the middle of the city was moreso a way of showing off wealth than it was about generating wealth, the latter of which was done either in the countryside or through trade.

By the high middle ages and into the renaissance, there were a number of transitions in terms of production and the extension of international trade, the appearance of the banking system in Italy, and the beginnings of colonization, all of which form important prerequisites for the emergence of capitalism. The amassing of

⁶⁴ Madella, Marco., ed. *Ancient Plants and People: Contemporary Trends in Archaeobotany*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2014: xi.

⁶⁵ Lena Landgren, “Plantings,” in *A Cultural History of Gardens in Antiquity*, ed. Kathryn Gleason (New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016), 98.

wealth gave new conditions that lead to the increase of gardens through the patronage system. There was also the challenge of the collectivity of the catholic church as the sole power in society. These new individuals, wealthy families, and early corporations also marked a fundamental cultural shift in European society in that they were now concerned with the here and now and worldly endeavors. This included amassing wealth and power, but also extended to the acquisition of knowledge and the signaling of the cultivation of the individual through plenty of allusions to the classics. While sensual qualities were generally eschewed within medieval gardens, these qualities were now revived under the humanism of the renaissance. They also now had the ability to reference other forms of art including poetry and plays.

During this time when garden design was proliferating, The 16th century Genovese humanist, historian, and author Jacopo Bonfadio introduced his concept of *una terza natura* or third nature in order to understand conceptually what the garden was. Building off the Roman author Cicero, who famously proposed the schema of the first and second nature, Bonfadio describes the concept as, “nature incorporated with art . . . [and made] the creator and conatural of art, and from both is made a third nature.”⁶⁶ If first nature is the natural environment “unmediated” by humans in the form of wilderness, and the second nature is the natural environment altered for human use through artifice, or the cultural landscape, then the third nature involves the creative expression of combining both features dominant to the first and second nature, nature and art, respectively. Due to the conditions we find in the 16th century

⁶⁶ Bonfadio, Jacopo. *Le lettere e una scrittura burlesca*. Roma: Bonacci, 1978: 96. As quoted in Hunt, John Dixon. *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture*. MIT Press, 1992: 4.

Renaissance Italian city-states, with the resurgence of the banking system and accumulation of wealth, gardens took on a less utilitarian and more leisurely role which is something Hunt points out. Hence the recrafting of the first nature for human use was not necessarily bound by economic necessity due to the patronage that allowed these artifacts to express the reigning culture and ideology of the time as filtered more often than not by the rich and powerful.

Although the Bonafadio's concept framework of gardens is often cited in landscape architecture history, reexamining the concept of third nature in the context of the renaissance Italian city-state economy helps to reiterate and sum up some of the core characteristics of garden art: (1) that it is to be differentiated from so called wilderness, which from our own more advanced knowledge of history today as opposed to the 16th century we know is more or less a myth, but we may still entertain the idea by placing it on a spectrum of degree of human intervention; (2) that it is to be differentiated from the cultural landscape in which nature is substantially reconfigured and subsumed for human ends; (3) it is a combination of both first and second natures in such a way as to *represent* the ideal middle ground between them, however, to not necessarily *mediate* between the two; (4) similarly to the concept of representation as opposed to a genuine mediation between nature and culture, the garden is a discrete cultural artifact filled with allusions, allegories, symbols, and metaphorical meanings, closer to an artistic object than it is to our modern understanding of landscape architecture;⁶⁷ (5) gardens consist of a form that is better

⁶⁷ See cultural history of gardens renaissance Morgan. Here Morgan argues that the Villa Lante represents this middle ground between nature and civilization.

adapted to ideological expression; and (6) that garden art of this kind is generally filtered through the upper stratum of society and reflects power.

In many ways, this overarching review of garden art history says little that is new especially to the reader who is already familiar with the history of gardens. In some respects, I am merely compiling the findings of recent scholarship into a coherent storyline with an emphasis on the economic conditions underlining them. It is to get a general idea of the garden in western european history which as we have seen can go in many different directions, revealing different aspects about the culture and ideology of the time, not necessarily dominated by economic reasoning. In fact, that is my main point about pre-capitalist garden art, is that in many ways it is not bound entirely by this or that mode of production, although such conditions are of course important. Here, we could say that the argument put forth by historians such as Elizabeth Barlow Rogers and cultural historian John Dixon Hunt are correct in their analysis of gardens as a cultural artifact that signifies primarily ideological expression. Likewise, it is not my argument that cultural history can be reduced to some crude schema of base-superstructure or a mere reflection of the existent “mode of production”.

In our transition to a mode of production dominated by capital however, we begin to transition to a different context in which that same analytical method is not as relevant to us. Recalling Ellen Meiksins Wood, this is precisely because in the development of capitalism, as its imperatives toward profit and the laws of coercive competition begin to take hold, ideological expression in society becomes increasingly restrained, homogenized, and centralized to express the undercurrents of the mode of

production of capitalism. Of course, this historical trend takes time, and as such there are plenty of gray areas of history in which we find exception to the idea that the mode of production begins to dominate cultural production even in the throes of industrialization. There always exists the cracks in the pavement in which a rose can grow. However, it is my argument that this historical trend becomes increasingly clear over time. But where does this trend actually begin? How does it emerge historically speaking and what is the transition point from the so-called pre-capitalist garden art toward modern day landscape architecture which is, as I have argued, fundamentally a response to the heightened contradiction and antagonisms of capitalist society?

CHAPTER 4

THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPE GARDEN AND PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION

Referring back to John Dixon Hunt, he has insisted on the importance of the time period from the late 18th into the early 19th centuries - the rupture of modernity as he calls it in *Gardens and the Picturesque* - in which there was a radical change in, “social, political, aesthetic, and psychological attitudes.” He continues:

The years around 1800 were also crucial in the history of landscape architecture theory and practice; indeed, it is largely to English design of that period that the rest of Europe as well as a new generation of landscape architects like A. J. Downing in the United States would look back. That moment constituted the watershed in landscape architecture for a variety of non artistic reasons... we still exist in a world that was determined by what happened around 1800.⁶⁸

In many ways the phenomenon of the English landscape garden is the transition point between garden art and what would later become landscape architecture proper, between the characteristics outlined previously and the qualities of landscape architecture that are engendered by the emergence of modernity. Yet what specifically are the conditions that give rise to the radical changes in almost every aspect of society that John Dixon Hunt refers to? Historians are clear as to the importance that this point in time played in not only the history of England or even western Europe, but through expansionism, empire, colonialism, and nascent capitalism, the rest of the world. Historian Eric Hobsbawm famously described this era as fundamentally defined by the “dual revolutions” of the French Revolution and the industrial revolution in Britain, the central political and economic revolutions, respectively, that would come to define the following two centuries. More specifically, Hobsbawm notes the importance of understanding the context of class society during

⁶⁸ John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (MIT Press, 1992): 285.

this time; that it is not, “the triumph not of 'industry' as such, but of *capitalist industry*; not of liberty and equality in general but of *middle class* or '*bourgeois*' liberal society...”⁶⁹ This is an important distinction to make especially considering the changing conditions of English and western European society. Although connected with a world market at the time, it is not a coincidence that the evolution of garden art toward the english landscape garden and picturesque occurred during the same time and place as the development of nascent agrarian capitalism and the rise of the bourgeoisie who carved out their independent aesthetic sensibilities, largely in response to how they gained their wealth. Roughly the 16th to 18th centuries laid the ground for the dual revolutions, the rupture of modernity, mainly by way of the primitive accumulation of wealth which would begin its transformation into becoming capital, that is, money which creates more money due to systemic compulsions both in trade, agriculture, and production. Here we can refer to some figures from Hobsbawm on how this accumulation took place.

Firstly, we should make note of how radically rural European society was in the late 18th century. According to Hobsbawm, depending on the exact area of the continent, the rural population could account for somewhere between 70-90% of a given area, with the lower end corresponding to the most developed areas with the strongest historical tradition of urban centers. Even in England where capitalism first began and hence the rapid growth of its cities, the urban population outnumbered the rural population for the first time only by 1851.⁷⁰ These facts remind us of the dominant role the countryside and agriculture still played in society which forms an

⁶⁹ E. J Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* ([New York]: New American Library, 1964): 1.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 11.

important basis for the entrepreneurial middling classes for whom the landscape garden was so popular. It also helps us to understand the timeline of economic and industrial development wherein we can situate public parks in urban areas as one of the central typologies of landscape architecture as opposed to the peri-urban or rural estate.

It should therefore not be particularly surprising that one of the main aspects of primitive accumulation that gave rise to capitalism in late 18th century England, was the reconfiguration of land holdings and tenure and the changes in law which governed these. This long standing process taken as a whole is known as the enclosures in which common land, traditionally managed by the local peasantry, was privatized, bought and sold increasingly as commodities, and forcibly removed from those who used the commons for grazing, hunting, fishing, and the collection of firewood. But this also applied to the holdings of the nobles who could no longer rely on previous legal privileges such as entails and the regulation or outright prohibition of sale or subdivision of their estates. These estates were therefore susceptible to bankruptcy and purchase by more competent entrepreneurially minded individuals.⁷¹ At the same time, this did not necessarily mean that the nobility or privileged classes in England then became industrious farmers or productive capitalists. Rather, many of them simply relied on a form of rentier capitalism or passive income through what historian Ellen Meiksins Wood calls, “a market in leases,” where, “a growing number [of English tenancies] were subject to economic rents - rents fixed not by some legal or customary standard but by market conditions... Tenants were obliged to compete

⁷¹ E. J Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* ([New York]: New American Library, 1964): 152.

not only in a market for consumers but also in a market for access to land.” This process then completed the transition from the manorial system under feudalism, whose hold in England was in any case historically tenuous compared to their continental neighbors, especially France, to a liberalized system of commercial farming. As Hobsbawm notes, “[By the 1780’s], the characteristic estate had long ceased to be a unit of economic enterprise⁷² and had become a system of collecting rents and other money incomes.”

These legal and economic changes therefore induced the emergence of three different class stratifications within the nascent agrarian capitalist economy: the landlord or proprietor, the commercial capitalist farmer who leased the land from the former, and the hired itinerant laborers who had been made propertyless and totally or largely dependent on wage-labor. By 1851, and likely with similar figures stretching back a decade earlier, a little over half of the arable land in England was owned by approximately 4,000 individuals, while a quarter of a million commercial farmers leased that land, and who employed about 1.25 million laborers and servants in the actual work of farming.⁷³ Additionally, this proletarianization of the rural workforce and the greater efficiency of English agriculture (“improvement”) created an estimated 17% of unemployed laborers who had to move into the growing cities by the 1830’s, and set the basis for the future industrial reserve army.⁷⁴

This in turn had a profound effect on the landscape under the regime of commercial farming and “improvement”, a term noted by Ellen Meiksins Wood to be

⁷² Under some geographies these estates had very clearly derived from the previous latifundia estates run by slaves or debt peons under the Roman economy, namely in parts of Spain.

⁷³ E. J Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* ([New York]: New American Library, 1964): 150.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 152.

etymologically derived from the concept of profit, used quite differently than it is today which simply means to make better.⁷⁵ With the centralization of land, the enclosure of the commons, and the proletarianization of the laborers in the agricultural sector, whole villages disappeared from the landscape as well as the modest cottages of “ye olde england” that began to be romanticized in literature and had a central impact in the development of the picturesque. As Wood mentions, this acted to make the rural poor rather invisible, the only physical evidence of whom was found in the desire paths cutting across fields that were granted right-of-way status because it was their only way of getting to work. This has been noted not only by historians interested in the economic impacts of the enclosures, such as Wood and Hobsbawm, but also scholars focused on culture and specifically gardens and the emergence of the English landscape garden. English Literature historian Rachel Crawford writes regarding Sir Uvedale Price, major landowner and one of the main theoreticians of the picturesque in the 1790’s, that, “Price had claimed that his love of picturesque irregularity in landscapes, revealing effects of time and place, was intimately tied to his role as preserver of social ‘connection’ in traditional paternalistic communities...”⁷⁶ That is, the modern form of commercial agriculture that formed the economic basis of the English landowning classes, including the bourgeoisie, who were the ones who patronized the landscape garden aesthetic, and its radical transformation of the landscape, went against the grain of their conservative and romantic aesthetic

⁷⁵ Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999): 106. “The word ‘improve’ itself, in its original meaning, did not mean just ‘make better’ in a general sense but literally meant to do something for monetary profit, especially to cultivate land for profit (based on the old French for *into*, *en*, and *profit*, *pros* - or its oblique case, *preu*).”

⁷⁶ Rachel Crawford, “Verbal Representations,” in *A Cultural History of Gardens in The Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Stephen Bending (New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016), 184.

sensibilities. It was only a certain type of productive landscape that they wanted to see, such as the grazing sheep or cattle bound by ha-ha walls as with Capability Brown, but not necessarily that which demonstrated the exploitation on which their wealth depended (i.e. large scale farming, enclosure of common lands, the sort of profit oriented agriculture which made quaint rural villages economically obsolete and hence abandoned, as well as the impoverished itinerant laborers walking across the landscape). Of course, one of the central implications of the picturesque is that the landscape is made to represent a painting, that is, an image which may or may not have basis in reality in all its forms but instead is likely idealized.

The English landscape garden also represented an expansion of the concept of the garden itself as indicated by the famous William Kent quote about leaping the fence and discovering that, “all nature was a garden.” This marks a transition point from the more enclosed garden art as a discrete cultural object toward working with more of the broader landscape as the scholar of 18th and 19th Century British and European Art Michael Charlesworth has noted, “In 18th century Britain, landowners extended the definition of gardens to embrace large areas of land that supported grassland and trees outside the pleasure grounds.”⁷⁷ This presupposes that large swaths of land can be used for the construction of grasslands or meadows dotted with clumps of trees, and hence the wealth necessary to accomplish such a landscape. At the same time, certain types of productivity were allowed to be seen while others were. For example, while cattle or sheep were allowed to graze on the ground of the landscape garden, a representation of the advancement in agricultural productivity and husbandry

⁷⁷ Michael Charlesworth, “Types of Gardens,” in *A Cultural History of Gardens in The Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Stephen Bending (New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016), 65.

as well as the burgeoning development of industrial output in textiles, messier animals such as pigs, were not allowed to be seen. Thus while there were certainly some aspects of productivity that were represented in the landscape garden it was more a pseudo productivity to venerate the new culture of entrepreneurialism and profit seeking while at the same time concealing its uglier aspects which contradicted the romanticism of the picturesque. Additionally, although the boundaries of the garden extended to incorporate the so called landscape, it nonetheless barred the rural working class from ruining the image that the nascent bourgeoisie had constructed for itself. Interestingly, 18th century literature and garden historian Stephen Bending remarks on an instance in which a group of villagers broke through the hedgerows of a local estate and began using the garden's grasslands and the greenbelt that buffered the country home from the surrounding working countryside, for cultivation.⁷⁸ Ultimately, the elite landowning classes during the 18th century in England were drawn to and adopted the ideas of the picturesque because it helped to conceal the heightened contradictions between town and country, capital and labor, and capital and soil. It ideologically expressed the new ethos of profit making and industriousness but paradoxically also expressed the romantic, rose-tinted view of the English "rural pastimes", characterized by "traditional paternalistic communities"⁷⁹ and "stable, virtuous, and natural social hierarchies"⁸⁰ which were celebrated in the poetry and literature of the day. In a way, it was an aesthetic reaction to the revolution in

⁷⁸ Stephen Bending, "Introduction," in *A Cultural History of Gardens in The Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Stephen Bending (New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016), 18.

⁷⁹ Rachel Crawford, "Verbal Representations," in *A Cultural History of Gardens in The Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Stephen Bending (New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016), 184.

⁸⁰ Rachel Crawford, "Verbal Representations," in *A Cultural History of Gardens in The Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Stephen Bending (New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016), 174.

agricultural capitalism that they were helping to create. As art historian Ann

Bermingham argues:

As the real landscape began to look increasingly artificial, like a garden [as in every inch of arable land was cultivated under the system of commercial agriculture], the garden began to look increasingly natural, like the pre-enclosed landscape. Thus a natural landscape became the prerogative of the estate... so that nature was a sign of property and property the sign of nature...⁸¹

But as other scholars note, although the landed elite which included the aristocratic classes, the nobility, *in addition* to the growing bourgeoisie,⁸² derived much of their wealth in commercial agriculture, there were also more global forms of accumulation going on at the time. This notably includes either ongoing *de jure* or *de facto* colonization, such as the company rule of India from 1757 to 1858 before it was officially colonized,⁸³ sugar plantations in the caribbean, mercantile capitalism, the atlantic slave trade (before 1807), and overseas trade generally, some of which still relied on slave labor to produce raw material output for English industry (e.g. cotton in the southern united states). This fact too is not lost on scholars who study the large estates of the landscape garden tradition in terms of where they gained their wealth to support such large landholdings. Again, Bending notes, "...while landscape gardens may suggest a world apart from commercial capitalism, they were fully implicated in a culture of commodities and strikingly concerned with spending money and

⁸¹ Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986): 14.

⁸² See Patrick Eyres, "Meaning," in *A Cultural History of Gardens in The Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Stephen Bending (New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016), 115: "Although commodification of gardening was well underway by 1700, the century's progress was significant precisely because the audience of consumers broadened from that of the elite to include the bourgeoisie."

⁸³ E. J Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* ([New York]: New American Library, 1964): 13.

conspicuous display.”⁸⁴ Even more specifically, “the financial resources that initially funded West Wycombe and Stowe were inherited from wealth accumulated through overseas trade.”⁸⁵

Thus while we have the domestic importance of land ownership in terms of rentier capitalism due to the process of the enclosures and nascent industrialization that accumulated the wealth of the elite in England at the time, we also have existing side by side foreign plunder via colonization, the plantation economy, and mercantile capitalism. That is, the English landscape tradition is based in large part on the primitive accumulation that helped to jumpstart the outward spiral of capital growth of the first industrial revolution. Although this initial accumulation is an essential condition of capitalism in order to take off as an autonomous, self-propelling process, there are other preconditions that we also take note of which consists mainly of the existence of an international and domestic market, the liberalization of land tenure, wage labor, and the alienation from the land and nature, all of which on their own or even in some limited combination, do not constitute capitalism. Taken together, however, provides the conditions for capital to begin its process. These we all see in England at the time which had a profound impact on the landscape, countryside, and increasingly on the cities, and reflected themselves, wittingly or unwittingly, into the concept of the picturesque and landscape garden. As Patrick Eyres says, “These

⁸⁴ Stephen Bending, “Introduction,” in *A Cultural History of Gardens in The Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Stephen Bending (New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016), 7.

⁸⁵ David Lambert, “Uses and Reception,” in *A Cultural History of Gardens in The Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Stephen Bending (New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016), 120.

English case studies confirm that landscape gardens articulated ideas integral to the political, commercial, and aesthetic interests of landowners.”⁸⁶

At same time, the English landscape garden, as a transition point between pre-capitalist garden art and landscape architecture, still shared some critical aspects with the former in that they were still largely for the private use of the elite, which in many cases still showcased their conspicuous consumption and wealth. This is in contrast with the increasing social role of the landscape garden in public life, the adoption of the park, that we more readily associate with under landscape architecture proper. As industrial capitalism begins to take off, it builds upon each boom and bust cycle in its rapidity and capacity to alter the landscape. As noted before, by 1851, England for the first time reached a population that was majority urban. Indeed, most of the “new money” estates of wealthy entrepreneurial individuals, as opposed to the old landed gentry, were built on the urban periphery in order to be in close proximity with the management of their business ventures in the city core. Additionally, many had townhomes in the city that often aesthetically resembled country homes.⁸⁷

However as the law of value began to assert itself over life in the first countries to begin to develop industry, including the United States and the lowland countries in addition to England, it became less based on the caprice of the individuals who held wealth and power and increasingly took on a structural and social role. This is to say that, the individuals making up the growing capitalist class became less defined over

⁸⁶ See Patrick Eyres, “Meaning,” in *A Cultural History of Gardens in The Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Stephen Bending (New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016), 136.

⁸⁷ Sarah Spooner and Tom Williamson, “Gardens and the larger landscape,” in *A Cultural History of Gardens in The Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Stephen Bending (New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016), 208-209.

time as individuals within individual powers vis-a-vis accumulated wealth, but merely personifications of capital, themselves subject to its laws as a general trend. This increasingly structural nature of capitalism and the consequences it inflicted on the landscape mirrored the increasingly social role that landscape architects took on in their mediation of such consequences. This is found primarily in the question of the growing urban centers, the destruction of nature, and the effects of industrialization on society.

The rupture of modernity or metabolic rift?

The English landscape garden and picturesque marked an era of transition between gardens and landscape architecture proper and mirrored the structural transition of political economy in the anglo-phone world toward manufacturing and eventually industrial capitalism. Given that the foundation for the historic development of capitalism in England was primarily found in the rise of commercial farming and agrarian capitalism, in conjunction with other necessary preconditions of accumulation such as an international market, the existence of wage-labor, colonialism, slavery, the enclosures, and the plantation economy, the emergence of capitalism was intimately tied in with not only the transformation of the cultural landscape of England, but also the health of the soil. Again, the competitive market of land leases for commercial farmers, producing for domestic and international markets, compelled agricultural innovation and the expansion of the productivity of the soil for greater yields. Hence we find the advent of the Norfolk crop rotation system, land reclamation, and the draining of wetlands. This in turn freed up more labor to be used

in the growing manufacturing and industrial sector of the economy in the cities, thereby allowing for the expanded reproduction of capital and economic growth in general. The expanded reproduction of capital presupposes the creation of surplus product, which is realized in its money form on the market, its exchange. Hence the material energy or value that is derived from the soil forms a surplus that is destined for other consumers in a different geographic market producing a situation in which, “trade far beyond the bounds of a single country,” results in the, “a squandering of the vitality of the soil.”⁸⁸ Therefore, “it prevents the return to the soil of its constituent elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing,”⁸⁹ which was previously more geographically based.⁹⁰ While capital does require the expansion of the limits of the soil including its regeneration by natural or artificial means, it only does so insofar as it can turn a short term profit, only insofar as it can continue to exploit the soil for its surplus that ultimately objectifies itself in commodities and gets realized in profit: “all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time is a progress toward ruining the more long-lasting sources of that fertility,” and consequently, “[A]ll progress in capitalist agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the worker, but of robbing the soil.”⁹¹ Just as it is the case under capitalism that the worker is paid not for the full value of their labor but merely for the bare minimum to

⁸⁸ John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000): 155.

⁸⁹ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1990): 637-638. As quoted in John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000): 155.

⁹⁰ See, for example, the historical existence of “night soils” and which humans and animal waste produced from the cities were collected and resold back into the local countryside as fertilizer.

⁹¹ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1990), volume 1: 637-638. As quoted in John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000): 155.

reproduce their *capacity for labor*; i.e. their labor-power, the same treatment is given toward the natural environment and the soil. Hence we find the crisis of the depletion of European and North American soils roughly in the mid to late 19th century, prompting the importation of guano from Peru⁹² and the “guano imperialism” of South America, and the state led investment in state “agricultural and mechanical” universities whose objective was the research in improving the productivity of agriculture and industry in the United States in 1862. Again, the economic necessity to expand yields does not consider the long term viability and health of the ecosystem; for every solution to an agricultural crisis under capitalism there lies the conditions for a new one. The second green revolution, for example, with its reliance on the extensive use of pesticides, chemical fertilizers, monoculture, and mechanization, has produced issues related to declining biodiversity and the erosion of topsoil.

This phenomenon in which there is a discrepancy between the social metabolism of human society, including the need for capital to expand and valorize itself, and the “metabolism prescribed by the natural laws of life itself” is what Marx calls an “irreparable metabolic rift.”⁹³ As sociologist John Bellamy Foster, who focuses on Marxism and ecology, explains:

An essential component of the concept of metabolism has always been the notion that it constitutes the basis on which the complex web of interactions necessary to life is sustained, and growth becomes possible. Marx employed the concept of a "rift" in the metabolic

⁹²John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000): 156.

⁹³ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1990), volume 3: 949-950. As quoted in John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000): 155.

relation between human beings and the earth to capture the material estrangement of human beings within capitalist society from the natural conditions which formed the basis for their existence—what he called "the everlasting nature-imposed condition[s] of human existence."⁹⁴

What is critical about the metabolic rift is that the alienation and “estrangement” of people from the natural environment forms the foundation of our relationship with the natural environment. When the earth and all its fecundity is divided in accordance to its means of producing for the world market, a sort of ecological division of labor, it loses sight of the conditions that give rise to its fertility in the first place - the complex set of relationships that form the basis of ecology. Just as the mechanization of worker, labor subsumed under capital, produces a social form of alienation and anti-humanism, the mechanization of the biosphere, nature subsumed under capital, produces a form of environmental alienation that is deeply unecological. Interestingly, Robert Liddiard and Tom Williamson in *A Cultural History of Gardens in the Medieval Age* argue that within the larger medieval landscape in England, that, “whatever the precise explanations for variations in the farming landscape, these were unquestionably correlated much more closely with types of soil and terrain than with patterns of land ownership.”⁹⁵ Meaning that older peasant communities in England farmed more so according to natural conditions more than anything else and paid attention to the long term regeneration of the soil, even if such practices did not produce the highest yield. This stands in contrast to the later forms of commercial farming which involved land reclamation, drainage, and the establishment of pasture

⁹⁴ John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000): 163.

⁹⁵ Robert Liddiard and Tom Williamson, “Gardens and the Larger Landscape,” in *A Cultural History of Gardens in the Medieval Age*, ed. Michael Leslie (New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016), 172.

for wool which would be used for the early textile mills. The increase of the industrial workforce in urban areas and the decrease of labor in agriculture and the countryside still further alienated people from the natural environment.

A second critical aspect of the metabolic rift is the implications it has for the antagonisms between town and country. With the centralization and rapid growth of the industrial cities, the metabolism of industrial processes became increasingly detached from the natural conditions which sustained that process, both in terms of their inputs and outputs, and instead attended to the abstractions of market logic. The waste produced from this process in the form of excrement and by products that polluted the Thames in London was noted by Marx in *Capital*, vol. 3: “In London ... they can do nothing better with the excrement produced by 4 1/2 million people than pollute the Thames with it, at monstrous expense.”⁹⁶ Although modern day municipal sewage systems in developed countries such as the United States now prevent this polluting effect, in terms of returning value back to the soil, much of the nutrients are either contaminated in relation to their suitability for agricultural use even after standard treatment, or go unused.⁹⁷ Instead, much of the fertility is returned to the soil

⁹⁶ Karl Marx, *Capital: : A Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1990), volume 3: 195. As quoted in John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000): 163.

⁹⁷ Of the total sewage volume produced by U.S. cities, about 1% are used to make biosolids, or organic fertilizers, and of that 1%, about 43% is used in agriculture. Of that 43%, there is debate in the scientific community about how safe these are to use if growing food. Given that industry shares municipal wastewater systems with the average resident, there still can exist pollutants even after treatment. Furthermore, since the 1970's the relative share in the costs of wastewater treatment coming from the federal government has decreased, thereby increasing the financial burden on municipalities. See OW US EPA, “Basic Information about Biosolids,” Other Policies and Guidance, July 13, 2016, <https://www.epa.gov/biosolids/basic-information-about-biosolids>; Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Biosolid Facts. 2018. pdf, (accessed May 13, 2023); Lauchlan Fraser, “Why and When Can Biosolids Be Used as a Soil Amendment for Ecosystem Reclamation and Rehabilitation?” (EGU2020, Copernicus Meetings, March 9, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.5194/egusphere-egu2020-2023>: “Research on the land application of biosolids has

through synthetic fertilizers bought on the market. In describing ecological thought within the Marxist tradition after Marx, Foster quotes the Austrian Marxist Karl Kautsky (1854-1938) on the development of modern agricultural techniques based in the regular application of fertilizers and pesticides:

Supplementary fertilisers... allow the reduction in soil fertility to be avoided, but the necessity of using them in larger and larger amounts simply adds a further burden to agriculture—not one unavoidably imposed by nature, but a direct result of current social organisation. By overcoming the antithesis between town and country... the materials removed from the soil would be able to flow back in full. Supplementary fertilisers would then, at most, have the task of enriching the soil, not staving off its impoverishment. Advances in cultivation would signify an increase in the amount of soluble nutrients in the soil without the need to add artificial fertilisers.⁹⁸

Thus we have a fundamental difference between the flow of value on the market and exchange under capitalism, which is heavily abstracted from place, geography, or its relations to other elements such as the producer. Considering the ecological health of soils, the production and marketing of synthetic fertilizers is also an example of a highly reductive conception of nature in the isolation of specific macronutrients to be applied to the soil such as nitrogen, phosphorus, or potassium, for example. But in doing so, it also abstracts one particular element at the expense of developing soil with its relationship with its other constitutive elements intact, namely all the microorganisms and life that inhabits healthy soil. Likewise, the flow of value

increased in the past 20 years, but there is little consensus on how the environment responds to biosolids applications.”

⁹⁸ Karl Kautsky, *The Agrarian Question* (London: Zwan, 1998), vol. 2, 214-15. As quoted in John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000): 239.

under naturally imposed conditions is deeply rooted in place and the concrete; it does not function as a machine but as a network of relationships. While additives like fertilizers can assist in yields, it should, “enrich the soil, not stav[e] off its impoverishment.”

We then find in the Marxist and more generally socialist tradition an ecological concern of the balance between town and country and to overcome their antagonisms in which the latter is exploited by the former. Foster notes that Marx and Engels advocate for the “intimate connection between industrial and agricultural production” and “as uniform a distribution as possible of the population over the whole country.”⁹⁹ In his essay “A Factory as it Might Be,” British socialist and artist William Morris (1834-1896) “envisioned a socialism in which factories would be set amidst gardens.”¹⁰⁰ Libertarian communist Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) wrote quite specifically on the possibilities of the interconnection between “fields, factories, and workshops” in a decentralized way so as to ensure an ecological relationship the natural environment as well as to play a social role in the balanced cultivation of individuals on the basis of exercising all their capacities, both “brain work and hand work” as he described it. This would act as a structural bulwark against the degradation of the individual or particular class under a highly inequitable social division of labor in a similar way that bioregionalism suggests a holistic way of looking at certain geographic areas and not to pigeon hole them for the sole purpose of providing for the global market at the expense of that regions ecological health. It is

⁹⁹ John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000): 163.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 237.

also notable that the modernist German landscape architect Leberecht Migge (1881-1935), who was influenced by socialist politics including Kropotkin specifically, pioneered a highly localized concept of the metabolism in the social housing projects of Weimar Germany in which a series of highly productive garden plots would utilize the greywater and refuse collected from the adjacent housing for their nutrients and fertility, in an attempt to realize the socialist ideal of overcoming the alienation to the land as well as the antagonisms between town and country. Although allotment or what we would today call community gardens were criticized for being “bourgeois”, Migge actively sought to turn that concept around in the radical functionality of his architectonic social gardens.¹⁰¹

The concept of the “rupture of modernity” popular among art and cultural historians is undoubtedly useful especially in its chronological placement in the historical timeline; that modernity did in fact make its emergence around the late 18th and early 19th centuries characterized by the “dual revolutions” of industrial capitalism and the revolutionary political fervor begun by the French Revolution. Furthermore, it helps to understand the lag within cultural production at the time in Europe and North America where *modernism* was the first attempt in the design professions to adequately and theoretically take into account the contemporary material conditions that *modernity* had swept into existence, and to extrapolate those lessons into form and function. However, what lies beneath all the attendant transformations of society in their “social, political, aesthetic, and psychological” capacities, that we see quite starkly by the end of the 19th century (e.g. the Parisian

¹⁰¹ See David H Haney, *When Modern Was Green: Life and Work of Landscape Architect Leberecht Migge* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

arcades, the first high-rises of Chicago and New York, large scale industrial production, the world of commodities), is the radical transformation of our relationship with nature. It is the seed that bears the fruit of the modern rupture in society. This consists not only in terms of our “attitudes” toward nature but in how our social metabolism with nature is governed and how that governance has run against the sort of metabolism that is “prescribed by the natural laws of life itself”, prompting the regular ecological crises that arise in capitalist political economy from such a contradiction.

The metabolic rift of the capitalist mode of production caused a radical transformation of the natural and cultural landscape which provided the foundational issues with which modern landscape architecture would attempt to deal with. The concentration and centralization of production, the rise of cities and the unplanned growth of urban areas, and their polluting effects; the constant revolutionizing of production and technology prompting the dizzying, rapid qualities of “progress” under modernity; class society and the greater social division of labor; the collective nature of society under industrialization and its increasing governance by economic abstractions (i.e. the law of value and the circulation of capital); and of course the alienation to nature. While the English landscape garden would deal with the transformation of the landscape under primitive accumulation and the very beginnings of capitalism through the representation of an ideal image of nature through the picturesque, a *representation of mediation*, it would be landscape architecture that comes to deal with the transformation of the landscape and broader capitalist society on a social level, constituting landscape architecture’s attempt at *genuine mediation*

between nature and culture, town and country. [include part about olmsted here] Its aesthetic and functional strategies in order to do so however, while varying based on the designer, time, and place throughout the 19th century, were generally conservative or reactionary in its approach to dealing with the antagonisms brought about by capitalist development.

CHAPTER 5

THE EMERGENCE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
AS A PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINE

The intellectual anxieties about the transformation of the landscape in ways that contradicted the pastoral tradition, found in both contemporary and classical poetry, was not only contained to early 19th century England but made its way to North America with whom the young United States shared economic and cultural ties. As cultural historian Leo Marx remarks in *The Machine in the Garden* (1964), the American literary tradition is replete with instances of this anxiety of “too much” civilization, industry, and urbanity in contrast to an imagined arcadia, the “virgin” New World, and the myth of the yeoman farmer ideal:

The radical change in the character of society and the sharp swing between two states of feeling, between an arcadian vision and an anxious awareness of reality, are closely related: they illuminate each other... it brings the political and the psychic dissonance associated with the onset of industrialism into a single pattern of meaning. Once generalized, of course, that dissonance demands to be resolved.¹⁰²

Marx argues that this common thread is found throughout American literature starting from the very first instances of colonization and columbian contact where the “virgilian mode was to... begin a new life in a fresh, green landscape” which was “embodied in various utopian schemes for making America the site of a new beginning for western society.”¹⁰³ This begins to come into relief especially at the beginning of the 19th century and with the ideological foundations of the young United States being set as embodying republican virtue in distinction with the old world. Marx analyzes classic American texts such as *Sleepy Hollow* (1820) by Washington Irving, *Walden* (1845) by Henry David Thoreau, *Moby-Dick* (1851) by Herman Melville, and *Huckleberry Finn*

¹⁰² Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000): 30.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 3.

(1884) by Mark Twain, to name a few, but he also couples these texts with the development of the industrialization and its consequences in society.

In particular he refers to the impact of Jeffersonian ideas in the United States and its implications for the landscape. In contrast with the Federalists at the time, who favored developing closer ties with England, supporting trade, mercantilism, and later domestic manufacturing, Jefferson advocated for decentralization, a primarily agricultural economy, limited urban growth and ultimately a version of the idealized yeoman republic. Marx notes the contradictory positioning that the Jeffersonian ideal held at the time insofar as technology was seen as simultaneously a labor saving device, derived from human ingenuity and engineering, but also as a means of corruption, "... the machine is a token of that liberation of the human spirit to be realized by the young American Republic; the factory system, on the other hand, is but feudal oppression in a slightly modified form."¹⁰⁴ The promise of America was that the abundance and fertility of land, a sort of providential Eden, would serve as a remedy against the onslaught of industrialization, creating a manichaeistic world view in which nature was good and industrial development or "civilization" was inherently bad:

Ironically, the sentiment [that the American factory system is humane so long as there is vacant land] rests at bottom upon the idea that the factory system, when transferred to America, is redeemed by contact with "nature" and the rural way of life it is destined to supplant.¹⁰⁵

Quoting Emerson, he says, "The land... is the appointed remedy for whatever is false and fantastic in our culture."¹⁰⁶ Thus there supposedly exists immanent forces in

¹⁰⁴ Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000): 150.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 159.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 236.

history of corruption and virtue, cities and country, artifice and nature, the urban and rural, decadence and piety, and so on. The middle landscape ideal, by implication, is to forever balance these two in order to do what is best for society. As Marx explains:

Whether we like it or not, the theory goes, we will always find ourselves mediating between these contraries, and so we had best learn to live in the uncomfortable middle... It is a moral position perfectly represented by the images of a rural order, neither wild nor urban, as the setting of man's best hope [sic].¹⁰⁷

From Leo Marx's analysis of these basic threads running through much of the American literary tradition, we can draw out some important points that situates the cultural and intellectual context in which landscape architecture as a profession arose. Significantly, there is the lack of differentiation between technology or mechanization and the "industrial system" as a whole in society, or perhaps more accurately, there is little differentiation between the propensity toward the invention of labor saving technology and organizing society in such a way that there is widespread alienation in service of efficiency. Or as Thoreau would have described it, "a system within which they work endlessly, not to reach a goal of their own choosing, but to satisfy the demands of the market mechanism."¹⁰⁸ That is, there is an assumption that technological progress necessarily means the corollary reduction of the centrality of the "soul" in everyday life under this new society. When technology progresses, life becomes increasingly ruled by such inventions - the machine. As such, it is conceptualized as something that is immanent to the human condition; a permanent part of existence that must be contended and negotiated with. For this reason, the modern society v. nature

¹⁰⁷ Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000): 100-101.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 247.

dichotomy is ahistorical and teleological insofar as it is assumed to be an inevitable tragedy of humanity even as “progress” continues its march. This conceptualization of society in relation to nature is also a deeply conservative one since it implies that the solution to such negative consequences brought about by the proverbial “machine” is to simply limit its extent, since its very innate qualities are corrosive to the human spirit and the natural world. Hence the “middle landscape” ideal where both mutually exclusive sides, each having their benefits and drawbacks, must be kept in balance in order to preserve the virtue of individuals and larger society.

It was this conservative view that underlined the emergence of the profession. At the same time, there was clearly a change in terms of what landscape designers were dealing with in a new industrializing society. As Dorothée Imbert notes, “As the collective organization [of society] gradually replaced the art patron, the uniqueness of the *tableau-jardin* gave way to the public realm of utilitarian landscapes such as a park for recreation...”¹⁰⁹ While the objective behind landscape design was fundamentally conservative in nature, the strategy had changed to meet the conditions of a new industrial society. We can point to a number of those conditions that make up this transition from the English landscape garden (corresponding to primitive accumulation and nascent capitalist industry) toward modern landscape architecture which eventually came to cohere itself into a professional body by the mid 19th century. As a start we can name the following characteristics of modern society that landscape architects were contending with: (1) size, including the scale of projects designed to meet the scale of

¹⁰⁹ Dorothée Imbert, “A model for modernism : the work and influence of Pierre-à Emile Legrain,” in *Modern Landscape Architecture: a critical review*, ed. Marc Treib (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1993), 103.

the built environment as well as the scale at which we could now affect the natural environment; (2) rapidity, meaning the rate at which technological and urban growth accelerated; (3) the greater social division of labor in society affecting both people and the soil; (4) society taking on a social and more collective character (as noted by Imbert); and (5) the economy taking on more abstracted and less concrete character (i.e. the law of value more than individual caprice).

Conclusion:

Though the intention of landscape design was still conservative, as a way of balancing these supposedly inevitable and immutable aspects of human society, it sought to contain or ameliorate in different ways over the course of the 19th century. It was only until the landscape Modernism of the 1930's and 40's that younger practitioners brought the discipline out from its conservative and reactionary nature into a progressive one. However, in all these historical instances, landscape architecture has not addressed the fundamental core issues that are at the heart of such mediations between the natural and built environments which reside in overcoming capitalist contradictions. But while the state issuing social democratic measures in order to save capitalism will certainly help in ameliorating those contradictions, it will not solve them. This view also fatally ignores the role of class conflict in society and that so long as the conditions that allow for the existence of a capitalist class are there, any progress of social democracy will be eroded and eventually undone as we have seen in the past half century. This was the flaw of landscape modernism and the Mchargian era, while the time of landscape as a culturally critical practice retreated to strategies that were effectively counter cultural in essence, a

reflection of the state of social and political “activism” in late capitalist society during the 1990’s and early 2000’s. This is all to say that capitalism itself must be superseded and the discipline must align itself with a political project that seeks to make that happen - to create a better world. In doing so, landscape architecture will free itself from the constraints under a capitalist mode of production which is inherently at odds with the goals of social and ecological welfare in creative and artistic ways and rational democratic planning. The contemporary debate about politics in landscape architecture must go beyond legislation, policy, and advocacy - it must go beyond a liberal conception of politics - and enter into a form of politics that actively challenges capitalism while offering a viable alternative for society and a different, healthier relationship with the natural world. In response to Tafurian pessimism about the role of design under capitalism, there is a path for designers including landscape architects forward and that is to direct all our expertise and energies toward the collective and emancipatory political project of socialism, not only for humans, but the biosphere and the non human as well. This can include things like legislative battles and policy but should not stop there. It ought to also include labor organizing within the profession, and using utopian methods contributing towards the liberatory imaginary of a future socialist society. In short, the discipline needs to take a stand in class warfare which capitalism wages against labor and the earth everyday, and it needs to do this in both its political and historical analysis and action.

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