

INTRODUCTION

PÜCKLER AND AMERICA

Sonja Duempelmann

University of Maryland

In 1975, Jim and Lolly Robertson founded the highly acclaimed ice cream parlor “Prince Pückler’s” in Eugene, Oregon. The Robertsons had come across a recipe named for Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau (1785–1871) in a culinary history of ice cream and decided to name their shop after him as well.¹ Although delicious ice cream might be an extremely effective and, to a certain degree fitting, means of propagating the Old World aristocrat’s name, as numerous children in Oregon would no doubt attest, we might also be delighted to find that Pückler’s reception in the United States rests on a firmer foundation. He planned in 1834 to cross the Atlantic and explore North America, but he never made the trip. His reputation in the United States is therefore largely based on the English translations of some of his writings and the knowledge about his landscape gardens passed on by some of the first generation professional landscape architects in the United States. The essays in this collection explore the different paths that led to Pückler’s recognition in the United States.

Pückler was born into a noble family in 1785. His enthusiasm for landscape gardening was possibly sparked when, after having finished his humanistic education and military training, he paid a visit to Goethe during one of his early journeys. Goethe had created a landscape garden along the river Ilm in Weimar, and his conversation with the young Pückler promoted the young aristocrat’s interest in nature and gardening. Pückler became count of Muskau and Branitz upon his father’s death in 1811. After participating in the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon, he spent time in England, where he visited a number of landscape gardens and familiarized himself with diverse gardening techniques. Inspired by his experiences, Pückler set to work on his own estate after his return to Muskau in 1815. From that time on, his landscape creations and writings as well as his extravagant, unconventional, and daring lifestyle that led him to be called variously a snob, dandy, adventurer, and lady-killer by many of his contemporaries, earned him fame and admiration in the German states and abroad.

Pückler came to hold a position among German landscape architects much like Frederick Law Olmsted's among their American counterparts. In German landscape architecture and garden journals of the early twentieth century, Pückler was frequently cited in conjunction with the landscape gardeners Peter Joseph Lenné, Friedrich Ludwig von Sckell, and Gustav Meyer, who, together with Christian Cay Laurenz Hirschfeld, were considered to be the founders of German garden art.² During the heated debate about the reform of garden art in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century, Pückler and his works were often used as examples by advocates of the naturalistic style and nature gardens as well as by advocates of the architectural style. Promoters of both used Pückler's teachings and landscape parks to support their arguments, as did advocates of site-specific designs not influenced by preconceived formulas or styles. Using nationalistic rhetoric, for example, the garden director Carl Hempel praised Pückler's creations as genuine German garden art in 1908 in arguing for the naturalistic garden.³ In 1911, by contrast, the garden director of Aachen, Wilhelm von Wessberge, used quotations from Pückler's writings to demonstrate that the modern architectural house garden corresponded with the prince's teachings.⁴ The garden architect and dendrologist Camillo Karl Schneider referred to Pückler's park in Muskau to support his view of the equal significance of both, the naturalistic and architectonic styles.⁵ And the garden architect J. P. Grossmann argued for the development of a garden art that, in keeping with Pückler's teachings, took each site's character and function into account.⁶ Pückler's standing among German landscape architects and his general prestige led citizens in Cottbus to form a committee in 1908 for the erection of a monument to Pückler in their city, an initiative that was seconded in 1911 by a group of influential garden directors and other dignitaries.⁷ Despite Pückler's fascination with English landscape gardens and his turn to the English landscape gardener Humphrey Repton's son, John Adey Repton, for advice,⁸ some German landscape architects in the 1920s and 1930s credited Pückler with the development of a German landscape style distinct from the landscape gardens in England. The Breslau garden director Edmund Gläser claimed the prince for Silesia and described him as "a German rooted in the soil and attached to his *Heimat*."⁹ This admiration for the "Garden Prince" culminated in the founding of the Fürst Pückler-Gesellschaft in 1930.¹⁰ That society existed until 1945 and was the precursor of the Pückler Gesellschaft e.V. created in West Berlin in 1979 to restore and maintain historic gardens and to support research in garden history.

While the *New Yorker* cartoonist Edward Frascino probably had other associations in mind when he depicted a proud American suburbanite's backyard pyramid (Figure 1), those familiar with Pückler's work are re-



"And that's my tomb."

Figure 1: Copyright The New Yorker Collection 2006 Edward Frascino from cartoonbank.com. All Rights Reserved.

mindful at once of his park at Branitz (Plate 1, page 181). Pückler's reception in the U.S. seems to have been both complex and shallow, both direct and indirect, and it is often difficult to reconstruct the circumstances of his reception and influence. At first glance, for example, there seem to be several striking conceptual similarities between Pückler's Muskau Park and the Biltmore Estate in North Carolina. Roughly the same size as Pückler's estate, the Biltmore Estate, like the park in Muskau, had a river running through it and incorporated farms, forests, and a village. Olmsted, like Pückler, considered views back to the main house and into the distant countryside essential, and he thus provided for vistas from the palatial chateau-style Biltmore House towards the Great Smoky Mountains. Though without an iconographic space comparable to Muskau Park, Olmsted's Biltmore Estate includes many features to be found there.¹¹ Whether these similarities reflect a deeper affinity in outlook between Pückler and Olmsted is a question that bears further consideration.

What exactly, then, has Prince Pückler's impact on American landscape architecture and literature been? How far have his literary and garden works been known in America? How have they been regarded? Did American landscape architects appropriate ideas promoted by Pückler in his works, and if so, how knowledgeable and critical were they of Pückler's works? Or did they simply and directly emulate his design ideas? Did they borrow from Pückler and create something new? And who were these American figures? How did they become aware of Pückler in the first place?

In recent years, scholars such as Noël Dorsey Vernon and Kurt Culbertson in the United States and Gert Gröning and Franziska Kirchner in Germany have begun to address these questions.¹² It was the goal of the conference "Pückler and America" held in Bad Muskau" in June 2006 to initiate a transatlantic dialogue on Pückler's work and reception. Organized jointly by the Stiftung Fürst-Pückler-Park Bad Muskau, the German Historical Institute, Washington, DC, and Auburn University, the conference brought together scholars in the fields of landscape history and literature from the United States and Germany. This supplement to the GHI's *Bulletin* presents a selection of the papers delivered in Bad Muskau.

In their contributions here, Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, Cord Panning, and Ulf Jacob introduce and contextualize the prince and his park in Muskau. After sketching how Romanticism was expressed in landscape and garden design, Rogers juxtaposes Pückler's landscape gardens in the German states with the urban public parks of the social reformer Frederick Law Olmsted in the democratic United States. Despite the differences in the two men's intention and in the locales and political contexts in which they worked, Rogers underscores the commonalities in their landscape works. Both Pückler and Olmsted were influenced by the Romantic idea that nature offered a remedy to the ills of civilization as well as a means to foster national identity. Rogers sees Pückler and Olmsted as two of the last Romantics in landscape architecture before landscape architects increasingly adopted a more formal design language and beaux-arts approach in park design again.

Cord Panning, executive director of the Stiftung Fürst-Pückler-Park Bad Muskau, gives an overview of the development of the park and draws the reader's attention to the difficulties in preserving the prince's work over the past century and a half. Since 1945, the park has been divided by the German-Polish border, but it has been the focus of a very effective and fruitful binational collaboration since the end of the Cold War. The border is, of course, the result of political events that occurred long after Pückler's sale of the estate in 1845; ironically, though, as a result of this latest twist of history the park reflects its original inception better

today than it had for decades. Moreover, it also arguably comes closer to fulfilling the role many American landscape architects in the early twentieth century ascribed to it than it did at the time of their visits. For the most part ignoring Pückler's sometimes high-handed actions in the village of Muskau, they considered it to be a prime example of a regional landscape that incorporated and thereby protected not only stretches of farm and forest land but also entire villages. The park today has taken this concept a step further by bridging not only municipal boundaries but also national borders.

Pückler's landscapes at Muskau and Branitz, as Ulf Jacob shows in his contribution here, are the products of his complex character as well as of his interactions with and reactions to a diverse array of contemporaries. Attached as he was to his noble family's history and its aristocratic privileges, Pückler was a witness to the break-up of Europe's old feudal order and the emergence of a new capitalistic society. Pückler adhered to conservative family tradition while at the same time embracing the Protestant work ethic. Both attitudes converged in his garden work. Analyzing the prince's attempt to realize himself as a nobleman, a man of letters, an artist, and an adventurer, Jacob interprets Pückler as a creator of different types of space. *Herrschaftsraum* (ruling space), *Textraum* (textual space), *Transzendenzraum* (transcendental space)—these spaces, Jacob contends, mark distinctive phases in Pückler's life in which the prince, influenced by other writers and contemporary cultural figures, appears as the shaper. As Jacob shows, these phases were interrupted by journeys that, much as they might have stemmed from Pückler's seemingly insatiable thirst for adventure, constituted escapes into worlds very different from his own—England (1826–29) and the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa (1835–40). One world he had planned to visit but never did was the New World.

What might Pückler have seen if he had actually carried through with his plans to travel to North America? Gert Gröning speculates on this question in his overview of Pückler's influence in the U.S. Gröning's contribution and those by Daniel Nadenicek, Keith Morgan, David Haney, and Michael Lee offer insights into Pückler's reception by landscape architects in the United States. Gröning begins his overview of "Pückler's significance for landscape architecture in America" in the middle of the nineteenth century, when encyclopedias and a handful of German immigrants were the main sources of knowledge in the U.S. about Pückler's work. Pückler's reception in American landscape architecture and gardening circles really only seems to have begun towards the end of the century, however. As landscape architecture was gaining momentum as a newly recognized profession at the turn of the century,

many American landscape architects visited Muskau Park on their tours of Europe and became infatuated with Pückler's creation.

Foremost among Pückler's American admirers was the Olmsted protégé Charles Eliot. Keith Morgan describes how Eliot developed a keen interest in the prince's landscape expertise and came to "turn to Pückler as his alternative to Olmsted as a role model." Eliot's enthusiasm for Pückler was based on his reading of Pückler's *Andeutungen über Landschaftsgärtnerei* (Hints on Landscape Gardening) and his visit to Muskau Park in 1886 at the close of his year-long European tour. On his return to the United States, Eliot remained deeply impressed with Pückler's landscape. Morgan shows how Eliot adopted the lessons he learnt in Muskau in private and public landscape commissions in his native America. Eliot's German experiences were particularly valuable, as Morgan demonstrates, for his vision of a metropolitan park system for Boston.

Eliot occupies a central place in the complex bilateral transfer of ideas in landscape architecture between Germany and America at the beginning of the twentieth century that David Haney explores in his article. Haney points out that the diffusion of Pückler's ideas was not a one-way street. After Eliot had adapted Pückler's lessons to the American landscape, the Boston metropolitan park system and other open space systems developed for American cities became models for German planners and landscape architects. The urban planner Werner Hegemann was one of the most fervent German advocates of American-style parks and park systems. Hegemann's descriptions of American parks sparked the interest of the landscape architect Leberecht Migge, who transformed the American lessons into park designs for Germany. Haney thus identifies a line of development that leads from Pückler's landscape ideas to the landscapes designed by Eliot in the northeastern United States and back to Germany by way of Hegemann and Migge.

Eliot, who died in 1897 at the age of 38, would probably have become the head of the landscape architecture program that Harvard University launched in 1900 had he lived. Given Pückler's influence on Eliot and the Boston park system, it is probably not surprising that Pückler played an important role in the landscape history curriculum at Harvard. What might come as a surprise, however, is the continuous attention that was paid to Pückler at the expense of other notable German landscape gardeners and architects such as Lenné and Sckell at Harvard through the twentieth century. Michael Lee offers insights into this story by examining how landscape history was written and taught at one of America's most influential schools of design. Since Harvard's first course dealing with landscape history was taught by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., who had been a friend and colleague of Eliot's, it is likely that Pückler was included in the curriculum from the start, even if the first written record

of Pückler's work figuring in the program dates back only to 1907. Lee shows how Pückler was regarded by the younger Olmsted's successors at Harvard and how their personal interests in different facets of Pückler's work shaped knowledge of German landscape history in the United States. Despite the skepticism about the role of history in design pedagogy in the modernist era, landscape history remained a required course at Harvard, and Pückler nonetheless stayed in the picture as teaching objectives changed over the years. Lee concludes that the continuing interest in Pückler and his landscapes at Harvard to this day is the result of the powerful legacies of Olmsted and Eliot.

Before Harvard's impact on landscape historiography, pioneering American landscape architects were influenced by the Romantic ideas and values of their time. Like Pückler in his landscape garden in Muskau, American landscape architects strived to combine the useful with the beautiful in their designs. Daniel Nadenicek explores the world of thought underlying this theoretical concept in America. The combination of the useful and the beautiful was promoted by the Transcendentalists in the first half of the nineteenth century and had an impact on the design philosophy of some of the first American landscape architects, including Frederick Law Olmsted, Robert Morris Copeland, and Horace William Shaler Cleveland. Nadenicek describes how Ralph Waldo Emerson and like-minded artists such as Horatio Greenough aimed at creating an American aesthetic based on the useful and beautiful, and how they considered landscape architecture an appropriate means of realizing that aesthetic. Olmsted, Copeland, and Cleveland, like many educated Americans who came of age in the mid-nineteenth century, were deeply influenced by Transcendentalist beliefs, and Nadenicek explains how Copeland and Cleveland gave aesthetic expression to Transcendentalist thought in their design for Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord.

Nadenicek suggests it was Romantic ideas that gave rise to similar design approaches combining utility and beauty in Pückler's Germany and Emerson's America rather than a more direct link between the prince and the "Transcendentalist designers." Some of the major Transcendentalist writers, by contrast, were well acquainted with Pückler's literary work. Bronson Alcott and Margaret Fuller, for example, were admirers of Pückler's writings.¹³ Pückler became known to English-speaking readers through Sarah Austin's translations of his *Briefe eines Verstorbenen* (1830–31), which were published under the titles *Tour in England, Ireland, and France in the Years 1828 & 1829* and *Tour in Germany, Holland and England in the years 1826, 1827, & 1828*. As might be expected, Pückler's accounts of his travels include many descriptions of gardens and parks. The landscapes he creates verbally in the *Briefe* are the subject of the essays by Linda Parshall and Hubertus Fischer that conclude this collection.

The most palpable indication of Pückler's literary influence in the U.S. is arguably Edgar Allan Poe's tale "The Landscape Garden," which was later revised and published as "The Domain of Arnheim." This story, Parshall argues, displays a great debt to Pückler the "portrayer of gardens." His writings on gardens draw upon the ancient pastoral tradition, Parshall shows, but fall clearly within the German Romantic movement. It is the Romantic aspect of Pückler's writing, she suggests, that inspired Poe to use some of the prince's tales in his own work. Whereas Parshall locates Pückler in the pastoral tradition, Hubertus Fischer considers Pückler's writings in the context of another literary genre: travel literature. Fischer defines the elements in Pückler's *Briefe eines Verstorbenen* that set them apart from the work of other contemporary travel writers. Pückler tried to emulate Heinrich Heine's *Reisebilder (Travel Pictures)*, Fischer notes, and deeply admired Walter Scott. Although Pückler's literary efforts met with both praise and criticism, admirers and critics alike acknowledged his individuality. In fact, quite atypically for the genre, the prince's published letters were based on actual correspondence, and, like few other writers, Pückler offered readers powerful descriptions that created the illusion one was his travel companion. Would Pückler have taken readers on his American journey? We will never know.

The aforementioned conference and this *Supplement* to the GHI's *Bulletin* would not have come into being without the initiative of Rachel Hildebrandt. In 2004, she contacted the GHI on behalf of the Stiftung Fürst-Pückler-Park Bad Muskau with a proposal for an exhibition illustrating German-American connections in the spheres of landscape design and literature. The proposal itself was the result of a long-running discussion between Gert Gröning of the University of the Arts Berlin, Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn of the Leibniz University in Hannover, and Cord Panning, executive director of the Muskau foundation.

I wish to thank everyone who helped to bring about the conference and make it a success. My special thanks go to my co-organizers at the Stiftung Fürst-Pückler-Park Bad Muskau, Cord Panning, Ute-Martina Kühnel, and Rachel Hildebrandt as well as to former GHI director Christof Mauch, who enthusiastically participated in the conference and made this publication possible. This collection would never have made it to the printing press without the help of David Lazar at the GHI, to whom I am truly grateful. I would like to thank all the contributors for their timely responses during the editing process and their patience. Finally, I would like to express my thanks to Auburn University, and to all the employees and interns at the Stiftung Fürst-Pückler-Park Bad Muskau and at the Polish Park Administration who in a variety of ways helped prepare and run the conference, not least by providing the participants with refreshing *Pückler Eis* in authentic surroundings.

Notes

¹ I thank Jonathan Skolnik for telling me about his favorite ice cream parlor in Eugene.

² See, e.g., Meyer Jungclaussen, "Der zeitgemässe Pückler: Wesenszüge seiner Kunst aus den 'Andeutungen über Landschaftsgärtnerei,'" *Die Gartenkunst* 55, 7–8 (1942): 102–04.

³ See, e.g., Carl Hampel, "Vortrag über Gartenkunst und ihre neuzeitlichen Bestrebungen. Teil 1," *Die Gartenwelt* 12, 51 (1908): 604–07. The same nationalist vein is evident in F. Zahn, "Fürst Pücklers gartenkünstlerisches Wirken: Ein Gedenkblatt zum 100 jährigen Bestehen des Muskauer Parks," *Die Gartenkunst* 28, 5 (1915): 61–71 (71). Also see Willy Lange, "Kunstwerke und Kunst im Garten," *Die Gartenwelt* 9, 48 (1905): 565–67.

⁴ Wilhelm von Wessberge, "Was bedeutet Pückler für die moderne Gartenkunst?" *Die Gartenwelt* 15, 10 (1911): 131–2.

⁵ See Camillo Karl Schneider, *Landschaftliche Gartengestaltung* (Leipzig, 1907), 4, 113; and Josef Buerbaum, "Kritische Betrachtungen zu C. K. Schneiders Buch: 'Landschaftliche Gartengestaltung,'" *Die Gartenwelt* 12, 6 (1907): 63–67.

⁶ J. P. Grossmann, "Die Moderne in der Gartenkunst," *Die Gartenwelt* 9, 28 (1905): 331–34.

⁷ See, e.g., the unsigned articles, "Tagesgeschichte: Cottbus (Denkmal für Fürst Pückler)," *Die Gartenwelt* 12, 37 (1908): 444, and "Denkmal für den Fürsten Hermann von Pückler," *Die Gartenkunst* 13, 3 (1911): 64.

⁸ On Humphrey Repton's influence on Pückler and John Adey Repton's visit to Pückler, see Manfred Uhlitz, "Humphrey Reptons Einfluss auf die gartenkünstlerischen Ideen den Fürsten Pückler-Muskau" (Ph.D. dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin, 1988) and Manfred Uhlitz, "Prince Pückler and John Adey Repton's visit to Prussia," *Journal of Garden History* 9, 4 (1989): 221–30.

⁹ Edmund Gläser, "Hermann Pückler, ein schlesischer Mensch," *Die Gartenkunst* 49, 6 (1936): 89–95.

¹⁰ See, e.g., "Gemeinschaftsarbeit: Neugründung einer Fürst Pückler-Gesellschaft," *Die Gartenwelt* 34, 46 (1930): 641–42.

¹¹ On Olmsted's work at the Biltmore estate, see Dana F. White and Victor A. Kramer, eds., *Olmsted South: Old South Critic/New South Planner* (Westport, 1979) and Charles E. Beveridge and Susan L. Klaus, *The Olmsteds at Biltmore*, NAOP Workbook Series 5 (Bethesda, 1995).

¹² Noël Dorsey Vernon, "Adolph Strauch: Cincinnati and the Legacy of Spring Grove Cemetery," in William H. Tisher, ed., *Midwestern Landscape Architecture* (Urbana, 2000), 5–24; Kurt Culbertson, "George Edward Kessler: Landscape Architect of the American Renaissance," in Tisher, ed., *Midwestern Landscape Architecture*, 99–116; Franziska Kirchner, *Der Central Park in New York und der Einfluss der deutschen Gartentheorie und-praxis auf seine Gestaltung*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Gartenkunst 23 (Worms, 2002); Gert Gröning, "Pückler und Amerika: Die Rezeption Pücklers bei Landschaftsarchitekten in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika," *Stadt und Grün* 7 (2003): 49–55. See also Patrick Bowe, "Pückler-Muskau's Estate and its Influence on American Landscape Architecture," *Garden History* 23, 2 (1995): 192–200, and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, "Zwischen Hudson-River und Neiße, Fürst Pückler, die Muskauer Wasserfälle und das Hudson-River-Portfolio," *Die Gartenkunst* 10 (1998): 300–09.

¹³ See Margaret Fuller, letter to Caroline Sturgis, March 4, 1839, in Robert N. Hudspeth, ed., *The Letters of Margaret Fuller*, vol. 2, 1839–41 (Ithaca, 1983–c1994), 57–61 (61), and Sigrid Bauschinger, *The Trumpet of Reform: German Literature in Nineteenth-Century New England*, translated by Thomas Hansen (Columbia, SC, 1998), 158.