

# TEXTS, LANDSCAPES, AND LIFE

Anne Whiston Spirm

“I have been saying the same thing all these years,” you said to me the other day. Yes, your themes are constant. You have cultivated your written work as you have tended your garden: planting shoots and seeds in deliberate patterns with an eye to present context and future form, learning from growth and changing circumstance, continually shaping, pruning, and planting afresh. The original structure of garden, of texts has held through all these years; neither has been repeatedly ripped out and replaced to follow fashion.<sup>1</sup>

We each belong to a set of themes, passions that become a life’s work, threads that weave us into lineages of practice and theory. Your web has many strands, linking your work to that of C.Th. Sørensen, Steen Eiler Rasmussen, G.N. Brandt, Sven Hermelin, Frederik Magnus Piper, Pieter Breughel, Geoffrey Jellicoe, and Kevin Lynch, as well as medieval monks, anonymous farmers and gardeners. Life themes shared across generations and cultures forge friendships among teachers, students, and colleagues – living, dead, unborn. You describe how such friendship inspired the book on C.Th. Sørensen, how it led you to give the title ‘Parkpolitik’ to another, how Sørensen regarded Le Nôtre and Ligorio as colleagues and kept their portraits, like family, in his bedroom.<sup>2</sup> While the landscapes you design may change over time, the written record will stand unaltered. From the articles for ‘Hem i Sverige’ in the 1950s to the recent essay on preservation in ‘Landskab,’ the same voice speaks across the years: always intelligent, confident, engaging; often playful, poetic; seldom, but sometimes, chiding. Fifty years from now readers will grasp your ideas, see your vision, and feel the force of your personality as do we who call you teacher, colleague, friend.

My subject here is your written work, texts that range across forty years and a spectrum of topics: gardens and gardening, city and countryside, your own designs, identity of place, art and aesthetics, and landscape architecture, its scope and practice. The texts trace paths of thought and

action across decades; I follow one topic, one motif, one theme after another, and watch each develop through the years. To discuss your written work is a daunting task. Yet it is unwise, impossible even, to isolate the built work from the written, or for that matter, to view texts and landscapes apart from your life. For you, theory is grounded in practice, practice guided by theory, and everything grows from the values that imbue your life. Themes of text, landscape, and life are one: time, theater, pleasure, art and aesthetics, place, and profession, all overlapping, interwoven, fused.

## Time

I am struck again and again by how pervasive and finely tuned is your sense of time: descriptions of landscape’s shifting, ephemeral phenomena, of living traditions and swinging fashions. You sweep us through the day, across seasons, reflecting on the past, envisioning the future, returning to the present, ever sure of your own place in time. There are those who would freeze the present, those who cling to the past, those who would break from both past and present. All too often, leaders in nature conservation, historic preservation, and artistic expression are separate people. Your particular talent is to preserve tradition through artful “free renewal,” to embrace change within a flexible structure. In the recognition of transience, tradition and renewal both gain significance: this has always been your theme.

Two stamps – “Danish Preservation” and “Niels Bohr’s Atomic Theory” – are juxtaposed at the end of an article of 1966.<sup>3</sup> These two images might just as well be your tiny, old farm house – called Marnas after its former owner – and its garden. The house is preserved much as it was one hundred years ago, with no indoor plumbing; the garden is a laboratory where ideas are tried and tested. It is also a workshop where you pursue ancient practices: growing pears in bottles for brandy, clipping hedges, making soil from wastes, and other tasks depicted in the Breughel print

Engraving on SIA's office wall. "Spring." Pieter Breugel the Elder. 1565.



that hangs opposite your desk and reappears in your texts.<sup>4</sup> For you, traditional gardening is a link “through history to human existence and evolution.”<sup>5</sup>

You describe the garden at Marnas as a celebration of transience, an open experiment steeped in tradition, changing as the plants grow and you age. In a succession of articles from 1958, I watch it evolve.<sup>6</sup> I follow your reflections on hedges, see your former garden with the left-over privet shrubs “that decided they wanted to become birds,” discover the article on a topiary garden, and learn how Marnas was designed to “hold the dream” of yourself as an old man sitting under a hawthorn grove. I track the changes to the garden over the years and even come across it in an article on garden preservation! Reading the plans from 1967 and 1976 and a succession of photographs, I recognize the grid of hedges enclosing many rooms, large and small. The birds clipped from hawthorn, now over ten feet tall, occupied their “hen-yard” from the beginning. I also see former phases, gardens barely recognizable as the one I know. Your daughter Beate’s sunny, little garden is now a shady room filled with lilies of the valley; her son Viktor’s special place is not beneath the trees as you imagined, but under the shade structure built to shelter tender plants. The “orchard” is now occupied by the guesthouse and privy and a gazebo built from the old windows of the architecture school you retrieved from the trashpile. One surviving fruit tree shades a wonderful spot to sit, looking out, like Thomas Jefferson at Monticello, toward the blue distance of your “sea view.”

In 1958 you published a plea for the preservation of old gardens; an early article in ‘Havekunst’ was also on garden preservation, as were your two most recent essays.<sup>7</sup> Between the first and last lie thirty-five years of practice and reflection, yet your basic approach remains constant: gardens are a temporal art, composed of materials that grow and change, that cannot be frozen in time. How then, can they be preserved? Then and now, you distinguish among three

types of preservation: reconstruction, renovation, and renewal. In a reconstruction, you remind us, we build *again*: from reliable documentation, to support the original functions, using the same materials and construction techniques, with sufficient funds to maintain the result. In a reconstruction, landscape architects are technicians, members of a team of experts. Renovation is more difficult: choices must be made and priorities set, all guided by an understanding of the spirit of the place, the original conception, and the elements that contributed to its artistic quality. Renovation is an enterprise of artful translation. Free renewal you offer as an approach that preserves not the form itself, nor even its spirit, but rather what you deem the *value* of the original, its artistic quality. You support free renewal as the preferable approach when documentation or funding is not adequate for reconstruction and too little of the original is left to support renovation – better a new form with a strong artistic concept than a dry copy devoid of the aesthetic qualities that made the original memorable.<sup>8</sup>

You tested and refined these “principles of preservation” in restoration projects such as Frederiksdals trädgårdar (1960s), Sophienholm (1970s), and Uraniborg (1990s), all described in published essays and professional reports. Reading both types of text, experiencing the places, one can follow the dialogue between theory and practice.<sup>9</sup> How fitting that Uraniborg, Tycho Brahe’s observatory and garden on the island of Ven, your recent reconstruction project, is a fusion of reconstruction, renovation, and free renewal. It is deliberately incomplete, suggestive, rather than exhaustive. An invitation to imagine.

As with other topics, your position on preservation deepens with experience, but does not change fundamentally. In 1958 as in 1993, time and tradition, art and aesthetics, place, pleasure, and theater are all seen as integral aspects of garden preservation.<sup>10</sup> In 1958, you discuss identity of place as a reason for preservation, pointing out the significance

and cumulative effect of humble gardens that are adapted to particular conditions and customs. By 1993, you devote a whole section to *Genius loci* (spirit of place). In 1958 you stress the magical wonder of gardens and the sensations they arouse with a rhyme. By 1993, pleasure – *Locus amoenus* (delightful place) – is a principle of preservation: never lose sight of the ephemeral pleasures of the present in translating the past. In 1959, you refer to Steen Eiler Rasmussen’s description of landscape as “that slow play,”<sup>11</sup> and in 1991, you describe the garden at Glorup at day’s end: “Now the sun sinks, and the mist returns. The scenery is different, but the scene is the same.”<sup>12</sup> By 1993, this has expanded into the concept of *Teatrum orbi*.

### Landscape as Theater

*“Teatrum orbi is a broad concept. It can represent the art of the theater as a mirror of the world. Or it can suggest the opposite, that reality is an illusion, that truth is found in the theater. Theater is both flight from reality and concentration of reality. In that paradox lies a particular parallel between theater and garden art.”*<sup>13</sup>

Like theater, landscape is an art of time, space, and story: “A good park is like a Shakespeare play. You expect to be entertained, and you certainly are, but besides you get a deeper awareness of life, of humanity, and of yourself.”<sup>14</sup> In landscape as theater, “trees form the scene, the frame around life” and are “themselves actors in a long play.”<sup>15</sup> Plants and animals have lives of their own, with their own stories, which humans interpret in various ways, for their own purposes. The autonomy of non-human actors and the impulse to interpret their stories underlie garden design, inform the dialogue of clipped and unclipped, of control, serendipity, and response. You describe how four privet shrubs, left over after planting the hedges of your former garden, were set in a serendipitous group, then a few years

later “developed a sudden desire to become long-necked birds.” “We helped them,” you said, “with pruning and clipping.”<sup>16</sup> The garden at Marnas is full of such dialogues – a single rose stem “decides” to grow through the privet hedge and blooms alone against clipped green. Landscape is an evolving play that is never finished; landscape design is like coming on stage during a play already long underway, and facing the challenge of engaging and extending ongoing dialogues.<sup>17</sup>

You often write of the designers and the original clients as if they still inhabit the landscapes they built. In the guide to Liselund, the Calmettes and their guests pop in and out, and a whole page in ‘Landscape Art in Denmark’ is devoted to a fantasy where you describe Kongens Have on a summer day in 1626 with Christian IV and his daughter Leonora Christina!<sup>18</sup> At first it seemed a bit strange to read descriptions of people who lived 200 years ago living on in the gardens; now I think you see life and landscape as a continuum, one long play with many actors – flowers, people, trees, rocks – who come and go across the stage, the landscape, some staying for only a day, a week, a season, others remaining for 80 years, 200 years, a thousand years. And you call yourself a “practical performer!”<sup>19</sup>

Such fantastic imaginings have their uses; as a designer you also cast your imagination forward in time. You ended the competition submission for Parc de la Villette, with “a realistic dream of November 1, 1993, 5 PM,” a whimsical swirl of imagined events, encounters, thoughts, sounds, smells, conversations, closing with the words with which you began –

### Pleasure

“Bonjour Plaisir!” Thus you introduce your prize-winning proposal for La Villette.<sup>20</sup> The ability to imagine how people might enjoy themselves makes for a good designer and a good host; you show the same concern for visitors to your

parks and gardens as you do your guests. And who knows better how to take pleasure from city parks! Like many apartment-dwelling Copenhageners, you use public parks as outdoor rooms, arranging a simple supper for twenty along the water of Christianshavn in May's low, evening light, a June picnic in Kongens Have after a lecture. So natural, then, to describe the purpose of garden buildings thus: "to shelter from rain and wind and form a frame around a lunch."<sup>21</sup>

Who else would list pleasure as one of the principles of garden preservation! *Locus amoenus*, the senses at play in the garden: "an intense experience of the moment's pleasure affords the strongest feeling of eternity."<sup>22</sup> Thus you capture the paradoxical relationship between the transient and the eternal.

In a text that sets out the circumstances and hopes for Limhamn's park, you state its functions so that no one should lose sight of the primary experiential goals: promenading, ball-playing, dog-walking, jogging, sun-bathing, sea-sensing, star-gazing, watching ferries come and go, sitting alone, bird-watching, sniffing honeysuckle...<sup>23</sup> The park is for all of these functions, and they must be integrated; the visitor should experience something unplanned and unexpected: "an intimate experience of nature when you are looking for beauty, ...beauty when you have set out for jogging."<sup>24</sup> You speak of the park as a place for sensual fantasy and admonish designers to allow free play for the user's pleasure and need for dreaming: "Escapism is part of the human constitution. It cannot be denied. It should not be neglected."<sup>25</sup>

## Place

You describe Liselund as the essence of Denmark: the beech forest's light, rustling leaves and cool shade; the meadow's high grass, pungent odor, and luxuriant growth; dense forest edge counterposed to grassy meadow, framing inti-

mate rooms in the rolling landscape; simple, unpretentious house sited against the forest edge.<sup>26</sup> For you, identity of place is rooted both in sensual reality and in tradition. The sensual experience of landscape is accumulated over days, seasons, years; landscape is shaped by sets of processes and practices repeated over time.

Coastlines and hedges figure prominently in your writings; both are basic elements of the Danish landscape. No point in Denmark is far from the coast: stiff winds whip off the sea across the low, open landscape; the sheltered outdoor room is a welcome respite. Coastlines, with their strong sensual, symbolic, and mythic presence, are a counterpoint to these intimate spaces.<sup>27</sup> Coastlines and hedges yield the characteristic combination of long, open view and close-up detail, exposed prospect and enclosed room.

*"Hedges grow well and evenly in the homogeneous soil. And the square enclosed by hedges is in our blood – it is part of the Danish garden tradition. The fact that we retained the Renaissance garden style so long, and never really abandoned it, is because it suits the Danish climate and the Danish soil. It suits us."*<sup>28</sup>

How do the spatial qualities of landscape promote identity of place and thus enhance a sense of orientation and well-being? 'Structure, Identity, and Scale' (1972) frames and explores this question, applying Kevin Lynch's ideas about the "imagability" of cities to the rural landscape.<sup>29</sup> You analyze three different landscapes at several scales, their spatial structure (relation of parts to the whole) and identity (distinctiveness of individual elements, their variety and contrast to context), gliding from the scale of a forest to that of an anthill within, then zooming out to the context of the regional landscape. Viewed from the intermediate perspective, the even-aged, second-growth beech woods has a diffuse, homogeneous structure and weak identity, its parts (the trees) relatively indistinguishable from one another. But structure at the scale of the anthill (stones,

traces of cultivation, ant paths, an old stump) is marvelously varied, its identity strong; so too at the grander scale of the region where the woods is juxtaposed to valley, stream, farmfields, and road. Scale is crucial, you conclude; any evaluation of spatial quality must relate to a particular scale (for landscape scale is an infinite spectrum from large to small), and “one of the most important steps in the analysis of landscape is to find the scale that dominates the landscape under investigation.”<sup>30</sup> Analysis, however, is never an end in itself, but a tool of design, a means of devising principles to guide, evaluate, and refine the act of shaping “the architecture of the landscape.”<sup>31</sup>

You chide landscape planners for their unnecessarily narrow focus on ecological, political, economic, and social concerns and neglect of the spatial and aesthetic: “serious engagement in social problems and great ecological knowledge are masked in the end by dilettantish planning.”<sup>32</sup> For “the power of our profession is the power of the coastline,” that dynamic, elemental place with all its sensual and symbolic associations.<sup>33</sup> The power of our profession lies in the art of creating places that stimulate senses, evoke joy, embody paradox, reflect tradition, and inspire hope, places whose aesthetic qualities endure (and are valued) beyond the specific economic and social context from which they arose.

### Art and Aesthetics

“Art is not a quality,” you say. “Art is the result of an intention. It may be good or bad, as any art critic knows.”<sup>34</sup> Given your stress on sensual experience, it comes as no surprise that you assert “landscape architecture can do without art, but not without aesthetics” and that, ultimately, “art cannot survive without aesthetics.”<sup>35</sup> And do not confuse ecological design and ecological art, you warn; they stem from the same values, but with different goals.<sup>36</sup>

“America is plagued just now by an art complex,” with landscape architects trying “to play the role of free artists

imitating...the gallery whim...of a few years ago.” Meanwhile, “European schools are focusing on ecology” and parks and gardens are designed as “scientifically controlled wilderness.” “The profession is confused and so is the public.”<sup>37</sup> Landscape architecture should focus on aesthetics rather than art, and landscape architects must not separate aesthetics and ecology, for “we are the only profession trained to design space in a landscape context.”<sup>38</sup> You make the distinction between landscape design and garden art in order “to promote art without confusing the profession.”<sup>39</sup> Then why did you insist on identifying C.Th. Sørensen as a garden artist rather than a landscape architect? I remember arguing with you about that. While a concern for aesthetic quality pervades all the texts, and while you take pains to identify gardens as an art form, you have published relatively little on art and aesthetics *per se*. That surprises me, given how strongly you feel about the subject.

### Profession

What is landscape architecture? You return to this question repeatedly, arguing that “the very essence of our profession lies in the combination of design and architecture with ecology,” defining design as the shaping of an object, architecture as the shaping of space, and ecology as an enlightened form of gardening. Within landscape architecture, you identify landscape planning, landscape design, and garden art as separate fields, relating the first to city planning, the second to architecture, and the third to poetry. The focus of each is distinct, but the boundaries are blurred: they are “three focal points in the same picture.”<sup>40</sup> You have lectured and written on all three areas and have practiced landscape design and garden art. The breadth of your interest and expertise, in scope of topics and scales of concern, is significant in an age of specialization and increasingly narrow professional focus. Landscape architecture demands breadth, for concerns related to landscape, by their nature, transcend

scales and intersect diverse issues. Your major interest, and practice, has been in the smaller, tangible scale of plaza, park, and garden, but you have resisted the prevalent polarities of planning vs. design, ecology vs. art, preservation vs. avant-garde experiment, designer's control vs. user's freedom of expression, occupying instead a middle ground enriched by paradox.

The tradition of the academic practitioner is strong in Denmark; two prime exemplars, Brandt and Sørensen, were your predecessors at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. A teacher in the broadest sense, you write for colleagues and students, but also for politicians, public officials, clients, and ordinary people. You explore and clarify in order to affect decisions and effect change, to enhance the appreciation of landscape, to promote the profession. Your written and built work are closely related; one domain illuminates, tests, and expands the other. The resulting clarity of thought, worked out in essays and landscapes, exposes the folly of separating theory and practice.

There is a wealth of texts in which you record your thoughts on projects as they evolve: initial proposals, reports, and then reflections, sometimes years later, on what happened.<sup>41</sup> As any practicing designer knows, the gaps between what is designed, what is built, and what survives are often heartbreakingly great. How sad that the designs for La Défense were not carried out; how fortunate we are to have the description of what could have been.

"It is difficult to work in foreign countries," you say, not so much due to language or lack of a professional network, as to the fact that "one is outside one's professional and social tradition."<sup>42</sup> A sense of your own place in time, space, and culture is an aid to navigating the shoals of foreign customs, but things easily go awry, as you relate in reflections on seven years' work on Vienna's Karlsplatz.

But this is also true on home ground. The larger the project, especially public projects, the more numerous and

diverse are the clients, the agencies to consult, the colleagues in other disciplines, the contractors in construction and maintenance. The essence of a project can easily be lost in misunderstandings or in the competing interests of so many actors, or sacrificed to tight funding or bland acceptability. You remind us that garden preservation is an enterprise that can only be accomplished by many different kinds of people acting in collaboration. One must therefore take care to define and agree upon the ideas that will guide the project, particularly those that relate to the special qualities of the garden in question and how it will be used and experienced.<sup>43</sup> This is true not only of preservation projects; it applies equally to other types of design projects – parks and parkways, plazas, cemeteries, suburbs.

Over the years, you have used a beautifully simple strategy to stimulate the creative process and to draw all the actors into collaboration. You compose a brief, lyrical statement of the special qualities of a site and the intent of the design, a blend of the sensual and ecological, the poetic and pragmatic.<sup>44</sup> For you, this text is an integral part of the act of design and also an implicit pact between you and your client. The qualities and ideas sketched in these texts seem so elemental, so simple, but unexpressed, they are easily lost. These texts are touchstones that serve as a standard against which to measure results. The "touchstone texts" distill the sensual reality, the experiential and ephemeral so often forgotten in the face of more "serious" and practical matters. They are a reminder that the material product must "hold the dream."

## Two Texts

In 1967, the editors of 'Arkitekten' asked for an essay on complexity. You responded with "A Letter from My Hen-Yard." Ostensibly a reflection on the newly planted garden at Marnas, it presents a philosophy of landscape and life, at once light and deep, playful and critical, spontaneous and

composed, reminding us that in landscape, ideas are tangible, and values have consequences. This gentle, but pointed, manifesto should be read by all students of architecture, landscape architecture, and planning.<sup>45</sup>

We all need a way to express ourselves by shaping our environment, you say; we need a corner where we can make something that doesn't have to add up to anything. Today we have great freedom and opportunity to buy manufactured products, but few possibilities for making things ourselves. The need for a material product of self-expression is at the root of planted wheelbarrows, wooden shacks, community gardens, and your hawthorn hens. Adventure playgrounds are as important for adults as they are for children.

How then can we justify the aesthetic double standard that asserts the architect's right to experiment, yet imprisons the users "behind a nice facade" and windows with "neutral curtains" and prevents them from the exuberant display of self-expression "which could be the true folklore of industrial society"? How can we find a balance, you ask, between planning and flexibility, between stability, on the one hand, and freedom, growth, and individual development, on the other?

The garden at Marnas embodies your resolution of these questions: establish a structure and let the details evolve. The themes and the basic strategy are the same explored by Brandt at Mariebjerg cemetery and Sørensen at Nærum Garden Colony. Your garden, like Brandt's and Sørensen's, is an interplay of order and complexity. The structure establishes the order; time and circumstance contribute complexity.

The trees are planted, you write, but the hen-yard is certainly not finished: "I have a definite idea of how my hen-yard will end [as a grove of hawthornes], but that which lies between now and then is an open plan." "A lot can happen before the hen-yard becomes a hawthorn grove." Despite

the fixed framework, there are many potential variations: how high should the hedges be? Should their tops be clipped horizontally or follow the terrain? What about the spaces between the rooms: should they be seen as voids or as rooms in themselves?

*Despite the many possibilities, I am not afraid of the result. And even if the whole thing just becomes a big mess, it won't be all bad. My confidence stems not so much from a sense of my own ability to manage the affair, but from two facts: the simple pattern of the planting and the material, hawthorn... If I always proceed with a respect for the placement of the hawthornes and their existence as living organisms, they will always form a clear pattern that can adapt to whatever serendipitous circumstances are introduced by myself and by time.<sup>46</sup>*

Plan only those details that express the essential framework and let the others emerge. And do not overplan the details; leave room for serendipity. "The only ideal city planned in detail that still functions well is the botanical garden at Padua... But then it is plants that are concerned there." Not people.

I am reminded of our recent visit to your newly constructed project surrounding the new student center at Lund University. A broad white arc bounds the edge of a grassy green amphitheater, inscribing a quarter-circle from the entrance to where it disappears into a little hill. The white arc is a raised box filled with chalky white rocks, large and small, from the bluffs on the nearby coast. Hefting a rock, feeling the chalky texture, I predicted that the students would use them to draw words and pictures on the surrounding pavement. "That would make me happy," you replied.

There is one essay, translated skillfully into English, where you sketch your own portrait – "The Lost Paradise," an extended reflection on Karen Blixen's garden at Rungstedlund.<sup>47</sup> An English-speaker should read this essay first,

before any others, then strive to hear your voice behind the flat translations in 'Landskab' and elsewhere. Your description of Blixen's fusion of texts, landscapes, and life, provides the perfect introduction to SIA. Always aware of views at different times of day and different seasons, you describe how on winter afternoons the sun's rays "strike deep into the room before it disappears among the branches of the grove." You imagine Blixen choosing her seat by a window, and thus her prospect, as carefully as she chose her words, so that she can look out where "the winter sunshine plays in the snow-laden branches on the other side of the deep cold shadow of the farmhouse." You see a parallel between garden and texts. The thorn arch, gateway into Rungstedlund, is "an example of the progressive scale often met in Rungstedlund garden[s] as well as in Karen Blixen's writings: the small and near-at-hand contraposed to the large and remote." Attuned yourself to the interplay between the deliberate and the serendipitous, you wonder: "Garden or park, intentional planting or edited coincidence? Such questions present themselves at Rungstedlund."

"For Karen Blixen the kitchen garden...became part of her staging of life as a work of art." Her flower arrangements were "a synthesis of Rungstedlund, herself, and the occasion." Yet you sense "the hint of a sigh of relief" when the old housekeeper speaks of how the kitchen garden, which needed "to be dug over every autumn and every spring sown with vegetables...succumbed to the landscaping of the garden."

"But what is work?" you ask, "A few years ago the small Swedish summer court at Sofiero slaved away deadheading the rhododendrons there." Behind these words is the farmer's son, the man who has dug, sown, watered, pruned, and eaten from the same garden for thirty years, who empties out the privy into the compost pile to make the soil that "drives the whole." A person who can describe a lost paradise thus: "The meadow and the trees. The sky and the

clouds. The blackbird pulling up worms, and the sparrow rummaging in horse droppings." Your close work with the translator paid off; she caught your cadence and didn't prune the long sentences where phrase follows phrase, observations, allusions, and reflections all building and breaking, wave upon wave. Then comes a curt phrase – pay attention here! – called out by a period. This I know about you: the way words are said, deeds done, or gardens made has intense significance. Style matters.

As your words propel us in space and time – gazing through a window into the garden across seasons and times of day, stepping into a seventeenth-century print, moving through the park, shifting seamlessly, effortlessly from the mental to the material and back again – you remind us that every garden, every landscape, engages body and mind; each is a material, spatial, temporal, intellectual, and spiritual phenomenon.

### **The Future: An Open Plan**

You once told me your writing has mostly been in response to requests for something specific: an article, a review, a guidebook, a history. What distinguishes the body of your work from an assortment of disparate texts is the consistent structure of the themes within which the details are adapted to the particular topic, time, and audience.

Yet the two books you most want to write, the one on trees and the one on Marnas, remain unwritten. They once existed only in *your* imagination, but in the telling they have come alive in *mine*: 'Two Trees' and 'The Garden at Marnas,' each illustrated with photographs taken over forty years. Philemon and Baucis will surely figure in 'Two Trees,' along with gateways and that wonderful photograph of people sitting beneath two trees in Dyrehaven, shoots from the same old stump.<sup>48</sup> And then 'The Garden at Marnas,' as it was envisioned and planted, as it has changed over thirty years:

*If I am so fortunate to live to a patriarchal age and feeble senility, and if my hen-yard hasn't been torn down for a rocket launching pad or some other useful thing, sometime near the turn of the century, I will sit in a grove of hawthornes with a rug round my legs. Perhaps there is a little clearing which lets the sun reach the ground in a few places, but mainly all that I have shaped has disintegrated, now I no longer have the strength to hold clippers or clamber up ladders. My son-in-law has no interest for this sort of thing and folk cannot be hired for garden work. Nonetheless, I am satisfied. The hawthornes are grateful for the freedom to develop a lovely, healthy growth. In early summer all the branches are decked with masses of yellow-white flowers, like whipped cream, which later fall to the ground like a silent snowfall, leaving the crooked stems standing black against the white ground. In fall, the branches are weighed down by dark red fruits and by all the birds that thrive in the sheltered world of the thorn grove and enjoy its edible fall dress. If I am truly fortunate my great grandchildren will make hideouts under the trees.<sup>49</sup>*

What lies between now and then is still an open plan, but one whose structure has so far held the dream – in texts, landscapes, and life.

*Since I first met SIA four years ago, our talks have been one long conversation extending over days and distance, weaving the past with fresh experience. This friendship has informed and enriched my reading of the texts, and the essay is thus an extension of our ongoing discussion. I am also grateful to the insights of Steen Hoyer and Henrik Pøhlsgaard, with whom I discussed parts of this essay, and, as always, to Paul Spirn for close reading of text and ideas.*

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