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## **Dumbarton Oaks: landscape and travel in research, conferences, and publications**

Travel, whatever its purpose, always involves an exposure to landscape: whether flattened and standardized to the point of characterlessness, as in the case of landing in a modern airport, or carefully choreographed and visually enticing, as when driving through a national park. Yet, whether glimpsed from the window of an airplane or seen through the windscreen of a car, the landscapes of a twenty-first-century traveler are typically scenic diversions rather than cultural lessons. They are, in other words, the byproducts of urban or regional planning and travel infrastructure, not the informative guides to the past and present of a given country – a measure of government efficacy, economic development, and natural riches.

The role of travel in shaping the perception of landscape and in transmitting styles, elements, and techniques of garden design has been a regular focus of inquiry in the Garden and Landscape Studies program at Dumbarton Oaks, especially in recent years. Most pertinent in this regard, we hosted a colloquium entitled “Travel and Translation” on 1 November 2013. The idea behind this event was to probe into the mechanisms of cultural appropriation beyond the conventional exchange of books, drawings, letters, and plant materials, emphasizing the historical importance of travel in gaining firsthand knowledge of different geographies as well as designed and vernacular landscapes. The colloquium equally stressed various modes of translating this experience into specific political and cultural agendas, stylistic approaches, and horticultural methods. Our more ambitious goal was to initiate a broader discussion of the relationship between landscape – both as a physical reality and a cultural construction – and travel, a discussion that I am deeply grateful is being expanded and significantly deepened in this publication.

The colloquium “Travel and Translation” was occasioned by the launching at Dumbarton Oaks of a new series of translations of significant texts in the histories of garden design and landscape architecture called *ex horto*. To reach a large audience of both general readers and scholars, we are making available in English works that have never before been translated, along with previously unpublished manuscripts and books that have long been out of print. The volumes will cover a broad geographical and temporal range and will eventually constitute a library of historical sources that have defined the core of the field. By making these works available, the series provides unprecedented access to the foundational literature of garden and landscape studies.

The first title in this series was an English translation of the travel journal of Hans Jancke, a German court gardener who, like a number of his peers both

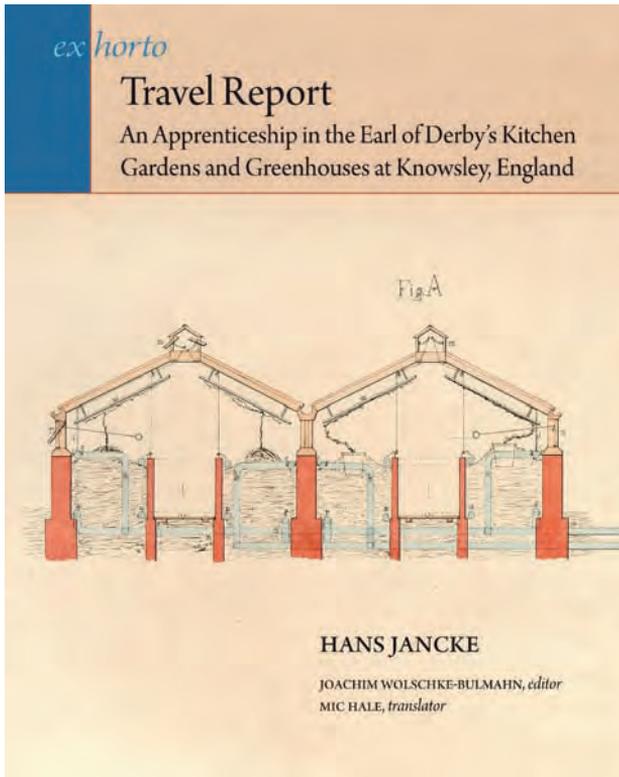


Fig. 1

before and after, spent a year as an apprentice in England in 1874–1875. His handwritten report, “An Apprenticeship in the Earl of Derby’s Kitchen Gardens and Greenhouses at Knowsley, England”, is in the Rare Book Collection at Dumbarton Oaks. Its translation and publication was a joint project with the Center of Garden Art and Landscape Architecture at Leibniz University Hannover (fig. 1). To underscore the German focus of the publication, the related colloquium on “Travel and Translation” centered especially on the German-speaking world and adjacent areas of Central Europe, with comparative examples from England, Italy, Ireland, and France.

It was the Grand Tour that established the cultural value of travel as an educational activity driven by the striving for knowledge and experience rather than mere curiosity. The chronological scope of the colloquium fell roughly under the same period (from the mid-seventeenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries), and its papers highlighted the point of transition in the social composition, objectives, and itineraries of travelers who embarked on such learning quests. The first grand tourists were typically British aristocrats drawn by the lure of ancient Roman ruins and bucolic charms, whether real or imagined, of the Italian countryside. But during the eighteenth century, as the colloquium revealed, this mobility – originally, a prerogative of the elite – was also extended to the professional classes, including gardeners, to become an important part of their training. These opportunities led

to the formation of horticulturist and botanical networks, which, together with learned societies, served as a means of disseminating specialist knowledge and new garden technologies throughout Europe.

Travel routes, destinations, and points of interest were changing accordingly. The Industrial Revolution brought about a set of new cultural priorities, with the north-south traffic towards Italy losing its privileged position among various patterns of movement across the European continent. Another trend, which occurred under the influence of the Rousseauian philosophy and the ideology of improvement, was the gradual switch of interest from individual historic gardens to the landscape at large. Mountains in particular, previously evocative mainly of dangerous crossings and bandit lairs, started to be viewed as cradles of intellectual freedom and visual expressions of new political ideals inscribed, as it were, in the topography itself. At the same time, a desire for a more ‘natural’ approach to gardening that had emerged in England was gaining strong support in the continent, culminating in the publication of Christian Cay Lorenz Hirschfeld’s five-volume *Theorie der Gartenkunst* (1779–1785), which appeared simultaneously in German and French. As the urge for sightseeing continued, travelers became less cultural pilgrims and more critical observers, turning an increasingly keen and analytical eye on what they encountered on their voyages and making landscape an object – rather than a mere setting – of their travel.

The case studies presented in the Dumbarton Oaks colloquium went some distance toward capturing this deep transformation in the cultural attitudes towards landscape, adding nuance and detail to the overall picture. For instance, Raffaella Fabiani Giannetto looked at the Veneto as one of the less studied Grand Tour destinations, suggesting that it was the distinctive character of its agriculturally thriving countryside – with relatively flat topography, gentle greenery, and subtle atmospheric effects – that may have contributed to the genesis of the landscape gardening style in England, rather than the elusive concept of the “Palladian garden.” In another case study, Finola O’Kane reconstructed travel itineraries of two eighteenth-century Irish revolutionaries, Edward FitzGerald (1763–1798) and Arthur O’Connor (1763–1852), demonstrating how landscape tourism, from a purportedly innocent educational activity, could evolve into a subversive insurrectionist practice, challenging Leo Marx’s notion that the idea of the “revolutionary landscape” was peculiar to the American experience.

Several of the other presentations featured speakers and topics that are being revisited in this publication. Kristóf Fatsar focused on the introduction of the landscape garden in Hungary – a country that historically had to rely on imported gardening styles – revealing how the lack of direct exposure to the original English models could result in eclecticism, hybridity, and distortion, complicating the transition from rigid axial geometry to a more informal approach to landscaping

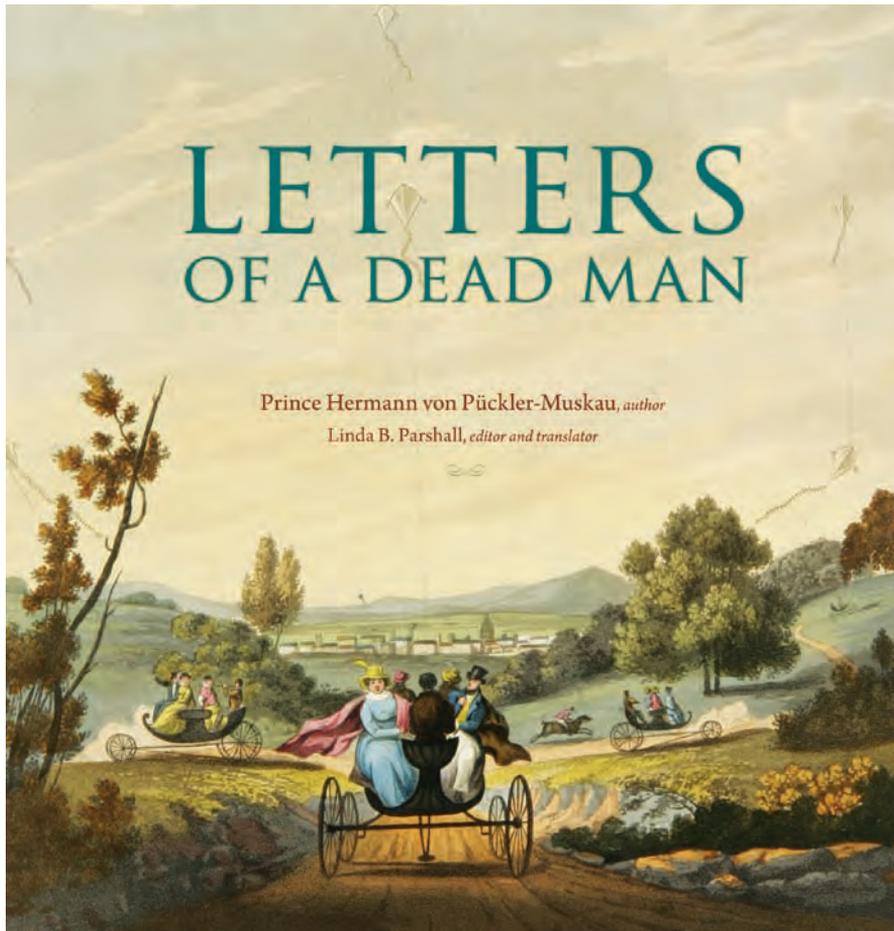
that eventually won the day. Hubertus Fischer analyzed travel reports by Heinrich Ludolph Wendland (1792–1869), a member of a distinguished Hanoverian dynasty of court gardeners, drawing attention to an early instance of this common yet largely neglected type of historical document, and highlighting the crucial function of travel in building and maintaining cross-European networks of professional contacts. Finally, Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn gave a full account of the apprenticeship that Hans Jancke (1850–1920), a native of Potsdam, served during 1874–1875 in the estate of the Earl of Derby in Knowsley, England. This presentation brought us into the more recent era, when railway communications transformed the very nature of travel, while access to advanced technologies became the principal reason for seeking training experience abroad.

One conspicuous omission from this rich array of themes, locations, and characters was perhaps the figure of Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau (1785–1871) – a landscape designer, socialite, and traveler (and, in the latter capacity, a subtle observer and charming gossip). It is perhaps not necessary in the present context to relate how, having spent his inheritance on the creation of an English-style park at Muskau (now on the border between Poland and Germany), in 1826 he embarked on a two-year tour of England, Wales, and Ireland with a vague prospect of finding a wealthy new bride to rebuild his fortune. Although frustrated in his matrimonial plans, Pückler’s travel diary in the form of letters addressed to his former wife – with whom he remained on the most amicable terms – soon turned him into a literary celebrity, providing funds necessary for the continuation of his landscaping projects.

With the publication of *Briefe eines Verstorbenen* in 1830 and 1831, Pückler became one of the most successful authors in Germany. What is perhaps less well known, in America at least, is the fate of Pückler’s *Briefe* in English. An abridged version of this book was translated by Sarah Austin in 1832 as *Tour in England, Ireland and France*. Although it met with considerable success in the British Isles and in America, it is a heavily expurgated edition, providing a charming period flavor but inadequate as a full and accurate rendering of the German text for modern readers, with much of the text’s spice and humor muted.

Some years ago, the historian Linda Parshall undertook a new and complete translation of the *Briefe*, with the support of the Foundation for Landscape Studies in New York. A little over a year ago, Dumbarton Oaks agreed to publish the volume in the translation series *ex horto*, and received a generous grant from the Stiftung Fürst-Pückler-Park Bad Muskau to improve the production values of the book and increase the number of illustrations, many of them taken from Pückler’s own “memory albums” of images collected on his travels. Translated as *Letters of a Dead Man*, this exhilarating almost eight-hundred-page illustrated volume has recently appeared (fig. 2). We hope it will bring renewed international attention to

Fig. 2



Pückler as a writer, landscape critic, social observer, and designer, restoring him in some measure to the stature he held among his contemporaries and in the later nineteenth century.

Readers of this publication might be especially interested in an auspicious connection between Pückler and Harvard University, of which Dumbarton Oaks is a part. Harvard recently observed the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of Alfred Rehder, the great botanist at the Arnold Arboretum, who not only worked at Muskau Park in his youth, but was the grandson of Jacob Heinrich Rehder, Pückler's head gardener, a man vitally important to the implementation of the Prince's landscaping ideas. Pückler's self-confessed "Park-Mania" led him to bring Rehder to England, so the two could tour the great English parks together. Rehder returned to Muskau two years before Pückler himself did, and he stayed on as gardener until his death, continuing to expand on Pückler's vision for Muskau.

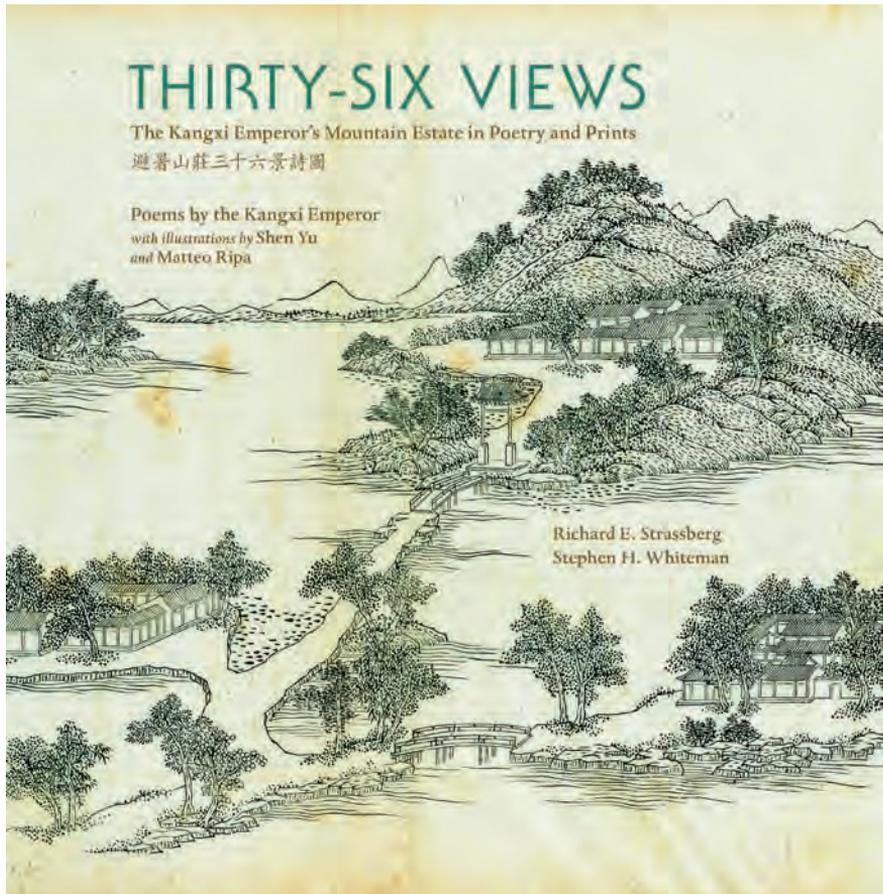
Two more instances will round out this presentation of travel-related research and publication at Dumbarton Oaks. One of them is personal. I have recently co-edited with Sonja Dümpelmann a collection of essays *Women, Modernity, and Land-*

*scape Architecture*, based on a colloquium of the same name held at the Harvard Graduate School of Design in 2011. As many of the contributions in this volume reveal, because of the lack of training and education in their home countries, female landscape architects traveled as much as or more than their male colleagues. Not only were they part of the international professional networks that spanned continents and generations in the earlier era, but many also had to travel extensively as part of their own education and professional development, and some even practiced in different countries. In comparison to many other professional women of their generation, pioneering female landscape architects thus tended to be comparatively mobile, defying the association of women with the local and women's history with localized histories. Not only did they travel for educational purposes to study, explore sites and historic landscapes, and to attend conferences, but also, like their male colleagues, they designed landscapes in various places, often traveling hundreds of miles for site visits. The stories of these female landscape architects suggest some larger implications for the study of travel. Such scholarship requires a global outlook that enables comparison and an integration of individual stories into larger, international and transnational narratives, without, however, losing sight of their equally formative local contexts.

The other of my final two instances of travel-related scholarship at Dumbarton Oaks is another publication in our translation series, *ex horto*. This is the first-ever translation into English of the *Imperial Poems on the Thirty-six Views of the Mountain Estate to Escape the Summer Heat* (1712), composed by China's Kangxi emperor, who ruled from 1662 to 1722 (fig. 3). He published this book of poems and related prose descriptions of the 36 Views as a summary self-portrait of his life in his favorite garden as he approached age 60. The setting of these poems is one of the oldest and best preserved of the Qing dynasty imperial parks, Bishu Shanzhuang, which played a significant role in the history of the Manchu court for more than a century and a half. Located beyond the Great Wall about 200 kilometers northeast of Beijing, it was the principal summer residence of five emperors, where they often lived for nearly half the year. Now a UNESCO world heritage site that covers some 1,400 acres, it rivals any other designed landscape in China in terms of significance, but it is considerably less well known than either the imperial gardens of Beijing or the literati gardens of Suzhou.

Originally written in Chinese and then translated into Manchu, Kangxi's poems were accompanied by woodblock prints, which were created by court artists to illustrate the thirty-six views. This is where travel enters into the narrative. The emperor subsequently commissioned Matteo Ripa (1682–1746), an Italian priest then serving at the imperial court, to create a set of copperplate engravings of the views. Ripa would eventually return to Europe, bring sets of these prints with him and present them to influential people, among them George I – the King of

Fig. 3



Britain and, at the same time, Elector of Hannover – and Lord Burlington. Ripa's prints became the first eyewitness images of Chinese gardens to reach Europe, perhaps as early as 1724, where they had a pronounced effect on the development of continental landscape tastes and "informal" gardening styles. Relatively few copies of the original book survive today. Harvard University is fortunate in possessing not only fine examples of the Chinese and Manchu editions with the woodblock illustrations, but also a rare bound copy of the engravings by Matteo Ripa, which is in the Dumbarton Oaks Library.

While the 36 Views present another fascinating instance of the transmission of knowledge through travel, they also reveal the way knowledge is transformed in cultural translation. Kangxi's landscape park was simultaneously translated into poems, prose descriptions, and woodblock prints. These woodblocks were translated into engravings with a decidedly more European character, which were then transmitted to Europe, becoming one of the chief instruments of Western visual knowledge of Chinese garden design. Yet they were arguably more Western than Chinese, reminding us that the viewpoint of the traveler needs to be taken into account in assessing the character and veracity of the travel account.

I am hopeful that some of the issues that I raise—especially about the point of view of the traveler, and about the need for attention to both international perspectives and local contexts—will continue to animate research and debate. In an increasingly digital world, we should continue to insist on the importance of knowledge gleaned from direct experience of landscape—material, phenomenal, and social. This is the kind of knowledge that travel has always provided, knowledge still unmatched in the virtual world.