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The Aesthetics of Garden Conservation

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Abstract: The aim of the article is to discuss two theories of garden conservation. The difference between them lies in how they conceive of gardens and consequently what values they find worthy of protection. The ‘idealistic’ theory treats gardens as cultural objects similar to other works and demands that the form originally designed should be restored. The ‘materialistic’ theory claims that gardens can be only conserved because of their processual qualities. The goal of conservation is then not to set back the garden process or stop it, but to keep it on and direct it. The author’s contention is that the latter theory is better because it corresponds with what gardens are, namely natural environments arranged by humans. This definition of a garden is discussed in the first part of the article.

I. INTRODUCTION

In 2011, Warsaw local authorities decided to restore one of the city’s centrally-located historical parks. To justify their position, they claimed that Krasinski Garden needed a facelift after several decades of neglect. Moreover, after refurbishment, this garden could provide green space for neighbourhood residents, who previously enjoyed it, as well as tourists crossing it on their way to the recently opened Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

Created in the 17th century, Krasinski Garden is one of Warsaw’s first public parks. Throughout its history, it underwent a series of stylistic modifications aimed at keeping up with current landscaping fashions. The last thorough rearrangement took place at the end of the 19th century when Franciszek Szanior, then Warsaw’s leading gardener and landscape designer,

decided to give it a modernist, landscape appearance. During WWII, the garden faced one of the Warsaw Ghetto's walls and during the Warsaw Uprising, it housed a cemetery. After the war, the park was enlarged in order to disguise city areas still in ruin and the park's forested areas continued to expand, offering refuge for trees transplanted from various construction sites across the city. After so many years of neglect, the Krasinski Garden had grown 'wild'. Nevertheless, visitors especially appreciated this green space, since it was relatively rich in fauna and flora. Moreover, its primary visitors were elderly people, who had lived for decades in its surroundings and considered it an object of deep affection.

The restoration project provoked deep controversy, mainly because it involved the felling of hundreds of trees.¹ To justify this extreme intervention, the architects and local authorities claimed to be addressing phytosanitary measures, security issues, as well as aesthetic and historical motifs. In fact, the latter must have been primary, since the architect's stated goal was to restore Szanior's elegant look. The *modus operandi* adopted in Krasinski Garden is hardly exceptional. In fact, this approach expresses and serves as an illustration of a more general way of thinking about garden restoration, since it is quite standard for those engaged in garden studies and garden conservation, and is thus not without reason. The aim of the article is to offer an alternative perspective on what a garden is and how historic gardens should be cared for. For the sake of the argument presented here, these approaches will be presented as contrasting, but they are not dichotomic, and are thus not mutually exclusive.

The last quarter of the 20th century witnessed an increased interest in gardens on behalf of scholars from various disciplines. The reasons behind this intellectual trend are multiple, but one stands out: academics suddenly noticed that the richness and significance of gardening traditions did not warrant the lack of attention being paid to gardens. Even though historical gardens were unanimously considered spectacular artworks, they were rarely discussed as compared to architecture, painting or sculpture. Moreover, hardly any attention used to be paid to contemporary landscape architecture, and everyday gardening practices are totally excluded from academic writings. This bizarre oversight prompted Michel Conan to ask, 'Why does contemporary Garden Art receive so little attention from art critics, even less than Land Art, Earthworks or Landscape Design? This is somewhat extraordinary since gardens have been more numerous and ubiquitous in contemporary western cities over the last fifty years than at any previous time in their history, and tourist attention for historical gardens has prompted an important surge in historic garden renovation.'²

In fact, artistic practices of the 60s and 70s, which merged land, nature, and an awareness of the ecological crisis, first inspired scholars to reconsider the garden's role in Western culture.³ This revived interest in gardening had practical motivations, since research was necessary to prevent certain historic

gardens from disappearing in countries undergoing the economic and construction boom of the 60s and 70s.⁴ Research showed that gardens should be saved because they offer important, yet neglected, elements of cultural and natural heritage. Hence, Eugenio Battisti, one of the leading lights in garden studies, claimed that gardens should be approached in both iconological and ecological terms.⁵ Incidentally, it may be noted that this interest in gardens corresponded to the interest in landscapes in general, which were ‘discovered’ as cultural and natural goods deserving of discussion and protection.⁶

Garden Studies is too interdisciplinary to claim that there is some well-defined theoretical core that defines them as an academic discipline. Yet, what seems to unite all garden scholars is the belief that ‘[t]he range of places that can be envisaged within this category [i.e. garden] is enormous and various, and it changes from place to place, and from time to time. Yet this diversity does not wholly inhibit us from knowing what it is we want to discuss when we speak of the garden.’⁷ The ‘tacit knowledge’ of what gardens are is in turn based on the belief that gardens, which are made mainly with nature, living or not, or rather – to be more precise – made from what is believed to be nature, as opposed to culture, are very particular human works. The fact that gardens are places where art (culture) and nature meet, places them somewhere *between* art and nature. Putting it another way, what makes gardens so different from other human works and spaces is that they are simultaneously artificial and natural. This thus determines ‘why [they] were (...) created? How were they used or visited (...)? And how does their representation in different arts express the position and value of the garden with its culture in diverse periods?’⁸

Further evidence of the discovery of gardens significance for western culture is that they’ve inspired new theoretical approaches employed by academics working in both aesthetics and conservation theory. Not only do these fields appear to have little in common, but ‘the aesthetics of garden conservation’ hinted at in this paper’s title does not really exist as a separate field of study. Even so, these fields share common views. First, both fields treat gardens like ‘objects’ that should be approached in new ways, because traditional aesthetics and architecture-oriented conservation theory prove insufficient. Secondly, garden aesthetics and garden conservation are both focused – the former for theoretical reasons, the latter for practical ones – on the weave of art and nature typical of gardens. They are thus both attentive to a core issue that is routinely overlooked by garden studies or studied only in historical contexts as a ‘matrix’ of garden styles. Even if garden studies scholars admit that ‘the garden is typically a place of paradox, being the work of men and women, yet created from the elements of nature’, they don’t analyse this paradoxical intertwinement of art (culture) and nature.⁹ Put differently, garden studies fails to question ‘what makes the art-nature relationship in gardens so particular, notwithstanding the variety

of garden forms, styles and uses?’ Instead, garden aestheticians try to answer this, while garden conservators take it into account as part of their practice.

Garden aesthetics and garden conservation could shed light on each other, since the former discusses how nature’s presence makes gardens different from other artworks and how this fact influences garden conservation practices. The latter, being forced to cope mainly with natural forces of growth and decay, which inevitably change the original human design, allows one to see that no matter how strongly we associate gardens with culture, they are natural environments all the same.

II. ENVIRONMENTAL GARDEN AESTHETICS

It is not unusual to approach gardens philosophically. Unlike the philosopher’s approach, which is also termed ‘garden aesthetics’ or a ‘philosophy of gardens’, garden scholars tend to interpret gardens as being expressive of particular philosophies of nature to which the original garden patrons or designers must have adhered.¹⁰ Particular cultivation practices reveal their owners’ views about nature (even though they might not be aware of their own beliefs). Similar interpretations are sometimes applied to contemporary yards. With both cases, gardens offer explicit or implicit illustrations of certain worldviews.

By contrast, philosophers treat gardens as objects deserving of a proper philosophical analysis, which is supposed to result in a better understanding of ‘what it is we want to discuss when we speak of the garden’.¹¹ David E. Cooper notes that today’s philosophers follow an agenda established in the 18th century, when garden aesthetics was born.¹² They tend to gravitate around 3 issues: 1) how should gardens be appreciated – as artworks or natural environments?, 2) what meanings can gardens convey as places partly artificial and partly natural?, 3) what is the relationship of art and nature in gardens? Initially, only the last two questions seemed relevant for garden conservation aesthetics, since they address whether the human design or natural materials ought to be conserved (or restored) and the manner in which it should be conserved, i.e. the conservation ethics. Yet, in fact, answering these two largely depends on how one addresses the first. Should gardens be seen as human-made ‘objects’ or ‘natural environments affected by humanity’?¹³

Many garden scholars and garden conservators claim that gardens are works of art, even if they recognise – how could they not?! – the presence and significance of natural elements in gardens. For example, Polish garden historian Longin Majdecki observes:

Creating a garden space consists of shaping interiors by means of vegetation, land forms, waters and other factors, all of which are combined with climate and soil. [...] Natural and living materials and elements are of primary importance for the spatial and compositional organisation of gardens. Architectural and sculp-

tural elements are subsidiary [in a garden] and therefore a garden composition is defined above all by the properties of natural elements. A garden composition is a dynamic system changing in time and space.¹⁴

In the final analysis, however, in spite of such statements Majdecki and other scholars fail to appreciate nature as distinct from garden's design. In conceiving of gardens as 'cultural objects,' they treat them on par with buildings, paintings or sculptures whose meaning or value is rooted in their creator's intentions or their social, cultural context.¹⁵ As a result, they strangely neglect nature, in the sense that they treat it like a passive medium, whose import reflects its role in materially embodying cultural meanings, such that '[b]oth the physical gardens and the ideas that drive them are cultural constructions'.¹⁶

Although most people accept that the presence of nature, whether living or not, contributes to each garden's charm ('garden is nothing if it does not seduce us' – Hunt claims), garden studies scholars tend to elevate a design's intellectual content, the way art writers privilege artworks' ideas.¹⁷ It thus seems that garden analyses follow the art historical analyses of traditional artworks and differ from them only in being more interdisciplinary since gardens involve a wide range of arts and have always played much more complex roles in the social lives of their patrons, users, and current visitors. Undoubtedly, there are good reasons for taking an art historical approach, however partial it may be, yet it inevitably undervalues nature's significance.

Rather than argue that this approach be abandoned, I contend that it should be expanded in such a way as to cover the non-artistic aspects of gardens. There are at least three reasons that support such a claim. (Although these refer to 'typical' gardens associated with the European tradition, they prove relevant *toutes proportions gardées* to other traditions as well, such as Japanese rock gardens).

First, people usually think of gardens as artfully made of nature, living or not. What is at stake here is not nature or art as distinct spheres to be objectively determined, but rather what people believe to be art (artful) or nature (natural). The difference between art and nature is conceptual.¹⁸ Hence, places made of materials deemed artificial or unnatural, such as plastic or glass (e.g. Martha Schwartz's gardens), are treated more as 'gardens' (or conceptual art) than true gardens. Second, people tend to react differently to nature living around them than to e.g. concrete walls. As Robert Harbison rightly remarks, '[i]f we imagine the forms of a formal garden like the Boboli or Villa Medici in masonry instead of vegetation we get an unexpectedly bizarre construction which shows that people let themselves be confined by plants in ways they would endure uneasily indoors'.¹⁹ The same may be said about Japanese zen gardens. Were they made from clay or steel, they might provoke uncanny feelings. Finally, even though it could be said (in a Spinozian vein)

that every artwork is made of nature, the fact that gardens are more often than not made of living nature is crucial (aliveness is an important part of property of nature in a garden, though nature includes inanimate objects too, such as rocks). Harbison notes:

A gardener takes what is there and begins to bend it to his will, but it is always getting beyond him. While painters don't make pigments or writers language, those materials do not go on living and dying visibly. [T]hose works are not green one day and brown the next, tamed for a time but never permanently subdued.²⁰

My taking the presence of nature in gardens seriously, rather than trivially, is not meant to disregard human intentions and efforts.²¹ Gardens are thoroughly human spaces but their human character is so particular and very often spectacular because of nature's nonhuman character. Without the latter, the former would pass unnoticed. Mara Miller's defining a garden as 'any purposeful arrangement of natural objects (such as sand, water, plants, rocks, etc.) [...] which is not fully accounted for by purely practical considerations as convenience,' underlines this aspect of garden art.²² Her definition includes two noteworthy points: she explicitly conceives of a garden in terms of an arranged natural environment, which is irreducible to its instrumental value. '[I]n a garden, there is in some sense an 'excess' of form, more than can be accounted for by physical necessity, and this form provides some sort of satisfaction in itself, and some sort of 'meaning' or 'significance.'²³ For Miller, the form's excess is due to the greater effort needed to create a garden as art, than is ordinarily required for garden whose use is wholly practical. She also underscores that its excess of form makes a garden a work of art. In other words, gardens are natural environments created by people in order to offer aesthetic satisfaction. Miller is, however, careful not to overrate human creative activities.

Because gardens are environments and not objects, Miller highlights, it is senseless to evaluate them using art-oriented aesthetics.²⁴ In fact, she points out that gardens' artistic status is very different than that of traditional artworks. She notes that gardens are not objects to be contemplated, which face some spectator; but environments that surround those who have already entered. Moreover, fully-immersed bodies perceive them with all of their senses. Hardly stable, gardens change according to seasonal cycles as well as the linear passage of time, so it is impossible to discern the garden's original or finished shape. Gardens depend heavily on factors such as light, temperature, and moisture, which determine not only how plants grow, but how gardens develop over time, but also – and even more importantly – how they feel at a particular moment in time. Given nature's unpredictability, gardens too are uncontrollable.²⁵ Thus, any 'excess of form' should not be associated only with

some anticipated or expected design, but also with the garden's forthcoming natural processes that are to be aesthetically appreciated on par with their composition.

I now try to enrich Miller's theory with one offered by Malcolm Budd, who recommended *aesthetically* appreciating nature *as* nature, i.e. as not being a human creation (work of art). This requires appreciating all nature's sensual and extra-sensual properties in a manner that is *disinterested*.²⁶ He actually offers gardens as examples of places where one may aesthetically appreciate non-pristine nature as nature. He suggests viewing them as 'nature affected by humanity' and hence they should also be appreciated in terms of 'human design or purpose or activity'.²⁷ His argument also works the other way around, namely it contends that we can appreciate gardens for their nature, not just as human creations.

A similar idea, though rooted in a completely different philosophical tradition, is found in Rosario Assunto's writings.²⁸ Having declared himself to be an essentialist and traditional thinker, this Italian philosopher and garden historian argues for a trans-historical idea or essence of garden which has been embodied in various ways throughout the course of history. What defines a garden is not, however, the way it looks or functions, but the manner in which it is cultivated and used. In other words, what transforms place into a garden are human practices based on particular approaches to the environment. According to his view, people's propensity to establish gardens stems from some need to create environments that correspond to ideal nature. The differences in garden styles result from the variety of historical ideals of nature adapted by garden designers. In other words, every garden offers an image of nature that is to be contemplated, i.e. approached in a disinterested way.

Assunto does not deny that nature found in gardens may serve other functions (e.g. social or productive). He rather claims that in the garden, nature is never reduced to its instrumental value, and is thus treated as an end in itself. Hence, gardens are places where nature is arranged in a manner that corresponds with human design, yet shows itself as natural (even if idealised), i.e. not human made. In this way, people experience nature aesthetically in gardens, as they discover its aesthetic value, which they may fail to notice elsewhere. As a result, all the gardens, including historic ones, educate people, and thus help them to develop an ecological approach based on contemplative mood and respect for nature. Thus, gardens require our protection and conservation for their biological value, as well as their cultural-historical meanings.²⁹

When the three theories discussed above (Miller, Budd, and Assunto) are combined, a garden turns out to be a place where nature is cultivated and used in a particular manner, rooted in an aesthetic appreciation of nature as nature. It should also be contemplated. As a result, naturalness (non-artificiality) of nature is recognised and acknowledged. It does not mean, however, that nature is let loose. As Hugh Johnson writes, there is 'one com-

mon factor between all gardens, and that is control of nature, to a greater or lesser extent, by humans'.³⁰ It implies, however, that even if people impose their designs onto nature, they routinely struggle with it. Moreover, people don't appreciate nature instrumentally, that is, for complying with their intentions. Rather, aesthetic appreciation of nature in a garden as nature amounts to appreciating its autonomous, human-independent, unpredictable character. It goes without saying that nature may be experienced in this manner outside gardens, too, but – as Assunto rightly claims – gardens are places where nature is arranged in such a way as to offer this sort of experience.

Given that the term 'nature' is notoriously ambiguous and that it has been shown on many occasions to be nothing more than a cultural construct and hence the culture-nature dichotomy is flawed, it is advisable to use it to mean 'non-human' or 'other-than-human'. Thus, nature in a garden consists of everything that is not rooted in human ideas, ideals, intentions, interests, etc. Gardens are thus places that have been designed to exhibit human designs, realised in a non-human sphere.

An aesthetic experience of nature is not the only kind of experience one has in a garden. Gardens are works of art (technique) that can be experienced thusly (it would be erroneous to intentionally overlook their designers' intentions as gardens are intentional human creations). A garden experience is, as it were, located between two poles, an aesthetic experience of human design and that of natural order (other-than-humanness).³¹ In as much as the latter accompanies the former and is intended by it, it is crucial for understanding what a garden is. Just as nature is essential to gardens as well as to their functions and meanings, one's aesthetic experience of nature is crucial for one's aesthetic experience of a garden. The aesthetic experience of nature is a basis for many possible manners of experiencing a garden (e.g. as a place that provides food or represents political power). What is more, the aesthetic experience of natural order allows one to experience the design of a garden in a fuller way, i.e., it allows one to experience the conceptual aspect of the garden as an aspect which is 'all too human'. In other words, the aesthetic experience of nature makes it possible to experience a garden as art.

To sum things up, garden aesthetics allows one to alter the usual garden studies approach, so that nature's contribution to gardens is adequately appreciated and the tension between art and nature is not treated trivially, as mere practical garden prerequisites, but is seriously considered as a *differentia specifica* of gardens. As we shall see, this has far-reaching implications for, among other things, garden conservation. Garden aesthetics proposes that instead of treating nature as a passive medium similar to paint in a picture or stone in a statue, nature in a garden should be thought of as an other-than-human co-creator of the garden. As such, it should be taken into account not only in terms of its material presence, but also in terms of what it means to people. Do garden's meanings result solely from the garden creator's or patron's intentions and not from an interaction among the landscape architect,

nature itself not to mention all the intermediaries such as garden workers? And is it not possible to interpret gardens regardless of anyone's intentions? Let's think of historic gardens. Do they become meaningless just because people cannot decode them properly? If this is so, why do people flock to visit them?³²

III. GARDEN CONSERVATION OR RESTORATION?

Given that garden conservation necessarily operates in the field extending '[b]etween the permanence (however relative) of stone and the transience of flowers', it is closely related to garden aesthetics.³³ As in other art domains, garden conservation theory and practice are aimed at taking care of aesthetic and historical values.³⁴ The greatest challenge garden conservators face stems from the fact that nature is aesthetically experienced *hic et nunc* in a garden. That is, its particular shape can be credited as much to its historical design as its own growth patterns, which ruin these designs. The approach to nature in a garden is the main cause of clashes between conservation theories which lean toward iconology or ecology. The former stresses the conceptual aspects embodied in the garden's design, yet the latter appreciates nature's material presence, so they could also be characterised as 'idealistic' and 'materialistic'.³⁵

In spite of noticeable differences, these two theories agree in so far as they claim that what makes garden conservation particular is that over time gardens constantly and rapidly change. In other words, they treat gardens as 'living monuments'. This expression was used in the 1981 Florence Charter, a document that defined the aims and scopes of garden conservation for the first time. According to this charter,

The historic garden is an architectural composition whose constituents are primarily vegetal and therefore living, which means that they are perishable and renewable. Thus, its appearance reflects the perpetual balance between the cycle of the seasons, the growth and decay of nature and the desire of the artist and craftsman to keep it permanently unchanged. As a monument, a historic garden must be preserved in accordance with the spirit of the Venice Charter. However, since it is a living monument, its preservation must be governed by specific rules which are the subject of the Present charter.³⁶

The Florence Charter also declares gardens to be places where one experiences a 'direct affinity between civilisation and nature' [§5]. By stating that historic gardens are interesting 'from the historical or artistic point of view' [§1], the document's authors underline gardens' iconological dimensions, which are above of all cultural monuments that also happen to be alive. As a result, the garden's authenticity 'depends as much on the design and scale

of its various parts as on its decorative features and on the choice of plant or inorganic materials adopted for each of its parts' [§9]. Plants are to be selected in such a way that they conform with the design. This document is noteworthy not only because it details the 'conceptual, ethical and political vacuum surrounding gardens'³⁷ and summarises 20th-century garden conservation practices and theories, but also because it opened a debate on the generally shared assumptions concerning what it means to conserve and restore gardens. These discussions ushered in the materialistic approach.

The main controversy was caused by the view that it could be possible to reconstruct an historic garden.³⁸ Italian conservators vehemently protested, proclaiming that their national garden charter states, among other things, that:

[E]very garden is unique and limited, has its own history (birth, growth, changes, and decay) that reflects the society and culture which designed it, used it, or related to it in any way. [...] Conservation practices have to respect the whole historical process of a garden, because the evolution of the garden structure as well as its subsequent configurations have been materialised in this process. [...] Therefore any act that privileges one historical phase and recreates it *ex novo* at the expense of later phases impoverishes the garden and is reductive, as well as decidedly anti-historical.³⁹

The main difference between the Florence Charter and its Italian counterpart is that the former recognises the material history of gardens, yet it also claims that conservation practices should be aimed at restoring or maintaining the original design, rather than conserving the garden's material elements. Given that a garden's material history is largely due to natural processes, the Italian stance emphasises the significance of nature as an important source of each garden's uniqueness. Two disparate philosophies of gardens ground these two theories. The bone of contention between them is not whether gardens are more artificial or less natural, but how to judge its dynamic character rooted in nature's presence.⁴⁰ Contrary to the Florence Charter, the Italian *carta* treats gardens as works of art whose dynamic quality should not be regarded as a negative 'property' threatening them from the inside. Rather, gardens' dynamism is a positive trait, since it makes gardens what they are, living places, simultaneously ruining the original design.

Breaking with the century-old tradition of comparing gardens to buildings, paintings, or poems, Italian conservators liken them to music.⁴¹ Francesco Fariello describes this approach in *Architettura dei giardini*:

What is typical for gardens, no matter where and when they were created, is that they incessantly oscillate between nature and artificiality, between architectonic discipline and painterly freedom, between structure and impression. [...] As subject to natural

laws of growth and changes, gardens are located between art and nature, between eternity of immutable marble and the momentariness of the ever-changing natural scenery. In this respect, the art of gardening is to some extent akin to music which expresses itself between the eternity of conception and the momentary directness of sound.⁴²

The musical metaphor employed here suggests that gardens should be conceived as artworks that endure like music thanks to time, not in spite of it. In addition to analysing a garden's timeless design, one must consider its changing character, because garden landscapes are directly and sensorily experienced *hic et nunc*. A garden thus resembles a melody comprising a series of arranged sounds. This comparison isn't meant to suggest that gardens are sequences of views, like musical bars, to be experienced while one strolls around. Rather, every single place in a garden is Heraclitean, constantly changing due to growth and unstable weather conditions. Unlike architecture, painting or sculpture, gardens are experienced as ephemeral. Comparing gardens to music allows one to stress not only gardens' fugacious character, but also connects the 'eternity of conception' to vegetal matter's 'momentary directness' involved in the garden's transient nature. As landscape conservator Maria Chiara Pozzana points out:

It is possible to think of a garden in terms of a musical composition that has a fixed structure which is defined by the score and repeated ad infinitum together with all its possible variations and yet remains the same original work. Obviously, this comparison is only conceptual as a garden is a totally different work, nevertheless the artist's idea, developed in the original design, may repeat itself over and over again in the course of seasons and vegetal cycles, maintaining its initial form. [...] A garden is a work of art that lives and thus is 'in becoming'. [...] A garden is always different and yet the same.⁴³

Pozzana's position suggests another interpretation of the gardens' 'musical quality'. Gardens are music-like because they change over time and yet various aspects persist unchanged. 'Nature [thus] acts like an artist and performs the piece in real time.'⁴⁴ If gardens are indeed ephemeral, then it is not so far off to consider their changing forms 'epiphanies' of scores.⁴⁵ The changes that a garden inevitably undergoes may be due to human interventions, too. As Eugenio Battisti observed:

There are monuments which last on the condition of being interpreted, because their structure contains aleatory, interactive elements which require that they [be] performed rather than understood. According to old, mythical denominations, garden art

is the Muse's gift like music or theatre. It is ephemeral inasmuch as its masterpieces are essentially unstable and ever-changing and they go down in history as eminent examples of numerous makeovers or amendments [...]. A garden is never a spectre of itself.⁴⁶

All the arguments quoted above are meant to show that one should think of gardens as processes, which are only partly structured by human intentions or actions because they cannot be fully controlled or stopped. It is not possible to go back to an earlier phase, either. Should any of this happen, the garden would become a timeless and lifeless 'spectre'. This is the main threat to the 'idealistic' approach to garden conservation.

The controversy surrounding garden conservation theory reflects a more general one dating back to the beginnings of conservation theory as such. The Italian *carta* builds on the ideas of Alois Riegl, who individuated two values attributed to monuments: historical and age values. Historical value is rooted in the formal and conceptual aspects of the original design of objects, whereas age value stems from the fact that monuments bear material traces of time's passage. Absent the cultural monument's historical value, they cease to be monuments, which led Riegl to oppose the view that monuments need to be conserved intact, let alone restored. He argued that monuments robbed of their age value would lose their authenticity.⁴⁷ Although Riegl didn't actually address gardens, his theory is easily adaptable to garden conservation, since historic gardens are also monuments. He did, however, apply his theory to the idea of natural monuments such as centuries-old trees.

The conservation of historical monuments thus represents a difficult, nigh impossible, task of balancing what the monument was when it was first conceived and built, and what it has become over time. Polish garden conservator Janusz Bogdanowski remarks that:

In no other art does the continuity of changes define to such an extent the essence of art. Despite a garden's supposed consistency (once designed, a garden lasts in its general shape), a constant changeability reigns in it. [...] Stone or brick architecture may last in a more or less unchanged form for centuries. When a garden is created, its development begins. A garden is an organism whose evolution only partially depends on its creator's intentions. When we look at beautiful old parks and gardens many years or even centuries after they were designed, it is difficult to guess what the designer intended and what was made by nature. [...] Not only does diligent care not conserve the atmosphere of [green] interiors, but it necessarily follows whatever changes they are undergoing. A garden is a living composition. [...] Once created, a garden conserves its 'personality' as characterised by changeability.⁴⁸

Bogdanowski's statement seems rather uncontroversial and few would reject his defining garden conservation as conserving a garden's unique 'per-

sonality'. However, if the garden is constantly changing, it acquires its age value thanks to processes which are internal to it unlike buildings, paintings or sculptures whose age value is rooted in processes external to them. It is impossible to ignore a garden's age value, making garden conservation much more problematic than architectural conservation. Bogdanowski's statement thus suggests that garden conservation consider not only the garden's historical value, but also its age value, which exponents of the 'idealistic' approach largely ignore, since this approach privileges the garden's original design, that is its historical value.

One way to achieve – as effectively as possible – the Rieglian 'impossible' goal is to treat a garden in terms of an open work, as Battisti recommends.⁴⁹ Garden design is thus conceived of as a set of parameters that define the general character of processes that take place in gardens. Consequently, there are no original shapes to be restored, while those shapes which are thought to be original and hence highly valuable are only initial compositions that trigger natural processes happening in the garden. A garden should be thought of as a palimpsest in which subsequent layers result from human and other-than-human actions. Those cultural and natural layers are too closely intertwined to be dissected, so removing upper strata in order to make a lower one come to light in fact destroys the palimpsest as a whole. Hence, according to Italian specialists, garden conservation consists of taking care of the garden palimpsest in such a way as to conserve already existent layers and at the same time to add a new one.⁵⁰

This approach offers two main ramifications: 1) It implies that all the conservation efforts are perforce contemporary and consequently any pretensions to restoring a historical shape of a garden are unsubstantiated. 2) All of the garden's past layers or historical phases are regarded as equally valid and have their own historical value that has to be conserved. An existing garden is the unique document of its cultural and natural history. Its authenticity lies in its material being continuous and yet not immutable. And of course, this is easier said than done.

One way to put the above theory into practice is to regard conservation as everyday maintenance and care.⁵¹ Such an approach prevents gardens from becoming wild, or a garden lacking any trace of human design, since it encourages interventions such as pruning, weeding, replacing dead flowers and shrubs with new ones, cutting down ill trees. If the theory's aim were to justify some sort of non-interventionist policy then such a notion of conservation would be off bounds. Everyday maintenance amounts to both acknowledging that some design both governs the garden and making space for nature's activity and adjusting one's efforts to it. Even if gardens are predicated on some design, it is unlikely to remain fixed for long, since it will be modified by either human decision or natural forces respected by the gardener.

The garden's dynamic 'personality' can be conserved and such conservation practices prolong those cultivation practices in use long before the garden

became an historical monument. Such practices are aimed not only at subjecting nature to human needs but also at taking care of it. Thus conceived, garden conservation turns out to be based not only on an aesthetic appreciation of a garden as a work of art, as it is suggested by the Florence Charter, but also on an aesthetic appreciation of nature in a garden as nature.

The materialistic theory has been criticised for various reasons. Some say it undervalues gardens' artistic or cultural aspects, since it fails to protect the cultural heritage to which gardens belong.⁵² It is often accused of preferring historical values over aesthetic ones, since historical meanings are protected at the expense of the garden's aesthetic consistency. As Polish garden historian Malgorzata Szafranska writes: 'a palimpsest is not a work of art [but] a collection of historical curiosities'.⁵³ She claims that gardens were supposed to offer aesthetic experiences, but achieving this goal means the original design must be restored even if it implies undermining its age value. Contrary to Italian conservators who privilege age value, she accepts the idea of restoration, even if it's a contemporary interpretation of the designer's idea. She also criticises the idea of associating authenticity with garden's material (biological) aspects, since she believes that there are much better ways to guarantee a garden's authenticity than to ensure the continuity of garden practices, i.e. manners in which a garden is cultivated and used.

These criticisms of the materialistic theory are rooted in a philosophy of gardens that interprets gardens as primarily 'objects' that are meant to remain more or less the same throughout their history, but inevitably change under the pressure of external factors. Since gardens are approached here in terms of conceptual contents that are embodied in natural elements, nature is perceived as one of these factors. The claim implied by such voices is that a garden design requires living nature, but only in so far as no other medium offers similar aesthetic experiences. Hence, within the limits of this particular medium one can do whatever it takes to materialise the creator's concept, i.e. the 'idealistic' side of the garden. This is one of the reasons why plants are replaced by other species and the garden's authenticity doesn't depend on lasting flora.

Italian conservators instead treat gardens more like human-affected natural environments, which are valuable precisely because their existence has not been materially interrupted. Gardens restored to some original point are not only considered fake, but the idea of recreating nonexistent gardens is dismissed from the get-go. At best, restoring such a garden would erase earlier modifications of the garden, leading some to conceive restoration work as the creation of a new, contemporary garden. Such approaches do not mean that they overlook garden's cultural aspects or deny the importance of original designs. Rather than overvalue gardens' aesthetic values as artworks, they value living nature as an element without which gardens are unthinkable and stress the need for practices aimed at taking care of what already exists. The musical metaphor they use serves this purpose.

That some compare garden conservation to everyday cultivation should not be interpreted as a call to garden permissiveness. Garden cultivation amounts to caring for nature, but at the same time it always follows a particular scheme. Given its caring character, cultivation leaves space for nature's agency, accepting a certain degree of nature's resistance, and thus does not eliminate *per se* the changes that nature introduces to the design. The same may be said of changes made by the human hand – the fact that some past actions departed from some original design does not necessarily mean that they are unwelcome and should be undone. Garden conservation as daily practice combines a respect for vegetal material conceived of as a vehicle for authenticity (at least as important as the design), as well as for cultivation interventions without which gardens designed as a particular space cannot exist. Such an approach is based on the belief the garden's authenticity lies not in its unchangeable form, but in the 'dynamic balance between form and matter, between duration and modifications'.⁵⁴

IV. CONCLUSIONS

If one thinks of gardens in terms suggested by the garden aesthetics sketched above – as I do – then one accepts the Italian theory of garden conservation as articulated in the Italian *carta*. And vice versa. If one finds this theory convincing, then one accepts environmental garden aesthetics. It's my contention that the idea of gardens as natural environments affected by humans, such that nature is arranged (or created) in such a way as to be an object of an aesthetic appreciation as nature, i.e. as other-than-human, is a logical consequence of the generally accepted claim that gardens are places of 'the direct affinity between civilisation and nature' and places where the tension between art and nature has a unique character. That gardens achieve this dynamic balance, thanks to the constant struggle between human and natural forces, can be more adequately understood if we abandon the traditional object-oriented ontology of gardens in favour of a process-oriented one. Gardens are processes rather than results, and environments, not objects.⁵⁵

The 'materialistic' theory of garden conservation together with its musical metaphor captures this approach. It underlines the processual character of gardens and values nature as a co-creator of the garden and hence treats it not only as a passive vehicle of meanings, but also as their source. It neither neglects the garden's original design, nor treats it as sacrosanct. Contrary to 'idealistic' beliefs, it claims that it is not possible to think of the garden's identity and hence its authenticity without referring to its *longue durée*, which is made possible by nothing else than nature.⁵⁶ What's more, I contend that the aesthetic experience of nature as nature that gardens offer is of primary importance and corresponds with the wider public's everyday, commonsensical beliefs.

Undoubtedly, ordinary visitors appreciate the garden's artistic or historical values, yet they really appreciate being surrounded by and immersed in nature, even if they realise that human hands arranged the nature around them. An important element of this satisfaction is their awareness of the fact that many of the trees and shrubs, though less transient than flowers, are actually old. To a large extent, Riegl was right – authenticity in gardens is rooted in their material, i.e., vegetal dimension. It is thus possible to restore a garden, but if it is devoid of age value, then it is likely to be perceived as a simulacrum, hiding the fact that the original has been lost forever, even if we know exactly what it once was like.

Returning to the Krasinski Garden introduced at this paper's onset, this garden really is a simulacrum. Not only was one phase of the palimpsest – not even the initial one – arbitrarily chosen to be re-achieved through restoration, but also the expansion of the forest, made possible by post WWII reconstruction, was entirely erased. In fact, it is only during the garden's restoration that its historical continuity was disrupted for the first time. Today's garden reflects contemporary Polish culture far more than the garden's glorious past, so it will take time before it becomes a historical garden again and feels authentic. As elegant, neat and ordered as it is now, it largely resembles gardens associated with newly-landscaped gated communities. Such gardens are usually appreciated for their newness value (Riegl's term).

The Krasinski Garden case proves that the values people appreciate about new gardens are unlikely to be the same ones that people, who recognise a garden's long, important history, appreciate as belonging to living monuments. When confronted with either the 'idealistic' or 'materialistic' theory, one must ask oneself: Is it really better to create a new garden *à la* what is known about its original design, thanks to plans and pictures, than it is to regularly conserve the garden, trying to preserve its original design without doing more than is possible or necessary?

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NOTES

1. Salwa 2014b.
2. Conan 2007, 3.
3. Leddy 1988; Ross 1998, 189-224.
4. Assunto 1988.
5. Battisti 2004, 319-326.
6. Goodchild 2009.
7. Leslie 2013, XII.
8. Leslie 2013.
9. Leslie 2013.
10. Cooper 2006.
11. Salwa 2016, 22-32.
12. Cooper 2009.
13. Budd 2002, 7; see below.
14. Majdecki 2007, 11.
15. Hunt 1991.
16. Leslie 2013, XII.
17. Hunt 2004, 38.
18. Birnbacher 2014.
19. Harbison 2000, 4.
20. Harbison 2000, 4.
21. I borrow the serious/trivial approach from Hepburn 1993.
22. Miller 1993, 15.

23. Miller 1993, 15.
24. This line of argument is one offered by Hepburn 1966, who first wondered why traditional aesthetics had so little interest in natural beauty.
25. Miller 1993, 115-117; see also Salwa 2014a, Salwa 2016, 156-186.
26. Budd 2002.
27. Budd 2002, 7, note 9.
28. Assunto 1988.
29. Assunto 1996.
30. Johnson 1979, 8.
31. Carlson 2000, 115-121.
32. Treib 2011.
33. Mosser 2000, 528-529.
34. Brandi 2005.
35. Salwa 2015.
36. ICOMOS-IFLA International Committee for Historic Gardens 1981, §2-3; on the history of the Charter see ICOMOS 1993.
37. Mosser 2000, 525.
38. ICOMOS-IFLA International Committee for Historic Gardens 1981, §15-17; on the controversy see Pelissetti and Scazzosi 2009; Giusti 2004, 132-174; Cazzato 1989.
39. Quoted after Pozzana 1996, 236-237.
40. One difference between animate and inanimate nature lies in the processes' rate of change: animate nature changes more quickly than inanimate nature.
41. Salwa 2016, 137-146; such comparisons may also be found in Miller 2010; Barwell and Powell 2010.
42. Fariello 1967, 4.
43. Pozzana 1996, 22, 150.
44. Pozzana 1996, 148; see also Petraroia 1989.
45. Catalano and Panzini 1991, 7.
46. Battisti 1989, 220.
47. Riegl 1982.
48. Bogdanowski 2000, 8.
49. Scazzosi 1993.
50. Boriani et al. 1987; Catalano and Panzini 1991, 7; Boriani 1992; Dezzi Bardeschi 1992; Pozzana 1996, 24.
51. Agostoni 1989; Carbonara 1989; Rinaldi 1989; Pozzana 1996, 153.
52. Majdecki 1993, 25-26; Bonelli 1989.
53. Szafranska 2004, 165; see also Szafranska 2000.
54. Rinaldi 1989, 139.
55. Miller 1998, 279.
56. Cfr. Elliot 1997.

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