

CULTIVATING IMPERIAL IDENTITY: THE GARDEN CITY AND URBAN LANDSCAPES
IN LONDON, CALCUTTA AND DELHI, C. 1860-1931

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

My dissertation considers how the cultivation of the garden was tied into the development of the colonial modern in the 19th century and early 20th century, setting in place value systems rooted in the link between horticultural space and urbanity itself in both metropole and colony. By considering the garden as imperial place-maker, I analyze how the garden was transmitted across multiple geographies and scales, foregrounding it as a modern site not just of aesthetic appeal but of disciplinary power. It was at once a mechanism for sifting out the difference between imperial subject and citizen and a space of collective identity in an often turbulent imperial context.

The urban morphologies of London, Calcutta and New Delhi – the British imperial capitols studied here – reflect the fractured nature of local, national and imperial debates about open space, the place of the living and the dead, and questions of imperial and even global identity. As a civilizing paradigm, the urban garden landscape both in England and in India solved crises of material and social ills brought on by rapid urbanization, neutralized class consciousness and integrated the working classes and natives into the national/imperial landscape, and regulated both errant English and Indian bodies. This ‘greening’ of the urban landscape was linked to a specific form of imperial modernity, a material and discursive representation of social progress on an extra-national scale. By the second decade of the 20th century, my project shows how the garden had come to be identified as a space to not only cultivate the land but produce a civic and imperial identity at multiple scales and across shifting geographies.

This work is based on a wide range of British and Indian government reports, newspapers, periodicals, journals, travelogues and other accounts, archival work done in the India Office Records held at the British Library, the manuscript collections of Lord Hardinge (microfilm) and Lord Curzon at the British Library, the letters of Edwin Lutyens to his wife, Emily, held at the Victoria & Albert Museum, the collections of the Royal Botanical Gardens held at Kew, and the archives of the Metropolitan Board of Works, the London County Council, and the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association at the London Metropolitan Archives.

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recuperate those missing bodies in the representations of open space. That some of those bodies are still 'missing' is more the fault of the writer than the advisor.

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Introduction: The Ideal of the Garden City and the Realities of the Raj

One of the first objects of a colonist on arriving at a new settlement is to plant a garden, as at once a proof of possession, and a pledge of immediate enjoyment; and indeed the history of the civilization of mankind bears evidence, that there are few benefits which a cultivated people can bestow on savage tribes, greater than that of distributing among them the seeds of good fruits and oleraceous herbs, and teaching them their culture.

John Claudius Loudon, *The Encyclopedia of Gardening*, 1824

[The English] remain at heart a country people...Our hearts are never in the town, even when we are forced to live in it, and our idea of improving it is to make it as much like the country as we can.

“English Ideals of Gardening” in *The Times*, 16 November 1907

In 1915, H.J. Davies, Superintendent of the Government Horticultural Gardens in Lucknow, published a pamphlet calling for the inclusion of children’s gardens in the school curricula of Indian village communities. These gardens, he argued, having “for some years past been recognized as an essential feature in the daily life of a child,” would provide beautiful surroundings, “inculcate in boys’ minds the dignity of labor,...introduce an agricultural atmosphere, [and] ...interest parents, school committees and the public in the school as a village institution.” His insistence that gardening would not be introduced in schools to turn out thousands of gardeners every year but rather to “bring out...character and will” articulated the Indian body as an instrument of reform through a particular relationship with *Nature*, making a deliberate link between landscape, the body, and identity. In Davies’ words, the garden and gardening were identified as both disciplinary site and praxis.¹

¹ H. J. Davies, “A Brochure on School Gardens,” Department of Agriculture Bulletin No. 55, 1915, rev. by W. Head 1931; from the India Office Records, British Library, V/25/500/298/55.

The educative importance of the garden in discursive terms and material form as elaborated by this botanical garden Superintendent would have been familiar to the Victorians, who understood the garden as a locus for the new middle-class domestic ideal, with its clipped hedges encircling and engendering the morality of the family and the nation. Gardening manuals were often DIY morality texts, their tone of self-improvement as familiar as that of Samuel Smiles and his widely read *Self-Help*. What is also buried in Davies' call for action is the anxiety that undergirded the garden in its modern form, emerging at moments of national, imperial, and global anxiety. Whether attached to the new suburban homes of the middle classes, the cultivated green space of the garden cemetery and public park, or its apotheosis as garden city, the garden was the solution to urban and social ills.

My dissertation, then, considers how the cultivation of the garden was tied into the development of the colonial modern in the 19th century and early 20th century, setting in place value systems rooted in the link between horticultural space and urbanity itself in both metropole and colony. As a civilizing paradigm, the urban garden landscape both in England and in India solved crises of material and social ills brought on by rapid urbanization, neutralized class consciousness and integrated the working classes and natives into the national/imperial landscape, and regulated both errant English and Indian bodies. The urban morphologies of London, Calcutta and New Delhi – the British imperial “capitals” studied here – reflect the fractured nature of local, national and imperial debates about open space, the place of the living and the dead, and questions of imperial and even global identity. The greening of the urban landscape was linked to a specific form of imperial modernity, a material and discursive representation of social progress on an extra-national scale. In the work at hand, I show how and why by the second decade of the 20th century, the garden had come to be identified as a space to

not only cultivate the land but produce a civic and imperial identity at multiple scales and across shifting geographies.

Cultivating Imperial Identity began as an interrogation into the connection between the shaping of an imperial identity and the discursive and material constructions of the colonial landscape. Questions of landscape and English/British identity have historiographically been cast in mostly national terms, as evident through the work of scholars like Ann Bermingham and Elizabeth Helmreich.² Motivated by an engagement both with the new imperial history and the work of spatial theorists like Henri Lefebvre, my project attempts to illustrate that landscape and British identity cannot be understood as bounded by England's geographical borders. This rethinking of the 'national' reflect the contribution of the scholars of the 'new' imperial history, such as Mrinalini Sinha, Antoinette Burton, Tony Ballantyne, Frederick Cooper, Ann Stoler and Catherine Hall,³ who have insisted on the mutually constitutive if uneven nature of metropole and periphery and, therefore, the history of empire and colonization as a complex and multidirectional process. My attention to the everyday spaces of the garden writ large grows from Lefebvre's argument for an analysis of vernacular space and its production as a result of specific processes through which relationships of power and social and subjective identities are

² Anne Helmreich, *The English Garden and National Identity. The Competing Styles of Garden Design, 1870-1914*. (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: the English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (Berkeley, et al: University of California Press, 1989}.

³ Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995); Antoinette Burton, ed. *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and Through the Nation*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), and Antoinette Burton, "Who Needs the Nation?" *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York NY: Routledge Inc., 2000), 137-156; Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race. Aryanism in the British Empire* (Hampshire UK and New York NY: Palgrave, 2002); Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley CA, et al.: University of California Press, 1997); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

formed – what Doreen Massey has argued elsewhere as a spatial power geometry.⁴ It also derives from work that suggests that such spaces in Britain which emerged in the 19th century as ‘modern’ were the result of multiple discourses—public health and sanitation, religious struggles between Anglicans and nonconformists, Enlightenment emphasis on the rational and Romantic discourses of nature and landscape.⁵

Thinking of the transmittal of the garden across multiple geographies and scales foregrounds it as a modern site not just of aesthetic appeal but of disciplinary power: at once a mechanism for sifting out the difference between imperial subject and citizen and a space of collective identity in an often turbulent imperial context. The garden operated on multiple discursive, imaginary, material and geographical scales. Recognizing this acknowledges the wide impact of garden writers like John Claudius Loudon and Thomas Firminger and the importance of a culture of amateurs in creating significant imperial horticultural networks within a wider discourse of improvement both in Britain and in British India, and the growing importance of social and political associations of horticulture. My project, then, also serves to counter those of Guha, Drayton, and Arnold⁶ for whom the question of ‘improvement’ is one of the failure of the improvement of an agricultural model in the Permanent Settlement of Bengal, or is tied to more formal structures of botany and science.

⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1992); Doreen Massey “A global sense of place” *Marxism Today* 1991 (38), 24-29.

⁵ Hazel Conway, *People's Parks. The Design and Development of Victorian Parks in Britain* (Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Hazel Conway, *Public Parks* (Buckinghamshire UK: Shire Publications Ltd. 1996); Susann Lasdun, *The English Park: Royal, Private and Public* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1991); James Stevens Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (Gloucestershire et al.: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2000).

⁶ Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (Duke University Press, 1996); David Arnold, “Agriculture and ‘Improvement’ in Early Colonial India: A Pre-History of Development,” *Journal of Agrarian Change*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (October 2005), 505-525; Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government. Science, Imperial Britain, and the “Improvement” of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

My choice of Calcutta, Delhi and London stems not only from their status as imperial cities, but from the fact that they functioned as the two successive capitals of the Raj, and Empire's 'nerve' center, respectively. I initially imagined them as 'successive' in terms of their urban morphologies given my early reading of their historiographies⁷ – from London (garden modern) to Calcutta (garden and imperial failure) to New Delhi (modern garden city). My research revealed a less smooth narrative: the dissertation aims to elaborate instead the very real local struggles over landscape that shaped their emergence as imperial cities. The stories of urban planning in both London and Calcutta are linked: the architects of both were similarly ambitious and similarly challenged by bodies living and dead. The 'garden' in the city emerged in each place as a defensive reaction to crises of the imperial nation-state, their civic landscape a negotiated, contested terrain emerging and evolving through complex relationships: variant ideas about public versus private space; tropes of nature and the garden tied to ideas of modernity; state concerns about health, sanitation and public order; and, in the case of Delhi, debates over the transfer of the city, the choice of town planning and architecture experts, and struggles over its design and layout.

At the beginning of the 19th century, only one-fifth of Britain's population lived in cities and towns of over 10,000. By the time of the Victoria's death in 1901, more than 80% of Great Britain's population lived in cities and large towns, with all the consequent pressures of such rapid urbanization. Not only were open spaces like public parks and squares seen as the lungs of the city, but the open sky and a bit of green turf underfoot would "lift tired hearts" and

⁷ See, for example, Stephen Inwood, *City of Cities: The Birth of Modern London* (London: MacMillan, 2005); Donald J. Olsen, *Town Planning in London: The Eighteenth & Nineteenth Centuries* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1964, 1982); Gordon E. Cherry, *Urban Change and Planning: A History of Urban Development in Britain since 1750* (Oxfordshire UK: G T Foulis & Co Ltd, 1972); Narayani Gupta, *Delhi Between Two Empires, 1803-1931: Society, Government and Urban Growth* (Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 1981).

"educate...the mind to noble thoughts and higher aspirations."⁸ Public parks and open spaces in London had been promoted by a Parliament restructured by the Reform Act of 1832. The Select Committee on Public Walks considered the necessity of "securing open spaces...and ...places of exercise calculated to promote the health and comfort" of the metropolitan population; it would also, it was hoped, satisfy those pesky working-class folk who had recently campaigned for the franchise. Rural migration to urban centers like London had cloistered workers around sites of manufacture and production, limiting if not outright preventing access to 'natural' spaces. Building regulations were few and sanitation administration differed little from its medieval ancestry. The provision of basic services was also minimal—particularly in those industrial wastelands populated by the working classes and the poor. The Select Committee recommended open, green spaces in urban areas be included in some form in London and elsewhere, but as I show in Chapter 2, the lag between government 'interest' and significant government action was long, 70 years long.

Calcutta's urban landscape reflects its shift from a mercantile, colonial center to an imperial city. Although attempts had been made to solve sanitation and transportation problems before 1803, these were generally geared towards the needs of trade and commerce of the East India Company. Over a century later, E.P. Richards, an English city engineer, would report to the newly formed Calcutta Improvement Trust in 1914 that social progress through the laying out of streets, the orderly creation of the city, and the creation of parks had been badly neglected for generations. His mapping of the city drew attention to the stark division between North ('black' town) and South ('white' town) Calcutta in terms of 'modern' urban amenities. Less than 12 percent of the city provided open space in the form of squares, streets or passages—most of

⁸ "The Squares and Open Spaces of London," in *The Nineteenth Century and After*, vol. 62, p. 949 (1907).

which, including the Maidan, were in South Calcutta. Before the Municipal Act of 1875, which introduced a fully electoral body of commissioners in Calcutta (and therefore substantial native representation), most of the city's rapid progress had been made primarily in the area south of Park Street—a primarily European residential area—while the larger portion of taxes collected fell on native ratepayers. Struggles over municipal authority would prompt Viceroy Curzon to become involved in municipal affairs; his influence in the passage of the 1899 municipal bill would radically reduce native participation in the evolution of the city and serve to further exacerbate North Calcutta congestion as municipal 'well-being' once more shifted toward European interests.

After 1858, in the wake of the Revolt, municipal 'improvements' introduced under Crown rule reconfigured Delhi's urban landscape and intervened into local customs of public space. Between 1857 and 1887, more than one third of Delhi's urban landscape was destroyed and a marked differentiation made between the new British Civil Lines to the north and the old walled city. Before 1857, British and European civilians had lived within the city's walls. The new Civil Lines redefined the native city as a relic of a traditional urban society whose time had passed. The British deliberately restructured the urban landscape, converting the palace of the last Mughal emperor into a military garrison, destroyed princely mansions, important landmarks and mosques to clear a space around the Red Fort, not unlike the impetus behind the construction of Calcutta's Fort William. The transfer of the capitol from Calcutta to New Delhi would further this separation by building a modern garden city from scratch. Even as Lord Hardinge, Viceroy at the time of the transfer and one of its instigators, envisioned not two cities but one, the monumentality of its built and landscape architecture served to further circumscribe the old city and substantiate an old narrative of Indian urban congestion and chaos.

This work thus tracks the imprint of the garden on urban imperial formations in each of these British imperial capitol and rethinks received narratives of progress and developments across all three. Such narrative impulses have posited London as modern and progressive, Calcutta as a failure of urban planning, and Delhi as the triumph of intentional modernity in an imperial context.⁹ More generally I seek to complicate even town planning histories that acknowledge the garden city as a national and international phenomenon. These “authoritative” texts neglected a long history over the course of the 19th century of the importance of the garden in England and its empire, loosening it from its disciplinary moorings, and producing the garden city model as something formed in response to late 19th/early 20th century questions of health and sanitation rather than connected to and emerging from a material and discursive universe of the garden as a moral and ameliorative force. The *garden city* tapped into longer-lived discursive and material processes by which the *garden* as idea and praxis were tied to questions of imperial identity.

The Garden Cure – Mapping the Garden City

What can be more rational than the satisfaction which the grownup amateur, or master of the house, enjoys, when he returns home from the city to his garden in the summer evening, and applies the syringe to his wall tree, with refreshing enjoyment to himself and the plants, and to the delight of his children, who may be watching his operations.¹⁰

⁹ E.P. Richards, *Report by Request of the Trust on the Condition, Improvement and Town Planning of the City of Calcutta and Contiguous Areas* (Jennings & Hewley: Hertfordshire England, 1914); S.W. Goode, *Municipal Calcutta: Its Institutions in the Origin and Growth* (Edinburgh, 1916). See, for instance, Robert Grant Irving, *Indian Summer: Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981); Christopher Hussey, *The Life of Sir Edwin Lutyens* (London: Country Life Ltd., 1950); and A.K. Jain, *Lutyens' Delhi* (New Delhi: Bookwell, 2010); Mary Lutyens, *Edwin Lutyens* (John Murray Publishers Ltd., 1980).

¹⁰ John Claudius Loudon, *Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion: Comprising the Choice of a Suburban or Villa Residence, or of a Situation on which to Form One, the Arrangement and Furnishing of the House; and the Laying Out, Planting, and General Management of the Garden and Grounds* (London: Longman, et al., 1838).

Loudon's commitment to the garden as a mix of pleasure, science, and education – a space, in short, of rational leisure – was at the core of the new middle-class garden. The son of an enlightened Scottish farmer, Loudon was part of that rising, evolving middle class for whom he wrote, studying botany, chemistry, Latin, drawing and writing at public school, and apprenticed to a nurseryman at the age of 14. The combination of the science of plants (botany) with its practical and ornamental or recreational applications (gardening), came out of the intersection of 18th century fascination with natural history (including botany) and the rise of Evangelicalism and natural theology, giving the new science of horticulture an aura of morality--an activity that could educate the mind and spirit. The primary impetus, however, was the industrial revolution and the rise of the prosperous middle classes. The middling ranks now had more money and leisure time and horticulture allowed them to cultivate not only themselves but their surroundings as well. A Victorian ethos of hard work and self-improvement required rational forms of leisure, and horticulture exercised body, mind, and spirit. It required intellectual rigor and discipline.

As important as the art and science of plants was the garden's extension of the new domesticity, what Catherine Hall and Leonore Davidoff have argued as a “significant reworking” of domestic ideology from the late 18th century onward. Not only clergy, but lay writers like William Cowper and Hannah More contributed to beliefs about the importance of the home as the ‘nursery of virtue’ and the proper roles of men and women. Amidst the expansion of a middle-class reading public, the advice manual helped navigate an increasing complex world. The concern of the middling sorts with questions of propriety was linked to the uncertainty of shifting economic fortunes and mortal disasters. Even as the disparate elements that made up the middle classes should be recognized, this new culture of home and domesticity bound together

Radical, Whig and Tory, Dissenter and Anglican, farmer and professional, and urban and rural.¹¹ A power shift at mid-century from the landed classes to the middling ranks of industrialists, entrepreneurs and the professions signaled a social change where home and garden represented a new spatiality of moral order, negotiating a sense of place in the changing landscape of the nation.

This making of ‘national’ place through the act of domestic garden-making was also linked to the urbanized landscape of an industrialized Britain. Though contemporaneous writings certainly linked the two, with few exceptions histories of the garden and histories of the park in Britain have tended to separate them.¹² *Cultivating Imperial Identity* tracks the emergence of the garden *in* the city within what I articulate as a horticultural spatiality, as a particular sign of national, imperial and global modernity. London and Calcutta were not garden cities in the way Ebenezer Howard would conceive, but their morphologies do reflect the struggles over green space as a solution to urban ills, social and environmental, over the course of the nineteenth century.

As importantly, these three cities were part not only of imperial but also of global networks of circulation and exchange. Anthony King has argued that postcolonial theory has been slow to punctuate urban studies, criticizing an overly economic interpretation of the world city paradigm and its ahistorical and “analytically feeble” nature. Within such a flat categorization, global urbanism is a uniform Western outgrowth, theorized as only belatedly

¹¹ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall. *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*. Rev. Ed. (London & New York: Routledge, 2002), 22; 155-56.

¹² Ritson, a social history; etc.; Hoyles, the Story of Gardening; Hazel Conway; Malchow; The exception is Stephen Constantine, who wryly observed that whole forests had been felled to satisfy “the appetite for books describing the history and appearance of the handful of prestigious gardens attached predominantly to the nation’s stately homes...” but the social and cultural history of the garden and gardening had been virtually ignored. (387).

influencing the global South.¹³ Juxtaposing the urban morphologies of London, Calcutta and New Delhi, works to disrupt the standard narrative of London as a modern urban landscape of parks and green spaces, Calcutta as its poor congested cousin, and New Delhi as the paragon of British modern town planning. It allows us to see how central the garden *in* the city as idea and practice was to each and to interrupt this progressive narrative that moves from core to periphery. As we shall see, the ‘greening’ of each was a fractured history, one of struggle not only over space but between public and private benefaction, between reformers and residents, or both. Only when we appreciate London, Calcutta and Delhi as vehicles of the garden city model rather than as self-standing urban spaces, do we fully appreciate the role of that model in shaping the English imperial identity of urban modernity itself.

New Imperial Garden City History

As an overarching framework, spatiality has been implicit in the analyses of the new imperial history, animating its methodological paradigms. Alan Lester’s and Tony Ballantyne’s emphasis on mobility, flow and hierarchical power moves analysis beyond a binary of metropole/periphery and demonstrates how empire operated horizontally between colonies and within them as well, articulated by both scholars as a structure of webs or networks to visualize how flows of information, ideas, people and things moved multi-directionally. What is brought into sharper focus is how considering the importance of *place*-- what Ballantyne recently urged as thinking *under* as well *across* the nation-- denaturalizes national and even imperial histories.¹⁴

¹³ Anthony King, *Global Cities* (Routledge, 1989), 321.

¹⁴ Tony Ballantyne, “On Place, Space and Mobility in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand,” *New Zealand Journal of History*, 45, 1 (2011), 50-70; 274.

A rethinking of imperial *place* making then demands a reconsideration of *city* making as well. With his *Global Cities*, Anthony King called for a “more sophisticated array of conceptualizations”—beyond international, transnational, and global that recognizes positionality, local meaning, and practice.¹⁵ While postcolonial theorists have not been independent of developing theories of globalization, the reverse is not the case. “Globalization is not a single set of activities or a single ‘one world’ movement but a number of partially interlocking global networks which have been...historically, geographically, politically, and culturally constructed...[through the application of] postcolonial theory and criticism.” Taking up King’s call to historiographical arms, scholars like Felix Driver and David Gilbert have reconsidered the urban histories of European cities. By noting how European cities have been shaped by the influence of 19th and 20th centuries’ empires, the authors further an articulation of imperial place-making through the intersections of empire and urbanism.¹⁶ Clark’s and Jauhiainen’s recent work on London casts the evolution of metropolitan green space as an international phenomenon, but it neglects the imprint of empire wholesale, even as it notes that the ‘greening’ of European cities was one of the most “important, widespread and controversial of modern urban developments.”¹⁷ As I show, contemporary garden city acolytes and planners like Ralph Neville (also an MP) keenly felt the pressure of comparison to Hausmann’s Paris,

¹⁵ Anthony King, “Globalized Localities or Localized Globalities? Old Wine, New Bottles? *Workshop on The Culture and Politics of Place, Locality and Globalization*, University of California, Santa Cruz, October 28, 2000, <http://www2.ucsc.edu/globalinterns/cpapers/king.pdf>, accessed November 4, 2014.

¹⁶ Felix Driver and David Gilbert, *Imperial Cities: Landscape, display and identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); also see Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: modernity, nationalism, and the Colonial Uncanny* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), Jyoti Hosagrahar, *Indigenous Modernities. Negotiating Architecture and Urbanism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), and William J. Glover, *Making Lahore Modern. Constructing and Imagining a Colonial City* (London & Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), who all argue counter to King’s concentration on larger colonial urban patterns (see, Anthony King, *Colonial Urban Development : Culture, Social Power and Environment* (London, Henley & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976)) by accounting for how such intervention happened on the ground.

¹⁷ Peter Clark and Jussi S. Jauhiainen, “London and Green Space, 1850–2000: An Introduction,” *The European City and Green Space: London, Stockholm, Helsinki and St Petersburg, 1850–2000* (Ashgate, 2006), 1.

Burnham's Chicago, and the unfettered municipal ethos of Germany, but it was also an imperial/global question as it informed their promotion of New Delhi as a model garden city.

The place-making of London, Calcutta and New Delhi then, must be understood as involving multiple scales—the local, national and global within an imperial ‘web.’ Thinking through how London, Calcutta and New Delhi were the result of a “constellation...of networks, movement and exchange,”¹⁸ allows us to more fully appreciate not only that British ideas about urban governance were *reshaped* at the points of intersection, but that they were also *produced* at the point of contact. Such an analysis deconstructs the *a priori* assumptions of Anthony King and Robert Home¹⁹ of British town planning translated across colonial landscapes, while at the same time, by putting the three capital cities of the British empire—London, Calcutta and New Delhi—within one analytical frame illuminates how their urban morphologies developed simultaneously rather than sequentially, disrupting a Whig narrative of urban progress that produced London as modern.

That histories of the garden city movement have narrated its genesis from the condition of *England*, points to the trouble with an urban history bounded by the nation-state. Even as the garden city in town planning has been examined by various scholars as a national and international phenomenon, without exception, it has begun with Ebenezer Howard as a utopian solution to urban housing ills.²⁰ A town planning narrative that places Howard's garden city at the pinnacle of English planning progress is, I argue, a triumphal national history that disregards its emergence at a moment of not only national but imperial crisis. Howard's garden city idea

¹⁸ Ballantyne, 275.

¹⁹ Robert Home, *Of Planting and Planning: The Making of British Colonial Cities* (London et al.: Chapman & Hall, 1997).

²⁰ See, for instance, Standish Meacham, *Regaining Paradise: Englishness and the Early Garden City Movement* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1999). Gary Ward; Cherry, Meller, etc.

could not have been put into play without reading the Interdepartmental Committee's Report as a moment of imperial, not just national, crisis. Ralph Neville and other Garden City Association members cast the importance of the garden city ideal in imperial terms, and environment as central to the viability of the empire after the South African War. Neville's interest gave the Garden City Association entrée into an influential network of politicians, the industrial and financial movers and shakers; its list of over 100 Vice-Presidents included Lever, Cadbury, several Lords (Crewe, included) and a future Prime Minister (Neville Chamberlain). Even with a robust garden city lecture circuit between 1899 and 1903 (over 240 across Britain), it would be the testimony of both the Earl of Meath (founder of the Metropolitan Garden Association and Garden City Association member), and Neville before the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, that provided the inclusion of garden city ideals in the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1909. This wide network of connections and imperial/global crisis made possible the vision of New Delhi as a garden city.

In sum, putting London, Calcutta and New Delhi into the same frame of debate as I do in the chapters that follow makes several contributions to the literature on space, urbanity and imperial modernity. First, it interrupts a historiography that tends to focus on their unique or singular development rather than seeing them as part of wider patterns as I do here. Second, it allows the interrogation of the often assumed exceptionality of London, which as I show had much in common with Calcutta and developed if not in tandem, then certainly in parallel from the point of view of the growth of their urban environments. Finally, it offers a more fractious account of urban "progress" in the context of empire than has been previously acknowledged. Those spaces linked to modernity—the open space of the park, garden, square, common and cemetery—were negotiated and contested in Calcutta, London and New Delhi in different ways,

but all three urban landscapes share a troubled rather than a linear history that is uniquely visible when we highlight the role not simply of city planning but of *garden* city planning in the period c. 1860 to 1931.

Chapters

Chapter 1 – “‘To ‘Meliorate the Stubborn Soil’ – English Garden History and the Cultivation of Imperial Subjects” – historicizes the emergence of the idea and realization of the English garden as an avatar of national identity in an imperial frame, foregrounding the garden as a modern site of disciplinary power and a space of collective identity and normativity in an often turbulent imperial context. At the center of this story lie John Claudius Loudon and Thomas Firminger and the link between them in creating a wider discourse of improvement through horticulture. In order to understand the question of the garden city and urban development, its intellectual history must be understood: *why* the garden is at the center of the garden city and how that has been left out of historiographies of the garden city; and how Loudon and Firminger’s horticultural spatiality is the ground from which the garden’s importance emerges.

Chapter 2 – “The Planning of London? Green Space, Belonging, and the Contest between Public and Private 1850-1910” – tells the story of London’s urban ‘modernity’ as an imperial invention that obscures the uneven and defensive nature of London’s urban landscape. By considering the contested nature of Battersea Park and Abney Park Cemetery, the tensions between government and private interventions over questions of social and environmental reform, and the myth of an increasingly green London, I disrupt the Whig narrative of landscape and expose how London’s

morphology was the result of struggles over spatial authority and the disciplining of the errant bodies of the dead and the living.

Chapter 3 – “Making Calcutta Imperial” – examines the evolution of the ‘improvement’ of Calcutta in the years between the Revolt and the transfer of the capital to Delhi, focusing on the tensions that emerged in the spatial development of the city as imagined by the British and as negotiated in practice. Particular attention is given to the struggles over those landscapes linked to modernity, the open, green spaces of Calcutta’s urban fabric—the Maidan at the center of the city, the utility and meaning of the Botanical Gardens, and the controversies over competing landscapes of death that would keep Indians at the margins of the ‘garden city.’ Chapter 4 – “Imagining a New Garden City? New Delhi 1911-1931” – dethrones Edwin Lutyens’ as the genius responsible for New Delhi’s development, by considering the national-imperial-global web in which it emerged. New Delhi’s urban morphology was rooted in a matrix of Britain’s global/imperial urban experiments, the insecurity of the Raj and Britain’s larger place on a global stage, as reflected in the debates over the transfer of the capital, the choice of Delhi, the choice of town planning experts and architects, and the meaning of the ‘modern’ imperial city

What follows, then, is one story of how ideals and practices of the garden city shaped town planning in an imperial and even a global context. While Sinha’s imperial social formation is critical for understanding the relationships between metropole and colony as mutually constitutive, it ultimately limits the scope of inquiry because it is a binary paradigm. Ballantyne’s and others insightful analysis of imperial connections and circulations as one that is horizontal as well as vertical provides a larger field of analysis, highlighting the multiple nodes and knitted networks in which imperial identities were constituted. But ultimately, as in the case of New Delhi, analyzing connections exclusively within the British empire produces its own limitations,

as the context in which New Delhi emerged was global as well as imperial. Indeed, if New Delhi was the signpost of the end of empire as Irving and Metcalfe have argued,²¹ it also speaks to the insecurity of Great Britain's place on the world stage. As Ballantyne has noted, place-making – here, through examining London, Calcutta and New Delhi – is the result of a convergence of a “unique set of networks, movements and exchanges...constantly being remade” and reshaped.²² They are, essentially, open-ended and never finished. What I offer here I hope highlights how the production of imperial history, like empire itself, is a messy business. Ultimately, what follows is less about the garden and its civic elaborations and more about re-imagining how that imperial story is told.

²¹ Robert G. Irving, *Indian Summer: Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), and Thomas R. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision; Architecture and Britain's Raj* (New Delhi: oxford University Press, 1989).

²² Ballantyne, *On Place, Space and Mobility*, 50-70.

Chapter 1: 'To 'Meliorate the Stubborn Soil' -- English Garden History and the Cultivation of Imperial Subjects

“No art has been more extended in its objects, or improved in its practices within the last fifty years than Gardening.”

John Claudius Loudon, 1824¹

“The history of the Gardens of England follows step by step the history of the people.”

Alicia Amherst, 1896²

Perhaps more than any other nation, the English have identified, debated and defined themselves in connection with landscape--a central locus where questions of national identity, citizenship and civilization, and history and modernity have oft played out. Writing after the South African War in his “Our England is a Garden,”³ Rudyard Kipling used the trope of the garden -- something cultivated and productive, the result of hard work -- both to shore up and to criticize England’s imperial identity at a moment when the surety of empire had begun to falter. The garden as metaphor was by then a familiar one, having been utilized over the course of the 19th century by a diverse group of writers, from poets to politicians, to define a national and imperial sense of self. The proliferation of images of England as a garden would also come to reflect the concern over the loss of her rural soul with the rise of industrialization in the 19th century, loss of a dependency on domestic agriculture, and the growing tensions of empire. Even as the romantic notion of England as a rustic nation penned by poets, essayists, and novelists

¹ John Claudius Loudon, *An Encyclopedia of Gardening; Containing the Theory and Practice of Horticulture, Floriculture, Arboriculture, and Landscape-Gardening, Including All the latest Improvements; A General History of Gardening in all Countries; and a Statistical View of its Present State, with Suggestions for its Future Progress, in the British Isles* (London: Longman, Hurst, et al., 1822), iii.

² Alicia Amherst (the Honorable), *A History of Gardening in England* (London: Bernard Quartich, 1896), 1.

³ Rudyard Kipling, “Our England is a Garden,” *The Collected Poems of Rudyard Kipling*, with an introduction by R.T. Jones (Hertfordshire UK: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2001), 762.

masked a more fraught history between the ploughman and the Privy purse, the residue and resonance of such ideals cannot be denied. And, certainly in the 19th century, the move of the rising middle classes to the suburbs reflects such rural romantic sentiments even as it was also tied to concerns about the dark underside industrialization had wrought--dirt, noise, pollution, poor sanitation--an increasingly crowded and unhealthy inner city. As both a material construction and spatial ideal, the garden reflected larger concerns emerging from rapid industrialization and the urbanization of a growing, affluent and influential middle class. As a carrier of larger ideas about relationships to Nature and landscape, the “English garden” left a visible mark on British public space at home and in the empire. Indeed, the emergence of gardens and parks, garden cemeteries, debates over public sanitation and moral health, and urban planning was a signature of national-imperial modernity in the decades c. 1830-1920.

The emergence of what I am calling a distinctively horticultural spatiality – the idea and the realization of the English garden as an avatar of national identity in an imperial frame – is characteristic of English modernity but has not been historicized to date. Scholars of garden history have only recently begun to consider the social and cultural significance of the garden.⁴ Even these have fallen short however, as the elucidation of the English as a nation of gardeners has failed to take into account the wider landscape of empire in the construction of such an identity. An exception is art historian Anne Helmreich’s *The English Garden and National Identity, the Competing Styles of Garden Design, 1870-1914*, which considers how competing styles of garden design in the last decades of the 19th century sought validity by representing themselves as 'English' and the garden's appropriation as a marker of national identity. Helmreich

⁴See, for instance Anne Helmreich, *The English Garden and National Identity, the Competing Styles of Garden Design, 1870-1914* (Cambridge, 2002); and Charles Quest-Rittson, *The English Garden, A Social History* (David R. Godine, 2003).

argues that "gardenscapes do not communicate universal values irrespective of time or place," but rather are grounded within particular cultural sets of meanings and are, therefore, contested and not fixed. Moreover, these gardenscapes were embedded not only within internal debates over garden design and practice, but also within the larger political, economic and social contexts from which they emerged. In this way, gardens can be argued not only as expression of competing professional agendas but articulations "through the vehicle of nature" of competing visions of the nation as well.⁵ And although empire is not wholly neglected—she notes that empire “had created a larger framework” in which the nation sought its Englishness—the garden as it traveled out into Empire has yet to be fully explored.⁶

Scholarship on gardens or gardening in India has emphasized the circulation of plants and seeds and the importance of botanical gardens to imperial economies and science, but has neglected the political, social and cultural significance of the garden as a disciplinary form and site, both discursively and materially. While Judith Roberts and Charles Carlton have argued the significance of the garden in British India, both have framed it as an act of homesickness and a longing for the familiar. Roberts points out the emotional importance of transplanting English gardens into Indian soil, that the central theme of English gardening and practices from 1750-1850 was the desire to provide a little bit of England. The creation of an English garden was also important for the psychological and physical survival of those living a temporary existence in a foreign and often hostile environment. More recently, Eugenia Herbert has argued that gardens were one of the “most visible manifestations of British presence and British civilization,” but

⁵ Helmreich, 1-2.

⁶ Ibid., 231-232.

considers it a “leap” to argue them as an “integral part of the template of power relations.”⁷ Certainly, gardens served to ameliorate a sense of displacement for those flung out into the Empire, and they were a visible marker of British presence, but Herbert’s argument ignores the writings of Thomas Firminger and others, for whom the garden was a politicized site, and gardening an act of imperial performance. Ideas about landscape and relationships to nature were integral to constructing an imperial identity.

Moreover, most historians who have looked at science and empire have tended to focus on the more organized, or official organs of science, neglecting the important roles of horticultural societies and amateur garden writers and practitioners in the 19th century who established their authority by a differentiation through ideas about progress, improvement and modernity. In India, articles in the journals of learned societies like the Agri-Horticultural Society, the Royal Geographical Society and Asiatic Society foregrounded an imperial culture – *educated, male and metropolitan* – linked to colonial administration and institutions. Government officials at every level were linked together through their membership and relationships within these societies. Plant hunters and botanists were not trained (as were, for instance, landscape architects like John Claudius Loudon or William Robinson), but rather gentlemen scientists of a sort who were also viceroys, governors, chaplains, public health and medical officials.

In this chapter, I will show how a specific form of imperial modernity was articulated through the trope and the space of the 19th century British garden. An exploration of horticultural spatiality foregrounds the garden as a modern site not just of aesthetic appeal but of

⁷ Eugenia Herbert, *Flora’s Empire. British Gardens in India* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 306.

disciplinary power: a mechanism for sifting out the difference between imperial subject and citizen and serving as a space of collective identity and normativity in an often turbulent imperial context. Here the combination of the written text and its circulation through organizational networks is key to the story. Historian David Arnold has demonstrated the power of the Agricultural Society of India (ASI) to circulate ideas about improvement,⁸ yet he neglects the importance of gardening manuals and the agri-horticultural societies after mid-century as a broad and informal network of knowledge production and consumption. Focusing on the more organized or official organs of science can underestimate the important role played by these societies and amateur garden writers who foregrounded the centrality of cultivation as an English ideal through writings about progress and tradition, labor, gender and class, modernity and subject versus citizen. These learned societies, national in origin but imperial in ambition, acted as agents of empire and played an important if little understood role in the making of an imperial modernity rooted in English horticultural values. Although the gardening manuals were often written by men who were members of these societies, women also participated in this process. Taken together, the reach of these garden writers was considerable, in part because they, addressed an 'amateur' rather than a quasi-expert audience. They urged not only improved horticultural practices for production of fruit and vegetables, but the importance of the ornamental garden—a material garden ideal as addressed more specifically later in this chapter. And although gardening books written by women appear late in the century, like their male counterparts, they naturalize their imperial presence through long experience in India, constructing subject positions for themselves within this emergent tradition of English horticultural enthusiasm.

⁸ Arnold argues counter to Ranajit Guha in the 1960s, who aligned the doctrine of improvement (and its subsequent failure) with the Bengal Permanent Settlement. See David Arnold, "Agriculture and 'Improvement' in Early Colonial India: A Pre-History of Development," in *Journal of Agrarian Change*, vol. 5, no. 4 (2005), 506.

At the center of the garden as disciplinary trope lie John Claudius Loudon and Thomas Firminger. A good deal has been written about Loudon's influence on the landscape of England. Scholars have articulated his influence on town planning (the garden city movement), the laying out and improvement of cemeteries, the gardenesque as garden style, his influence in the design of suburban gardens and small villas, and how he paved the way for future garden writers like William Robinson and Gertrude Jekyll. While his impact should not be underestimated, his influence in terms of the rise of horticulture and his articulation of modernity through the space of the garden have been neglected. Firminger, in contrast, has been understudied, and no link has been made between him and Loudon, nor has the importance of a culture of horticultural amateurs within a wider discourse of improvement in British India been considered. I take these two as the foundational proponents of ideas about the authority of English horticultural expertise and its power to shape both colonial landscapes and imperial knowledge of them.

"Bringing Minds into Collision" – John Claudius Loudon and the Gardening Ideal

The son of an enlightened Scottish farmer, Loudon (b. 1783, d. 1843) was part of that rising, evolving middle class for whom he wrote. Sent to live with his uncle in Edinburgh, he studied botany, chemistry, Latin, drawing, and writing at public school, and learned Italian and French while apprenticed at 14 as a nurseryman in landscape gardening. Moving to London in 1803, he had some success as a journalist. His writings on botany earned him election to a fellowship of the Linnean Society and his "Observations on Laying out the Public Squares of London"⁹ brought him to the attention of the London Horticultural Society (later the Royal

⁹ *Literary Journal*, 31 December 1803.

Horticultural Society).¹⁰ At the age of 20 he was drawn into Sir Joseph Banks' circle in London. Banks, who had circumnavigated the globe with Cook from 1768-1771 and whose 3,000 plant specimens from that voyage reinvigorated King George's botanical garden at Kew,¹¹ brought Loudon into a community of gentlemen scientists.

By the time he wrote *Hints on Formation of Gardens and Pleasure Grounds* (1813), he had worked as land agent and tenant farmer, begun an agricultural college, and published suggested designs for public squares in London, treatises on hothouses, landscape gardening and designs for improvement of farms and country residences.¹² With *Hints on...Gardens*, he turned his focus on the improvement of the gardens of the emergent middle classes, in the new suburbs as well as towns, noting that his suggestions were adaptable from land the size of a perch (about 100 square feet, or a 10 x 10 area, could also be up to 26 by 26 feet, not standardized) for up to 100 acres (divided into layouts for a perch to an acre and for an acre to 100 acres).¹³ In writing to

¹⁰ Miles Hadfield, *Pioneers in Gardening* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1996), 156-8; Jane Loudon, "An Account of the Life and Writings of John Claudius Loudon," in *John Claudius Loudon and the Early Nineteenth Century in Great Britain* (Dumbarton Oaks, 1980), 9-11.

¹¹ Kenneth Lemmon, *The Golden Age of Plant Hunters* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1969), 39-41.

¹² "Hints respecting the Manner of Laying out the Grounds of the Public Squares in London, to the Utmost picturesque advantage," *Literary Journal* 2, no. 12 (December 31, 1803), 739-42; *Observations on the Formation and Management of Useful and Ornamental Plantations; on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening; and on Gaining and Embanking Land from Rivers or the Sea* (Edinburgh: A. Constable, 1804); *A Short Treatise on several Improvements Recently made in Hot-houses; by which from four-fifths to nine-tenths of the fuel commonly used will be saved; time, labour, and risk, greatly lessened; and several other advantages produced. And which are applicable to hot-houses already erected, or to the construction of new hot-houses* (Edinburgh, 1805); *A Treatise on Forming, Improving, and Managing Country Residences; and on the Choice of Situations Appropriate to Every Class of Purchasers. In All Which the Object in View is to Unite in a better manner than has hitherto been done, a Taste Founded in Nature with Economy and Utility, in constructing or improving Mansions, and other Rural Buildings, so as to combine Architectural Fitness with Picturesque Effect, with an Appendix, Containing an Enquiry into the Utility and Merits of Mr. Repton's mode of Shewing Effects by Slides, Sketches and Strictures of his Opinions and Practice in Landscape Gardening* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees & Orme, 1806); *Engravings, with Descriptions, Illustrative of the Difference between the Modern Style of Rural Architecture and the Improvements of Scenery, and that Displayed in a Treatise on Country Residences, and Practised by Mr. Loudon* (London, 1807); *The Utility of Agricultural Knowledge to the Sons of the Landed Proprietors of England – And to Young Men Intended for Estate Agents: Illustrated by What has Taken Place in Scotland. With an Account of an Institution formed for Agricultural Pupils in Oxfordshire* (London, 1809); *Designs for Laying out Farms and Farm-Buildings, in the Scotch Style; Adapted to England: Including an Account of Tew Lodge Farm, Oxfordshire, with an Opinion on the Subject of Breaking Up Grass Lands* (London: Harding, 1811).

¹³ Loudon, *Hints on the Formation of Gardens and Pleasure Grounds*, vi.

respond to the lack of information on improvement for “small spots” rather than landscape parks like those designed by Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton, Loudon brings the homes of the middle classes within the framework of ‘improvement’ and *modern* gardens:

It follows that small spots, from being less adapted to this system of improvement, and the detail of country seats in general, from being less the subject of the artist’s studies, have been completely neglected. Thus, while quartos and folios have been sent forth on landscape gardening, picturesque improvements, or country residences, we have been upwards of a century without seeing any work to supersede the ancient plans and treatises on parterres and kitchen gardens...[full of] clipt trees, shorn hedges, and groves, are too obsolete, as well as too expensive in execution, for the present day.¹⁴

Key in this treatise is Loudon’s linking art and science in the garden space, the “result of a combination of parts forming a whole, calculated by its fitness and utility to gratify the mind, and by its effect to charm the eye.”¹⁵ It is the combination of utility and art that makes the gardens of the middle classes modern and a sign of the general progress of the times. The designs for these small gardens are a combination of styles—scaled down forms from the landscape park or “imitation of rural scenery” of the aristocracy with the “old-style” geometric forms of the 17th century. Eighteen century landscape parks laid claim to nature, embraced and improved upon it rather than the formal and somewhat severe garden of the age of William and Mary, where the formal demarcated the boundary between wild nature and civilized culture. Ann Bermingham has argued that the landscape park, with its ha-has, eternal vistas and connection to nature laid

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., vii.

claim to the landscape and, through it, the nation. The enclosure and cultivation of waste or fallow lands once utilized in common by villagers (lammas rights) and the absorption of small farms of 20 acres or less into larger landholdings had changed the 18th century English countryside. Although enclosure was not a new phenomenon – it had, in fact, been happening since the 15th century – during the last half of the 18th century, particularly, it had accelerated, and by the end of the century Parliament had granted more than 5,000 enclosure acts amounting to containment of close to a million acres of land. The landscape park emerged from this nexus of social and cultural change as landowners with more land given over to cultivation through the enclosure system could now indulge in more extravagant gardens--extravagance not achieved through elaborate parterres and terraces like those of William and Mary, but through the amount of land now devoted to the garden. With its uninterrupted vistas, the park connected the garden to the wild landscape beyond and established a natural or organic connection between land and landowner. "[N]ature was the sign of property and property was the sign of nature."¹⁶ In Loudon's new small garden, the styles are combined and adapted to the size of the property available. Variety, charm and utility were key, a combination of both science and art. He points to French ideas for plantings of small trees, shrubbery, and flowers mixed with the 'English' lawn, Chinese and Indian forms consisting of straight, shaded walks in squares of grass, as well as Spanish and Turkish forms, though the latter were less adaptable due to differences in climate.¹⁷ This combination of designs also marked these new gardens as modern, linking the emergent middle classes to historical garden forms, the importance of property for membership in the nation, and the imperial circulation of plants, seeds, and knowledge.

¹⁶ Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 2.

¹⁷ Loudon, *Hints on the Formation of Gardens and Pleasure Grounds*, 27.

With *The Encyclopedia of Gardening*, published in 1822, Loudon made his name and fortune as a gardening writer and the *Encyclopedia* was considered the definitive work on horticulture, far and above the most consulted English reference book on gardening.¹⁸ One can see in his *Encyclopedia's* "Introduction," not only Loudon's personal ideals but the reflection of the larger context in which it is written--the rising importance of the garden and gardening practice:

Gardening, the branch to which we here confine ourselves, as compared with agriculture, is the cultivation of a limited spot, by manual labour, for culinary and ornamental products; but relative to the present improved state of the art it may be defined as the formation and culture, by manual labour, of a scene more or less extended for various purposes of utility, ornament and recreation.... Gardening is practised for private use and enjoyment[,...]for public recreation in...promenades, parks and other places in or near to large towns...for public instruction [in botanic gardens]...and for purposes of ornamenting the places of burial, in planted cemeteries.¹⁹

With his *Encyclopedia*, Loudon set British horticulture at the apex of modernity, noting that government and politics, geography and “habits of life,” affected production and taste: “The

¹⁸Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, rev. ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 188. Also, Charles Quest-Ritson, *The English Garden. A Social History* Boston: David R. Godine, 2001), 177.

¹⁹John Claudius Loudon, *An Encyclopedia of Gardening Comprising the Theory and Practice of Horticulture, Floriculture, Arboriculture, and Landscape Gardening; Including all the Latest Improvements, a General History of Gardening in all Countries, and a Statistical View of its Present State*, 2d ed. (London: Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1860), from preface to the 1st edition. It should be noted here that although the 1860 edition was revised and published posthumously by Loudon's wife, Jane, because in her preface to this revised edition she was careful to note what changes had been made, the quotations used are from Loudon's original introduction to the *Encyclopedia*. The size and depth of the *Encyclopedia* in the 1860 edition reflects, as Mrs. Loudon notes in her preface to the revised edition, the growth of horticultural knowledge and practice--both in a scientific and a historical sense. It ran to several volumes; over 1200 pages!

history of gardening may be considered chronologically, or in connection with that of the different nations who have successively flourished in different parts of the world; politically, as influenced by the different forms of government which have prevailed; and geographically, as affected by the different climates and natural situations of the globe....²⁰ Under a paternal form of government, a monarch's tastes would be followed indiscriminately and provenance "splendor more than elegance or use." Using Louis XIV as an example, he noted that even as the King led fashion and the arts in Europe, he did nothing to advance the cottager or put an extra "cabbage or potatoe upon his table." Gardens of splendor—spectacle—were tied to a sense of profligacy. Republican governments offered utility as they concerned themselves with economy but those arts were ignored which would administer to luxury. Under such circumstance gardening was practiced as a useful art rather than one of design and taste, and more for its substantial benefits and scientific objects than for its extraordinary productions and peculiar gratifications, nodding to France under the Revolution, America and Switzerland. The modern garden emerges as a mastery of nature but not to the point of vulgarity or garishness: "[I]n the true English garden, though art is employed...it is not avowed and ostentatiously displayed...."²¹

When Loudon started his *Gardener's Magazine* in 1826, he had two major objectives in mind: "to disseminate new and important information on all topics connected with horticulture, and to raise the intellect and the character of those engaged in [the] art." Scholars like Melanie Simo and Anne Wilkinson have argued that the *Gardener's Magazine* was intended to elevate and educate practical gardeners, those who made a profession of gardening.²² And certainly, Loudon believed that every gardener who made a living should be educated not only in

²⁰ Ibid., 3.

²¹ Ibid., 38.

²² See, Melanie Simo, *Loudon and the Landscape: From Country Seat to Metropolis, 1783-1843* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); and Anne Wilkinson, *The Victorian Gardener: The Growth of Gardening & the Floral World* (Gloucestershire UK: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2006).

horticultural practices but have an education in ‘general knowledge’ as well. As important, I would argue, is how he created an international forum for the amateur middle-class gardener. Loudon made the initial connections of the practice of horticulture in India and elsewhere in the empire and brought it before a wider audience. Within a few years of its first issue, Loudon had included a column about the state of overseas horticulture, most notably publishing abstracts from the *Transactions of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India*.

Gardener’s Magazine, unlike its predecessor, *The Botanical Magazine*,²³ was a clearinghouse or centralized source of dissemination of horticultural knowledge and information. The *Gardener’s Magazine* included “original communications” – letters from readers, as well as reviews of books, essays and journals, “Miscellaneous Intelligence” which included foreign and domestic notices highlighting the importance of horticulture on a world scale and an interlinked global network. Also included were reprints and highlights of the transactions and publications of horticultural societies, like the Horticultural Society of London, Ireland, and provincial societies, the Linnaean Society, biographies, obituaries and notices to readers and correspondents. Interestingly, there was also an indexed section on “advertisements connected with gardening and rural affairs” giving the reader easy access to technology of the moment as it pertained to horticulture. The accounts of papers read before Horticultural Society of London and others, as well as the articles and notices in the *Gardener’s Magazine*, bear out the importance of empire at the center of horticultural discoveries, as well as a significant imperial horticultural network. Loudon’s relationship with the Horticultural Society was often acrimonious, reflecting the *Gardener’s Magazine’s* criticism of the Society’s claims of superiority “to any other publication

²³ The *Botanical Magazine; or Flower-Garden Displayed*, was begun in 1787; It would become known as Curtis’s Botanical Magazine. See Ray Desmond, “List of Victorian Gardening Magazines,” *Garden History* vol. 5 no. 3, 1977.

of the same period.”²⁴ As Loudon pointed out, the *GM* had a much larger reach. Rather than the full color plates used in the Society’s journal production, the woodcuts in the *Gardener’s Magazine* made it cheaper to produce and available to a greater audience, as it was affordable to a wider range of classes and particularly those middling classes and practical gardeners whom the *GM* embraced. Moreover, the journal often included papers considered more controversial in that they did not merely “record horticultural science like the papers in the Horticultural Transactions”²⁵ but included notices of emerging technologies and science, often from that class of gardeners often excluded and snubbed by the Horticultural Society. Loudon himself notes the

...utility of the Magazine to be incomparably greater than that of the Transactions: first, the cheapness of the work, by which its sale is so much more extended that it has already readers in every part of the world; secondly, the controversial papers alluded to, the object of which is, to correct or improve the conduct or condition of gardeners or others connected with gardening. No improvement in any art can be permanent, or truly valuable to society, which does not at the same time raise the character and promote the happiness of those by whom it is practiced.²⁶

The Horticultural Society, established in 1804, was granted royal charter in 1809 and Princess Charlotte and Prince Leopold were made Honorary Members. Foreign dignitaries were also represented amongst its Members, for example, the Prince of Germany (Grand Duke of Saxe Weimar). In a brief history published in 1817, the Society took pride in noting the growth of and interest in it, born out in the call for seeds, grafts and plants it distributed as well as the frequent exhibitions of produce at Society meetings. It also noted its international reach through its

²⁴ *Gardener’s Magazine*, vol. 11 (1827), 438.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 439-440.

corresponding members from every part of the globe, as well as its part in the circulation of horticultural knowledge and its importance in advancing such knowledge: "...the Horticultural Society of London cannot but contemplate with satisfaction the progressive advancement of their Institution... [b]eing founded, originally, by a few private individuals, it has, by degrees, acquired the character of a publick (sic) establishment, which is likely to do some service to the country...." It also linked its importance as an organ of the state: "An Association of this kind, which is not merely speculative, but aims at practical advantages, is not an inefficient member of the State; nor will it be regarded with indifference by an enlightened Government, to whom every thing, that has a reference to the well being of the people, must appear interesting." And asserting its utility, the Society noted that it was geared towards practical as well as ornamental garden arts:

[ornamental gardening] is [something] to which a civilized and refined people are well justified in attending, as it both affords innocent amusement, improves the taste, and renders the mind susceptible of the beautifies of nature. It is, accordingly, included in the plan of the Society: and the botanist, or more properly the florist, as well as the artist, whose skill and genius are employed in laying out and beautifying grounds, are, therefore, very fitly admitted to fellowship with the Horticulturist.

Even as its members included practicing gardeners as well as royalty, it becomes fairly clear who was “the state.” As of 1818, its annual subscription was 3L.3s and admission to members by 1820, 5£.5s.²⁷

Loudon’s principal criticism of the Horticultural Society was this lack of accessibility to its garden, publications, and library to those who needed it most. Other contributors to the *Gardener’s Magazine* noted the lack of resources available to gardeners for “acquirement of scientific instruction” beyond the pages of the *GM*. Mechanics’ institutes²⁸ and new scientific societies neglected to teach natural science, a deficit which needed addressing, “[a]s the study of nature is calculated to produce results so conducive to morals and happiness, and as natural and chemical philosophy are so intimately connected, it follows that the interests of the gardener and mechanic in such institutions are reciprocal.”²⁹ Loudon insisted that the practicing gardener be not merely an empirical practitioner but that they should be enlightened in the art of gardening in order to understand its principles.

The list of contributors in the *Gardener’s Magazine’s* second volume shows its wide circulation: England, Ireland, New York, Paris, Brussels, Milan, Scotland, Warsaw, Madrid,

²⁷ “Horticultural Society of London, a Brief History of its Founding,” *Transaction of the Horticultural Society of London*, vol. 11, 1817; Andrew Murray, *The Book of the Royal Horticultural Society 1862-1863* (London: Bradbury & Evans), 1863.

²⁸ The mechanics’ institute movement began in Scotland in 1800, fostered by George Birkbeck, a professor of natural philosophy and chemistry at the U of Glasgow. The first “institute” was actually a series of free lectures for working-class people. “Mechanic” referred to artisans, craftsmen, and commonly used in reference to rural tradesmen who migrated to cities to work in factories with the rise of industrialization. The first institute was established in Edinburgh in 1819, then the Glasgow School of Arts in 1821, 1823 saw the London Mechanics’ Institute established and the Manchester Mechanics’ Institute established in 1824. By 1851, in England there were over 702 mechanics’ institutes. Many mechanics institutes, like those in Australia and New South Wales, were referred to as schools of arts, as well as lyceums, athenaeums, miners’ institutes or public halls (in other colonies). Many of the institutes eventually became public libraries, or masonic halls, etc. From *Mechanics Institutes, Schools of Arts, Athenaeums, etc.: an Australian Checklist*. Compiled by Bronwyn Lowden and Don Vale (Australia: Lowden Publishing Co.), 3d ed., 2010. p. iii.

²⁹ P. Masey, “On the Best Source at Present Open to Gardeners for the Acquirement of Scientific Instruction, and on the Propriety and Advantage of Mechanics’ Institutions Extending Their Benefits Towards Them,” *Gardener’s Magazine*, vol. 4, 1828, 324-327.

Pennsylvania, and Buenos Ayres (sic). The articles themselves represent a wide range of interests and geographic scope: a heated debate on the use of salt as a manure, particularly with regard to those plants, like the amaryllis and other flora imported from the empire (Cape of Good Hope); new inventions like the dendrometer (measuring tree height); advice on the management of land and labor in the colonies; and cultivation of popular hothouse and conservatory plants like the fuchsia and salvia. But articles also reveal the growing importance of political and social associations of horticulture. Loudon saw horticulture as part of a wider culture of improvement embedded within the times at hand.³⁰ By the journal's fourth volume in 1828, contributions from readers were voluminous enough to require categorization. By this volume there is also more of a sifting out of the practical and artistic gardener, reflecting the growing professionalization of the landscape architect. By its eighth volume in 1832, Loudon notes that its contents "show that the work continues to answer the purposes for which it was commenced, viz. those of collecting scattered fragments of information on the various departments of gardening on which it treats; giving an account of the progress which the art is making in various parts of the world, and more especially in Britain; and bringing minds into collision, which, probably, would not otherwise have known of each other's existence."³¹

The evolution of the *Gardener's Magazine* reflects the progression of Loudon's thinking about the links between horticulture and social reform for the national public good; some of his most reformist writings emerged in the midst of debates about the Reform Act and extension of the Poor Laws. He insisted that gardening be taken out of isolation and linked it to the wider

³⁰ See "Successful Experiment to Ameliorate the Condition of Country Labourers," *Gardener's Magazine*, vol. 2, 1827, 21-23 which is striking in its argument that "the moral and political degradation of the labouring classes in this country...is more the effect of the circumstances in which they have been placed, than of any positive and unavoidable necessity; and by far less the result of their own indifference or criminality, than of the imperfection and errors of that state of society of which they form an essential, but a most oppressed and unjustly treated portion..." which foreshadows Edwin Chadwick by almost a decade.

³¹ *Gardener's Magazine*, vol. 8, February 1832, preface.

world of contemporary English politics and social change. In the February 1832 issue, introducing a garden tour recently taken, he noted: “Gardening, as we have before observed, is not so much to be improved from within itself, or by the experience of its practitioners in their own departments, as by calling in, and bringing to bear upon it, other sciences and arts.” Further,

there are some of our readers, no doubt, who would be much better pleased to see our pages confined to short practical papers on the culture of the different articles grown in kitchen and flower gardens, than to read discussions on subjects of general improvement contained in such articles as those of which the present is a continuation, or to study the accounts of inventions occasionally brought forward in our General Notices.... We consider persons entertaining this opinion as taking too confined a view of our duties; because we know that almost all the improvements of any consequence which have been made in gardening have been drawn from other arts and sciences.... The *spirit of the times* requires in every man not only a thorough knowledge of his own profession, but *much general knowledge, to enable to keep pace with the rapid changes which are taking place around him.*³² (emphasis added)

The next several volumes (running to 1841) would argue the importance of horticulture societies as a source of civic membership³³, the moral relationship between laborers and land³⁴ and the characterization of horticulture as essential to the construction of ‘modern’ man. Articles and letters from contributors also pointed to the depressed state of nursery and gardening professions, but I would argue actually indicated the growing community of gentlemen amateurs. The

³² Ibid., 1-2.

³³ Ibid., 82.

³⁴ Ibid., 101.

Gardener's Magazine established a new protocol in horticultural journalism, and the subsequent proliferation of publications reflected the growing interest of the middle classes in gardens and gardening.

In writings like his later *Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion*, Loudon set out the ameliorative effects of the *space* of home and garden: "the benefits experienced by breathing air unconfined by close streets of houses, and uncontaminated by the smoke of chimneys; the cheerful aspect of vegetation...and the enlivening effect of finding oneself unpent up buildings and in comparatively unlimited space are felt by most people, and these are greatly increased by the possession of a garden, in which the progress of vegetation can be watched from day to day...and...the taste and fancy can be exercised by continually forming new and beautiful scenes." He exhorts the satisfaction of hard work and a do-it-yourself ethos that separated men of the commercial and professional classes from the aristocracy: "...[A] man who plants a hedge, or sows a grass-plot...the enjoyment of a citizen whose recreation, at his suburban residence, consists in working in his garden must be higher in scale, than that of him who amuses himself, in the plot round his house, with shooting at a mark or playing with bowls." ³⁵

Loudon's centrality to the making of a 19th century English culture of gardening cannot be underestimated. Through his *Gardener's Magazine* particularly, he provided an international forum for the "dissemination of useful knowledge" about the authority of the English on the meanings and direction of horticultural spatiality *and* practice.³⁶ Even with such a forum, he neglects empire's role in the rise of and transformation of horticulture. Thomas Firminger's publication of a *Manual of Gardening in Bengal* in 1864 would directly challenge Loudon's

³⁵ Loudon, *Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion: Comprising the choice of a suburban or villa residence, or of a situation on which to form one, the arrangement and furnishing of the house; and the laying out, planting, and general management of the garden and grounds* (London: Longman, et al.) 1838, 2.

³⁶ *Gardener's Magazine*, vol. 1, 1826, 1.

insularity, demonstrating the importance of horticulture to an imperial as well as national identity.

Informal Imperial Networks: Cultivating the Imperial Citizen

As has been well documented, a doctrine of improvement was well established in India by the 1830s in India. This idea of an improved landscape often dovetailed with the perceived need for European enterprise to replace “Indian ignorance and sloth.” Not everyone was in agreement with this type of intervention, particularly the Permanent Settlement and the establishment of the zamindari system which by mid-century was admitted as a structural disaster by some. Land enclosures, irrigation canals and British domestic compounds were part of this improvement ideal. The ethos of improvement went beyond official rhetoric, proselytized by missionaries like Bishop Reginald Heber and William Tennant whose writings took on a tone of moral responsibility in terms of the landscape. It is not coincidental then that the Agricultural Society of India was established by William Carey, a Baptist missionary, and its prospectus declared the Society’s intent to “enlarge the ideas of the peasantry, to dissipate their prejudices, to call forth their latent energies, to encourage their industry, and promote their respectability and usefulness in society.” Cultivation, industry and utility would gradually conquer the “indolence which in Asiatics is almost become a second nature,--and the interdiction of habits of cleanliness, and a neat arrangement of domestic conveniences, in the place of squalid

wretchedness, neglect and confusion.... [I]n a word...industry and virtue...by an association of this nature [would] become obviously important even to the natives themselves."³⁷

Yet even as agriculture was eclipsed by horticulture, discourses of improvement hardly faded from view; rather, with the emergence of gardening manuals like Firminger's *Manual of Gardening in Bengal*, the growth of exchange of plants and seeds both in India and between metropole and other colonial out-stations, the proliferation of flower and vegetable exhibitions, and a wider network of knowledge dedicated to horticultural improvement was widely promoted. Such manuals urged not only improved horticultural practices for production of fruit and vegetables but the importance of the ornamental garden to the material construction of empire. After all, the AHSI and its sister societies were interested in the cultivation of crops that adapted European agricultural *and* horticultural advances to the Indian landscape. Horticultural plants and seeds were imported from Europe as well as other imperial locations.³⁸ The AHSI set about the task of ascertaining which crops were naturally hardy in the Indian environment, and attempted to acclimatize others. Outgrowing its small garden at Alipore, it was subsequently allotted space in 1836 by the Botanical Garden for close to three decades, and ultimately transferred to a space adjacent to the Belvedere residence of the Lt. Governor in 1872. The gardens were laid out in such a way as to incorporate research (though not on the same scale as the Botanic Gardens—see Chapter 3 of the present work) and ornamentation as a park with pathways, lawn and flowerbeds, and an exhibition area for the increasingly popular horticultural

³⁷ William Carey, "Prospectus of an Agricultural and Horticultural Society in India," in *Transactions of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India* 1 (1838): 211-21. This was the AHSI's inaugural journal. By the 1870s, the writings of the journal were so voluminous that "transactions" and "proceedings" were separated into separate journal issues.

³⁸ Ray Desmond, *The European Discovery of Indian Flora* (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 214-215.

shows. The shows were important events for the AHSI, intended to motivate improvement in the quality of local vegetables and fruits. Flowers were later part of the shows as well.³⁹

In 1864, Thomas Firminger published his *Manual of Gardening for Bengal and Upper India*, the first comprehensive horticultural handbook of its kind in British India and a major carrier of ideas about the relationship between local knowledge and national-imperial identity. In the *Manual*, Firminger mirrored Loudon and later English garden writers, advising on climate and soils, garden design and implementation, pest control, grafting and budding, and those plants most suitable to an Indian landscape. But unlike Loudon, Firminger was neither trained as a professional gardener nor educated as a botanist; he was, in fact, a chaplain. He was, however, as we have seen, a man of his time, reflecting the rise of the middle-class garden, the importance of horticulture to British identity, and what I would call the amateur expert -- reflecting the Victorian culture of the auto-didact. In India as in England, the garden was a private space exhibiting public virtues -- the virtues of a suburban home and its garden, in both image and practice, and proclaimed values of order, privacy, and an appreciation of nature in a controlled environment. The active man of business could find solace and peace puttering about in his garden, watering his plants, digging in his beds, and perusing seed catalogs. In the new rationalized space of the garden, educated middle-class men of business like Thomas Firminger could perform physical work without losing status.

But the garden had also been marked out as a space of expertise of the kind that the English were uniquely able to provide. Loudon's publication of his *Encyclopedia of Gardening* in 1822, the *Encyclopedia of Plants* in 1829, *Illustrations of Landscape Gardening and Garden Architecture* in 1833, and the *Suburban Home and Villa Companion* in 1838, constituted a

³⁹ Ibid.

substantial body of work wherein the homeowner could learn scientific names, cultivation tips, and design and plant an entire garden. Along with books like these, new gardening periodicals were constantly appearing, with Loudon's *Gardener's Magazine* in 1826 at the forefront. The first general-interest horticultural journal, its first edition staked out its importance as a forum for entertainment and information for the general reader but also for "instruction of practitioners in the art[.]...its plan calculated to procure information from every possible source at home or abroad." The growth of horticultural societies during this period is also astonishing--beginning with the London Horticultural Society's founding in 1804, within 20 years practically every village, town, or county in England had at least one if not more, horticultural or botanical society. By the middle of the century, England was rapidly becoming a vibrant world of "plant-fancying, gardening, nurseries, amateur and professional horticulturists." ⁴⁰

Thomas Firminger, educated at Cambridge and serving as a chaplain in Bengal, was a key figure in the promotion of these ideals and aspirations. Although an amateur,⁴¹ he was, however, careful to lay out his expertise for the reader. He noted that the need of a "practiced and comprehensive" work had long been felt by those who had the "management" of a garden in India. Having ascertained "after every inquiry possible" (to the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India and elsewhere) that no such work was being undertaken, he resolved on beginning one himself. Firminger derived his authority on gardening by virtue of the practical

⁴⁰ Abigail Jane Lustig, *The Creation and Uses of Horticulture in Britain and France in the Nineteenth Century* (Diss. University of California, Berkeley, 1997), 93.

⁴¹ As Ann Shtier has noted, from about 1790 through the 1820s, science writing (and I would include botany and gardening here) was frequently set within a discourse of self-improvement. Professionalization is a slippery term before about 1860; "gentlemen of science" was a term usually used for those who were "trained" in or for whom science was a career rather than a hobby, although it is not uniformly the case. I use the term "amateur" here as a "gentleman amateur" (a term in circulation at the time) to note the difference between men like Thomas Firminger for whom horticulture was more a hobby (if a consuming one) and "expert" John Claudius Loudon, for whom it was his vocation. See e.g., Ann Shtier, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England 1760 to 1860* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 150-153.

English knowledge he had acquired working in his own garden and his “copious and frequent” consultation of the writings of established English authorities like John Paxton and Dr. Lindley – the former a noted landscape architect and the latter a well-known botanist. As significantly, his gardening expertise had an imperial legitimacy. As a result of several years’ residence at Ferozepore in the Punjab where he made himself “well acquainted with the cultivation of a garden in the North-West Provinces,” as well as by his close observation of other gardens and access to the Government Botanical Gardens and the Agri-Horticultural Society in Calcutta. In addition, he argued that his position as a judge at the Calcutta horticultural shows over a period of 6 years had served to familiarize him with the “finest [or not] productions of the country.” Although he makes some allowance for his amateur status by noting his “considerable diffidence” in submitting his pages to press, he in turn reifies himself as an expert by virtue of his sheer hard work and diligent pursuit of knowledge:

...working single-handed; gathering, often under great difficulty, my facts for myself; not taking any statement upon trust, which by subsequent trial I had the means of verifying; and with the labours of no predecessor to be of any material assistance to me, I can only hope for indulgence, if in some instances the information I impart be not so full as might be desired, and if in some few perhaps I prove wrong or mistaken.⁴²

Firminger sought further to establish himself in a position of authority by differentiating himself not only as a horticulturist but as an Englishman (and I quote it here at length to make my point):

⁴²Thomas Firminger, *Manual of Gardening for Bengal and Upper India* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1864), pp. i-ii.

Under the most favourable point of view it can hardly be said that horticulture has as yet made much advancement in India. Of the natives, those of the higher class, it would seem, have never manifested much fondness for it, nor taken much interest in the pursuit; while those, who follow it for a livelihood, have not found it sufficiently remunerative to devote to it more than the least possible of their time and thought. Of this we have the plainest evidence, look in whatever direction we may. The flowers they prize are confined to only a limited few; and those not especially for their beauty, but from having been consecrated from time immemorial to certain religious or festive purposes. And so, again, in regard to the fruit that we see exposed in vast quantities for sale in the bazaars; it is always the most inferior of its kind...uniformly all but of the very worst description. That this should be the case no adequate reason can be assigned, but the want of a very trifling amount of care and attention bestowed upon the cultivation of better sorts. This little care and attention, it does not appear that they think it worth their while to bestow.....There are, it is true, gardens in possession of the wealthier natives, where fruit-trees of choice kinds are to be found, where some slight attention is bestowed, upon them but such gardens are comparatively very few...there are none that possess any high merit but what has been at some time owing to a mere sport of nature, wholly unaided by the hand of man....even the simple operation of budding is regarded with superstitious aversion....⁴³

⁴³ Ibid, B.

Here Firminger clearly marked out a rule of colonial difference⁴⁴ by focusing on a particular idea of cultivation, an active intervention “by the hand of man”⁴⁵ in Nature, and negated a long history of Indian gardens and garden traditions as being of little value. In Firminger’s estimation, unlike their British equivalents, Indian practices over time had remained static in form and practice, unable or unwilling to move beyond ideals rooted in religion and superstition. Moreover, he was highly critical of those wealthy native gentleman who disdained to get their hands dirty with the hard work of horticulture, arguing that horticulture amongst the natives would never be carried to any degree of excellence until these gentlemen “[overcame] the scruples they now have of manipulating with their own hands.”⁴⁶ Thus, in Firminger’s case, the presumed superiority of English horticultural knowledge was derived from empirical knowledge of the local soil and the experience of a substandard colonial example.

Firminger was not uncritical of his countrymen’s work in India. In fact, in his estimation the English fared only somewhat better, having provided gardens of good example: “Private individuals have contributed as far as their limited means have allowed to disseminate a taste for gardening by the attractiveness of well-stocked and orderly-arranged gardens they have kept up.” Firminger censures these practices as well, charging that they have done little, save the introduction of new plants, to advance *horticulture* in India. “The mere ordinary operations of working the soil, watering, highly manuring [and] pruning are all that has been done; no efforts have been made to improve the races of plants indigenous to the country; no attempt by any of the more refined processes of science to produce superior varieties.”⁴⁷ Although the English in

⁴⁴ The rule of colonial difference is a construction of racial (and other forms of) distinction between colonizer and colonizer, a term coined by Partha Chatterjee and taken up by subsequent historians of ‘new imperial history’. See Partha Chatterjee, *A Nation and Its Fragments*, 1994.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2.

India are neither superstitious nor rooted in tradition, Firminger is nonetheless critical of their stasis, which he reads as tantamount to indifference to “improvement.” Moreover, he takes those to task those who have left their malees⁴⁸ in charge of their gardens. “No one should allow himself to suppose that he can have a well-kept, well-cultivated garden without being, to a considerable extent, his own head gardener.” Malees, according to Firminger, were good servants but more could not be expected of them “than what is in their nature.” He doubted that malees could be educated beyond simple tasks because the “judicious application of the theory of gardening” was not to be acquired “but by men of a liberal education, and of a class far above that of mere labourers, such as malees are.”⁴⁹

In his quest to cite Indian horticultural practices as evidence of the importance of the English-in-England model, Firminger ignored or obscured the fact that gardens and gardening were a staple of both Hindu and Mughal cultures.⁵⁰ Certainly, he would have been familiar with the historical characterization of Lahore as a 'city of gardens,' a common reference describing the city, even after much of its urban landscape lay in ruins after the Revolt.⁵¹ Not only were there royal gardens constructed by urban nobility outside most cities of Mughal India--the *chahar bagh* which were open to the public at certain times, but the house garden--*khanah bagh*, an important domestic space for the imperial household--was common in the imperial palaces as well as the mansions of the elite. Francois Bernier, a French traveller, wrote that a "good house

⁴⁸ The malee (also referred to as “mali” and “mahlee”) was the garden worker, the caste of Indian men who worked in the garden.

⁴⁹Firminger, (1864) 5.

⁵⁰In the *A'in-i Akbari* of Abu al-Fazl, the chronicler of the Mughal state under emperor Akbar (1556-1605), he wrote in Book I of the *A'in* on the importance of the garden to the imperial household. Moreover, he noted that "Gardens and flower beds are everywhere to be found. Formerly people used to plant their garden without any order, but since the time of the arrival in India of the emperor Babur, a more methodical arrangement of the gardens has obtained; and travellers nowadays admire the beauty of the palaces and their murmuring fountains." Quoted in Stephen P. Blake, "The *Khanah Bagh* in Mughal India," in James L. Wescoat, Jr. and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, eds. *Mughal Gardens. Sources, Places, Representations, and Prospects* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996); 176.

⁵¹ By “Revolt,” I mean what has been known as the 1857 Mutiny. I choose to use a somewhat less freighted terminology throughout the rest of this work.

had its...gardens, trees..." and in order to be "greatly admired" would be "situated in the middle of a large-flower garden...." Lieutenant Franklin, an Englishman, writing at the turn of the 18th century, noted that in the "remains of many splendid palaces...[were] gardens with capacious stone reservoirs...."⁵² And, like Flora Annie Steel and Grace Gardiner, writing over 200 years later,⁵³ the house-garden was important enough to require three out of 17 sections of a 17th century household manual. In the cities of Agra and Lahore, the relationship between garden and city predates England's concerns with open, green spaces in the wake of industrialization.⁵⁴ Gardens as a symbol of authority and spatial signifier would also be appropriated by Sikhs like Ranjit Singh, who used the garden as a symbol of status⁵⁵ in much the same way as 18th century English landowners and their landscape parks. As important as his obscuring a long history of gardening in India, Firminger also neglects to note that the 'science' of horticulture (or, the art and science of gardening) had only recently, in historical terms, developed in Britain.⁵⁶

Firminger's *Manual* can be seen as a prescriptive manual for empire. In keeping with other primers for the making of Victorian imperial identity, it was an articulation of English national superiority through a particular relationship *with*, and as importantly *over*, nature. A resident of India at first in Ferozepore, Firminger had lived through the Second Sikh War (1848-

⁵²Blake, 178-179, 182.

⁵³Flora Annie Steel and Grace Gardiner, *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (Edinburgh: Frank Murray, 1890). Chapter 8 was devoted to gardening.

⁵⁴See James L. Wescoat, Jr., "Gardens, Urbanization, and Urbanism in Mughal Lahore: 1526-1657," in James L. Wescoat, Jr. and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, eds. *Mughal Gardens. Sources, Places, Representations, and Prospects* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996); 139-140. Wescoat has written elsewhere about the contextual meanings of the Mughal garden, and its variety of forms, and the gardens of the Mughal emperors as sites of power. See, for example: James L. Wescoat, Jr., "Gardens versus Citadels: The Territorial Context of Early Mughal Gardens," in J.D. Hunt, ed., *Garden History: Issues, Approaches, Methods*, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture 13, Washington DC, 1992, 331-58; and "Landscapes of Conquest and Transformation: Lessons from the Earliest Mughal Gardens in India, 1526-1530," *Landscape Journal* 10 (1991), 105-14.

⁵⁵Wescoat, 169.

⁵⁶I am not arguing here that gardens did not exist in England before the 19th century. But "horticulture" as an important practice associated with the middle classes only emerges with the likes of Loudon, in the 1820s but had really only begun to take hold at mid-century in England, not much before Firminger demeans Indian practices in 1864.

49). In 1854 he left Ferozepore, embarking on a series of tours through the historical cities of northern India, furloughing to England, and later arriving with his wife in Calcutta in 1857, on the eve of "Panic Sunday," to take up his chaplaincy at Howrah, in easy commute of the Botanical Gardens.⁵⁷ Although he never writes about the Revolt specifically, it cannot have left him unaffected. His membership in the horticultural society may have also influenced his opinion of native 'horticulture' as there had been chagrin for some time at the paltry interest apparently exhibited by native elites in participating in the AHSI or regional societies. Even C.M. Villiers-Stuart's "attempt to break fresh ground" in an exploration of the Indian garden in 1913, replicated a prejudice to native gardening practices, noting that "Indian gardening, like every other Indian art, is closely interwoven with the history of the country, and the artistic traditions and religious ideals of its designers played a far larger part in the ordering and planting of the gardens than is usual in European pleasure-grounds." Though she notes the technical sophistication of Mughal emperors Jahangir and Babur in garden irrigation, and the harmony of an old Indian garden-palace built for the hot weather as an illustration of harmony of house and garden, her emphasis is on the religious and artistic symbolism of Mughal gardens. Anglo-Indians, even as they may have lost the "charm of garden symbolism," are "always improving well-known shrubs and flowers and acclimitizing (sic) new ones."⁵⁸ Here again, amidst an articulation of Mughal gardens as worth considering in the building of New Delhi, was a now familiar elaboration of elite native garden practice as divorced from science and modernity and adhered to art and tradition.

⁵⁷ Biography taken from "Notice of the Author," by Walter Firminger, Firminger's son, in the introduction to the 6th edition of the *Manual*.

⁵⁸ C. M. Villiers-Stuart, *Gardens of the Great Moghuls* (London: A&C Black, 1913) 1-5.

The elaboration of difference between English and native practice that Firminger pioneered was taken up in other manuals written in his wake. Gardening manuals in India flourished, running to several editions; horticultural journals like *The Indian Gardener* (1881) and weekly garden columns in *The Times* (Bombay) and *The Statesman* (Calcutta) proliferated, geared towards an ever more amateur and popular audience. Without fail, the indolence and lack of care of malis was bemoaned by English gardeners. In the fifth edition of Firminger's *Manual*, published in 1904, it was noted how the example of English gardeners and gardens had worked to good effect and the condition of horticulture in India vastly improved. "There is ... now a growing tendency among the wealthier natives to surround their dwelling-houses with well-kept gardens." Many of the ruling princes had taken not only a "keen personal interest in the subject" but also had provided public parks and gardens for the benefit "of their respective States and people." The example provided by the rulers and chiefs at Baroda, Hyderabad, Mysore, Jaipur and Gwalior among others had served to "establish horticulture on a firm basis throughout the land." But in the midst of his praise, the new editor noted that the design and maintenance of those princely gardens had been "mostly under European supervision." The interest native princes and wealthy Indian gentlemen exhibited in horticulture was clearly not enough to make them modern, requiring as it did the intervention of a British hand.

From Gardening Ideal to The Ideal Garden

Unlike the debate over styles that raged in England in the last quarter of the 19th century, gardens in India followed a rather loose design of what was known earlier as the gardenesque. Geometric borders mixed with more 'landscape' effects depending upon taste and were not

designed by architects (as with the Arts & Crafts movement) but by the amateur gardener. Manuals like Firminger's and Mrs. R. Temple-Wright's *Flowers and Gardens in India, A Manual for Beginners* (first edition in 1892) included examples of garden and landscape layout, and Firminger's also included geometric designs to follow. His designs echoed the bedding-out craze that emerged with the beds designed for the Crystal Palace by Joseph Paxton at mid-century, and made possible by imperial collecting and access to new plants and hybrids. Amateur gardeners tended towards the more 'natural' or what would become known as the 'wild' garden, though it was certainly NOT wild as in left to do as it pleased. Begun by William Robinson and refined by horticulturists like Gertrude Jekyll, a pupil of Robinson, it meant lawn, herbaceous borders and particularly the domestication of hardy exotic plants. In India, having a garden meant really a garden that included an expanse of lawn, and borders of flowers under shade trees for seating. Usually there was also some sort of pond or tank for irrigation and aesthetics as well. An Anglo-Indian⁵⁹ garden also included English flowers and plants, although these were often harder to maintain. The idea of the Arts and Crafts garden was that the house would be buffered from the "wilds" of nature by a well-designed garden space, creating a threshold between house and Nature. The landscape was layered, i.e., that area directly around the house was axially planned – the formal garden or terraces, surrounded by the wild garden and then Nature. Unlike the English (or for instance, Australian) gardens, the area around an Indian house was cleared to allow for the flow of air. Trees and vines too close to the house were also seen as harbors for snakes and other pests. Arts and Crafts gardens also required adaptability to local conditions both in building materials and plantings and flowers and shrubs should be adaptable to the soil and surroundings.

⁵⁹ As used here, "Anglo-Indian" refers to the British living in India, not biracial offspring of British/Indian parents.

Without a doubt, the core of the English Indian garden was the lawn. The lawn in the new middle-class home was a smaller version of the open landscape park that emerged in the 18th century in England. The landscape park was a space seemingly unbounded by fence or hedge, utilizing instead the ha-ha, a low ditch that deterred wandering animals as well as demarcating an estate's edge. From the house then, or anywhere else on the estate property, its expanse was visually connected to the countryside outside its borders, espousing both a connection to the larger land, an exhibition of the estate as 'natural', and the control and ownership of land as well.⁶⁰ Where an immense expanse of land had created a sense of privacy, in urban areas in the middle-class garden, space was more visually bounded, creating privacy through the privet hedge or the high wall, while at the same time including that green sward of lawn endemic to the landscape park.

The establishment and maintenance of a garden in British India was an important way to distinguish oneself from indigenous society. Detached houses standing within large garden compounds were compared to the 'tortuous' lanes and congested housing of natives. The garden was an essential component of these houses, identified by their form as British space. Thomas Firminger and Mrs. Temple-Wright, like most garden writers in India, exhorted what Loudon had coined in England as the gardenesque – a combination of formal and natural, with broad sweeping lawn, flowers and shrub beds, and artistic focal points. This form, even as styles changed or were debated in the metropole, remained essentially the same. For Firminger it was a matter not of the desire of the owner but rather the inability of the native mali gardener to achieve it (although he seemingly contradicts himself). The flowing lines of the picturesque were more easily achieved because they were easily designed by the owner and planted by the mali.

⁶⁰See Bermingham, *passim*; and Tom Williamson, *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Society in Eighteenth Century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

"Small beds...are easily designed and look well but many of the geometrical...figures...when attempted by the rude skill of the malee...prove only ridiculous. Winding paths with clumps of shrubs planted at intervals at the bends and curves have a very fine effect."⁶¹

Although Judith Roberts and Charles and Caroline Carleton have argued that the form and substance of the English garden in India was a result of homesickness and nostalgic longing,⁶² it was an equally clear marking of territory, symbolic and otherwise. Even with the careful cultivation of imported seeds and native plants 'improved' upon by a British hand, the results were often mixed as Edith Cuthell discovered. "My violets are in bloom: You cannot think how one treasures out here the quiet little 'home' flower.... Dear little English flower.... Carefully, one by one have I gathered enough to make me a buttonhole.... It is a great triumph for I have spent more care and thought on the violets than on all the lurid tropical flowers that patch the garden with colour."⁶³ Although Roberts and Carleton have noted Cuthell's devotion to her cultivation of violets and their association with home, a different reading of Cuthell's experience exhibits the labor involved in gathering enough violets to make a small buttonhole. Violets wilted in the long hot season but also failed to flower prodigiously even during India's colder months. Even Cuthell noted that for her English seedlings, sprouting on her verandah in October when "life [was] once more endurable," it was a matter of "Darwinian" survival.⁶⁴ And although Cuthell notes that for those like her family, where a lawn was an expensive luxury reserved for the "high functionaries" in Government Houses who were more permanent residents than

⁶¹ Firminger (1864), 23.

⁶² Charles Carlton and Caroline Carlton, *The Significance of Gardening in British India* (Lewiston et al.: Edwin Mellen Press), 2005; Judith Roberts, "English Gardens in India," *Garden History* 26;2 (Winter 1998), 115-135.

⁶³ Edith Cuthell, *My Garden in the City of Gardens. A Memory with Illustrations* (London and New York: John Lane, 1905), 3-5.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

themselves, she did put forth quite a bit of effort to make a garden, even if it was made up "only" of garden beds, trees, and hard packed dirt and gravel.

Most other women garden writers, including Mrs. Temple-Wright and Flora Annie Steele, who included a whole chapter on gardening in her *Indian Housekeeping Manual*, insisted on the inclusion of a lawn in an Indian garden. It was what marked out an English garden from an indigenous one and both women were highly critical of those who either thought the work of a garden futile because of the impermanency of their time in India or the mobility of their husband's service. The lawn was a sign of privilege and modernity in England and Steele particularly likened the lawn to the Raj--each required commitment and care. "[T]he horrid Indian flower garden, consisting of mud cart wheels, divided into contortions by ridiculous little mud paths, should never be countenanced."⁶⁵ The lawn in India was particularly labor intensive; even as Indian gardening manuals and journals advertised Buddig's lawn mower, the care of the lawn often fell to the mali, tended only by a scythe. Indian lawns had to be manicured daily, rolled to keep smooth, and kept free of weeds. Mrs. Eggar noted that she could hear the weeds growing in her garden.⁶⁶ Steele also insisted that flowers whether in pots or in beds made an Indian house an English home.

Nothing makes an Indian house look so home-like and cheerful as a verandah full of blossoming plants, and hung with baskets of ferns. And it is besides an endless amusement and pleasure. All that is required is a little personal supervision, and the recollection that these mute dependants of yours are as liable to starvation, neglect, and consequent death as 'the cattle and the stranger that are within your

⁶⁵ Flora Annie Steele and Grace Gardiner, *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook: Giving the Duties of Mistress and Servants, the General Management of the House and Practical Recipes for Cooking in All Its Branches* (1888), repr. (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 125.

⁶⁶ Mrs. Henry Cooper Eggar, *An Indian Garden* (London: John Murray, 1904), 160.

gates.' Silent as flowers may be in complaint, they are eloquent in their gratitude, and their blossoming service of praise will make your home a pleasant resting-place for tired eyes. And how tired eyes can be of dully, dusty, "unflowerful ways," only those can really know who have spent long years in the monotonous plains of Northern India. There, it seems to the writer, the garden is not merely a convenience, or a pleasure. *It is a duty.*⁶⁷ (emphasis added)

By the end of the 19th century, there had been a distinctive shift in the tone of garden writing in India, as well as the authors themselves. Tomes like Firminger's *Manual*, running over 600 pages, thick with botanical terms and theories, were quickly being supplanted by books of either pocket size (relatively speaking), written in 'layman's' language, specifically addressed to a larger, unskilled audience. With a few exceptions, these were written by women. Books like Edith Cuthell's and Mrs. Eggar's took the form of a diary or autobiography of sorts, narrating the life of their garden through their day to day lives. These books, however, though conversational in tone, were instructional and both Cuthell and Eggar were educated and familiar with Firminger and horticultural practices. Eggar was married to the Secretary of the Agri-Horticultural Society of India, and at the publication of the first edition of "An Indian Garden" had been in India (and Alipore) for close to 25 years. Through her pages, she proves herself an apt manager of both land and laborers, acquainted with the 95 species of ferns, the dozens of types of trees, and every flower and shrub in her garden. Although written in an apologetic tone, she is more progressive than the 'Burra Sahib' or the 'Ancient' – her husband and father-in-law respectively—who adhere to geometric bedding schemes and acclimatized seed, while she experiments with indigenous plants and a more relaxed gardening style in her "Chamber of

⁶⁷ Steele and Gardiner, 128.

Horrors.’’⁶⁸ Eggar’s experimentation and depth of knowledge is akin to that of Gertrude Jekyll, who by the end of the century was writing for *The Garden* in England and working as a landscape architect. Eggar’s gardening diary also included simple design suggestions, descriptions of various flowers, shrubs, and trees in non-scientific terms and where they grew well, the type of advice that would give an amateur a fairly good idea about what worked well in an Indian garden in uncomplicated terms.

Although a more popular book than the works of either Loudon or Firminger, Eggar’s diary paled in comparison to Mrs. Temple-Wright’s *Flowers and Gardens in India*, which ran to 7 editions over a 20 year period (1892-1922). Temple-Wright approached her garden and garden-writing in a more no-nonsense tone than her fellow Anglo-Indian women gardeners. Like Cuthell and Eggar, the garden emerges in Temple-Wright’s book simultaneously as a personal and imperial space. Temple-Wright insisted that even if one’s time in India was transient, the English in India were not. Therefore, a garden, regardless of scale, mattered to the cultivation of English imperial identity. Recognizing perhaps the variety of readers who might take up her book and the equal variety of pocketbooks available for cultivation, she suggested that even a potted garden on a verandah helped to identify oneself as an imperial subject in the Indian landscape.

Conclusion

Both Loudon and Firminger were aware that gardens manifested local, national, and imperial conditions. Loudon wrote: “The history of gardening may be considered

⁶⁸ A name given to Eggar’s experimental garden area by her husband.

chronologically, or in connection with that of the different nations who have successively flourished in different parts of the world; politically, as influenced by the different government [sic] which have prevailed; geographically, as affected by the different climates and natural situations of the globe.”⁶⁹ But what made English gardens in substance over the course of the 19th century is plant material obtained because of empire. Those exotic plants that had been nurtured or showcased in elaborate bedding out patterns, by the 1870s—particularly under William Robinson’s influence—were eschewed for a more natural appearance, in effect domesticating the exotic within the English landscape. Gardening manuals in British India were not straightforward horticultural texts but were deeply imbued with the colonial project in their judgments of indigenous practices (or lack thereof), commentary on labor, differentiations of race, gender, class and caste, and a delineation between modernity, science and improvement versus deficiency, superstition and stasis. Through a particular relationship with Nature, gardening and horticultural practices created an imperial subject through a particular articulation of colonial knowledge and with it, the claim to a certain English horticultural authority that was not merely declarative but was pedagogical as well.

The garden as a space of an “object lesson” in a larger context of imperial discipline and governance turns up most visibly in pamphlets urging gardening in Indian primary schools in the provinces. In the opening chapter of his 1917 *The Amateur's Guide to Gardening in Southern India*, H.E. Houghton, Superintendent of the gardens of the Agri-Horticultural Society at Madras, noted (echoing H.J. Davies, as noted in the Introduction of this work) it had only recently been discovered that gardening had an educative factor, “training the eye to observation, the mind to reasoning, teaching patience, perseverance, and attention to details...as nothing else can do.” The

⁶⁹ Loudon, *An Encyclopedia of Gardening*, 3.

educative factor that Houghton (and Davies) identity was not recent at all but had, as we have seen, a much longer history. The garden as a disciplinary site had been articulated through the writings of John Claudius Loudon, as well through the gardening texts written in India by the likes of Thomas Firminger, Mrs. R. Temple-Wright, S. Percy-Lancaster, G.O. Speede, and Woodrow Pogson to name a few. Moreover, as we will see in Chapter 3 on Calcutta in the present work, particularly, the translation of gardening ideals and ideal gardens into the urban open spaces of the Indian city, were uneven at best and imbued with the very real struggle over the urban landscape. It is not surprising, perhaps, that Houghton (and Davies) writes of the educative factor of the garden for provincial schools. The spaces of the capital of the Indian empire had become fractured with protests. Far from settling the landscape with markers of English identity, the distinctively English gardening genius was caught up, as we shall see, in the turbulent urban histories of the Victorian period – from London to Calcutta to Delhi and beyond.

Chapter 2: The Planning of London? Green Space, Belonging, and the Contest between Public and Private 1850-1910

This is true of all classes; we all want quiet; we all want beauty for the refreshment of our souls.

Octavia Hill, 1875 ¹

In 1909, the Housing and Town Planning Act passed in Britain. The Act has been lauded as a major achievement for the emergent town planning movement, as the pinnacle of progressive urban improvement, as the very cornerstone of modern British planning.² Despite its function as an endpoint in the teleological narrative of English urban progress, the 1909 Act was, in fact, the legislative embodiment of a long and uneven process of urban governance in response to the political, social, and economic crises of the nineteenth century English city. The Act brought together existing legislation on housing for the working classes, public health and sanitation, and the preservation and creation of open spaces. Its incorporation of town planning on modest Garden City lines was certainly innovative, but it was hardly a triumph for progressive public values. Rather, it enshrined a protection of cherished property rights and privileged self-governance over regulation by the state. The fact that its enactment was a result of the findings of the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (1904) further suggests how defensive a reaction it was to crises of the imperial nation-state. Formed by Parliament, the ICPD had investigated reports from the War Office expressing concern over the rejection of Army recruits on the grounds of physical disability over the course of the South African (Boer) War. Of the over 50 recommendations made in the Report, some of which were

¹ Octavia Hill, *Homes of the London Poor* (London, 1875), 12.

² See William Ashworth, the *Genesis of Modern British Town Planning* (London: Routledge, 1954); a more critical analysis of the Act is provided by Anthony Sutcliffe in "Britain's First Town Planning Act: A Review of the 1909 Achievement," *The Town Planning Review*, vol. 59, no. 3 (Jul., 1988), pp. 289-303. Sutcliffe provides the first detailed historical investigation of the debates before and the passing of the Act, though he reveals more *what* happened than *why*.

deemed ‘imperative,’ many focused expressly on the environment and fitness as the solution to the pernicious effects of overcrowding. More specifically, the Report called for provisions of fresh air and open space, garden allotments and physical exercise in schools to forestall what was perceived as decline in the quality and longevity of English racial stock. The conclusions drawn and recommendations made by the ICPD centered on unruliness of working class bodies in urban space as the sign of imperial modernity in crisis. In this context, the Housing and Town Planning Act may be said to have provided a timely justification for a garden “cure” for the symptoms, if not the root causes, of urban crisis at the start of the 20th century.

Like the 1909 Act itself, the story of London’s modernity is more uneven than linear, more defensive than progressive, less triumphal than halting. To be sure, London has been held up as the model of imperial urbanity due to ideas emergent in the 19th century about the importance of open, public space, and its integration of *rus in urbe* by virtue of its open squares and commons, public gardens and parks, and garden cemeteries. This civic landscape was not, however, a natural progression provided or supported by the state; it was the result of ongoing tensions between government and private intervention – of conflicts over who should fund the urban garden ideal. Nor does the myth of an increasingly green London stand up to close scrutiny. Much of its open space lay in the West End, neglectful of the serious overcrowding of the East End (with the exception, of course, of Victoria Park). Urban reform in London was the result of struggle between public and private interest, dissension amongst a hodgepodge of local vestries and a somewhat centralized municipal government, and moral and social reform movements over the course of the latter half of the 19th century. Cast against Calcutta, its ‘sister’ capital city of empire, what becomes apparent is the unevenness of their urban morphologies are more similar than different. Like Calcutta (as we shall see in Chapter 3), London’s landscape

was a result of struggles over spatial authority and disciplining the errant bodies of the dead and the living.

If we consider only the royal parks, these struggles are scarcely visible. Regent's Park, for example, had been laid out over a period of years by John Nash (1811-1826). Designed as a public park, it was only gradually opened to the masses. The 350 acre park was designed in relation to the housing around it, developed for the gentry and the park as a space of recreation for Regent's Park residents and the wealthier classes. Surrounded by trees and shrubs so they were not visible to their neighbors and ranged about the perimeter, Nash's design effectively appropriated the park as a private space for each villa owner. Like the other royal parks (St. James, Hyde and Kensington) that formed a green nucleus in the West End, it was meant for a particular type of user. When Peter Josef Lenne', a German landscape gardener, visited Regent's Park in 1823, he noted there were no benches or shelters for pedestrians and no places for refreshment or amusement. Lenne' also noted that the parks and squares in London were surrounded by railings in contrast to their "open" German counterparts. Clearly, to enjoy London parks it "[was] necessary to be a man of fortune, and take exercise on horseback or in a carriage."³

But park development more broadly was embedded in a larger discourse of Victorian improvement that responded anxiously to questions of both public health and the public purse. Nathan Cole, writing in 1877, noted that London parks had afforded wholesome healthy pleasure to the thousands who visited them each year and their value from the vantage of sanitation could not be overestimated. They promoted "improved habits...awaken[ed] new thoughts, and suggest[ed] fresh subjects for the mental exercise of the million...who might otherwise be

³ Quoted in Hazel Conway, *People's Parks*, 13-14.

employed in the study of less desirable objects than those which nature provides and art cultivates.”⁴ Cole’s characterization of a public park as a space of both moral and mental education and as an antidote to more dangerous influences was a familiar one, articulated in 19th century political, social and economic debates about the conditions of the working classes and the poor, rapid urbanization and overcrowding in the larger towns and cities, and the larger health of the nation. Between 1826 and 1885, Hazel Conway notes, over 200 public parks were developed in Great Britain.⁵ As impressive as this number seems, it fails to account for the complex nature of park development; nor does it make clear that the majority of these several hundred new parks were *outside* London. Given that the ‘greening’ of London was a standard against which colonial cities like Calcutta were held (see Chapter 3), it is worth considering the fractured history of the emergence of public parks in the metropolis at greater length.

On the heels of the debates about political and poor law reform, in 1833 the Select Committee on Public Walks (SCPW) was commissioned to investigate and report on the condition of public open space in Britain’s major industrial towns, including London. Spearheaded by R.A. Slaney, a Benthamite and newly minted MP, the Report reflected Slaney’s earlier investigations and writings on the lack of “commodious public walk[s]” in industrial towns and his friendship with John Claudius Loudon. Influenced by Loudon’s writing about breathing zones and public squares that emerged over the proposed enclosure of Hampstead Heath in 1829,⁶ Slaney and his committee identified the pressing social and political need for some provision for open space in rapidly urbanizing environments, where commons and wastelands were being enclosed and developed:

⁴ Nathan Cole. *The Royal Parks of London* (London: Journal of Horticulture Office, 1877), ii.

⁵ See Conway, *People’s Parks*, Appendix 2.

⁶ See “Breathing Places for the Metropolis,” *Gardener’s Magazine*, vol. 5, 1829, p. 686-7.

During the last fifteen years, from the increase of building and the augmented value of Property, many open spaces have been inclosed, and every day the increasing multitude become more and more restricted in their means of reaching any open and healthy place to walk in. In taking a view of that part of London which is situate to the North of the Thames, your Committee would begin near Vauxhall Bridge and follow the margin of this vast city round till it again meets the Thames near the West India Docks. St. James's Park, the Green Park and Hyde Park, which reach in a connected line from near Westminster to the top of Oxford-street, afford to the inhabitants of all this Western portion of the Metropolis inestimable advantages as Public Walks. The two later [sic] Parks are [now] open to all classes. St. James's Park has lately planted and improved with great taste, and the interior is now opened, as well as Kensington Gardens, to all persons well-behaved and properly dressed.... From Hyde Park, following the edge of the Town to the North-East, your Committee find no open Public Walk till they reach the Regent's Park to the North of the New-road.⁷

The Report clearly showed the lack of open space outside of the West End and near northwest portions of London. From Regent's Park heading east to the "River at Limehouse" there was not a single place reserved as a public walk or park, "planted and laid out for the accommodation of the People, yet there is no part of London where such Improvements are more imperatively called for."⁸ Also noted was the lack of open space south of the Thames and that in all cases—both in the East and south of the Thames—several "salubrious" places of little to moderate cost

⁷ "Extract from the Report and Evidence laid before the House of Commons, by a Select committee appointed February, 1833 on the Necessity of Public Walks, and the Propriety of establishing Public Baths," *Report of the Select Committee on Public Walks*, pp 5-6. Hereafter SPCW.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 6-8.

to the government were available for development. It is significant that this portion of the Report exhorted the responsibility, moral and otherwise, that the government bore in providing for the 'People.' It is no coincidence that the Report was taken up not long after the passing of the 1832 Reform Act and shortly before enactment of the new Poor Laws, where in the months leading up to its passage, riots had broken out in London, Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester and elsewhere. The memory of the July 1830 revolution in France was also fresh, where King Charles X was replaced with King Louis-Philippe who advocated a constitutional monarchy.⁹ Even as the Committee believed in the basic premise of the "public good," embedded within the Report's pages lay the tension between a state fearful of possible revolution and the customary preference for private philanthropy, as the SCPW recommended stimulating the "liberality of individuals."¹⁰ This tension would be highlighted in the more than ten years between proposal and development of Battersea Park on the south bank of the Thames.

Battersea: Reforming the 'Sink Hole of Surrey'¹¹

It is no little recommendation of this scheme in the eyes of Your Majestic Commissioners that the realization of this project would put an end to the scenes of demoralization which the existing almost lawless state of the locality presents daily, and chiefly on Sundays.

With this petition in 1843, the Reverend R. Eden, vicar of St. Mary's Parish¹² in Battersea, put forth a proposal in front of the Commissioners of Metropolis Improvements of the

⁹ Walter Besant, *London in the 19th Century* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1909), 361-363.

¹⁰ SCPW, 10.

¹¹ As Battersea Fields were known due to their tendency to flood at high tide along the Thames, as well as their reputation as "dens of infamy." Henry S. Simmonds, *All About Battersea* (London: Ashfield, 1882) 4.

¹² St. Mary's church had been established in Battersea in 1777. See, Simmonds, 44-46.

need for a park in Battersea Fields on the south bank of the Thames.¹³ Eden would have been conscious of the work of the SCPW to enact legislation for park genesis, as well as the highly publicized local actions to secure the open space of Primrose Hill in 1842, and the public meetings instituted by George Frederick Young, MP for a royal park in the East End. The petition that resulted was signed by over 30,000 residents in 1840 and presented to the Queen by the Marquis of Normanby, the Home Secretary. The petition compared the deplorable conditions of the Tower Hamlets' 400,000 inhabitants with those conditions of the West End which enjoyed the open spaces of the three royal parks, resulting in an Act of Parliament in 1841 for the building of Victoria Park. Although original plans for Victoria Park placed it on the north bank of the Thames, the 1842 purchase of land had included Bonner's Fields, common land notorious for open air meetings and rallies.¹⁴ Reverend Eden, in his petition for Battersea Fields, echoed that of Victoria Park, noting that the residents of the West and Southwest London already had the advantages of the royal parks and, further, that as the need had been demonstrated for Victoria Park, so it existed on the Thames' south bank.¹⁵

The idea for a park at Battersea first emerged in a letter from one James Phillips in 1841, who had written to the daily papers noting the Fields to be a good place for a park given their location on the river, the extensive open meadows on a perfect level, and a subsoil "dry at all times even after the heaviest rains." Phillips also noted there appeared to be no buildings or obstructions of any kind to be removed, and that given the land was subject to lammas rights and

¹³ "Battersea Park: A Short Statement of Facts to shew (sic) the Origin and Progress of the Project for forming a Royal Park at Battersea, and the necessity of avoiding any further delay in commencing and carrying into effect this much needed and desirable object." [n.d., but given the information within, assumed to be between 1841 and 1844) F/JP/4, London Metropolitan Archives, hereafter F/JP/4-LMA.

¹⁴ 4 & 5 Vict. C. 27 and 5 & 6 Vict. C.20; Conway, *People's Parks*, 40-41.

¹⁵ Petition, "Battersea Park," handwritten, signed by R. Eden, n.d. (though I have been able to ascertain the estimated date of the petition from other documents in LMA files and House of Commons papers), MBW/OW/BP/1-Battersea Park, London Metropolitan Archives. Hereafter MBW-LMA.

therefore unenclosable, assumed the cost for purchase would not “fall heavily on the public purse.”¹⁶ The “lammas rights” or commonable land rights to which Phillips referred were relics of England’s feudal system when land was tilled in common, a custom dating to before the passage of the Statute of Merton under Henry III. The Merton Act gave the lord of the manor the right to enclose common lands without sanction of Parliament or the assent of commoners resident on manorial lands.¹⁷ Lammas land was land used in common, usually for grazing, after crop-planting season had passed. Common lands would also include waste land filled by brushwood and undergrowth used as fuel by manorial tenants and copyholders, as well as small plots for grazing or market gardens.

James Phillips was partly right about Battersea Fields. In the 16th century, that land often was under water during the Thames’ high tide, until the lord of the manor built an embankment and reclaimed the marsh land and that land would be subject to lammas rights at certain times of the year. The manor became the property of Earl Spencer in 1763; the land would be parceled out by the family in 1835.¹⁸ Even before the division and sale of a good deal of the manorial lands, Battersea Fields had acquired a certain level of notoriety. It was rumored that an attempted assassination of Charles II had taken place there as one Colonel Blood had lain in wait in the river marshes. The duel resulting from the political quarrel between the Duke of Wellington and the Marquis of Winchelsea over the Catholic Emancipation Bill took place here in 1829. Moreover, the Red House tea gardens, considered second only to Vauxhall, adjoined the Fields and attracted a substantial number of aristocrats to its small private arbors. Part of the Red House’s grounds were also devoted to pigeon shoots, attracting the “cream of society” until 1840

¹⁶ F/JP/4-London Metropolitan Archives; hereafter FJP4-LMA.

¹⁷ Lt. Col. J.J. Sexby, *The Municipal Parks, Gardens, and Open Spaces of London: Their History and Association* (London: Elliot Stock, 1898), xvii-xviii.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

when it was supplanted by the more fashionable Hurlingham. Over the course of the next several years, the Red House and other public houses that emerged would become home to Sunday pleasure fairs, donkey races, foot races, “comic actors, shameless dancers, conjurers, fortune-tellers ...drinking-booths...and gamblers of every description.” In one local missionary’s words, it had become a “place out of hell that surpassed Sodom and Gomorrah in ungodliness and abomination.”¹⁹

The solution to this ungodly landscape—and the threat to public order claimed by Reverend Eden of St. Mary’s and Thomas Cubitt, Esq., one of the local landowners²⁰--was a park. Clearly, Battersea Fields offered a fine location during the summer months for recreation, evident by the thousands who flocked to the pleasure fairs. But control over the purse was as important as control over the green space; or, making proper English space and making a proper English profit were entwined. Eden insisted that time was of the essence as the cost of land in London was rising at a steady pace and the land of Battersea Fields was the subject of speculation. By 1845, a bill had been submitted to Parliament for putting improvements into effect for both the establishment of a park and provision of a bridge on the Chelsea side.²¹ Appearing before the Commissioners, Eden voiced his concern that two years had passed since the first petition had been made and there had been no signs of movement on the part of the Commissioners. His concerns about land speculation bore fruit with the first of several claims made in respect of property for the proposed park. The first, made in December 1847, by one “Chabot” demanded 10,212£ for his three acres of land and was supported by several surveyors

¹⁹ Thomas Kirk, *London City Mission Magazine*, September 1870; Sexby, 9-11; Simmonds, 79.

²⁰ Both men, but Cubitt particularly, had purchased land after 1835, as evidenced in the Schedule to the 1846 parliamentary bill. *See A Bill to Empower the Commissioners of Her Majesty’s Woods to Form a Royal Park in Battersea Fields, in the County of Surrey*, May 1, 1846, 9 Vict.

²¹ MBW-LMA, “Metropolitan Improvements, Battersea Improvements, Items, The Chief Commissioner, October 3, 1845.”

from the district who had valued the property anywhere from 7,115£ to 9,499£. It was ascertained that Chabot had purchased the land from the Earl of Spencer in 1835, at auction, for a mere 120£. A decision by the jury gave him 750£, a fortunate precedent for the future of the park.²²

Beyond concerns about land speculation, the Commissioners in turn seemed to doubt the veracity of Eden's arguments about the need for a park, as well as the important question of common land use: a question of who used the land as well as who profited from it. In describing the situation of the area, Eden noted that the only legal difficulty existed at "certain parts of the year, from September to November" when the land was open to pastorage of cows belonging to the local populace. He further noted that it was disputed whether the right was with the "inhabitants" or with the "occupiers" (i.e., landowners).²³ Here was the question of commonable lands and lammas rights for the manorial lands of Earl Spencer, who had sold the lands under consideration. In a letter from W. T. Atwood, the treasurer and secretary of the Market Gardeners and Landed Association, it became clear that some of the land in question was more than pastorage for a few months out of the year. Atwood noted that a "great portion of the land" of Battersea Fields was under cultivation under common land usage.²⁴ This question of lammas or common land stalled any real movement for construction of Battersea Park for the next several years as local inhabitants protested the parish's rights to the land. With the land rights in dispute, the parish requested an Act of Parliament to purchase and extinguish "all Rights of Common and Lammas and other Communable Rights" over Battersea Fields.²⁵ In the petition,

²² *The Times*, December 4, 1847, 7.

²³ "Improvement of Battersea Fields," May 21, 1845, *Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Commissioners*. From *Fifth Report of the Commissioners appointed by her Majesty to Inquire into and consider the most effectual means of improving the metropolis and of providing increased facilities of communication within the same*. 1846.

²⁴ MBW-LMA, Letter of William Thomas Atwood, August 31, 1846.

²⁵ MBW-LMA, Letter dated November 2, 1847.

the churchwardens exerted their authority on behalf of their parishioners “either as Freeholders, Copyholders or Tenants or Parishioners of all the land” held under Lammas or “other communable rights.”²⁶

Disputes over Battersea, then, were both spatial and fiscal, in ways that echo the claims made by Felix Driver and Raphael Samuel when they argued that “places are not so much singular points as constellations, the product of all sorts of social relations which cut across particular locations in a multiplicity of ways.”²⁷ By 1852, it became clear that the local copyholders and other parishioners disputed the churchwardens’ claim to the land, asserting their communal rights would have to be bought out. Several parishioners had in the interim written to St. Mary’s churchwardens, voicing their “serious apprehension” about the impingement on the rights of Parishioners “held from time immemorial...including a public right of way” and insisting the dispute be given public attention.²⁸ Given the controversy, the Commissioners were hesitant to act. There was no centralized authority with power. The Metropolitan Board of Works would not come into being until 1855, and even its jurisdiction with regard to common lands would be seriously hampered by local laws of various vestries within its purview. As the costs of buying out small landholders increased and the question of common land rights remained under fire, debates in Parliament led by Benjamin Disraeli questioned the use of state funds for local interests, and I quote him here at some length to illuminate the questions at hand:

I am far from saying that it may not be the duty of the Government to establish parks for the community. I do not want to enter into that great question now; but I think it is a question whether the inhabitants of the district should not at least

²⁶ MBW-LMA, Document, n.d., William, Long & Howard on behalf of petitioners.

²⁷ Quoted in Tony Ballantyne, “On Space, Place and Mobility,” *New Zealand Journal of History*, 45, 1 (2011); 60.

²⁸ MBW-LMA, Letter dated October 16, 1848.

contribute their quota, and whether it may not be perfectly legitimate in a great metropolis like this, that the central authority should aid in a purpose which contributes to the ornament and health of the general population.... It is perfectly legitimate for the Minister to come forward and propose a vote of 150,000£. or even more, to make a park at Battersea or anywhere else.... Let me inform the committee what occurred in the case of Battersea Park. A bill was brought into Parliament, as usual empowering certain individuals to buy land at Battersea, and to make a park. A clause was put into the bill not compulsory mind you, but permissive—to enable the Lords of the Treasury, if they thought fit, to advance from the Public Works Loan Fund such a sum as they might think proper for the advancement of the object in question. The projectors of Battersea Park, with that bill which nobody had ever seen, and that clause...yes, a public bill, of course, but it does not follow from that five persons in the House knew what was going on...of all the speculations that man ever engaged in, no speculation was ever so absurd as that of Battersea Park. The persons who undertook the enterprise were totally ignorant of all the circumstances with which they had to deal. They purchased a great deal of land, and made arrangements by which they left so slight a margin to the Government as a return that 20 years must elapse, even if they are successful, before they receive any rents; and the slight margin that is left will never defray the sum that is already due for accumulated interest... [t]o the Public Works Loan Fund....²⁹

²⁹ *The Times*, December 16, 1852.

The issue at hand, and an issue taken up in subsequent public debates in the next few years about the formation of Finsbury and Southwark Parks, was whether or not the nation should fund what was arguably a metropolitan or local concern. Additionally, like Regent's Park, Battersea's appeal was it assumed the cost of park formation could be recovered, and even bear profit, by selling lots for the building of ornamental villas and mansions on the park's perimeter. Part of Disraeli's concern was that the Commissioners had had to approach Parliament again and again past the original 200,000£. cost estimate, as the buyout of small parcel copyholders and the settlement of commonable land rights stymied a wholesale land purchase. For Disraeli, this was the worst sort of speculation on the part of the House of Lords, as the cost was to be borne not only by the national public purse for a London park, but it was an investment made with little sense of a real future recoup of costs or profit.

Thomas Cubitt responded in defense of Battersea as a "proper subject for the Government to take up," arguing that if it had been carried out in a timely manner, the park would already have begun to bear profit not only in the beauty such a park would provide, but that property owners would already understand the value redeemed in both monetary and aesthetic terms. Cubitt also worried that such a public debate would dampen the "public mind" for works of public improvement.³⁰ Parliament would remain at odds over these fiscal question for the next several years. On one hand several MPs argued that while there was a certain responsibility and pride to be taken in their capital, a limit should be set and the cost and maintenance also be subsidized by the local district. Others countered that inhabitants in the neighborhood should not be required to keep up a park, that it was a property belonging to the

³⁰ MBW-LMA, Letter to the Right Honorable Sir William Molesworth, MP, from Thomas Cubitt, Esq., dated February 11, 1853; Treasury Minute February 22, 1853.

nation, having been purchased by Parliament. Moreover, the metropolitan parks served those beyond the metropolis and

every part of the empire was interested in the wellbeing of its capital.... It is preposterous for gentlemen to object to grants of this kind simply on the ground that the advantage derived was but local. If that principle were to be adopted as a guide for the conduct of Parliament no general or public improvements would be made...nothing would be done in any part of the united kingdom.... London belonged to the empire at large and it was quite a perversion of terms to suppose that great improvements here only concerned the inhabitants of the metropolis.³¹

For Battersea at least, part of the matter was settled in May of 1853, when a parliamentary bill passed to extinguish all common and lammas rights.³² With the bill's passage, first steps were taken to clear the site and more than 50 houses and buildings were demolished, hedges and fruit trees cut down, ditches filled and market garden grounds cleared and sown with grass seed. By February 1854, portions of the Park were made available for public use, although the remainder had yet to be laid out.³³ The greening of Battersea was a long, drawn out struggle over not just who belonged there, but who should oversee and benefit from its development as a proper London park in both symbolic and material terms.

³¹ See, for instance, *The Times*, June 6, 1856, p. 6, June 13, 1857, p. 6 and June 24, 1857, p. 6.

³² May 27, 1853, 16 Vict. *A Bill to Provide for the Purchase and Extinguishment of all Rights of Common and Lammas and other Commonable Rights over the Site of Battersea Park in the County of Surrey*.

³³ *Report from the Architect and Engineer as to the Progress and Present State of Battersea Park and Chelsea Bridge; and of the Day on which the new Chelsea Bridge is Likely to be Completed and Opened for Public Use*. May 11, 1855.

Abney Park Cemetery: “The Burying of Our Dead Out of Sight”³⁴

If the debate over belonging and green space raged among the living, it was also pertinent to the location of the dead. This little verse from a Devon tombstone speaks to the nature of such post-mortem contests:

Here I lie by the chancel door;

They put me here because I was poor.

The further in, the more you pay,

But here I lie as snug as they.³⁵

Nor was this a debate limited to funerary inscriptions. On Tuesday, May 14, 1850, the Metropolitan Sanitary Association called a meeting to discuss the proposed Metropolitan Interments Bill. Before a crowd estimated at over 1,200 persons, were several MPs and other gentlemen involved with the Association, including the new first medical officer of health for the City of London, John Simon. Simon had been appointed late in 1848 during the height of the cholera epidemic sweeping London. Months before the meeting, he had presented his first annual report to the Metropolitan Commissioners, the entirety of which was published in the *Times*. Simon exposed the whole fetid mess of sanitation in the City, at the center of which lay the issue of metropolitan interment. With a cholera epidemic only recently ended and theories about miasma and disease transmission circulating, and pushed by the writing of the new medical officer, the General Board of Health put forth a comprehensive public health scheme which

³⁴ Quote taken from “Metropolitan Interments Bill—Riotous Proceedings,” in *The Observer*, May 20, 1850; hereafter “Riotous Proceedings.”

³⁵ Cited in D. J. Enright, *The Oxford Book of Death* (Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 322.

included wholesale burial reform in London.³⁶ The scheme proposed establishing the Metropolitan Interment Commission which would, in turn, have the power to close all urban burial grounds and buy up existing joint stock cemeteries. Kensal Green would be enlarged to form the Great Western Cemetery; its Great Eastern counterpart would be built as well, though a possible site had not been specified. The proposed Act also introduced a rationalized system of funerals for all classes of the metropolis so that a decent burial would be within reach of even its poorest members.

The new Internment Bill was argued before the assembled crowd as a great benefit to the working classes, many of whom “starved to secure decent interment” for their friends and family. The proposed cemeteries would be near enough that any of the working class could take a train to plant a flower on the grave of a loved one. In reducing the cost of funerals, it would also alleviate the need to keep the deceased in their homes for weeks on end, a particularly egregious practice in the eyes of the middle-class public. Under constant interruption, the speaker, promoted the new Bill as one meant to reform the “present system of metropolitan burial [which] is prejudicial to health, incompatible with decency, demoralizing in its tendency, and unnecessarily expensive.”³⁷ Lord Rebrington, one of the MPs present, noted that about 52,000 people died every year, there were currently 170 acres of churchyards, 20 acres of Dissenters’ burial grounds, 13 acres of private or commercial graveyards, and a half acre belonging to Roman Catholics. While the optimal amount per acre was 110 corpses – to allow for proper disintegration, the actual figure was nearly double that amount on average. St. James in Clerkenwell was held up as an example of a particular problem of tying bodies to local

³⁶ Riotous Proceedings; Chris Brooks, *Mortal Remains: The History and Present State of the Victorian and Edwardian Cemetery* (Elsevier Science Ltd., 1989), 44.

³⁷ “Riotous Proceedings.”

parishes in that over 3,000 bodies were estimated buried there; 10 other churchyards averaged 1,000. Echoing George Walker's *Gathering in Graveyards* (1839) and Edwin Chadwick's *Interment in Towns* (1843), the good MPs argued that great nations did not barter their dead, nor subject the living to the horror and effluvia produced by intramural burial.³⁸

It is worth highlighting here that the arguments about burial conditions in London and elsewhere had been apace for well over a decade. With the publication of his *Gathering in Graveyards*, Walker, a surgeon, had exposed the 'burial crisis' of London.³⁹ Walker had become interested in the problem of intramural burial having visited Pere LaChaise in Paris and experienced himself some of the worst of London's burial grounds with a surgery office in the tight huddle of Drury Lane.⁴⁰ He articulated the problem of intramural burial within a framework of progress, noting that the "wisest among mankind" had understood the dangers of immersing the dead within the environs of the living and prohibited its practice.⁴¹ His persistent petitions led R.A. Slaney (see his relationship to Loudon and the Select Committee on Public Walks, Chapter 1) to form a committee investigating the sanitary conditions of large towns and a special inquiry to implement reform.⁴²

Given the emergence of the garden cemetery in the 1820s and 30s in London, Walker's criticism might seem surprising. George Frederick Carden had publicly decried the problem of burial in London, urging the formation of cemeteries on the Pere LaChaise model.⁴³ Although

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ George Alfred Walker, *Gatherings from Graveyards, Particularly those of London. With a concise history of the modes of interment among different nations from the earliest periods, and a detail of dangerous & fatal results produced by the unwise & revolting custom of inhuming the dead in the midst of the living* (London: Messrs. Longman et al., 1839).

⁴⁰ Brooks, 30.

⁴¹ Walker, iv.

⁴² N.B. Penny, "The Commercial Garden Necropolis of the Early Nineteenth Century and its Critics," *Garden History*, vol. 2., no. 3, 1974, 61.

⁴³ Brooks, 10-11; Penny, 62-63.

Carden had begun his plans for a ‘garden necropolis’ for London in 1825, Liverpool’s St. James and Glasgow’s Necropolis would be realized before his, in 1828 and 1829 respectively. Kensal Green Cemetery, held by a joint stock company, would not see its first burial until early 1833.⁴⁴ It was these private cemeteries that were to provide models for their public counterparts. But as Chris Brooks has noted, the ‘ring’ of garden cemeteries about London that emerge in this decade excluded the dead bodies of the working class and poor, if not by virtue of design then by virtue of economy.⁴⁵ As a cemetery specifically offering burial space to the working-classes in the East End, Abney Park was intended to be a more inclusive space than that of its predecessors, Kensal Green and Highgate, which served a more aristocratic clientele. It was a conscious policy of Abney Park’s Congregationalist committee that there would be no separations or demeaning classifications whether economic or religious—in death all were equal.

Formed by the Abney Park Cemetery Company, the cemetery opened in Stoke Newington in 1840. Its Nonconformist Board sold cemetery plots to all regardless of religious affiliation. Abney Park itself was hallowed ground to Dissenters as the Fleetwood-Abney estate upon which its 32 acres were laid out had a long historical association with dissent. A new cemetery formed by Congregationalists might have seemed unusual, as Dissenters had been involved in the new non-denominational cemeteries since the beginning and rights of burial were sold to anyone regardless of religious affiliation. Church of England law, however, prevented burial in non-consecrated ground, and the new garden cemeteries run by joint-stock companies looked to make a profit after substantial amounts of money were spent on acquiring land, providing an infrastructure of drainage, buildings and landscape design. Not to mention the considerable effort required to form the cemeteries by Acts of Parliament. Cemetery companies

⁴⁴ Penny, 63; also see Curl more particularly for development of Kensal Green Cemetery.

⁴⁵ See Brooks, particularly on Abney Park.

looked to attract if not a wholly aristocratic at least a well-off clientele; such a market in London tended to be Anglican. The new cemeteries were thus divided into consecrated and unconsecrated grounds, each with their own chapel.⁴⁶ Abney Park's committee had decided from the outset that none of the cemetery's grounds would be consecrated and no one would be "exiled" in burial. Moreover, Anglican burial fees—those high costs of funerals proposed to be equalized by the Metropolitan Interments Act—were eliminated in Abney.⁴⁷ Although the cost of a guinea might be insignificant in a middle-class burial, for the poor or working-classes, it was a significant sum. Additionally, the cost of a common grave at Highgate cost 2£. 10s., equaling several weeks wages for a significant strata of the working classes.

Even as Abney Park was touted as a 'democratic' space both by the cemetery's committee and contemporaries, a consideration of its design and where and how these working-class bodies are buried counters such a notion. By virtue of both their denial of 'perpetual' rest and their graves' locations along perimeter walls or screened from view by various landscape forms, they were marginalized in the landscape – positioning them as internal Other in these garden geographies of death.⁴⁸ The bodies of the working class and poor were either buried in common graves (though less than the cost of a plot at Highgate), or a space could be leased up to seven years, at which time the leasehold could be renewed or the space given up, the bones turned over and the space leased by another. Although common graves at Abney Park differed from their Tower Hamlets' counterpart where common plots were packed as full and densely as possible, unlike in the leasehold plots bodies at Abney were buried four a space, often without

⁴⁶ Curl, 100-101.

⁴⁷ See Rev. Thomas B. Barker, *Abney Park Cemetery: A complete Descriptive Guide to Every Part of this Beautiful Depository of the Dead...* (London: Houlston & Wright, 1869); George Collison, *Cemetery Interment: Containing a Concise History of the Modes of Interment Practiced by the Ancients...and More Particularly of the Abney Park Cemetery, at Stoke Newington with a Descriptive Catalogue of its Plants and Arboretum* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, 1840; Joyce, *A Guide to Abney Park Cemetery*; Brooks, *Mortal Remains* 26, passim).

⁴⁸ See Barker, section "Ground Plan of the Cemetery and Appendix of Names."

markers. It could be argued that the churchyards, with the lack of space and constant turnover of bodies and one marker per ‘grave’, were more democratic outside the knaves and catacombs, as elicited in the poem at the head of this chapter.⁴⁹ And, burial in the churchyard was a common law right – one had rights to the parish in which he belonged.⁵⁰ The courts tended to interpret common and canon law broadly except in cases where money was at stake; in the case of paupers and parishes, their bodies often had no place at all.

It was this common right to place, as well as issues of consecration, that lay at the root of the controversies over the new internment bills. The “Burial Question” was debated well into the 1870s, tied into questions of political equity and justice and the responsibility of the state. At its core, the Burial Question circulated around whether churchyards and burial grounds were the property of the nation. The argument against this provided that Parliament itself had negated this idea, as the Government had failed to put forth any petitions to provide “fresh burial grounds” for parishioners displaced by closed churchyards “at the cost of the nation.” To date, this had not been done and, rather, been left to the responsibility of local boards and vestries at the cost of the ratepayers.⁵¹ This question of parochial autonomy versus national interest and the questions of bodies in the landscape would be taken up by the Metropolitan Public Garden Association and the struggle for open space in the congestion of the East End. (See Figure 2.1 for London map, c. 1868, showing green spaces in London.)

⁴⁹ Issues of markings in churchyards by virtue of private communication with Thomas Laquer (Professor at UC Berkeley), April 4, 2004.

⁵⁰ R. Burns, *Ecclesiastical Law*, 9th ed., 1842.

⁵¹ *The Burial of the Burials Bill. By a County Magistrate* (London: W. Poole, 1873), 4-6

Private Philanthropy v. Public Purse: The Metropolitan Public Garden Association

Depend upon it, your best chance of escape is to make the places inhabited by the poor healthy, to let them have open spaces where the fresh wind may blow over them and their clothes.

Octavia Hill, 1877⁵²

If earlier Victorian debates about the greening of London and its consequences for who belonged and who benefited were limited to the confines of the south-of-the-river park and the shaded cemetery, by the 1880s they were part of larger discussions about urban reform and English governmentality. On November 20, 1882, a group of like-minded individuals met at the London residence of Lord Brabazon (later Earl of Meath), to discuss the intertwined issues of the poor and working-classes in London and the lack of open space, particularly in London's East End.⁵³ Octavia Hill, one of those in attendance, had worked for years to preserve open areas from building speculation and railway encroachment, most recently and unsuccessfully in Bunhill Fields. The Metropolitan Board of Works (MBW), created in 1855 to tackle the problem of comprehensive metropolitan administration, had taken on the provision of parks and open spaces from its earliest days, if passively so. Hill and other members of the Common Preservation Society had criticized the MBW for failing to aggressively press the public interest in the matter of acquiring commons for public use. Under the Metropolitan Commons Act of 1866, the Board had been given the ability to acquire common land for public recreation. The Act had followed a report of the Select Committee on Open Spaces, which had recommended the

⁵² Octavia Hill, *Our Common Land and Other Short Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1877), 137.

⁵³ Joyce Bellamy, "The Metropolitan Gardens Association History," *The London Gardener*, vol. 9, 2003-2004, 29-30.

repeal of the Statute of Merton and the prohibition of further enclosures in London.⁵⁴ Commons or commonable land as seen with Battersea had increasingly become sites of neglect, ‘infamy’ and dumping grounds for refuse and manure. The idea of enclosure had begun to appeal to the lords of manor, particularly as land prices in London rose. The debates over the Metropolitan Commons Act had brought up once again the issues of lords’ rights and those of the commoners. Were the lords’ rights “practically absolute” and therefore the rights of the commoner safely ignored, or the residents and commoners’ rights sufficient enough to prevent any enclosure by the lord?⁵⁵

The forming of the Metropolitan Public Garden Association in 1882 was part of an expanded reform movement in the 1880s; participation cut across membership lists as social reformers like Octavia Hill appeared on the rolls of the Kyrle Society, the Commons Preservation Society and ultimately the MPGA. Hill’s preservation work had begun with her ultimately unsuccessful attempt to prevent the Society of Friends from selling building leases on the old Bunhill burial ground. A subsequent crusade to preserve the Swiss Cottage Fields met with the same abysmal failure.⁵⁶ After these defeats and with influence from her sister, Miranda, who had read a paper before the National Health Society on disused burial ground as open spaces, Hill urged the Commons Preservation Society to look beyond suburban commons and consider “where space is most needed.” Small central spaces in the most congested areas were of paramount importance; failure before the Society, however, forced Hill to consider a new body

⁵⁴ *First Report from the Select Committee on Open Spaces (Metropolis); Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence and Appendix.* 1865.

⁵⁵ David Owen, *The Government of Victorian London 1855-1889: The Metropolitan Board of Works, the Vestries and the City Corporation* (Cambridge MA and London UK: Belknap Press, 1982), 148-149.

⁵⁶ H.L. Malchow, “Public Gardens and Social Action in Late Victorian London,” *Victorian Studies*, vol. 29, no. 1 (Autumn, 1985), pp. 97-124; 107.

appointed ad hoc.⁵⁷ With her sister she formed the Kyrle Society late in 1876 and mounted a campaign encouraging local authorities to turn their attention to disused Church of England burial grounds within London's metropolitan area.⁵⁸ But as she and her sister would soon learn, the conversion of disused burial grounds into small gardens was hardly straightforward, even with two Parliamentary acts in place. The first had allowed for the closure of old burial grounds, but virtually locked plots of ground from which the public were excluded, and which were often neglected and lapsed into a sad state of disorder. Only a few rectors and churchwardens had taken advantage of their position and converted their churchyards into gardens.⁵⁹

The Metropolitan Open Spaces Act, passed in 1881, allowed for the transfer of disused burial grounds to local authorities, "with a view to use of the grounds as public gardens."⁶⁰ At the time of the passage of the Act, supporters of metropolitan amenities were an incongruent, loosely related group of clergymen, upper-class philanthropists, spinsters, and a few radicals thrown in for good measure. Although the London philanthropic community as a whole commanded impressive resources, it was fractured by competing purposes and petty jealousies.⁶¹ For both the Kyrle Society and the Commons Preservation Society, a commitment to the preservation of open space was peripatetic, driven more by personal than organizational interest. The 1881 Act was due more to Hill's own persistence and exploitation of her personal and professional network rather than any united philanthropic front. Groups like the Kyrle Society were criticized as clubbish, made up of middle-class women with time on their hands whose

⁵⁷ Letter to Mrs. Edmund Maurice, Sept 22, 1875, in C. Edmund Maurice, *Life of Octavia Hill as Told in her Letters* (London: Macmillan, 1914), 336.

⁵⁸ Malchow, 107.

⁵⁹ Sir Robert Hunter, *Gardens in Towns: Being a Statement of the Law Relating to the Acquisition and Maintenance of Land for Purposes of Recreation* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1915), 51.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Malchow, 108.

social vision was limited to providing band concerts and garden window boxes for the poor.⁶²

Those interested in real reform looked elsewhere.

Unlike the Commons Preservation and Kyrle societies, the Metropolitan Public Garden Association placed itself firmly at the center of a larger movement for social reform, where “the provision of public recreation grounds [was] not a mere question of ornamental philanthropy, ...but... also a vital question of social economy and efficiency.”⁶³ Its members represented a cross-section of prominent Victorians interested in the Social Question, arguing that moral decay had its genesis in physical deterioration and the two were intimately linked to modern urbanization.⁶⁴ From the outset, the MPGA linked itself to the National Health Society and other public health institutes; reports of its activities were published regularly in *The Lancet* and *The British Medical Journal*.

Open space had not been a central focus of the Metropolitan Board of Works. Although by the end of its tenure, it had 2,500 acres of open space under its management, I would argue that it was a passive recipient more than active agent. In 1889, as the London County Council emerged from the ashes of the MBW’s demise, Mrs. Basil Holmes, secretary of the MPGA, noted the activity of the LCC’s Open Space Committee was a result of the “past and present exertions” of the Association.⁶⁵ In its more than six years of existence, it had been “hard at work improving and beautifying the metropolis, providing playgrounds and gardens, planting trees and placing seats in thoroughfares, assisting public gymnasia, and fighting to preserve open spaces,

⁶² Ibid., 109; Mrs. Basil Holmes, *The London Burial Grounds* (London: T.F. Unwin, 1896).

⁶³ Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, *A Brief Statement of the Objects of the Metropolitan Public Garden, Boulevard, and Playground Association* (London, 1883), 5-6.

⁶⁴ Malchow, 109; Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, *Third Annual Report*, 7.

⁶⁵ “The Increase of Open Spaces,” *Journal of the Society of Arts*, July 12, 1889, 698.

commons, churchyards, and gardens from the encroachment of railways or buildings.”⁶⁶

Certainly, as evidenced in its Third Annual Report, the MPGA had accomplished in three years what the MBW had not in almost 30 years of municipal existence. The Association was pointedly critical of municipal bodies like the Board, noting that its members had been “obliged to defray the cost of...improvement, to transfer such open spaces...to the local authorities for future maintenance” and “encourage[d]” the MBW to do its “fair share of the work.”⁶⁷

Because of its initial success and visibility, the Association exerted a good deal of pressure at the Parliamentary level, as well as with the MBW. It is hardly coincidence that Lord Brabazon, the MPGA’s Chairman, was appointed head of the LCC’s Open Space Committee upon the demise of the Board of Works.⁶⁸ Over the course of its first decade of existence, the work of the Association was three-pronged: seeking changes in the laws, defense of existing open space, and creation of new playgrounds and parks.⁶⁹ As Octavia Hill had discovered, even as the Metropolitan Act of 1881 had given power to trustees to transfer certain open spaces to local authorities like the MBW, it did not alleviate the hurdle of expense nor the lure of valuable land speculation. Land in London was at a premium and trustees of disused burial grounds saw the opportunity to turn a pretty profit. The MPGA competed with speculative builders and railway companies whose coffers were more flush with cash. The Disused Burial Grounds Act of 1884 destroyed the commercial value of these old burial grounds; cases like that of St. James’ Burial Ground in Hampstead Road had garnered substantial public attention. In that case, the London and North Western Railway Company sought purchase from the St. James Trustees to “disturb the remains of persons buried at the eastern end” of the burial ground in order to extend

⁶⁶ Metropolitan Public Garden Association, *Third Annual Report*, 7.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ “The Increase of Open Spaces,” 698.

⁶⁹ Malchow, 113-114.

Euston Station. Both the MBW and Vestry of St. Pancras opposed the purchase. Two and a half acres in area, the burial ground was bounded on its western side by St. James Church, the London Temperance Hospital, and a charity school; on its north and east by Cardington-street, and on the south by Little George-street, a heavily populated area. The burial ground had been closed by Order of Council in December 1853 and it was estimated that 50,000 bodies were buried there. Over 35,000 bodies were interred on the site which the Railway sought to purchase. St. Pancras petitioned that the disturbance of thousands of human remains presented a danger to public health and a complete “disregard of public decency.” Dr. Hoffman, the Inspector of Burial Grounds for the MBW argued that the importance of preserving open spaces in such a congested area could not be overrated and that with the exception of “undoubted public improvement,” burial grounds should not be so disturbed but rather turfed and planted with flowers. As to whether or not the extension of Euston Station would provide “public benefit,” he declined to comment. Moreover, he opined that if the work were carried out with proper precautions and under skilled supervision, it posed no danger to public health or outrage to public decency.⁷⁰

The MPGA mounted a public campaign in *The Times* against the Bill, noting that should Parliament allow such an act to pass it would set a “lamentable” precedent of private benefit at public cost. “[A]ll the other disused burial ground in the metropolis will attract the covetous eye of the speculative builder, and [owing to the enhanced value of the land] it will be vastly more difficult than it is at present to render these open spaces of use to the public by converting them into pleasant gardens, as has already been done in many instances with such happy results....”⁷¹ Indeed, the MPGA’s third annual report for works completed in 1884 had close to 20 burial

⁷⁰ “Disused Burial Ground, Hampstead Road.” *Return to an Address of the Honourable The House of Commons*, dated 2 May 1883.

⁷¹ Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, April 23, 1883, 10.

grounds under review.⁷² Octavia Hill worried that such a precedent would derail negotiations elsewhere in South and East London and that “the people” would lose the few gardens remaining in London. Hill called on the House of Lords to save such grounds, the bill having passed by a narrow margin in the House of Commons. Final passage of the bill would be of great regret to “many who watch the life of the poor.”⁷³

A scathing editorial in *The Times* noted that as the land under question had no association for the well-to-do inhabitants of St. James, as it was the burial ground for the paupers of the parish, the disturbance of those “unmarked graves would hurt no one’s feelings.... [W]hat do the inhabitants of St. James’s, with the parks at their doors, care about recreation grounds?”⁷⁴ The public pressure brought to bear on Parliament and St. James Church proved mostly successful, as ultimately only a small corner was acquired by the railway and the remainder transferred to St. Pancras and laid out as a public garden.⁷⁵ The MPGA, bolstered by this success, repeatedly brought attention to the plight of disused burial grounds like that of Churchlane in Whitechapel used as a cooper’s yard, Union-street Borough used as a builder’s yard, Farringdon-street and St. Bride-street, E.C., used as a Volunteer Corps drill ground, where the tombstones had been removed without permission and the space levelled and graveled. The Association fought the encroachment on burial grounds in terms of desecration of ancient burial places for economic gain by greedy churchwardens, sanctioned by an Act of Parliament. It also cast the matter in imperial terms, noting that the “native of South Africa or China would never think of disturbing the burial place of his ancestors....,” that was something left to civilized nations.⁷⁶ It is worth

⁷² See MPGA, *Third Annual Report*, 1885.

⁷³ Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, May 22, 1883, 7.

⁷⁴ “Within a Stone’s Throw of the Euston-square,” Editorial. *The Times*, May 1, 1883, 12. See also, Brabazon, “The Use and Abuse of Disused Burial Grounds Within the Metropolis,” *The Times*, November 10, 1883, 12.

⁷⁵ Brabazon, “Open Spaces And Recreation Grounds,” *The Times*, October 23, 1883, 10.

⁷⁶ Brabazon, “The Use and Abuse...,” 12.

noting here that even as the Metropolitan Board of Works had been enabled by previous law to acquire disused burial grounds for the benefit of the public, more often than not it failed to do so. And, therefore, the MPGA either petitioned its members or the public to purchase these grounds, improve them and then hand them over to the local vestry. It wasn't until the Disused Burial Grounds Act that it became illegal to "erect any buildings upon any Disused Burial Ground, except for the purpose of enlarging a Church, Chapel, Meeting-house, or other place of worship." Clearly, the debates about burial grounds being sold to commercial interests are implicated here. But Parliament had also provided, after debate in committee, that any burial ground which had already been granted a faculty for building before passage of the Act, or already sold or disposed of by a previous Act of Parliament, was exempt, bowing itself to a different sort of public pressure.⁷⁷

On the heels of passage of the Act, to provide a record of the state of burial grounds in London, the Association's secretary, I.M. Gladstone (later Mrs. Basil Holmes) compiled a list of 441 burial grounds, both disused and still in operation. It was first included as an appendix to the MPGA's 1885 Annual Report, and later published as *London Burial Grounds*. It noted that 57 disused burial grounds were open to the public as either gardens or playgrounds, 115 were now occupied by building, railway lines, street and docks, 38 had been turned into private gardens, store yards, builders yard, vacant building sites and "playgrounds for special schools," and 217 which were no longer in use but closed to public access.⁷⁸ Publication of the state of London's burial grounds, by name and location, provided a public record previously unavailable and, therefore, open to public inspection and reference. It is important to remember, however, that even as the Disused Burial Grounds Act was, legally, for the use of the MPGA and other

⁷⁷ See *Disused Burial Grounds Act*, 1884.

⁷⁸ Metropolitan Public Garden Association, *Third Annual Report*, 80-81.

philanthropic groups like the Kyrle Society, it could not force the Metropolitan Board of Works, local vestries, or district boards to actually take over, convert and maintain these grounds. The MPGA mobilized other amenity groups like the Kyrle Society and Commons Preservation Society, as well as Association members who were ratepayers in congested areas, to attend vestry and board meetings and harass its members until local action was taken. Its influence in Parliament and at Whitehall, however, did work to enhance its national image. Park advocates from Dublin, for instance, called on the Association's influence and expertise to secure passage of a bill enabling the Dublin Corporation to maintain open spaces in the city.

Even with such national visibility for the MPGA and recognition of the importance of its work, the preservation of open space was not a government movement but remained a philanthropic campaign. Conversion of open ground to public amenity was often still done by the Association; much of the work done in laying out the grounds, providing amenities, as well as monies for land purchase was provided by the MPGA. Even when local governments assumed responsibility for maintenance, the Association often provided inspectors, caretakers, landscape gardeners, physical education instructors, and surveillance against vandalism and landlord encroachment.⁷⁹ The MPGA had opened 17 public gardens and 4 playgrounds by 1886, but permanent municipal responsibility had only been assumed for one garden and one playground. Moreover, maintenance costs in the East End were substantial, where refuse dumping and vandalism were a particular problem.⁸⁰ (See Figure 2.1; Map of works finished or progress by the MPGA, c. 1900.)

⁷⁹ Malchow, 115-116.

⁸⁰ Lord Brabazon, *Social Arrows* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1887; Metropolitan Public Garden Association, *Sixth Annual Report*, 1888.

It was hoped with the creation of the London County Council in 1889, that much of the burden of initiative and maintenance would be removed from the MPGA and a more cooperative relationship engendered between the Association and local authorities. At the moment of the LCC's election, the MPGA had completed over 130 projects and dispensed over 22,000£ either from its own accounts or provided by its membership. And many of these projects still remained in its hands and on its books. Lord Brabazon's election to the LCC and his place as Chairman on the Parks and Open Spaces Subcommittee did, however, have its advantages and at the end of the LCC's first year, three playgrounds and eight gardens were made over to its authority. The London County Council has been given a good deal of credit for the "opening up" of London; certainly in its first decade of existence the amount of open land under its purview had increased substantially from the 2,800 acres handed over by the MBW.⁸¹ However, it must be noted that a large portion of the acreage under the Board's control at the time included three parks only recently placed under its care -- Battersea, Victoria and Kennington Park -- as well as the garden adjoining the Bethnal Green Museum. These public parks had previously been managed by Her Majesty's Office of Works. The debate over national responsibility for local enjoyment still raged in Parliament in 1886 as the House of Commons requested funds from the Imperial Exchequer. A hue and cry went up from the members representing provincial towns and cities, where local corporations were responsible for maintaining their parks and recreation grounds.⁸² In 1906, the LCC controlled 110 parks, gardens, churchyards and open spaces totalling 4,960 ¼ acres, with an annual cost of maintenance equalling 113,368£. and a permanent outdoor staff of 843.⁸³ Certainly, this was an improvement on the MBW. The LCC took up the Progressive mission with some zeal, fostering what it called a "municipal hospitality" in providing new open

⁸¹ Lt. Col. J.J. Sexby, *London Parks and Open Spaces* (London County Council, 1906).

⁸² *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 13.

spaces, including provision of bands, cricket pitches, gymnasia, tennis courts and football grounds.⁸⁴

But as can be seen in its Annual Reports in 1899 and 1902, the MPGA was still in the business of open space acquisition and maintenance. One critic of the LCC noted that while the Council had done its share and done it well, it was only one amongst a number and not even the most important; a large number of small places in London were maintained by the MPGA. The Council maintained a smaller acreage than the City of London and the borough councils and over half its public parks and open spaces had been bequeathed to it by the MBW at its demise. The author made the point that acquisition of the spaces had only been effected with the assistance of numerous agencies, private philanthropy included.⁸⁵ The MPGA Reports also show a coalescence of interests amongst philanthropic protection societies like the Hampstead Heath Protection Society, the Charity Organisation Society, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Norwich Open Spaces Society, as well as correspondence with district councils and corporations of the suburbs. The Association's 17th Annual Report (1899) notes several successful works including the layout of four new recreation grounds, assistance given towards the "preservation, acquisition or improvement" of close to 20 open spaces and advocating on behalf of half a dozen. It also provided benches, drinking fountains and ornamental fountains in many of the squares, small gardens and public parks under the purview of the LCC.⁸⁶ If the provision of open space was no longer a question, it remained a partnership between private philanthropy and public purse. And as will be seen in the aftermath of the South African War, the bodies of the working classes were still subject to the congested rookeries of London.

⁸⁴ Sir Gwilym Gibbon and Reginald W. Bell, *History of the London County Council 1889-1939* (London: Macmilland and Co., 1939), 508.

⁸⁵ G.E. Wright, *The Story of the London County Council. A Series of Articles by the Times Special Correspondent* (London, 1907)

⁸⁶ MPGA, *Seventeenth Annual Report*, 13 *passim*.

An Act of Purposeful Planning? Dismantling the “Alsatis of Squalor”⁸⁷

As I suggested at the start of this chapter, Parliament passed the Housing and Town Planning Act in 1909 with a good deal of fanfare. On the occasion of its second reading before Parliament (when it was approved), John Burns, author of the Bill, summed up its necessity:

The object of this Bill is to provide a domestic condition for the people in which their physical health, their morals, their character and their whole social condition can be improved.... [The Bill aims to] secure the home healthy, the house beautiful, the town pleasant, the city dignified, and the suburb salubrious. It seeks and hopes to secure more homes, better houses, prettier streets, so that the character of a great people, in towns and cities, and in villages, can be still further improved and strengthened by the conditions in which they live.... It seeks to improve the health of the people by raising the character of the house and the home, and by extended inspection, supervision, direction and guidance of central control to help local authorities to do more than they do now.⁸⁸

On its face, the Act appears of national interest and concern, and certainly it was. Celebrated as a non-partisan, comprehensive solution to the “evil effects of overcrowding upon the physique and morality of its victims” – effects so obvious and notorious no objection could be made, it did for the first time bridge an awkward and often unworkable two-tiered metropolitan administrative

⁸⁷ This term is taken from the speech by John Burns before the Second Reading of the bill for what would become the Housing and Town Planning Act, 1909. Burns was President of the Local Government Board at the time of the passing of the bill. (See, Wm. A. Casson and Athelstan Ridgway, *The Housing, Town Planning, &c., Act, 1909* (London: Charles Knight & Co. Ltd., 1910), vii-viii; Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, HC Deb 05 April 1909 vol. 3 cc733-98.

⁸⁸ Wm. A. Casson and Athelstan Ridgway, *The Housing, Town Planning, &c., Act, 1909, with Introduction, Full Explanatory Notes, and Index* (London: Chas. Knight & Co., Ltd., 1910), vii-viii.

structure. In London particularly, it gave a power to the London County Council that superseded a fragmented parochial vestry network that had often frustrated the LCC.

The Metropolis Local Management Act of 1855 had attempted to provide larger oversight by providing a central authority in the form of the Metropolitan Board of Works. The Act, however, in many ways was more a triumph of local pluralism than municipal unity, part of what John Davis has argued was a larger movement for self-governance at mid-century.⁸⁹ Local vestry response to Edwin Chadwick's commission on public health had been fierce, centered around two distinct but related issues: centralization of both national and metropolitan authority. Local vestries had found Chadwick's commission offensive because it was Crown-appointed and paid no regard to local autonomy. The threat of national centralization was more pressing for those in favor of self-government, who saw such large-scale centralization as a form of the *ancien régime*. With the passing of the 1855 Act, the Metropolitan Board of Works would handle common municipal functions while ensuring that the center of gravity remained at the parochial level: the City of London was untouched and the more than 80 local vestries remained intact.⁹⁰

Such a fractured municipal network ultimately set the stage for the next half century of struggle over the London landscape which the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1909 set out to ameliorate, "substituting universality and homogeneity for sporadic effort."⁹¹ The Act was hardly a natural evolution of ideals of urban planning, however. It did serve to outlaw back-to-backs, home to the "rookeries" in the East End and South London as described by George Sims and other social investigators of the 1880s onward. Any schemes put forth under the Act required

⁸⁹ John Davis, *Reforming London: The London Government Problem 1855-1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 10-11.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11-12. For more thorough explication of the (complicated) vestry, district board and metropolitan system as it existed in London from 1850s through 1900, see Davis, *passim*.

⁹¹ Casson and Ridgway, ix.

an order of the local board rather than an order of Parliament; addressed the inability of local boards to enforce powers given to them under the Housing Act of 1890, and allowed them to purchase land; and importantly included the provision and government of open space within a structure of town planning. No open space or commons could now be built over and any proposal to do so would require an order of Parliament (and, therefore, public and political exposure), and the provision of equal amounts of space for that taken.⁹² The 1909 Act effectively consolidated the previous 40 years of housing and open space legislation passed as a result of local or national crisis. But the Act itself was a response to crisis in the wake of the South African War (1899-1903) and a perception of ‘race deterioration’ tied to urban life.

For the British, the war stirred up serious doubts about the ability of the British ‘race’ to meet the challenges of the new century. The protracted difficulties experienced in subduing a small nation of “stubborn farmers and herdsmen,” as well as finding soldiers fit to serve provoked alarming questions about racial degeneracy.⁹³ Anxiety centered particularly on the fitness of that population historically tapped to serve--the working classes. Concerns about the moral and physical health of the working classes had been the subject of close to 75 years of social and political reform movements and agitations, beginning with the findings of the 1833 Select Committee on Public Walks. Even with the myriad of Acts relating to public health, sanitation, housing and open space, the conditions of life for the lower stratum of the working classes had hardly changed. By the 1880s, conditions in the East End of London, particularly, had worsened and social investigators like George Sims and Reverend Andrew Mearns had

⁹² Ibid., 82.

⁹³ Richard Soloway, “Counting the Degenerates: The Statistics of Race Deterioration in Edwardian England,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 17., no. 1. (Jan. 1982), 137.

exposed the conditions under which the poor lived.⁹⁴ Mearns noted that given the “noble army of men and women who penetrate the vilest haunts,” little mark had been made upon the landscape of the East End and those who thought differently existed in a fool’s paradise.⁹⁵ Certainly, these were borne out in the Metropolitan Public Garden Association’s campaigns for open space and the conversion of disused burial grounds. Even with the 1890 Housing of the Working Classes Act, with regard to the casual or unskilled laborer, little had changed. It could even be argued that with the projects of the London County Council, like Boundary/Bethnal Green, that slum clearance and reconstruction had only served to exacerbate conditions as great numbers of those displaced were forced to seek housing in already overcrowded areas. Further, the moral panics of the 1880s, the Settlement House movement, the media frenzy over Jack the Ripper in London and Charles Booth’s findings that the poor were ‘amongst us,’ fanned middle-class anxieties over the costs of urban life.

Debating the Working-Class Body: The Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration

The Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration formed at the behest of the Duke of Devonshire, Lord President of the Privy Council, based on contradictory conclusions drawn between several memoranda issued by the Director-General and Army Medical Officer and responses by the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) and the Royal College of Surgeons (RCS). The War Office’s reports noted an increasing deterioration in physique taking place in those classes from which military recruits were generally drawn, while the RCP and RCS argued that the statistics furnished by the War Office failed to support increasing physical deterioration.

⁹⁴ George Sims, *How the Poor Live* (London, 1881); Rev. Andrew Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London, An Inquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor* (London, 1883).

⁹⁵ Mearns, 2-3.

The RCP did think an inquiry “into the present physical condition of the nation would be of great value” but the RCS failed to see the need for such a large scale investigation, noting that the state of public health in Britain was well-known and those facts sufficient enough to “dispel anxiety.”⁹⁶ Sir William Taylor, Director-General, pointed out that even if a case could not be made for progressive deterioration amongst the classes in question, certainly one could be made for an inquiry into the “causes and present extent of the physical unfitness that undoubtedly exists in a large degree among certain classes of the population.” Taylor noted that the question addressed in his report was not that there was evidence of progressive deterioration, but rather the “disturbing fact that from 40 to 60 percent of the men who present themselves for enlistment” failed to meet the fitness criterion for military service.⁹⁷

Tasked with inquiring into the “allegations concerning the deteriorating of certain classes of the population as shown by the large percentage of rejections for physical causes of recruits for the Army,” along with the results of the Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland), the ICPD issued a report of its findings after a month of hearings and examination (by its own count) of 68 witnesses. A summary of its recommendations included an anthropometric survey of the physical condition of the population, a registry of illness not confined to only infectious diseases, and an Advisory Council who could advise the Government on administrative and legislative issues with regard to public health where “state interference might be expedient.” Most emphatically, the Committee argued the time had come for dealing drastically with the problem of overcrowding, to be carried through without hesitation or sentimentality. It suggested the possibility of “labour colonies” and “public nurseries” in order to clear the slums, where the

⁹⁶ *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1904), 1-2.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

Government in partnership with local authorities would lodge temporarily those displaced by clearance, with their children boarded in temporary public nurseries. The enforcement of parental responsibility would make the parent a “debtor to society on account of the child” until such debt could be paid off. It also urged that local authorities in contiguous urbanizing areas cooperate with regard to building regulations and bye-laws, and preserve open space to incorporate “some of the attributes of an ideal garden city.”⁹⁸

The Committee at once recognized the importance of environment and planning, along garden city lines, an idea recently emerging with the formation of the Garden City Association, while also holding working-class poor responsible for the failings of their children’s health. Yet even with the vehemence of its recommendations, there was an almost five year lag between the issuance of the Committee’s Report and the passing of the 1909 Housing and Town Planning bill. How could this be? Perhaps the answer lies, as the *British Medical Journal* noted after the Report was issued, that a *general* progressive deterioration did not exist and physical deterioration was confined to the “lowest and poorest strata of the people.” The *Journal* attributed this to a lack of initiative on the part of the class in question, the failure to take advantage of opportunity of improvement when offered it: “Laziness, want of thrift, ignorance of household management, and particularly the choice and preparation of food, filthy, indifference to parental obligations, drunkenness, largely infect adults of both sexes, and press with terrible severity upon their children.”⁹⁹ The Committee found that there was no compelling evidence for “progression” and physical degeneracy, but rather that statistics showed the death rate had diminished, that sanitation had improved, and the incidence of tuberculosis had waned. It also argued that the general unfitness of recruits was more the result of the fact that the “calling of the

⁹⁸ Ibid., 84-85.

⁹⁹ *British Medical Journal*, August 6, 1904, 296-297.

soldier” no longer attracted that class of men who formerly enlisted, but came rather from the chronically un- or under-employed. Focus should be given to improving the moral and physical conditions of the class from which the “army of the empire” was now drawn.¹⁰⁰ This was an old concern in a new guise.

While the *British Medical Journal* hoped that the recommendations of the Committee would be put into action as the Committee had been appointed to meet a national demand, it expressed doubts that it would not just end up in the “pigeonholes of the Privy Council Office.”¹⁰¹ In a subsequent publication of the proceedings of the British Medical Association’s 73rd annual meeting, the matter was taken up as one of “national significance.” Even as the doctors’ opinions echoed some of the moral overtones of the Committee’s Report, it did find that environmental conditions were important to childrens’ health. What this meant, in their minds, was that the health and physical development of those classes affected could be ameliorated by a suitable environment. The object of the discussion was to “examine the preventable causes of unfitness, and in particular those which are traceable to industrial conditions, using that term in its widest sense.”¹⁰² Beyond issues of mothers working through pregnancy term and alcoholism of one or both of the parents, the doctors focused on the factors of environment. While allowing that public health reforms had greatly diminished “the worst evils” from earlier in the century (using Manchester as an example), the problem of conditions remaining in the poorer quarters of large towns could not be ignored. The statistics gathered by one Dr. Butterworth in six Salford elementary schools (whose statistics they used throughout their report) showed that comparing

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 297.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee...*, 930.

boys from a poor versus a well-to-do neighborhood produced significant differences in height and weight:

In School 1 the boys were drawn chiefly from the class of clerks, warehousemen, and shopkeepers. They were clean, well-nourished, and sufficiently clothed; only 3 boys out of 87 showed signs of vermin. The school is surrounded by a large open space and has a very large playground. In School II the boys were mostly drawn from the class of unskilled labourers; clothing was deficient both in quality and quantity; not one boy was wearing an undervest; of the 62 boys examined, 20 showed marked signs of vermin. In the better-class school the height of the boys comes up fairly near to the average of boys of the artisan class twenty years ago, but the average weight is lower at all ages. The boys in the poorer-class school are deficient in both respects.¹⁰³

Working to ascertain the cause of discrepancy, a series of questions were asked: what role does overcrowding play, not just in numbers in a house, but in houses in an area so there is a severe lack of open space? What role is a lack of sleep where whole families shared one room? What is the factor of child-labor? The doctors also noted that most of the public discussions over the last two years with regard to physical deterioration had circulated around under-feeding as a primary factor; clearly there were other important factors as well.¹⁰⁴

Richard Soloway has argued that the IDCP's recommendations were not particularly welcomed by a Conservative government reluctant to commit resources to "collectivist social

¹⁰³ Ibid., 930-931.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

programs already advocated” by its Liberal opponents.¹⁰⁵ In debates in the House of Lords almost a year after the Committee’s recommendations, the Earl of Meath asked what the government had done or planned to do with regard to the recommendations of the Committee. Speaking to a statement he had made two years earlier, he reiterated by arguing that even though he was not asserting that degeneration had taken place in the poorer classes, what he wished to emphasize was that the “overwhelming increase” in recent years in the numbers of the poor living in towns had “completely altered the physical condition of England, and turned a negligible national defect into one of the most serious gravity.” Meath argued that while hygiene and nutrition were important, they could not be considered without granting the importance of open space and building regulation.¹⁰⁶ As initiator of the MPGA, Meath had long experience with the issues of congestion and lack of open spaces in East and South London. As founder of the Lads Drill Association, he advocated compulsory physical training in schools and military training as well, noting the physical and mental prowess of the “Motherland’s...self-governing Colonies” seen in the recent South African War, compared to the condition of the boys at home.¹⁰⁷ In response to Meath’s query, Lord Kenyon pointed out that a structure was already in place for dealing with overcrowding, for instance through the Public Health Acts, which enabled complaints to be brought against property owners. Kenyon pointedly ignored that the structure of the Public Health Act (and subsequent Housing Acts) had failed to ameliorate some of the worst conditions as it relied on district authorities often under pressure by local interests. The Earl of Crewe arguing in support of Meath’s demand, noted that the ICPD in its report had dealt with “every social question of the present time” but the Lords had failed to deal with them in any real way. It seemed that the sticking point was passing legislation that would make many of the

¹⁰⁵ Soloway, 152.

¹⁰⁶ HL Debates 20 July 1905 vol. 149 cc1304-52; Meath, 1321-1326.

¹⁰⁷ Meath, *Universal Military Training of British Lads*, 1905.

recommendations of the Committee compulsory, something the Lords found horrible to contemplate.¹⁰⁸ In the end, working class children were not treated to the ideals of the garden city, though this had less to do with the perception that they needed it than with the failure of the post-South African War state to realize every aspect of its vision for improving English racial stock.

Conclusion

Environmental factors had been found to be key to the question of deterioration, by both the Committee and groups like the British Medical Association. Yet initial response was geared towards concerns about children and food. From 1905 to 1909, the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress invested the laws governing poor relief in the United Kingdom and the “means outside the Poor Laws.” Moreover Balfour’s Conservative government responded to the questions of overcrowding and housing by proposing amendments to the Public Health Bill and the Housing of the Working Classes Act. Not only does this speak to, still, a hesitancy for state intervention where matters of property rights are at stake, but also to a certain maintenance of the status quo: partnerships between private philanthropy and government, with an emphasis on philanthropy. The changing of the guard in December 1905 with a Liberal administration gave hope that an urban interpretation of social reform would sit high on the agenda. In a speech at Albert Hall, the new Prime Minister noted that London, the “greatest city in the world” presented problems of housing and overcrowding “terrifying in their dimension” and the problems of London were problems only of degree in other, smaller cities.¹⁰⁹ Campbell-

¹⁰⁸ HL Debates 20 July 1905 vol. 149 cc 1304-52.

¹⁰⁹ “Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman at the Albert Hall,” *The Times*, December 22, 1905, 7.

Bannerman's administration took up the question of amending the Housing Act in 1907 but the inclusion of town planning clauses rather than a separate bill stalled any movement forward until 1908. At stake was not the principle of town planning, but the question of whether or not planning schemes would be applied to built-up areas like London's East End or cover only new suburban planning schemes. Ultimately, after much debate both London and Scotland were included in the measure. Not unlike the previous decades and questions of urban improvements, much of the controversy lay in the provisions that would allow Local Government Board interference into local affairs and a usurping of Parliament's powers. Elsewhere in the empire, as we shall see in the case of Calcutta, the story of urban planning was similarly ambitious and similarly challenged by bodies both living and dead.

Figures



Figure 2.1 Map of London, c. 1868, showing park and other green spaces north and south of the Thames. Note that the larger portion of this green space is in the West End. (map in public domain)

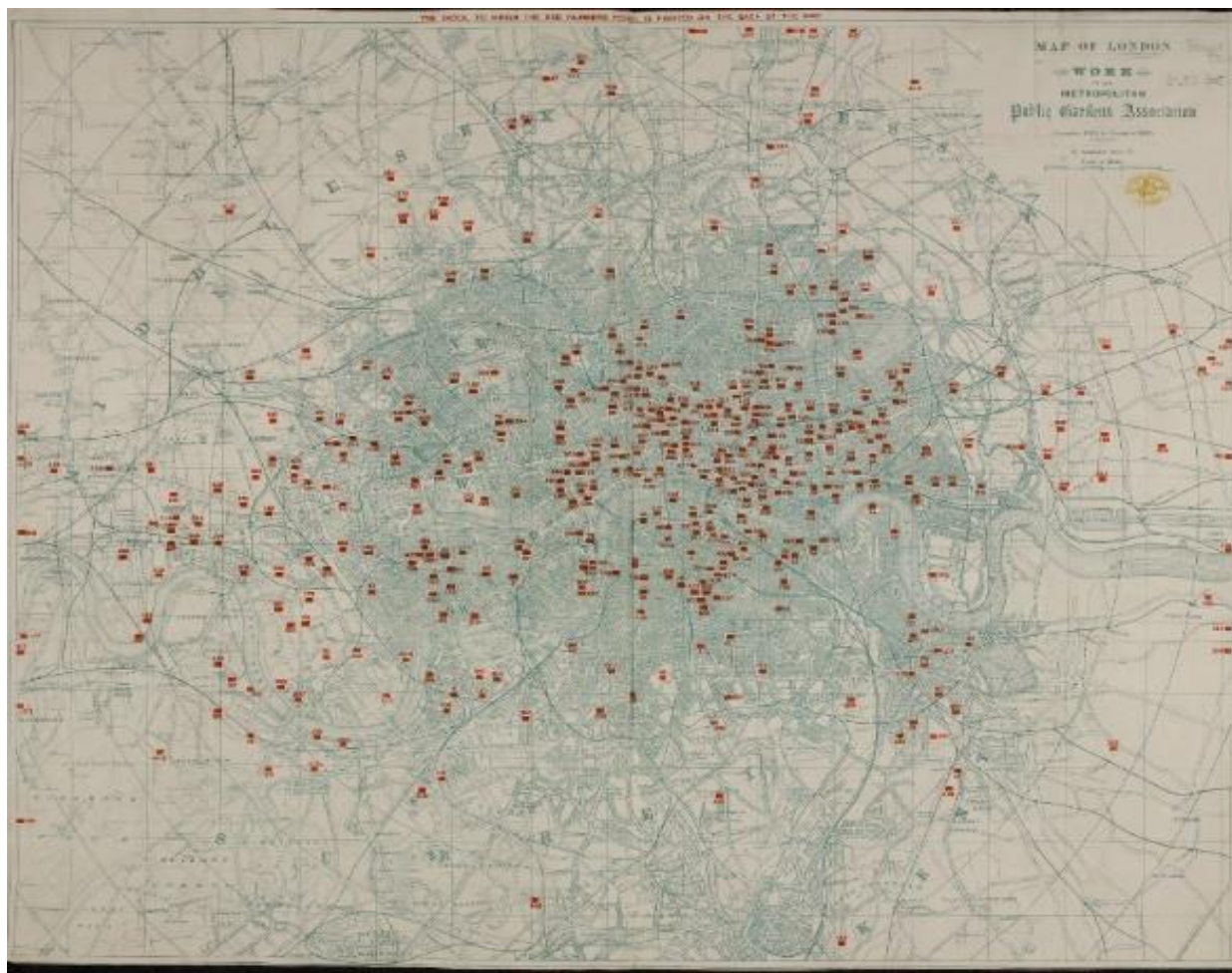


Figure 2.2 Metropolitan Public Garden Association, Map of Projects Completed or In Process, c. 1900. (©The British Library Board, Maps.3485.(135) 2065).

Chapter 3: Making Calcutta Imperial

[There was] not a spot where judgment, taste, decency and convenience are so grossly insulted, as in that scattered and confused chaos of houses, huts, sheds, streets, lanes, alleys, windings, gutters, sinks and tanks, which jumbled into an undistinguished mass of filth and corruption, equally offensive to human sense and health, as compose the capital of the English Company's Government in India. The very small portion of cleanliness which it enjoys is owing to the familiar intercourse of hungry jackals by night, and ravenous vultures...and crows by day....

William Mackintosh, 1782¹

[I]ts [sic] no figure of speech but the simple truth to say, that no language can adequately describe its abominations. In the filthiest quarters of the filthiest towns that I have ever seen, either in other parts of India or in other countries, I have never seen anything which can be for a moment compared with the filthiness of Calcutta.

Sir John Strachey, President, Calcutta Sanitation Commission (1864)²

Calcutta...is an English city.

Sidney Low, 1907³

In his 1914 report to the Calcutta Improvement Trust (CIT), E.P. Richards noted that “social progress, as regards the building and layout of the city, [the] creation of a normal network of streets, provision of main roads and good bridges, [an] orderly extension of the city [and the] creation of parks” had been “badly neglected for generations.”⁴ Richards, the CIT’s newly appointed planning engineer, was skeptical of the CIT’s ability to achieve its task, opining that only a “completely authoritarian regime with huge resources and a vigorous policy of demolition

¹ William Mackintosh, "Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa, 1782," in H.E.A. Cotton, *Calcutta Old and New*, 1909.

² Reginald Craufuird Sterndale, *Municipal Work in Calcutta, Or Hints on Sanitation--General Conservancy and Improvement in Municipalities, Towns and Villages* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co, 1881), 19-20.

³ Sidney Low, *A Vision of India* (London: Smith Elder & Co., 1907), 212.

⁴ E.P. Richards, *Report by Request of the Trust on the Condition, Improvement and Town Planning of the City of Calcutta and Contiguous Areas* (Jennings & Hewley: Hertfordshire England, 1914), 10.

would make any impact whatsoever.”⁵ His characterization of the state of Calcutta completely negated the self-congratulatory articulation by the most recent edition of the Imperial Gazetteer of India -- published only five years earlier -- of the growth of Calcutta after 1857 as a smooth narrative of advancing prosperity. Both Richards’ and the Gazetteers’ version of Calcutta are incomplete tales and obfuscate the more complicated story of the Second City of Empire -- the very real struggle over spatial authority, the fits and starts, the half-steps and missteps that characterized its urban development.

In this chapter, I will examine the evolution of the 'improvement' of Calcutta from the 1860s to the 1920s, focusing on the tensions that emerged in the spatial development of the city as it was imagined by the British and the city as put into practice. Particular attention is given to the struggles over those landscapes of the British 19th century linked to modernity: the open, green spaces of Calcutta's urban fabric--the Maidan, the public squares, and the Botanical Gardens; and the controversies over competing landscapes of death--the Hindu burning ghats and the British and Muslim cemeteries. While historians who work unself-consciously inside an imperial frame have argued that 19th century Calcutta's municipal failures were the result of Indian disinterest or self-interest, laziness or ineptitude, an analysis of the very real struggles over spatial authority produces a more complex, nuanced story. Issues over sanitation, and public and moral health particularly were at the center of debates, controversies, and disagreements around urban development, as was the makeup of the evolving Calcutta Municipal Corporation (CMC) and the election of natives from wards to represent the native communities.⁶ As the CMC

⁵ Ibid., 384.

⁶ Until 1863, Calcutta's municipal administration consisted of Justices of the Peace, a system going back to 1793. The Act of 1863 introduced a representative system of justices appointed by the Government. Most native Justices were from the elite classes. Under the Calcutta Municipal Act of 1876, a corporate body of 72 commissioners was created, 48 of which were elected; the Government appointed the remaining 24. In 1888, the number of commissioners was raised to 75 to account for the extension of municipal boundaries and creation of new wards; 50

gained power, it was also stymied in its ability (at least in British eyes) to advance sanitation, building plans, and general public improvements which included a green city, as issues over land ownership, slum clearance, and open space were debated and stalled in committees. Far from untroubled, the story of Calcutta's emergence as a modern colonial city was fractured and uneven, the result not of ideas imposed from above but of struggles of the politics of urban planning and design for livable yet surveilled and carefully managed green spaces designed to keep Indians at the margins of the 'garden city' experience.

The late nineteenth/early twentieth century state of municipal improvements had its foundation in the earlier history of Calcutta. The question of sanitation had confronted the East India Company in the late 17th century. Job Charnock, in an effort to attract native labor, had issued a public proclamation permitting anyone to erect housing on the swampy land owned by the EIC, and it was not long before a number of buildings and huts sprang up around the Company site. Although rudimentary building and sanitary requirements were laid down as early as 1707, enforcement was lax to nonexistent. East India Company officials in London were chiefly concerned with commercial activities, and administration of the areas under Company control were considered secondary at best, necessary only to support its primary commercial concerns.⁷

In 1803, then Governor-General Lord Wellesley realized the need for a comprehensive approach to creating an ordered city and formed a Town Improvement Committee. The objects

were elected, 15 appointed by the Government and the remaining 10 nominated by the Chambers of Commerce, the Port Commissioners and the Board of Trade. For an excellent account of the growth of the Calcutta municipality, see: Keshab Choudhuri, *Calcutta: Story of its Government* (New Delhi, 1973). Also, Rajat Ray, *Urban Roots of Indian Nationalism: Pressure Groups and Conflicts of Interest in Calcutta City Politics, 1875-1939* (New Delhi et al.: Vikas Publishing House, 1979). This would, however, be radically reduced in 1899, with Viceroy Curzon's intervention in the passing of a new municipal act.

⁷ Ernest Harold Goldsmith, *Municipal Government in Calcutta: The Calcutta Corporation* (Dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 1957), 25.

of sanitation, efficiency, surveillance and beautification were to be brought together to create a more controlled urban landscape:

It is a primary duty of the Government to provide for the health, safety and convenience of its inhabitants of this great town, by establishing a comprehensive system for the improvement of the roads...and...streets...and by fixing permanent rules for the construction and distribution of the houses and public edifices.... The appearance and beauty of the town...and every improvement which shall introduce a greater degree or order, symmetry, and magnificence in the streets...will tend to ameliorate the climate and to promote and secure every object of a just and salutary system....⁸

Wellesley proposed an aesthetic connected to public health and therefore civic virtue; a beautiful city was one that was well ordered and regulated. British administrators, however, failed to appreciate Wellesley's vision and its connection between efficiency and beauty. Subsequently, the Lottery Commissioners assumed the responsibility of town improvement; funds for municipal improvement were raised by a series of public lotteries, including the building of the Town Hall.⁹ Because of the success of these lotteries, a Lottery Committee was formed in 1817 to analyze the City's needs. The Committee debated a wide range of issues for improving the beauty of the city and the health of its inhabitants, including building new roads and widening existing ones, excavating new water tanks and filling old ones, building bridges and aqueducts, and the provision of sanitation drainage, burial grounds, and ghats. Under the Committee's

⁸ Cited in S.W. Goode, *Municipal Calcutta: Its Institutions in Their Origin and Growth* (Edinburgh: T.A. Constable, 1916), 237.

⁹ Lotteries were held for specific public improvements, like the building of the Town Hall. Ten percent of funds raised were given over for public works or municipal improvements, like drainage and sanitation; effectively, this small amount of monies coupled with meager collections from taxes, would make efforts to these types of improvement virtually impossible, with the exception of those improvements in British/European areas.

supervision, Strand Road along the Hooghly River was designed and a part of it executed; Hastings, Colootola, Amherst and Mirzapur Streets were opened; Kyd Street was improved; the extension of Wellington as far as College Square to the north and Park Street to the south was planned; College, Cornwallis and Wellesley Street were constructed with the squares and tanks of the same names; and the Secretary's Walk and Children's Walk along Chowringhee Road bordering the Maidan with adjoining balustrades were constructed. Essentially, the Committee's purpose was to remake "chaotic Calcutta" into the "decent shape of a modern town."¹⁰ With the exception of White Town, the Lottery Commission and subsequent municipal governments would be spectacularly unsuccessful.

Calcutta's duality as a "City of Palaces" and the "City of Dreadful Night" stems from the failed evolution of a city that was alternatively praised by visitors as a beautiful city of parks and green spaces and yet condemned as pestilential, decadent, and filthy. This was, however, a spatial narrative centered on the iconographic landscapes of "British" Calcutta -- the Maidan, the Botanical and Zoological Gardens, large squares like Dalhousie Square in the heart of its commercial district, Garden Reach on the Hooghly River, and the garden mansions of its European residents on Chowringhee. Even S. W. Goode, who congratulated Calcutta for its "comparatively rapid progress" in local government, noted Calcutta "wanting in the extensive and beautiful parks which most large Western cities have reserved or acquired for the public good," even as it should be justly proud of its Maidan, the Eden Gardens which "provide[d] Calcutta with its most popular evening promenade...and numerous squares." What Goode exposed in his rather neutral language was the improvement of 'White' Calcutta at the expense of 'Native' or northern Calcutta, which was in need of a "park of ample dimensions" and squares

¹⁰ Keshab Choudhuri, *Calcutta: Story of Its Government* (New Delhi et al.: Orient Longman, 1973), 31.

which would be "more than promenades."¹¹ It is not my point here to establish an alternative modernity (as Swati Chattopadhyay has done) by considering Bengali perceptions of the city. Rather I problematize those spaces of the city narrated as British and reconsider an overarching colonial urban morphology that has been hypothesized as the result of Indian failures, and analyze how through regulation, transgression and negotiation the unstable figure of the imperial citizen was constructed.

Cultivating Iconographic Landscapes - The Maidan, the Victoria Memorial and the Royal Botanic Gardens

...without the Maidan...Calcutta would be something of a hell."¹²

Known colloquially as “the Chief Glory of Calcutta,” – and translated from both the Hindi and the Bengali as 'wide open space,' -- Calcutta's Maidan was literally the creation of empire, representing a fundamental change in the British attitude towards India from *colonial* to *imperial*. From its inception, it was a space of conquest, a landscape embedded in the shift from British commercial enterprise to political power. In 1756, the settlement of Calcutta was destroyed by the forces of Siraj-ud-daula, the Nawab of Bengal. Following the defeat of the Nawab by Robert Clive less than a year later, the British retook Calcutta and realizing the ineffectiveness of the old fort determined to build a new one that would be virtually impregnable. Situated on the bank of the Hooghly River south of the existing British settlement and the old fort, it was surrounded by an elaborate system of earthworks, projecting bastions, and a moat at its outer edge. Additionally, an area of over 1,300 acres around the new fort was cleared of

¹¹ Goode, 342-343.

¹² Richards, 22.

tiger-infested jungle and several small native villages to afford a clear field of fire. (See Figure 3.1 Map of Calcutta, c. 1840s). This cleared field, the Maidan, would never truly fulfill its military imperative; it soon became Calcutta's main public recreation area and, importantly, redefined the physical space of the city.¹³

The vast expanse of the Maidan remained uncluttered until late in the 19th century, a physical manifestation of imperial authority. It provided a vantage point as well from which to survey Calcutta. As Kipling had noted, "if you get out in the centre of the maidan, you will understand why Calcutta is called the City of Palaces."¹⁴ The important public buildings were located near or, in the case of the Government House on, the edge of the Maidan, along Esplanade Row to the north and Chowringhee Street. Chowringhee, the long north/south street along the Maidan's eastern perimeter, consisted of a long line of garden houses, mansions or even smaller bungalows, set in large compounds.¹⁵ Visible from the river as one drifted up the Hooghly, it was these houses that gave Calcutta the label City of Palaces. But Chowringhee was considered a suburb of Calcutta well into mid-century; it was the area around the old Tank Square adjacent to the old fort that had been regarded as the fashionable district. Chowringhee became a desirable locale for the wealthy who wished the ambiance of country living and yet still were within a carriage ride to the administrative and commercial heart of Calcutta. For those who could afford a garden estate, the suburbs of Ballygunge to the south and the area near Circular Road, and Entally to the southeast offered plenty of choices for larger plots of land. When Chowringhee Road and Park Street became prime areas for commercial real estate in the

¹³ Norma Evanson, *The Indian Metropolis, A View Toward the West* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 19; Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism, and the Colonial Uncanny* (London and New York: Routledge), 46.

¹⁴ Rudyard Kipling, "The City of Dreadful Night," in *From Sea to Sea, Letters of Travel* (Garden City NY: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1913), 194.

¹⁵ Chattopadhyay, 46.

mid-nineteenth century, the wealthy residential area retreated further south to Alipore around Belvedere House, the governor's country retreat.

The Maidan turned the focus of imperial power from the urban, commercial fabric of the area that had built up around the old fort and the adjacent Tank (Dalhousie) Square, to the Maidan itself. Surrounded by monuments to British authority -- palatial garden houses, St. John's Church, the Court House, Government House, the Imperial Museum, the Asiatic Society-- the Maidan became a space to "see and be seen."¹⁶ Planted with trees by Lord Auckland in 1842, Fort William's firing field was planted to resemble an English landscape park and became a field for the display of imperial leisure and splendor. In the constant quest for a cool breeze and appropriate society, a drive down the Course or Respondentia Walk along the Hooghly in the early hours of the morning or late in the evening expressed a refined leisure. A necessary part of this imperial display included an entourage of native servants and attendant groomsman.¹⁷ And while Indian gentlemen crowded the Course and the Walk as well, in 1821 these spaces were made an exclusively European preserve:

It having been represented to the most Noble the governor of Fort William that considerable inconvenience is experienced by the European part of the community who resort to the Respondentia, from the Crowds of Native workmen and Coolies who make a thoroughfare of the Walk.... His Lordship is pleased to direct that natives shall not in future be allowed to pass the Sluice Bridge (but

¹⁶ Perhaps it is of interest to note that many Indians made their wealth from landed interests; in fact was common practice amongst the Bengali "middle" class to have a few rental properties, both commercial and residential. Some, like Joykissen Singh (a wealthy *banian*) owned expansive property, i.e., garden houses, on Chowringhee Street. See, Chattopadhyay, 293.

¹⁷ Ibid., 291-292.

such as are entering or leaving the Fort), between the hours 5 and 8 in the Morning, and 5 to 8 in the Evening.¹⁸

Although the directive seemed to be pointed at natives of a lower class, natives of *all* classes were prevented from using the Respondentia during those times most heavily used by the European population. This Act was not modified until the 1860s and even as the Act itself was repealed, an unwritten dress code for men remained requiring the wearing of a top hat and dress coat.¹⁹ As late as 1887, Indian gentlemen in traditional dress were accosted by the police.²⁰

For any visitor to Calcutta, the Maidan was always a site of interest. Its emerald expanse, and the vista it provided of British Calcutta from anywhere on its periphery, helped give an impression of a city of parks and green expansive space. As a public park, the Maidan's engenderment differed from those in Britain. Perhaps the question of what or who constituted the public was at the core of why S.W. Goode, writing in 1916, was surprised that the second city of empire, and a British city no less, lacked the public parks so prevalent in London. By 1870, nearly every city in Britain had a public park. Park creation resulted from a combination of motives: concerns for health promoted parks as "lungs" for the polluted urban city, and moral and social arguments that the ameliorative effects of nature would improve and foster order amongst the disorderly classes.²¹ But once parks had been created, debate about their proper use regularly occurred between different groups of park users. As park use increased, the public community remained fairly amorphous, with ill-defined boundaries. Park regulations attempted

¹⁸ Seton-Kerr, *Selections from the Bengal Gazette*; cited in Chattopadhyay, 293, fn. 39.

¹⁹ Walter Kelly Firminger, *Thacker's Guide to Calcutta* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1906), 33.

²⁰ Letters to the Editor, *The Statesman*, 22/3/1882 and 27/12/1882.

²¹ For studies on the importance of the emergence of the public park in Britain, see, for example: Hazel Conway, *People's Parks: the Design and Development of Victorian Parks in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Nan Dreher, *Public Parks in Urban Britain, 1870-1920: Creating a New Public Culture* (PhD Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1993); Susann Lasdun, *The English Park: Royal, Private and Public* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1991).

to police those boundaries. Although by definition public parks were for all members of the public, park users that failed to meet specific and often varying standards of behavior and respectability were excluded. Admission to public parks could be, and was, denied on grounds of class (often based on dress and cleanliness), a holdover from the eighteenth-century practice of admitting only fashionable society to London's royal parks.²²

Was there a fear of the Indian crowd in open spaces like the Maidan, particularly given the fact that the British in India were drastically outnumbered? The Indian government anxiously viewed the growing national consciousness of the educated Bengali elite as a danger to the imperial state. And certainly the open, public space of the Maidan was appropriated by Bengalis as this growing consciousness moved from frustration in the print media and government petitions to a highly visible public space--the Maidan--in the agitations over the Age of Consent Act (1891) and the Bengal Partition (1905-11).

In 1891, Sir Andrew Scoble, a member of the Indian Legislative Council, proposed a bill that would raise the age of consent for sexual intercourse with Indian girls from the age of ten to twelve years. Within the language of the Bill, relations with an unmarried or married Indian girl below the age of 12 were defined as rape. Proponents of the measure argued that the Bill did not outlaw or interfere with child-marriage, but "only the premature consummation" of such a marriage. Although the high-caste Brahmin practice was common amongst other Indian

²² There is a distinction to be made between royal, public and municipal parks. Royal parks were what the name implies: the parks of the monarchy. However, they were open to the "public" at times, though that public was narrowly defined. A public park could be established at the behest of a particular philanthropist or group, and was meant for public use. Municipal parks emerged with the establishment of the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1855 in London. Also, as seen in chapter 2 of the work herein, the creation of parks in London was hardly straightforward and was often fraught with controversy over questions of land rights and common usage.

class/caste and religious groups, there was a "general consensus" that the problem of premature consummation was most endemic to Bengal.²³

The Act, seen as not only intervention into religious practices but a "humiliating view" of Bengali domesticity, united formerly disparate groups and inspired a more visible political agitation. The first public meetings in Calcutta were held the end of January 1891, with students from Calcutta University gathering in Albert Hall, while newspaper reports estimated upwards of 3,000 people attended open-air meetings in Jaun Bazar, Sobha Bazar and Bagh Bazar--open, greenspace squares in northern Calcutta. Those gathered protested not only a perceived interference by the Government into religious practices but the consequences of the Bill itself: police oppression, defamation of the native population, and the medical examination of women under the Act.²⁴ The following weeks would see almost daily public protests, culminating in a mass meeting planned for February 25 by the British Indian Association to be held on the Maidan between Dhurumtollah and Government House. Although the Association filed the proper permits on February 19, in plenty of time for approval for and notice of the event, the local government did not issue the meeting permit for four days, giving the Association little time for notice in local papers.²⁵ It is not clear if the delay was purposed but it may be assumed that the government—given the public agitation already over the Bill—might be hesitant to deny permission outright. It could, however, delay its issuance enough to make such a meeting difficult if not impossible. Moreover, approval was finally given for assembly not in front of the Government House--the headquarters of British power in Calcutta (and India more largely)--as

²³ For an examination of the controversy over the Age of Consent Bill, see Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), 138-180.

²⁴ Dagmar Engels, "The Age of Consent Act of 1891: Colonial Ideology in Bengal," *South Asia Research* 1983 3:107-131; 121.

²⁵ Ibid.

the organizers had requested, but rather at the southern end of the Maidan in the Race Course, several miles away. Native newspapers reported attendance at the meeting at 100,000, while the Viceroy reported a radically smaller number of 10,000. Even if the numbers are unclear, the enormous meeting has been recognized as the first of its kind and the largest ever held to protest any government measure.²⁶ Moreover, what is clear was the meeting was not only a bhadralok (educated, middle-class Bengalis) event but a unification of the larger Bengali population,²⁷ and a very visible unity at the heart of British Calcutta, the Maidan.

Such a mass meeting, held in protest over what was perceived as a radically interventionist policy on the part of the colonial government, appropriated an imperial public space and transformed it into a national one. Within the last ten years, scholars have begun to not only reconceptualize space as an important technology of rule, but how performativity--i.e., use of or behaviors within space--have the ability to radically transform it through "performing" an alternative utility.²⁸ The Maidan then, by the performance of protest produced a reconceptualization of its space not only by Bengalis but, I would argue, by the British as well. As discontent with imperial conditions and policies grew, the Calcutta Maidan and the new public green squares would provide the native population spaces for protest in mass numbers.²⁹

²⁶ Rajat Kanta Ray, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal 1875-1927* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), 126-27; it is worth noting that although this was the largest, it was not the first time the Maidan had been used as a space of protest. Open air meetings convened by the Indian Association over the Ilbert Bill in 1884 came into being because "no halls could contain the demonstrations that took place." (102-103)

²⁷ Ibid., 122.

²⁸ Although Judith Butler (*Gender Trouble; Bodies that Matter*) has little to say about "space" or "place," her ideas about performativity have influenced cultural/historical geographers, historians of women and gender, et al., most notably those who work on the body. Moreover, scholars have begun to consider performativity in relationship to identity, particularly national identities. See, for example, Setha Low, *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000). Also, more generally on performance, perception and identity, see, Elizabeth Bell, *Theories of Performance* (Thousand Oaks, CA et al.: Sage Publications 2008), particularly Chapters 7 and 8.

²⁹ Little has been written on the history of Indian protest beyond peasant and ryot rebellions. The seminal text is Eric Stokes' *The Peasant and the Raj. Studies in Agrarian and Peasant Rebellion in Colonial India* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

In 1899, Lord Curzon, the new Viceroy, arrived in a Calcutta unsettled by the controversies over the Ilbert Bill (1883-1884), the Age of Consent Act, the monitoring of the Bengali vernacular press, and a clamoring by the British official and commercial interests for a return to control of its municipality, as well as larger Indian concerns. Imperial officials like Curzon viewed Calcutta as the nerve center for the Indian National Congress, but Calcutta--capital of the Indian empire and home to its Government--had also been embroiled in a municipal power struggle between British/European interests and the growing power of a Hindu (bhadralok) majority in the Calcutta Corporation. The Bengal Chamber of Commerce, heavily weighted by British commercial interests, had grown more and more impatient with the Corporation, where in its opinion a small caucus of elected Hindu members commanded a corporate majority and controlled all important committees, settling all municipal concerns in private.

It is no exaggeration...to say that...for the last ten years, and probably for longer, the city of Calcutta has been governed by a clique of Bengali Hindus...informally selected or self-elected from the very class which has always professed the most exalted principles and clamoured most loudly for publicity of discussion.³⁰

What such a diatribe obfuscates, however, is that the power the Bengali majority wielded was usually for the benefit of the native population. The matter of granting jute warehouse licenses offers a brief case in point. In 1893, the British executive of the Corporation wanted to grant the application of one Finlay, Muir and Company, but Indian members delayed the application to allow for investigation of resident complaints in the neighborhood where the warehouse would

³⁰ Quoted in Rajat Ray, *Urban Roots of Indian Nationalism: Pressure Groups and Conflict of Interests in Calcutta City Politics*, 53-54.

be located. A particular problem was the heaps of jute dust polluting the atmosphere. Finlay et al., along with other members of the Chamber of Commerce, complained to the Bengal Legislative Council wherein the Council favored taking away the ability to grant licenses from the Corporation. The Indian commissioners forwarded a memorial to the Council which was subsequently rejected as the Council opined it had not solicited advice from the Corporation. Bhupendranath Basu, an Indian member of the Corporation, angrily noted that had these warehouses been sited on Chowringhee Street rather than in the native quarter, such a thing would not have been entertained.³¹ The Bengal Chamber of Commerce proceeded to remedy the lack of British/European influence on the Corporation which the Finlay debacle had exposed. Unlike Bombay, for instance, where only half of its commissioners were elected by ratepayers, 50 out of 75 commissioners in Calcutta were elected. The remaining 25 were elected by various interests including the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, the Port Trust, as well as appointed by the Local Government. Even though the chairman of the Corporation was always an appointed British official, the sizeable population of elected representatives gave it a power of supervision over executive proceedings, a result of the Calcutta Municipal Act of 1886.³²

The Municipal Act of 1899 would mark a major turning point for the Corporation and Curzon would take a personal hand in revising the Act. In its original form, the Act proposed a better balance between the Corporation and executive branches--but it was a better balance for British and European interests alone. Greater influence and representation was provided for commercial groups by reserving four seats on the General Committee to the Calcutta Trades Association, the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and the Port Commission. Elected ward representatives could elect four Committee members and the Government would choose the

³¹ Ibid., 54-55.

³² Ibid., 56.

remaining four. Elected members would now be outnumbered two to one, and the Corporation Chairman--a British government appointee--was designated as Committee President.

As a matter of course, any new Legislation would pass directly to the Lieutenant Governor for approval. But the heated controversy surrounding the Bill prompted the Viceroy's intervention. Curzon thought the Bill failed to curtail the power of the Commissioners, their reduction on the General Committee notwithstanding. He reduced the number of elected Commissioners from 75 to 50, 25 of which would be nominated by the Local Government and an equal number elected by ratepayers.³³ The elected sector of the Corporation was left with virtually no power as they did not comprise a majority either in deliberative sessions or on the General Committee. In the first of ostensibly administrative moves, Curzon had achieved one of his first objectives in curtailing the power of the bhadralok by rendering them silent at the local level. With the Partition of Bengal, he attempted to quash their larger influence.

For Curzon, the partition of Bengal was an effective administrative move, an attempt to remedy a top-heavy imperial administration. But more importantly it would clip the wings of Calcutta's Hindu bhadralok. Bengal's diverse peoples and cultures created an administrative nightmare for a system based on the collection and classification of information.³⁴ This was the public face of the Partition of 1905. But Curzon was well aware of the regional influence of Calcutta intellectual and political elites. For Curzon, bracketing the bhadralok was fundamental to a continuance of British imperial aims in India. East Bengal's population was mainly Muslim while in West Bengal Hindus maintained the majority. In Calcutta, the bhadralok found themselves trapped by the cultural diversity of the city, outnumbered by Hindus with whom they

³³ Goldsmith, 89-92.

³⁴ See, for instance, Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton, 1996).

shared nothing but religion, and a growing number of Oriyas from outside Bengal. The partition separated them from most of their fellow Bengalis and bhadralok, and surrounded them with peoples of alien traditions.³⁵

According to the 1872 Census of India, almost half of the total population of Bengal was Muslim, mainly peasants living in East Bengal (now Bangladesh). In Calcutta, Muslims were a minority, not more than around 20 percent of the total population. Most Muslims were day laborers: cooks, stable boys, coachmen in European households, and others were boatmen, poultry and beef butchers, tailors, tobacco and perfume sellers, bookbinders and carpenters. Few held government jobs or had professional occupations, though this was changing by the turn of the century, and literacy levels were much lower for Muslims than Hindus. The proportion of Muslims serving in government rose from 4.4 percent in 1871 to 10.3 percent in 1901, while the figures for Hindus were much higher, rising from 32.2 percent to 56.1 percent over the same span of time. Most Muslims lived in what was called "the Muhammedan belt" between the white and black towns. While Muslim and Hindu communities were essentially separate, with little intermingling in Calcutta at least, such separation geographically and culturally had up until this time produced little consequence. Partition in 1905, however, would create an almost unbridgeable divide.³⁶

The proposed Partition was made public in December of 1903, and Curzon left for a tour of Eastern Bengal --a stumping trip of sorts--as he made long, conciliatory speeches to the Muslims in Dacca, Chittagong, and Mymensing. Over the course of his visit, Curzon realized that the Partition as proposed was untenable and amended the original plan by promising a

³⁵ Broomfield, 28-29; for more on the local/municipal roots of nationalism, see Rajat Ray, *Urban Roots of Indian Nationalism; Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal 1875-1927* (New Delhi, 1979).

³⁶ Krishna Dutta and Anita Desai, *Calcutta: A Cultural History* (Northampton MA: Interlink Books, 2008), 140-141.

Lieutenant Governor to be posted at Dacca, a Legislative Council in Mymensing and possibly a new university. Curzon's old friend, the Nawab of Dacca, who had refused to accept the original proposed scheme, was instrumental to Curzon's revision. When Curzon left for England later in 1904, the revised partition plan moved Rajshabhi, Dacca and Chittagong of the "old" Bengal administration (and now leaving out Assam) within a newly created administrative province with Dacca as its capital and the promised Lieutenant Governor in residence.³⁷ In a letter to the Secretary of State on February 2, 1905, Curzon laid out the amended plan, giving the Secretary the history of the annexation of lands to, and the growing administrative complexity of, Bengal. Worth noting is Curzon's statement that the difficulty of dealing with the mass of business expected of him was "aggravated[,] and the burden of his work added to by the notoriously litigious spirit of the people, which grows with the advance of popular education, by the incessant criticism of the [native] Press, [and] by the aptitude of the educated classes in Bengal for public agitation...."³⁸ Curzon himself had essentially added to the duties of the Lieutenant Governor by officializing the Municipal Corporation of Calcutta, radically reducing the self-governance of the body.

The Partition of Bengal was announced on July 20, 1905 and a meeting was held in the Town Hall a few weeks later, followed by a good deal of protest in the native press.³⁹ But as with the protests over the Ilbert Bill and Age of Consent Act, native feeling moved beyond newspaper editorials and constitution petitions into the open spaces of the city. As it was flooded with rioters in 1905, the Maidan would become firmly established as a space of native protest in the wake of the Bengal partition. Like the open squares in the city, it provided Indians a space to

³⁷ Sukharanjan Sengupta, *Curzon's Partition of Bengal and Aftermath* (Kolkata: Naya Udyog, 2006), 32-34.

³⁸ Letter as quoted. in its entirety in Sengupta, 38-39.

³⁹ See, for example, *Amrika Patrika Bazar*, *The Bengalee*, and *The Hindoo Patriot*. During this period, articles, letters and editorials appeared daily on the Partition, and it was more often than not front page news.

visibly transgress British authority. Bengali feelings against the Partition ran high: its enactment was couched in the most stark terms as a "conspiracy" against the growing power of the *bhadralok* in East Bengal. Surendranath Banerjee (a member of the Indian National Congress) voiced outraged Bengali feelings on the matter: "The revised scheme...was conceived in secret, discussed in secret, and settled in secret, without the slightest hint to the public.... We felt that we had been insulted, humiliated and tricked." ⁴⁰ But what may have been decided in the dark was protested by very visible mass actions. Thousands of protest meetings were held across India where the numbers of attendees ranged from a few hundred to tens of thousands, the largest of which were held in Calcutta. On October 16, 1905, a meeting planned for the Town Hall overflowed into the Maidan as the numbers proved too large to be contained indoors. It was estimated that over 100,000 people converged on the Maidan that day from smaller protests being held around Calcutta, in concert with the huge procession of people that had followed Rabindranath Tagore to the Hooghly for a ceremonial bathing of unity.⁴¹

Calcutta's Maidan reoriented and reinvented British power after the Battle of Plassey as it moved Fort William to the river, surrounded by two square miles of 'empty' space. The spaciousness of the Maidan provided at least in an imaginary sense a spatial separation that offered protection and an artificial form of nature that pushed out the "wild foreignness"⁴² beyond its borders and allowed British Calcutta to turn its back on the native town to the north. But the Maidan became a fractured landscape. Intended by the British as an expanse of power

⁴⁰ Quoted in Jitendra Kumar, *India Unbound. Essays in National Consciousness* (New Delhi: Indian Films & Publications, 1977), p. 21.

⁴¹ See, Kumar, *India Unbound*, pp. 24-25; "England Boycotted in India," *Public Opinion*, 21 October 1905; *The Times*, London, August 9, 17, 22; September 2, 5, 7, 8, 1905. It was at these meetings that the conceptualization of the swadeshi (indian goods) movement emerged. There was also quite a bit of consternation on the part of the authorities as plans were made to disrupt the arrival of the Prince of Wales, who was due to visit Calcutta.

⁴² Helen Thomas, "Stories of Plain Territory: The Maidan, Calcutta," in *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space*, Iain Borden, Joe Kerr, Jane Rendell, eds. (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2002), 147.

and site of imperial performance and grandeur, in that expanse also lay the possibilities of transgression. Certainly, it was a symbolic space, at the center of Calcutta and at the center of the Indian empire. Ringed by the architectural edifices of government, this park contained within it the Eden Gardens, the Race Course, the Royal Calcutta Golf Club (1829) and by the end of the century a number of sports clubs. After the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, it became home to the Victoria Memorial designed and constructed by Lord Curzon.⁴³ And, I would argue, the Memorial, a highly visible monument to empire, can be read as Curzon's attempt at a counternarrative to a space recently appropriated by native/national identities. A permanent monument to a British construction of India as a repository for Calcutta's (and India's past and present), the Memorial would be a public display of a particular, positivist British narrative of India.

Curzon's "White Elephant": The Victoria Memorial

The Victoria Memorial was Curzon's monument. Even though Queen Victoria died in 1901, Curzon had considered the need for a memorial to the British in India from the moment of his arrival in India, a building which would be a "standing record of our wonderful history, a visible monument of Indian glories, and an illustration, more eloquent than any spoken address or printed page, of the lessons of public patriotism and civic duty."⁴⁴ The Queen's death gave Curzon his opportunity. The Memorial would become for him a means of underlining imperial power and pedagogy at the center of Calcutta, even as the city was torn apart by the Partition

⁴³ Sukanta Chaudhuri, *Calcutta, the Living City* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990); Geoffrey Moorhouse, *Calcutta: The City Revealed*, 1971.

⁴⁴ Lovat Fraser, *India Under Curzon and After*, p. 236; The Marquis Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., *British Government in India. The Story of the Viceroys and Government Houses*, vol. 1 (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1906), pp. 178-180.

controversy and its aftermath. As a historiography of the British in India, the Memorial would provide a monolithic visual reminder of that presence. Its siting at the center of Calcutta on the Maidan remapped the Maidan as one of imperial spectacle and power, taking back a space politicized through Bengali unrest. It would, in his words, quiet the "rising tide of national feeling" seeking justification in a "remote and largely unhistorical past" and remind Indians of their place within the Raj.⁴⁵

In his speech to the Asiatic society, Curzon outlined the relevance and purpose of the Memorial: "Let us, therefore, have a building, stately, spacious, monumental, and grand, to which every newcomer in Calcutta will turn, to which all the resident population, European and Native, will flock, where all classes will learn the lessons of history, and see revived before their eyes the marvels of the past...." Curzon was emphatic that the history displayed in the Memorial's halls would not be a triumphalist British narrative, that the Memorial was not a space of British civilizational superiority but rather the latest in a series of stages of which British ascendancy was the latest.⁴⁶ And yet, as one scholar has recently noted, there is enough evidence archivally to expose Curzon's ecumenism as mere posturing.⁴⁷ "The material is to be imported, the design

⁴⁵ Curzon, *British Government in India*, 179.

⁴⁶ Curzon, "Memorial to the Late Queen-Empress," *Journal of the Queen Victoria Indian Memorial Fund*, no. 1, April (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1901), 2-5.

⁴⁷ Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty. Design in the Age of its Global Reproducibility*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 302; Curzon acknowledged that without the "great munificence" of the Native Princes in their contributions to the building of the Memorial, it would not have come into being. Because of this a "hall of princes" was to be created within the Memorial. See, Curzon, *British Government in India*, 183. The initial group of contributors included: The Rajah of Gwalior (10 lacs Rs), the Rajah of Kashmir (15 lacs Rs.), Raja of Jaipur (5 lacs Rs.), Mysore Dubrar (1 lac Rs) and the Nawab of Dacca, Maharaja Monindra Chandra Nundy of Cossimbazar, Raja Ranjit Sinha of Nashipur, and the Maharaja Sir Jotindro Mohum Tagore, who all contributed between 10,000 to 50,000 Rs. *Journal of the Queen Victoria Indian Memorial Fund*, No. 1, April 1901 (BL/IOR). With the exception of the Rajahs, most of the initial contributors would publicly oppose Curzon's Partition of Bengal.

is to be imported, the architect is to be imported."⁴⁸ And as museums go, it was largely an empty hall speaking perhaps to Curzon's (and others) true ideas about the 'history' of India.

There is no country where there exists such a lamentable and appalling dearth of material for bringing the past in a visible form before the eyes of the present, for teaching the lessons of history in a concrete form, or for familiarising succeeding generations with the commanding figures and the memorable events that have preceded them. Other countries have their National Galleries or Imperial Museums. England has the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery, the British Museum, the Tate...not to speak of the monuments in Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's..... Paris has the Louvre.... In India we have nothing of this sort.... A traveller might come to India and leave it with the impressions that since the days of the great Moguls whose tombs and temples are the wonder of the East, it had had no history that was worthy of concrete commemoration, had produced or seen no great figures, but had only been fortunate in the enjoyment of an administration which had been lavish in endowing it with law courts, town halls, educational institutions, secretariats...⁴⁹

With these words, Curzon staked Britain's claim to the mastery and construction of India's history. He also seemed quite anxious that "a traveller might come to India" and be ignorant as to who had made this history. The architecture of the British empire as it resided in "town halls" failed in Curzon's eyes to elucidate any real imperial grandeur as the Moghuls had with their Taj Mahal. A grand, marbled edifice, filled with concrete examples of the British rise to power in

⁴⁸ *The Pioneer*, as quoted in *The Calcutta Review*, January 1902, pgs. 194-196.

⁴⁹ Lord Curzon, "The Queen Victoria Memorial Hall in India," in *The Nineteenth Century and After, a Monthly Review*, 1901, pp. 949-959.

India--a history of "commanding figures and memorable events"--would link the vernacular with the grand. Moreover, I would argue, Curzon's insistence on the importance of its siting in Calcutta as a national/imperial memorial and that the only viable site was the Maidan itself, speaks to the private motivation underlying his more public exhortations. At the heart of the center of the British empire would be built a monumental representation of Britain's place in India and re-codify spatially the city as imperial.

In Curzon's own words:

In one respect Calcutta offers advantages with which no other city in India can compete. It possesses in the Maidan one of the finest city parks to be seen in any capital in the world. Situated on the outskirts of the town, and yet in close proximity to its most crowded quarters, this great expanse, already adorned with the statues of Governors-General and eminent men, presenting a stretch of green sward such as can nowhere be created in the drier climate of Northern India, interspersed with avenues and clumps of trees, and lending itself both to landscape gardening and to architectural effect, offers an almost ideal site for the erection of a simple but noble memorial structure.... It has not yet been finally determined upon what portion of the Maidan the Victoria Hall will be placed. The architect, when appointed, must be consulted upon this point. It is proposed to surround the Hall by a beautiful public garden, the laying out of which will be co-ordinated with the design and plan of the building.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Ibid.

His words aside, the Maidan lay at the heart of Calcutta not on its outskirts, and Curzon was certainly cognizant of the Maidan's location and importance. It was the intent of both Curzon and the Memorial's General Committee that it should be erected in a metropolitan area where it would be visited or seen by the "largest number of people."⁵¹ Of the Indian cities under consideration, Curzon grudgingly noted that Bombay had its "splendid appearance," Delhi had its imperial memories,⁵² Madras its "historic renown" and Agra its majestic monuments. Madras and Bombay he rejected as essentially mere seaports and Agra was "consecrated to a vanished dynasty and regime." In response to criticisms that Calcutta was out of the way, Curzon responded that because it was the seat of the imperial government "sooner or later everybody [found] his way [there], whether he be an Indian Prince, ...a European traveller, or an English merchant." Moreover, and as important in Curzon's eyes, Calcutta possessed the Maidan, "one of the finest city parks to be seen in any capital in the world."⁵³ The Maidan, as a green sward allowed for the kind of designed landscape that, belying its Indian siting, would be very English in nature: a landscape park. And, as will be discussed later, Curzon's plans for the gardens of the Memorial were designed by a British landscape architect, with the input of the head of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew (and a one-time official at Calcutta's Botanic Garden), and its character would embody those of the flowerbeds and massive lawns so dear to British hearts.

There were of course those who opposed the building of such a grand Memorial and disputes over responsibilities for the costs of construction and future maintenance. Curzon took several opportunities to speak to the naysayers by impressing the need for a memorial to Queen

⁵¹ *Journal of the Queen Victoria Indian Memorial Fund*, No. 1, April 1901, 5.

⁵² This refers not, at this point, to Delhi's link with the old Mogul dynasties, but its connections with the ending of the 1857 Revolt. It had also been argued that Delhi should be the chosen site because that is where the Crown took over the governance of India and the Proclamation of 1858 was read out. Curzon countered that it had not been Delhi but Allahabad. *Ibid.*, 24-25.

⁵³ *Journal of the Queen Victoria Indian Memorial Fund*, No. 1, April 1901, 2-8.

Victoria, to show the world "in some striking manner [the] imperial unity...so largely the creation of her personality and reign."⁵⁴ He also insisted that "the charge" of the Memorial should fall to the Government of India, and be a particular responsibility of the Viceroy. Leaving something as important as the Memorial to the whims of the Local Government was unconscionable for Curzon, who deprecated local involvement, noting that it would produce "the atrocities...perpetrated in the gardens of the Taj" and result in the "artistic" placement of the tramways blighting the four corners of the Maidan.⁵⁵ British detractors thought a charitable foundation a more appropriate remembrance of the Queen and some local natives preferred a memorial more Indian in character, like Calcuttan lawyer Gurudas Banerjee who wanted the building dedicated to Sita, wife of Rama of the Indian epic *The Ramayana*.⁵⁶ But the most vociferous objections to the Memorial came not to its idea, but its proposed location--the Maidan.

Curzon was well aware of the Maidan's importance to both the British and native populations, noting Calcutta's "inhabitants regard[ed] the Maidan as a virtuous woman regards her honour, any assault upon which must be repelled as the deadliest form of insult."⁵⁷ As a public park, it was home to sports clubs, the Race Course, promenades, bandstands, the Eden Gardens and offered a good deal of recreational space and fresh air in the midst of the congested city. It also contained several monuments to Anglo-Indian notables, including the Ochterlony Monument which had been put up by public subscription in 1826, dedicated to David

⁵⁴ George Nathaniel Curzon, *Notable Speeches of Lord Curzon: With an Introduction by H.K. Beauchamp*, (1905) C.S. Raghunatha Rao, ed. (Madras, The Arya Press, 1905), 305-306.

⁵⁵ Note by His Excellency the Viceroy to the Finance and Commerce Department, 27 March 1904, MSS EUR F111/457c, India Office Records, British Library. Steam-powered trains were first constructed from Chowringhee to Kalighat and Kidderpore (Khidurpur) across a portion of the Maidan in 1882, followed by electric trams in 1889. See H.E.A. Cotton, *Calcutta Old and New. A Historical and Descriptive Handbook to the City* (Calcutta, W. Newman, 1909), 235.

⁵⁶ Dutta and Desai, 130-131.

⁵⁷ Curzon, *British Government in India*, 188.

Ochterlony, hero to Briton and native alike.⁵⁸ Curzon's original idea -- to site the Memorial on the northeast corner just south of Government House, and between the Fort and the Red Road, and move the Ochterlony Monument -- was met with violent objections. Over the course of several months, objections in the newspapers argued vehemently against⁵⁹ "occupying with a permanent fabric any portion of the open expanse constituting the Maidan strictly so called, which an unwritten law has, with a few exceptions, very properly preserved from encroachment for the health and the recreation of this densely populated city."⁶⁰ The final bar to this site, however, was the discovery that the Government had allowed access to the Tramway Company far into the northeast section of the Maidan.

The next choice of site, known as the "fort site" was a bit north and east and would leave the Ochterlony Monument in place. The agitation against this site caused the Building Committee to publish their reasoning for consideration of all sites up to this point in several newspapers, asking the public and "various public bodies" to express their preference by way of letters or memorials addressed to the Committee. Sir James Borudillon, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, had noted to the Committee that they would be wise to present the possible sites as the workings of the Committee, rather than Curzon's preferences, in order to protect Curzon "from any show of ill-feeling or ingratitude on the part of the Calcutta public." Curzon was under fire in the native press for his machinations with Calcutta University; after deflating native influence through the Calcutta Municipal Corporation with the Act of 1899, Curzon had set his

⁵⁸ David Ochterlony, who began as a cadet in the Bengal Army in 1777, had served in several wars on the subcontinent, including the Maharatta wars, the defense of Delhi while serving as Resident to the court of the Shah Alam, and the conquest of Central India. His support of a native prince's (Bhurtpore) right to his throne was reversed by the British government and because of this, Ochterlony resigned his service. He was said to have died at Meerut "broken-hearted" at this betrayal of India. See, Firminger, *Thacker's Guide to Calcutta*, 59-61.

⁵⁹ Quoted in *Journal of the Society of Arts*, no. 2776, volume 54, February 2, 1905; numerous newspaper articles and letters to the editor appeared in the *Statesman and Friend of India*, the *Bengalee*, the *Amrika Patrika Bazar*, and the *Englishman* from November 1902 to February 1903.

⁶⁰ *Journal of the Queen Victoria Memorial Fund*, No. 1, April 1901.

sights on university reform. The University's Bengali-dominated Senate provided a secure constituency for congressmen elected to the Bengal Legislative Council and Curzon and other high ranking British officials viewed the University as a breeding ground for political agitators. Curzon had appointed a Universities Commission which had recently returned a report much-publicized by the Bengali press who viewed it as an attempt to weaken the very foundation of educated Bengalis.⁶¹ Borudillon recognized that anger at Curzon's policies was being conflated in the native press with the proposed Memorial, with many labelling it "Curzon's folly" and the "White Elephant" of Calcutta.⁶² After another year of debate, the Cathedral Avenue site was finally chosen at the southeastern corner of the Maidan, the site of the old Presidency jail. The Bengal Chamber of Commerce, the Calcutta Trades Association, the Judges of the High Court and Bar Library--all of which were made of European members only--agreed with Borudillon, who had promised on behalf of the Government to tear down the Jail and give the land to the Trustees.⁶³ Choice of this site accomplished several things: it would substitute one building for another and no encroachment on the free use of the Maidan would take place; it would not "infringe on the vital conditions of Calcutta's honour," nor cut off breezes from the River;⁶⁴ but more importantly it would serve to now anchor all four corners of the Maidan with monuments to empire. Although Curzon's initial choice of a site near Government House would have served as a "pendant" to British authority and provide a "noble position, visible from all quarters,"⁶⁵ the

⁶¹ Rajat Kanta Ray, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal 1875-1927* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), 147-150.

⁶² Letter, Sir James Borudillon to the Trustees, quoted in Letter from the Trustees of the Victoria Memorial, 6 October 1910, to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Political Department, Jails Branch, F111/459B, IOR/BL.

⁶³ Letter from the Trustees of the Victoria Memorial, 6 October 1910, to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, F111/459B, IOR/BL.

⁶⁴ Curzon, *British Government in India*, 188.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

final site would provide an even greater vista as its white dome was visible from every point on the Maidan, from the river, and most of the surrounding city.

Curzon's design of the Memorial and its placement on the Maidan was a calculated move to more definitively inscribe Calcutta itself as imperial. The debacle of the Partition only made Curzon more determined that the Memorial stand as a self-confident display of empire at its heart. For a man who had made a point of drawing from Indian tradition in architecture and encouraged Indian craft practices, the choice of European classicism for the Memorial's design stood in stark testimony to his intentions. Although the Memorial as idea was already in place before the Partition, for Curzon it took on an importance beyond constructing a memorial to the queen--it was a deliberate move to reappropriate an imperial space politicized by Indian bodies in protest. Writing to Lord Lytton in 1924, in typical pomposity, Curzon claimed the Memorial as "the greatest monument to British rule in India...and the finest modern building that has been raised in Asia."⁶⁶ This elided, of course, the fact that the building of it had been stalled over the course of 20 years by Parliament and the Indian Government for financial reasons and ongoing public and political pressures, problems with the massive foundation on unstable Hooghly silt, labor strikes, the advent of World War I, not to mention the move of the capital to New Delhi that would reduce Calcutta's status as second city of empire. By the time Prince Edward arrived to open the Memorial after Christmas in 1921, Curzon's marble monstrosity stood in a much more fractured landscape as Calcutta was torn apart by hartals and riots. A security cordon not only enveloped the Maidan but the entire city, as offices and homes of National Congress agitators were raided. In the ten days before his commemoration of the Victoria Memorial, more than 10,000 arrests were made of natives protesting the Prince's arrival. *The Englishman* estimated

⁶⁶ Letter to Lytton, F111/459B, IOR/BL.

that there were more than twice as many police officers for the 5,000 spectators who witnessed the Memorial's opening. In his speech in the great hall, the Prince opined, "It is fitting that this memorial to the Great Queen-empress should be opened at a time when her dreams for the Indian Empire have come true."⁶⁷ Perhaps from the Prince's myopic viewpoint, in front of an audience on the Maidan of a few thousand select subjects, this could be true. Its white dome visible from any point on the Maidan and the city more largely, it was that spectacle of empire Curzon had desired. But it stood for an empire whose hold on India was now much more tenuous. It is significant that Curzon did not attend the Memorial's commemoration. His Partition of Bengal, rather than centralizing British power and neutralizing a rising tide of national feeling, had served to fracture the former and give new momentum to the latter. The Memorial now stood in a city that no longer carried the title 'second city of empire' as the capital of Indian Government. The narrative of the Maidan as imperial had been reified by Curzon's Memorial, but it was to be a story of an empire on the wane.

The Botanical Gardens: the Science of the Public Park

A good deal has been written about the links between science and imperial expansion more largely, and the ways in which botany and the commodification of plant cultures served empire and its colonizing ambitions.⁶⁸ As part of an eighteenth century Enlightenment impulse to improve the world through science and technology, George III's mother established Kew

⁶⁷ Quoted in Alex von Tunzelmann, *Indian Summer. The Secret History of the End of an Empire* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2007), 57-58.

⁶⁸ See, for example: Arnold, *Tropics and the Traveling Gaze*; Drayton, *Nature's Government*; Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860*, (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Lucille H. Brockway, *Science and Colonial Expansion: The Role of the British Royal Botanic Gardens* (New Haven & London :Yale University Press, 1979, repr. 2002).

Gardens in London in 1751. Although it was initially meant to serve a more aesthetic and recreational purpose, under Joseph Banks' supervision, Kew became the center of a huge web of amateur colonial plant collectors and an imperial network of established botanical gardens. But following the Napoleonic wars, after royal patronage waned and it fell victim to internal parliamentary parsimony, Kew lay neglected until it shifted from royal to public institution under the guidance of William and Joseph Hooker. Under their direction (1841-1871), Kew became firmly established as an international scientific center and both actively promoted and benefited from imperial expansion.⁶⁹ The ideological difference between Banks' ideas of improvement--of people through Nature and Nature through production--and the Hookers' focus on the utility of science to empire with regards to Kew, mirrors the struggle over the Calcutta Botanical Garden in terms of institutional identity and more importantly for my purposes, its importance as an imperial *landscape*.

In 1787, Colonel Robert Kyd, an East India Company official and avid horticulturalist, established the Calcutta Botanic Gardens. Although his proposal to the acting Governor-General appealed to the commercial interests of the Company, Kyd had a more humanitarian motive as well. Witness to the devastation of 1770 Bengal Famine, he argued the necessity of improving Indian agricultural production and alternative sources of food for the native population. Mindful of the East India Company's mercantilist sensibilities, he also noted the profitability of commercial crops like indigo, coffee, tobacco, cardamom, cinnamon, sandalwood, teak, camphor, nutmeg, pepper, clove and tea.⁷⁰ The selection of a site on the west bank of the Hooghly River opposite Calcutta and "derelect [sic], overgrown with brushwood and frequently

⁶⁹ See Drayton, *Nature's Government*; see also Raymond Desmond, *The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew*. 2d. ed. (Kew Publishing, 2007).

⁷⁰ Desmond, *European Discovery of the Indian Flora*, 57.

flooded"⁷¹ was hardly propitious for what would become an important public space. For Kyd it appeared to be more a matter of convenience than vision; the site was adjacent to his country house and collection of exotics of some fifty acres.⁷²

The shape and meaning of the Botanic Garden would shift over the next several decades, reflecting the vision (or in some cases, lack thereof) of its Superintendents, its metropolitan overseers (Kew), as well as its historical context as the East India Company moved from trade to governance.⁷³ Colonel Kyd worked hard and "ditched and embanked" his 50 acres, erected bamboo fences to keep out the wild buffalo, and waited for plant donations to arrive. Joseph Banks at Kew questioned the need for fifty acres for what was essentially a plant "nursery"--it would require too large a labor force, too much money for maintenance, and "encourage the likelihood of malpractice." Kew, after all, grew 5,000 plants on two acres. Moreover, Banks saw the purpose of the garden as one of "public utility and science" and derided Kyd's idea that the Garden should also serve as a "not inelegant" retreat for weary Company officers.⁷⁴ Under Nathaniel Wallich's tenure (1817-1847), the Gardens were opened to visitors as a "public pleasure ground" --a refined space of entertainment and instruction where the growing European population could promenade and picnic.⁷⁵ Although scholar Richard Axelby surmises Wallich's motives may have been more personal, *vis a vis* his status as an outsider,⁷⁶ I would argue that Wallich would not have been unaware of local sanitation and planning politics. Moreover, based upon a report to the Treasury in 1838 on the state of royal gardens in England and Kew in

⁷¹ Ibid., 58.

⁷² Sir George King (Supt.), *A Guide to the Royal Botanic Garden, Calcutta, with a Map* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1895), 2.

⁷³ Richard Axelby, "Calcutta Botanic Garden and the Colonial Re-ordering of the Indian Environment," *Archives of Natural History* 35 (1): 150-163, 2008; 152.

⁷⁴ Desmond, *European Discovery of the Indian Flora*, 59-60.

⁷⁵ Axelby, 153.

⁷⁶ He was a Danish Jew; see Axelby, 153.

particular, the monies spent on botanical gardens like Calcutta's had come under fire. Historian Ray Desmond notes that the report seems to have deliberately downplayed the performance and importance of colonial botanical gardens in its push for making Kew a "national botanical garden with an imperial role."⁷⁷ Wallich protested that he had essentially worked wonders with the scarcity of funds and labor at his disposal, and he insisted that the Garden's primary objectives held currency--not only its scientific and commercial utility, but "the practical benefits enjoyed by the community through the establishment."⁷⁸ The actual number of visitors to the Botanic Garden during Wallich's tenure is not clear, though it is clear that this had become one of the missions of the Garden and would remain so into the 20th century.⁷⁹ Little mention is given in those reports of the Garden which are available archivally for Wallich's time⁸⁰ but there are several diaries, autobiographies and travel narratives that refer to "weekly perambulations" like those of Lady Canning, wife of the Governor-General, or the Gardens as the first place to visit after arriving in Calcutta. Bishop Reginald Heber, shortly off the ship that had brought him to India, headed directly to the Gardens.⁸¹ Moreover, the design of the Gardens as it emerged under Wallich reflected a landscape park and pleasure garden ideal, as evidenced in William Griffith's, Wallich's successor, tirade before the Court of Directors in London. Griffith accused Wallich of neglect: the Garden was overgrown with trees (which had been provided for shade for tender plants as well as people) and many of the plants in the Garden were not labelled. Griffith ordered the removal of the floral borders lining the pathways as well; the informal park-like layout that

⁷⁷ Desmond, *European Discovery of the Indian Flora*, 92.

⁷⁸ Excerpted from the *Report of the East India Company to the Government of Bengal*, 21 August 1839, qtd. in Desmond, 92-93.

⁷⁹ See, Thomson, following, as excerpted in *Calcutta Review* (1857); also see reports of Supt. George King during his tenure (1870s-1890s).

⁸⁰ India Office Records, Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.

⁸¹ See for example Bishop Reginald Heber, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India*, 4th ed., 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1828); Emma Roberts, *Scenes and Characteristics of Hindustan*, 3 vols. (London, 1835); Fanny Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque*, 2 vols. (London, 1850).

had evolved under Wallich was anathema to Griffith. In a botanical garden there were to be "distinct compartments demonstrating systematic botany, medicinal and decorative plants, and elsewhere nurseries and orchards."⁸² Clearly, for Griffith, science was the focal point and there was no room in a botanical garden for the pleasure of picnics and leisurely strolls.

In his Report of 1857, Dr. Thomas Thomson, then Superintendent of the Calcutta Botanic Garden, it is apparent that even 20 years later, the value of a botanic garden in Calcutta was still under fire, perhaps because of the almost schizophrenic nature of the Garden as its focus shifted with each successive Superintendent. Thomson pointedly aligned the Second City of Empire (Calcutta) with its First (London), and his language about the educative value of nature, open space and sanitary concerns speak both to the emergent culture of public parks in Victorian Britain and their ameliorative value, a discursive differentiation (and inferiority) made through the relationship of science and culture, and local concerns in Calcutta. I include it here at some length to make these points:

What Kew Garden is to the metropolis of England, the Calcutta Botanic Garden might be, and ought to be, made with respect to the metropolis of India. The taste of the natives of India for the beauties of nature is certainly very small, and there is, I will admit, no demand on the part of the people, for a national Botanic Garden. This taste, like all others, requires culture for its development and no means appears better adapted to produce that gradual modification of the modes of thought of the people of India, which alone can bring about their amalgamation with European civilization, than the cultivation of the natural sciences, and *the education of the taste for the beauties of nature....*

⁸² Griffith, as cited in Desmond, 95.

The *local importance* of the Hon'ble company's garden has, therefore, I think, never been sufficiently appreciated. Its position, on the right bank of the Hooghly, is undoubtedly, in some respects, disadvantageous, as rendering it difficult of access, but any change of site is obviously impossible, from the great expense by which it would be attended. The rapid extension of the population of Howrah makes this annually of less importance, and it may reasonably be hoped that, before many years, improved means of crossing the river, the exact nature of which cannot be foreseen, will facilitate access to the Garden from the Calcutta side....

The rapidity of the development of Calcutta, during the last fifty years, has undoubtedly been very great, but it is probably trifling in comparison to what may be expected in the next half-century. *The existence of a large area of open ground, the property of the State*, in the immediate vicinity of a populous and rapidly increasing city, is so important on sanatory [sic] grounds, that no question can exist as to the propriety of retaining it.

The area occupied by the Botanic Gardens will probably ere long be entirely surrounded by a dense population, when its importance, as a pure and healthy spot, will be even greater than at present.... To make the Botanic Garden an establishment worthy of the Empire, its scientific character ought to be raised, and it ought to be made available as a place, *both of instruction and of recreation*,

for the public. To attain the latter object, it is not in the least necessary to neglect the former.... [emphasis added]⁸³

Thomson's concern with the Garden's location as inconvenient to most of Calcutta's population is noteworthy, given that within two years a report would be published (post Revolt) on the state of and need for open spaces in northern Calcutta.⁸⁴ Although its budget was spartan in comparison to Kew, the Garden had again been under attack by the Court of Directors as to its viability. Annual reports of the Garden failed to give any accurate visitor accounts. There are records of the amounts of plants given out to the public both locally and abroad and plants and materials received from outside sources. Even more official research visits (whether to use the Library or other source materials) were not catalogued in the Reports, let alone the recreational visitor whether there to walk, picnic or visit the greenhouses and herbarium. Beginning with Thomson, this would change and visitor counts, while not specific but rather noted in more general terms--dozens, hundreds, etc.--would be included in subsequent annual reports and were an ongoing issue of concern to subsequent Superintendents. Although Thomson notes the location of the Garden on the opposite side of the Hooghly from Calcutta as a problem of access, he notes that its location in the proximity of the growing suburb of Howrah was propitious. And, certainly, municipal reports of health and sanitation problems in the outlying suburbs of Calcutta (like Howrah) addressed the lack of open space and "lungs" in an area like Howrah that was a growing mix of crowded native residential areas and the growth of industries like the jute mills.

George King took over the Gardens as Superintendent in 1871, in the wake of the destruction wrought by the cyclones of 1864 and 1867 where most of the standing trees and plant

⁸³ Dr. T. Thomson, "Report on the Hon'ble Company's Botanic Garden," in the *Calcutta Review*, iv-v, December 1857, No. LVII.

⁸⁴ See, *General Report for the Improvement of the Town of Calcutta*, 1859, and "Calcutta in 1860," in *Calcutta Review*, March 1860, vol. 34, pgs. 280-312, for a discussion of the Report's findings.

collections were destroyed. In King's opinion, the destruction of the storms had offered the opportunity to "abandon" the Garden and begin anew on a "site more easily accessible to the residents of Calcutta." Though he acknowledged there were advantages to the Garden being located "so remote from the town," King (like Thomson before him) understood that for the Garden to be of local importance beyond a botanical station and, therefore supported more readily by the Government and the local population, it needed to be accessible.⁸⁵ The move of the Gardens had been a matter of public discussion for some time. In an editorial in 1869, *The Englishman* noted that a five mile drive and the discomfort of crossing the river in a dinghy made a day excursion an unlikely prospect for all but the most determined.⁸⁶ Certainly, with the advancement of Indian gardening in the last few years, interested parties sought out the Gardens for seed and plant trade and horticultural knowledge, but its beauty existed "in isolation" from a populace sorely in need of its charms and "practical utility." Suggestions had been made for the Gardens to be moved to the old Kidderpore estate, a move that could be "effected without any great expenditure of public money."⁸⁷ But the available acreage at Kidderpore would have been inadequate to the future needs of the Gardens, as well as the proposed site on the Maidan. The Maidan site (on Chowringee from the corner of Park Street in the north to the Presidency jail in

⁸⁵ King, *A Guide to the Royal Botanic Garden*, 6-7.

⁸⁶ "The Botanical Gardens," *The Englishman*, 6 January 1869.

⁸⁷ Ibid. It is not clear which "estate" this refers to. Several East India Company officials and wealthy merchants had houses here in the early years as the climate and location on the river Hooghly was seen as more salubrious than the close quarters of the government and business center around the old Fort north of the Maidan. It could be the estate of Warren Hastings (Governor General of Bengal 1773-1785), who had several houses in the suburbs south of Calcutta proper. Hastings owned a large tract of land between his Belvedere and Kidderpore houses (in Alipore), of which 63 biggas were "partly lawn but chiefly garden ground in high cultivation and well stocked with a great variety of fruit trees," and a paddock of 52 biggas. Moreover, there were several small bungalows and a larger house covering an additional 46 biggas that could have been used by the Botanic Garden's staff. But the property had been purchased at auction in 1816 by a wealthy merchant, Gabriel Vignon, and it remained in his family until the 1890s when Curzon purchased it on behalf of the Government of India "because of its associations." See, Curzon, *British Government in India*, 140-149. It could also be Belvedere House and 24 acres of grounds at Tolly's Nullah, which was made the official residence of the Lieutenant Governors of Bengal in 1854 (the Viceroy was ensconced at Government House just north, and on, the Maidan). The vacant land just northwest of Belvedere would eventually become home to the Zoological Gardens, demolishing a bustee that had developed there. Biren Roy, *Calcutta: Marshes to Metropolis 1481-1981* (Calcutta: National Council of Education, 1982), 168-169.

the south) would have put the Gardens squarely within reach of most Calcuttans and accomplished both Thomson's and King's visions of the Gardens as a disciplinary site educating native taste. *The Englishman* argued that any objection against the Maidan site on military grounds--it was still officially the property of the army--was redundant as "surely it [wasn't] necessary to retain the whole of the Maidan for military evolutions." Times had changed and there was space available elsewhere for regimental maneuvers and more powerful artillery was now available than what had existed at the time of the Maidan's clearing.⁸⁸ The Bengal government had proposed total removal of the Garden to Darjeeling's Lloyd Botanic Garden, with a partial move to Kidderpore or another suitable site near Calcutta. This proposal met with vociferous protest as the Garden was not just a "scientific center" but also a "delightful place of public resort."⁸⁹

It is unclear why the Gardens were not moved at that time. Perhaps it was due to Thomson's waffling, or the lack of foresight of the superintendents in the interim between him and King, or local critique not heeded by the Government of Bengal. As Thomson had noted, any move of the gardens (even to Kidderpore) would be expensive, the destruction of the successive cyclones of '64 and '67 notwithstanding. And certainly under the Lieutenant-Governorship of Sir Richard Temple (1874-1877), who had argued the need for development of India's resources in the wake of the Famine, the Garden's move to a site more readily accessible to Calcuttans could have been accomplished. Temple had taken a personal and political interest in the Garden, granting King a good deal of improvement monies to build several new plant houses, improving waste land in the Garden's eastern portion, and the improvement and laying out of several roads. He was, however, adamant that the Garden should raise its scientific profile,

⁸⁸ "The Botanical Gardens," *The Englishman*, 6 January 1869.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

calling it a mistake to treat the Garden as principally an "ornamental specimen of landscape gardening."⁹⁰ In any event, the Garden remained where it was, reachable by an arduous trip through the *bastis* of Howrah or by the Hooghly River from Calcutta. Under King's tutelage, the Gardens would, however, be totally redesigned to reflect the dual impetus of the Botanic Garden as scientific center and public park. But as King would discover over the course of his superintendency, increased public use created its own difficulties as existing regulations regarding public behavior had little juridical teeth in controlling and prosecuting infractions.

In 1898, King petitioned the Bengal Government for new legislation to regulate the Garden. Due to the expansion, improvement and programs of the Garden overseen by King during his tenure, visitor numbers to the Garden had increased. New roads were built within the Garden to allow the passage of carriages, a floating dock and brick and iron landing ghat had been put in place, and he had petitioned the new steam passenger ferries to land at the new ghat, increasing the possibility of visitors both from Calcutta and downriver. The Herbarium and three additional conservatories had been erected; garden staff had been provided with decent housing; ornamental water features and undulations had increased its ornamental landscape features and nursery buildings were erected and made ornamental as well as functional.⁹¹ Due to King's hard work and the influence of George Thiselton-Dyer, the new Director of Kew in the 1880s, the Calcutta Garden's budget had been increased further.⁹² Thiselton-Dyer's political influence had worked to firmly establish the importance of the colonial botanical gardens as essential

⁹⁰ Buckland, *Bengal under the Lieutenant Governors*, vol. 2, 616-618.

⁹¹ See, *Annual Report(s) of the Royal Botanic Garden, Calcutta*, from 1872-1895.

⁹² Thiselton-Dyer became director of Kew in 1885. While Assistant Director of Kew, he had used his father-in-law's influence with Disraeli to secure Kew's interests (Thiselton-Dyer was married to Joseph Hooker's daughter). See Drayton, 242-243. It's interesting to consider that Thiselton-Dyer and Hooker used the Disraeli administration's interest in the colonies and India to justify why Kew should be a center of science first and a public park second, at the same moment George King was struggling to foreground the Calcutta's Garden importance as a local recreational as well as educative space.

components of the imperial economy and Calcutta as a key component in that economy, and his financial generosity helped establish its position as a public space of recreation within an increasingly more crowded urban landscape. It didn't hurt that King also had considerable influence with high officials in the Bengal Government through his organization of and membership in the Red Lion social club, which dined regularly at the home of D.D.

Cunningham, Secretary to the Sanitary Commissioner of the Government of India and a professor at the Calcutta Medical College.⁹³ In his petition to the Bengal Government, King argued that considerable difficulty had been felt in the absence of legal sanction in administering the rules for management of the Garden. Although King gave recent examples of rule breaches, he substantiated his claims by highlighting his 25 years experience “of the conditions under which visitors are admitted to [the] Garden.” Although there was already a substantial list of rules of behavior (15) from forbidding dogs, allowing picnicking in “suitable areas” and prohibiting shooting, bird-nesting and bathing—King’s petition included four more he thought of paramount importance: “no thoroughfare or right-of-way of any sort,” prohibition of public meetings “or...the delivery of addresses of any kind[,] ...processions (religious or other) within the precincts of the Garden[,]...and musical performances...only by permission of the Superintendent.”⁹⁴ King’s proposed rules reflected the growing social and political tensions in Calcutta and elaborated and codified the Gardens as an elite space, albeit a public one. With the growth of jute mills and other industry outside the Garden’s boundaries, King feared that the Garden would become a public thoroughfare. He had already witnessed a growing number of native workmen living below the Garden and who were “usually dirty and often carr[ied]

⁹³ Mention of the Red Lion “club” is made in the obituary of David Prain. See, *Obituary Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society*, Vol. 4, No. 13 (Nov., 1944), pp. 746-770.

⁹⁴ Letter, 24 February 1898, from Sir George King to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Financial Department. IOR L/JP/1702.

bundles,” making a track to the mills above it and the establishment of a public footpath through the Garden was “most undesirable.”⁹⁵ In response, the Government consulted the Committee for Management of the Zoological Gardens at Alipore and asked whether the legislation advocated by King was necessary. The Zoological Gardens answered affirmatively, complaining that none of their servants had any legal authority to “detain persons who were found trespassing or breaking the rules...or to take action in regard to intoxicated or disorderly persons.” Clearly, in the eyes of both public gardens, King’s proposed legislation was needed. The Government, however, deemed it not an “Imperial” measure, arguing that

...[a]t present the government is much in the position of those persons who throw open their places in England to the public either with or without exacting a fee. Rules may be made the breach of which may result in the advantages offered to the public being withdrawn or curtailed, but which are otherwise without legal sanction. The public at the Botanic Garden are *not trespassers, and being there by invitation cannot be treated in any other way*...than a private individual can treat a guest. (my emphasis).

The Government went on to say that “cognizable offences” such as the theft of plants or flowers were arrestable acts under local criminal codes, but further urged that the problem of non-cognizable offences could be solved by “enrolling a few of the durwans” as constables under the Police Act.⁹⁶

This question of investing the durwans with quasi-police powers appears to be at the heart of the Government’s hesitancy to pass King’s proposal in 1898 into law. Race, class and

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Letter dated 17 March 1898, Honorable J. Pratt, Officiating Superintendent and Remembrancer of Legal affairs, to Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Financial Department. IOR L/JP/1702.

caste tensions had made themselves known within the Garden's boundaries, and there was concern, as expressed several years later by David Prain, King's successor, that the park durwans would abuse their power.⁹⁷ Moreover, Prain noted that while native gentlemen, "whose standard of politeness is higher than the European standard," were more apt to comply peaceably, where "Europeans...who ought to know better...resent being addressed by a native and construe as discourtesy what is no more than the performance of his duty on the part of the caretaker."⁹⁸ Public response to notice of the pending bill also highlighted concerns about racial and caste differences, one writer noting that the "power conferred upon the durwan...[was] too much for a man of his position," and "it [was] possible that some innocent person might be hauled up for the fault of some mischievous person [or] that on some occasion the durwan to extenuate himself from his own negligence, will put some innocent unfortunate creature as his scapegoat."⁹⁹

The Bengal Public Parks Act went into effect in 1904 after languishing for several years at the committee level. While the Government had not at first considered it an "imperial" question, the bill was revived in 1902 after further experiences in the Gardens and "other places" and the need for the "preservation for peace and order"¹⁰⁰ made the question indeed *imperial*. In its enactment, it is curious that one of King's suggestions – the prohibition of religious and other types of lectures – was left out of the Act. Perhaps in light of the controversy over open-air preaching in Calcutta's public squares in the early 1880s and the question of public rights and

⁹⁷ Letter dated 19 September 1898, Lt Col. P.A. Buckland, Honorary Secretary, Zoological Garden, Calcutta to Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Revenue Department. BL/IOR L/JP/1702; Letter, 23 October 1902, David Prain, Superintendent, Royal Botanic Garden Calcutta, to Secretary to Government of Bengal, Finance Department, IOR L/JP/1702

⁹⁸ Prain, *ibid*.

⁹⁹ All notices of pending bills were published in the *Calcutta Gazette*. Letter of 23 December 1903 from Babu Shrish Chunder De to the Secretary of the Bengal Legislative Council; letter of January 14 1904 from Maulvi Syed Mahomed Karim Agha, Secretary Muhammadan Defence Association, to Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Legislative Department. IOR L/JP/1702.

¹⁰⁰ Extract from *Abstract of the Proceedings of a Meeting of the Council of the Lt Gov of Bengal*, 12 December 1903.

freedom of expression, the Local Government was loath to interfere. A growing visible response to state interventions into Indian life (the Age of Consent Act etc.), as well as the recent protests over Curzon's university reforms, would not have gone without notice or concern. There had been suggestion that the Act should cover not only the Botanic and Zoological Gardens, the Eden Gardens, and Darjeeling, but the larger public squares like those that had witnessed Indian protests. The public squares of course were subject to municipal laws and police oversight in a way that the Gardens had not been. But like the Gardens, beyond criminal acts, there were no 'written' rules of behavior. After the protests and riots in the open spaces of Calcutta post Partition, this would change. Not only would the Seditious Meetings Act be passed in 1908, but bye-laws were enacted in 1907 severely restricting the use of Calcutta's public squares, where an increasing presence of protest particularly around the university, had become more visible.

Bringing Out the Dead: Cemeteries, Burning Ghats and Imperial Bodies

As in London, if anxieties around the dangerous excess of native circulation in the would be imperial city was a major feature of Calcutta's urban imperial development, they were not limited to living bodies. Early in 1864, the Government of Bengal issued a directive to the municipality of Calcutta, demanding immediate attention be given to the practice of cremating the dead on the banks of the Hooghly and the "absolute necessity of putting an entire stop" to it.

The practice of burning the dead and skinning animals at ... Nimtollah and the adjoining burning Ghat, besides being a disgusting nuisance in itself, leads directly to the still more disgusting practice of throwing the bodies of men and animals into the river, and cannot be permitted to continue any longer. It is a

reproach to a *civilized* Government that, in a *city like Calcutta*, the practice of burning the dead at a public ghat, *though sanctioned by long custom and possibly by religious sentiment, should have been allowed to prevail so long*, to the detriment of the general health of the community and of public decency..... [A suitable place shall be obtained and set apart] outside the town and the Suburbs, for the cremation of the dead....[and] all burning grounds within the town may be closed as soon as possible.¹⁰¹ [emphasis added]

The Government's directive was at the behest of Sir Cecil Beadon, Bengal's Lieutenant Governor. Beadon, a long-time Anglo-Indian,¹⁰² having served in India since 1836, had been welcomed by the native and European communities alike, because he not only knew the country well but was known for his "free intercourse" with both groups and particularly embraced by Indians as sympathetic to native concerns. In 1862, early in his tenure, he had taken on the question of reorganizing the native judiciary and bringing their salaries and status on a scale more commensurate with the responsibility and importance of their duties. And it was under his governorship that the first steps towards self-government were taken in local administration in Bengal.¹⁰³

The Nimtollah Ghat, the principal open-air crematory for Hindu Calcutta, was located on the Hooghly, not far north of Fort William and the Maidan. Not only could the smoke from the

¹⁰¹*Proceedings of an Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal Corporation of Calcutta, held at the Town Hall on Monday the 7th March 1864, Containing a Full Report of Baboo Ramgopaul Ghose's Speech Regarding the Suppression of Burning Ghats on the Banks of the Hooghly. Reprinted from the Hindoo Patriot.* Calcutta: Hindoo Patriot Press, 1864.

¹⁰²The term "Anglo-Indian" as used herein refers to the British own usage at the time, denoting someone who was of British parentage and born in India, or official or non-official British residents of India. It would later (post 1947) refer to those of mixed parentage, usually a British father and Indian mother--who were referred to during the Raj as "Eurasian."

¹⁰³ Buckland, *Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors*, 277-80.

Ghats often be seen from the Maidan¹⁰⁴ but the partially burned bodies floating down the Hooghly from Nimtollah and upriver ghats (like Kasi Mitra) were often sources of horror to European residents and visitors alike, as carcasses were dragged ashore by "pariah dogs and jackals" or dismembered by alligators. The Government had long desired to stop the practice of throwing dead bodies into the river and in 1854 an attempt had been made to legislate against it, but at that time (before the Crown takeover) the idea of stopping the practice was abandoned because of its perceived interference with Hindu ritual observances. Instead, the police were ordered to sink as many floating bodies as they could find, an oft inadequate solution. John Strachey, the Sanitary Commissioner for Bengal, estimated that as many as 5,000 dead bodies ended up in the river off Calcutta every year, and with events like the fever epidemic in the Burdwan Division in west Bengal, the number of bodies floating downriver to Calcutta only increased.¹⁰⁵ By 1864, things would change with the passing of a new law in Calcutta that gave the municipality the right to supervise and ameliorate public health problems caused by industry, slaughterhouse, the markets, burial grounds and burning ghats.¹⁰⁶ The residents of the riverside villas along the Hooghly at Garden Reach and further downriver to Barrackpore near the Governor's country house, had also lately petitioned for a solution to this problem of bodies washing up on their lawns or being dragged into the open basement of their houses by dogs.¹⁰⁷

The language of the Government's directive highlights several key themes in wider debates over membership and identity in British India, themes made plain by the contentious debate on the issue that took place at a meeting of the Justices of the Peace on March 7, 1864,

¹⁰⁴ See Sigmund Kreutz, *Towards the Rising Sun: a Story of Travel and Adventure* (Chicago: Laird & Lee Publishers, 1903), p. 218-220; Montague Massey, *Recollections of Calcutta for over Half a Century*, 1918.

¹⁰⁵ Buckland, *Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors*, 296-297.

¹⁰⁶ See *Calcutta Municipal Act*, VI (B.C.), 1863.

¹⁰⁷ Reginald Craufuird Sterndale, *Municipal Work in India* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, and Co., 1881), 185-186. Sterndale was Vice Chairman of Calcutta's suburban municipality.

and the ensuing press coverage. The Government had demanded Nimtollah Ghat and all burning ghats within town limits be completely closed down and a new location set apart outside the town and suburbs, and means provided for public use. Tolly's Nullah, a site much further south was suggested as a substitute and, as Beadon argued before the Conservancy Committee, was considered a suitable location given its sacred associations.¹⁰⁸ The Committee, a sub-committee of the newly constituted Calcutta Municipal Corporation, however, produced a report which was read aloud to the members and public present, recommending the Ghat remain open. Upon their investigation of the alleged complaints against the Ghat, the Committee opined they had found no "nuisance either to the European or native inhabitants, ...the immediate neighbours [did] not complain...and its removal to Cassy Ghat [sic]" would cause a great inconvenience, "it being the practice among Hindoos, that deceased persons should be carried to the burning ground by their nearest relatives."¹⁰⁹ The Conservancy Committee members were careful to state that, barring the aforesaid concern, removal of the Ghat to Cassy Mitter's Ghat would certainly be an improvement and had recommended the Justices (of the Corporation) give the issue full consideration.

Babu Ramgopaul Ghose, a native member of the municipal committee, utilizing the Government's own language and that of the Crown, pled the case of the Ghat. Ghose, coined the Indian Demosthenes by the *London Times*, was a "zealous reformer" and leading member of the native community. A founding member of the British Indian Association, as well as Young Bengal, he also was a member of the Council of Education, a Fellow of Calcutta University and a member of the Bengal Legislative Council. Ghose and Beadon in 1864 were well acquainted

¹⁰⁸ Buckland, *Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors*, 297.

¹⁰⁹ *Proceedings of an Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal Corporation of Calcutta* (Calcutta: Hindoo Patriot Press, 1864), 2.

personally and professionally as Ghose's membership on the Legislative Council fell under Beadon's governorship, and they had both been members and officers of the Agri-Horticultural Society of India when Ghose was forced to step down as Vice President because of his agitations over the Black Act. Beadon had resigned from the Society in protest over Ghose's eviction.¹¹⁰ It was perhaps because of his personal knowledge of Ghose that Beadon had not consulted him. Although Viceroy Lawrence admonished Beadon in the midst of the controversy for not having consulted any "leading members" of native society, Beadon told Lawrence that he had indeed taken care to consult most all the Hindu Justices of the Peace *but* Ghosh, before the proposal came up for a formal discussion. Beadon told Lawrence that he would have more likely as not consulted "any European justice as Ram Gopal Ghosh, who has long abjured Hindooism, drinks freely and otherwise affects European manner[s]...."¹¹¹

While the Government had lumped the skinning and dumping of animals and the burning and dumping of human bodies into the same category, Ghose was careful to separate them agreeing that, indeed, the skinning and dumping of animals should be discontinued at the Ghat and removed to a less populous neighborhood. He also agreed that the practice of dumping dead human bodies into the river was "most objectionable" and concurred that it should be immediately discontinued: "[T]o suffer it to remain would really be contrary to the laws of decency and of hygiene. I do not therefore in the least object to stringent measures being taken to stop this pernicious practice."¹¹² Ghose did object, however, to interference on the part of the

¹¹⁰ B.B. Majumdar, *Indian Political Associations and Reform of Legislature 1818-1919* (Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965), 21, 29, 61; Ram Gopal Sanyal, *Reminiscences and Anecdotes of Great Men of India* (Calcutta: Riddhi-India, 1980), 4-5; Nirmal Sinha, ed., *Freedom Movement in Bengal 1818-1904, Who's Who* (Bengal: Government of West Bengal, 1968), 107-110.

¹¹¹ Beadon's "Minute" of 1 June 1864, *Home Department, Public Proceedings, A*, 13 June 1864, Nos. 27-28, qtd. in Sudhir Chandra, "Subjects' Citizenship Dream; Notes on the Nineteenth Century," *Civil Society, Public Sphere and Citizenship*, Rajeev Bharvava and Helmut Reifeld, eds. (New Delhi et al.: Sage Publications, 2005), 124.

¹¹² Beadon's "Minute," 2-3.

Government of Bengal in the management of municipal affairs, noting that the municipal corporation had been created by legislative enactment for the purpose of managing these affairs--including the management of the Ghats. This resistance on the part of the municipal corporation, newly constituted in 1863 as a more representative body that included natives, would ultimately become a problem for both the Government of Bengal and British Calcutta interests, and by 1899 under Curzon's directive, native influence on the CMC would be considerably weakened and even nullified. Ghose went on in effect to shame the Government with its own promises of non-interference, noting that he had assured anxious native enquirers that the report of the removal "must be untrue," and adding he was quite sure the Government would not pass so "extraordinary an order without ...due investigation and deliberation." Ghose cast the Government mandate as arbitrary and against the practices of good government, questioning who were the "competent persons" who had taken evidence, when the Conservancy Committee could find no such complainants. Ghose also questioned how the Government meant to provide facilities at a convenient distance, as required by law, when it was obvious it could not do so. He accused the Government of acting in a supralegal manner, ignoring the law and arguing the proceeding was irregular at the very least, if not outright illegal.

Concern was expressed by Ghose and other corporation members present that if the Government could step in, on behalf of a "*populous neighborhood*" (my emphasis) and stop the burning of the dead (against the law no less) on the banks of the Hooghly, then where was this interference to stop? The members pointed out that there were several other "populous neighborhoods" along the length of the Hooghly and if such an arbitrary measure could be enforced at Calcutta, why not Benares, Allahabad and Huridwar? Moreover, the Government's language that this ancient custom might "possibly" be sanctioned religious custom denied either

its own knowledge of Hindu practices or willful ignorance. Ghose argued that whether the Government called it "superstitious prejudice" or ancient custom, it was bound to respect it as the British government in India had always respected the religious usages of the people. Moreover, in the recent enactment of the Indian Penal Code, the Government had "wisely" provided against any insult to religion, particularly "indignities" to any human corpse or disturbance of funeral ceremonies.¹¹³ Ghose not so subtly accused the Government of violating its own penal code. Given the religious importance of the Ganges in Hindu death rituals, removal of the Ghat *away* from the river to Tolly's Nullah, an inlet, as had been suggested, he argued that the order was a "molestation" of Hindus by reason of their religious observance and would sow the seeds of discontent amongst a vast population.¹¹⁴

Justice Hobhouse opposed Ghose's motion that the proposal be reconsidered, maintaining that the Government knew better than the Conservancy Committee what was best in such a matter. He argued that "religious feelings" should give way to "public health and decency" and any submittal of the proposal to a committee should consider first whether the Ghats were a danger to public health or "subversive" of public decency and, if found to be so, removed a convenient distance outside of town.

The controversy was covered closely in the press, which served to further embarrass the Government. *The Englishman*, the "organ" of the British community was, as usual, critical of "heathen" practices, while the *Friend of India* (owned by members of the English community but seen as sympathetic to native concerns) opined that the Government was stepping on a "national right" and the native community was rightly "roused to anger" for their "sacred rights" being

¹¹³ Indian Penal Code, 1863; this section of the Code was made to keep overzealous missionaries from interfering in native ritual practices, including funerary rites.

¹¹⁴ *Proceedings*, 6-8.

interfered with. Further, it noted that Englishmen were known to object to every "petty encroachment" on their common usages at home, and due regard must be given to the "Hindoo's...feelings.... [This] is not Government at all--it is simply a blundering, head strong proceeding which a despotic ruler--Louis Napoleon himself--would not have attempted."¹¹⁵ Viceroy Lawrence would be chastised in England as well for interfering with native practices.¹¹⁶

In its First Annual Report to Parliament (1864-65; issued in 1866), the Bengal Sanitary Commission (under John Strachey) congratulated itself for achieving a "great reform...without the slightest difficulty or opposition of any kind," ignoring of course even as it admitted in its own report, the huge outcry of the native community. The Commission opined that the whole issue had been given a "most exaggerated importance," and the accusations by the native community had no foundation.¹¹⁷ It was not an attack on native practices, but simply a matter of public health. Again, with the language of its own Report, the Government betrayed the matter as one of identity, noting that "it is evident to every Englishman...that the practice of burning the dead in the midst of the city is indecent and objectionable...and in almost any other part of India but Calcutta this would be the opinion of the better classes of the native community." For the moment, the matter was laid to rest.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ "Compilation of the Opinion of the Press"; Appendix to *Proceedings*, 12-13.

¹¹⁶ Letter from Lawrence to Florence Nightingale, quoted in Gourlay, *Florence Nightingale and the Health of the Raj*, 64.

¹¹⁷ *First Annual Report of the Sanitary Commission for Bengal, 1864-65* (Bengal Sanitary Commission, 1866), 62.

¹¹⁸ It's worth noting that, following the controversy, an attempt was made by Barrackpore cantonment, slightly up the Hooghly from Calcutta and also the country home of the Lt. Gov., to close the burning ghat known as Kalee Baboo's ghat...the local brigadier general had served notice under Section 79 of the 1863 Municipal Act to close the ghat as it occasioned a "nuisance" to the cantonment directly opposite it on the Hooghly. The appellate plaintiffs were the owners of the ghat, who protested that (i) it had been closed in violation of the Act, (ii) the evidence provided was "reports" that did not constitute "evidence" (i.e., hearsay that did not prove that they were a health risk at all), and (iii) they were "not in such a state...as to be a risk to the health of the neighbourhood." Moreover, in his certificate (one of the reports), J. Sutherland, M.D., the Deputy General Inspector of Hospitals at Barrackpore, laid out the true offense of the ghats, that they lay "directly...or nearly opposite...the houses of European residents at

While it seemed as if the local native population had won the argument over removal of the Nimtollah Ghat, for the next several years the Ghat was heavily monitored by public health officials. Although the Ghat still operated, the Committee of the Justices cut down on its use due to its "deplorable" condition. By the end of 1866, the local Hindu community, which had raised Rs. 35,000 by public subscription¹¹⁹ made those improvements the Justices had required, including a considerable enlargement of the ghat and the erection of a wall on the river side, so that the activities of the ghat were "completely concealed from public view...." The chimney stack was also heightened so that the "offensive odours" emanating from it were taken up from ground level. The health commissioner, C. Fabre-Tonnere, reporting on the ghat was, however,

Barrackpore [and were] a "disgusting and loathsome nuisance...." Further, Sutherland betrayed his own personal interest in the matter when he opined that it had recently become necessary for him as well as others to close the 'river side' doors of their houses because of the "disgusting stench from bodies undergoing cremation." He went on to say that the "influence of such burning on the health of the residents at Barrackpore could not easily be estimated, but that he "regard[ed] the burning of dead bodies near to and windward of the station as hurtful; and that ...the offensive gaseous emanations resulting from the action of fire on human bodies are injurious to the health of persons within their influence." The Appellate Court opined that while the acts of the Municipal Commissioners might interfere with "private rights that are highly valued," the closing of the ghat was not in violation of the idea of "evidence." The Court went on to say that they held that the "word" of medical men was trustworthy, constituting the "evidence of competent persons...." The Court did opine however that the Commissioners had acted incorrectly, as the reports upon which they acted did not show any evidence of any insanitary conditions of the state of the ghats *themselves* that would be a health threat to the neighbourhood. Further, the Court noted that the "question under the Act is not as to the practice of burning or burying dead bodies but as to the state of the locality where the burning or burial takes place..... There is no power to interfere with the practice of burying or burning so long as the burial-ground or burning-ghat is not itself in a noxious condition." (And further went on to find it 'analogous' to regulations in England). The court also noted that the defendants (the municipal commissioners) had objected to the appellate proceeding on the grounds the court had no jurisdiction to "interfere with the action of a public body...." The court went on to say that there was no precedent in Hindoo law that would govern such a case and that because an institution inaugurated with broad sanitary powers was a particularly European invention, it had to look to English law where such an institution was well known and established--essentially that the courts in England DID have rights to intervene where a public body or institution had acted in excess of its powers. Moreover the court noted that in bringing the suit the Commissioners had inferred to the fact it had the Lieutenant Governor's (Beadon, also involved with the 1864 case in Calcutta) sanction, but that the court could find no evidence submitted for that fact and that further the three letters submitted by the health officials had used such an allusion to give their own reports more weight.

¹¹⁹ Goode, 220.

still dissatisfied that there was more he wished to be done.¹²⁰ Fabre-Tonnere's inspections of the ghat were frequent and became more so with the influx of refugees from the Famine. Out of 20,000 or more who had migrated to Calcutta, 5,284 died, with a large percentage of those being burned at Nimtollah, resulting in a daily conflagration of corpses.¹²¹

In 1876, the Ghat was finally moved further north, just south of Kasi Mitra Ghat, another Hindu cremation site. The year before, the Commissioners for the Port of Calcutta had complained that Nimtollah Ghat "obstructed traffic" and was besides "unsightly in appearance." It is not clear why the complaint of the Port Commissioners trumped Hindu religious custom or even the government's own original public health arguments. Perhaps it was the fact that in 1867 and 1868, the banks of the Hooghly River had been levelled in several places to accommodate the docking of cargo boats, including the area between Nimtollah and Prosoo Coomar Tagore's Ghat.¹²² This was, of course, when Nimtollah was daily subject to tens of cremations from famine deaths and the ghat was now directly adjacent and therefore more visible to docked commercial vessels as port traffic increased. Moreover, the problem of partially burned dead bodies thrown into the river at Nimtollah still appears to have been a problem, even though the ghat was monitored by public health officials, the municipality paid for pauper cremations, and police kept a close watch on cremation ceremonies.¹²³ It could also be that under the Port Act of 1870, passed after the initial contretemps over the ghat, the Port Trustees were no longer under the jurisdiction of the municipal government. Given control over the riverbank as well as the

¹²⁰ *Administration Report for the Calcutta Municipality for 1866* (Calcutta: Printing Offices of the Justices, 1867), 14.

¹²¹ C. Fabre-Tonnere, Esq., M.D., Health Officer, to S.S. Hogg, Esq., Chairman, Justices of the Peace, Calcutta, *Third Annual Report of Operations of the (Municipal) Department*, April 20, 1867, 9; C. Fabre-Tonnere to S.S. Hogg, March 1, 1868.

¹²² See *Annual Report on the Administration of the Bengal Presidency for 1867-1868* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1868), 167.

¹²³ Ross C. Houghton, *Women of the Orient* (New York: Nelson and Phillips, 1877), 408-409; William Joseph Wilkins, *Daily Life and Work in India* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1888), 187-193.

construction of wharves and jetties and with no tax monies garnered from municipal funds, the Port answered only to the Secretary of State. Further, the climate in the office of Viceroy Lytton hardly favored complaints from the native population. Under his governance, the growing native press and critique of the Raj would be stymied by the Vernacular Press Acts.

By 1912, Nimtollah Ghat had grown to over 1/3 of an acre, with water facilities and waiting rooms. The process of cremation was heavily regulated as well, with contractors supplying wood and other necessary items at rates set by the Corporation. Additionally, two medical registrars were posted and the ghat now operated on a 24 hour basis.¹²⁴ The dead bodies of the Hindu population, now consigned further north and out of view no longer sullied Calcutta's imperial landscape.

Cemeteries

In the first half of 19th century in Calcutta, the physical evidence of British mortality in India was literally buried in their midst. But rather than avoid any mention of cemeteries as a reminder of an often early and untimely death, travel (and other) writers often found them places of contemplation and even responsibility, reporting on them as they would the state of the jail and the Fever Hospital and reflecting on the "implications for British residency and rule in such a foreign place."¹²⁵ Early cemeteries embodied the uncertainty of early life in Calcutta, as visitors often found few of their countrymen who lived to "middle age" and a population of "juvenile

¹²⁴ Goode, 220-221.

¹²⁵ David Arnold, *Tropics and the Travelling Gaze*, 51; Roberts, *Scenes and Characteristics of Hindostan*, 34, *passim*.

mothers and brides" and too many infants.¹²⁶ Although Emma Roberts was given to almost gothic renderings of cemetery landscapes, her descriptions illuminate a concern with conditions of death both far removed from and yet familiar to the churchyards and cemeteries of England:

...[M]any exhibit the most frightful features of a charnel-house, dilapidated tombs, rank vegetation, and unburied bones whitening in the wind. The trees are infested with vultures and other hideous carrion-birds; huge vampire-bats nestle in the walls, which too often present apertures for the admission of wolves and jackalls [sic] crowding to their nightly resort, and tearing up the bodies interred without the expensive precautions necessary to secure them from some frightful desecration."¹²⁷

The fear of "desecration" of graves was a real one and not only by local wildlife, but by poor Indians as well. Tombstones and iron railings were often stolen for building uses in the bustees that grew up around South Park Street for instance, while nearby residents used the grounds for grazing their goats and cattle. Anxieties over dying in India circulated around ideas of a "good" death and "proper" burial.¹²⁸ The controversy in 1864 over the Nimtollah burning ghat reflected not only concerns for public health, but British prejudice towards the practice of burning bodies (it was only in 1829 that Bentinck's government had outlawed *sati*), the castigation of Hindus as cruel for "abandoning" their relatives to die at the ghats (Hindu practices revered in death as in life the sacrality of the Ganges), and for a seeming lack of concern as the partially burned bodies

¹²⁶ According to the "Report to the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Organization of the Indian Army," military deaths, *exclusive* of combat casualties, totalled more than 100,000 British soldiers between 1815 and 1855 (my emphasis). See "Report...", *Parliamentary Papers*, 1859, 167; quoted in Arnold, *Tropics and the Travelling Gaze*, 238, fn 5.

¹²⁷ Arnold, *Tropics and the Travelling Gaze*, 51. See also Alexander Duff, *India and Indian Missions* (Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1839).

¹²⁸ See, Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

of their relatives were fought over by jackals and vultures. Such a display in British eyes cast Hindus as cruel and lacking in that "tender feeling" that existed amongst Christians burying their dead.¹²⁹ As early as 1853 the *Calcutta Review* suggested, for reasons of sanitation and efficiency, a crematorium for the use of Europeans be constructed. William Joseph Wilkins, a Missionary for the London Missionary Society, noted that "[c]remation in England in a properly constructed furnace is one thing, but...as it is carried on in India is quite another."¹³⁰ Cremation, as carried out in England seemed more civilized to Wilkins, but cremation in India was too closely related to the native burning ghats. At the behest of the newly formed Cremation Society of Bengal, the Calcutta Municipal Corporation went to some considerable expense, erecting a furnace in 1903 next to the Lower Circular Road cemetery. With 18 "large Bunsen burners" and completely enclosed, the crematorium, meant for the "use of Europeans, Anglo-Indians, and Indians who have adopted a European style of living," was little used. S.W. Goode noted in 1914 only four cremations had taken place there that year.¹³¹

Even though, as David Arnold has recently argued, early European cemeteries in India were couched in terms of melancholy and sensibility, and obelisks and monuments in Park Street stood as "noble" testament to British temerity amongst a "scene of...squalor and misery,"¹³² by 1864, a discernible discursive shift had taken place that remade the Indian landscape of death into one of redemption and reform, i.e., making it British rather than Indian as seen in the language of the Nimtollah controversy. With India now under the Crown, the sense of impermanence and even the wistfulness evoked by Emma Roberts and others would be swallowed by a language of imperial ownership and improvement. The campaign taking place in

¹²⁹ Arnold, *Tropics and the Travelling Gaze*, 53; Roberts, *Scenes and Characteristics from Hindoostan*, vol. 2, 34.

¹³⁰ William Wilkins, *Daily Life and Work in India* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1888).

¹³¹ Goode, 222-223.

¹³² Arnold, *Tropics and the Travelling Gaze*, 55.

Britain from the 1830s through the 1860s for extramural burial grounds and properly managed cemeteries had had little effect on Calcutta and India more largely. The provision of cemeteries or death "sites" prior to 1857 had been communal responsibilities, whether they be the Hindus' burning ghats, the Parsis' Towers of Silence, or the Muslim or European burial grounds. The colonial government had had little control and, until the controversy over the Nimtollah Ghat in 1864, had shown little interest beyond their own cemeteries. The Indian Conservancy Act of 1856 had prohibited internment in unregistered and unlicensed grounds--a law aimed at both Muslim and European burial--but enforcement of its provisions was haphazard at best.¹³³ Any controversies about Anglo-Indian burial grounds centered on issues of consecration between Dissenting sects and the Anglican church, debates mirroring those taking place in England.¹³⁴

By the 1880s, cemeteries in Calcutta became an issue of governmental concern. Of the three European cemeteries in Calcutta, South Park Cemetery had been closed by 1796 and its extension -- North Park Street-- opened across the street to accommodate the European dead, but it would close in 1840 and Lower Circular Cemetery opened.¹³⁵ Newspaper reports and letters to the editor derided the sorry state of "government" (nee British) cemeteries which visitors found in a state of advanced neglect or desecrated by natives. One letter writer called the state of the Lower Circular Road Cemetery a "disgrace to a larger city like Calcutta," noting that the chowkidar had allowed native contractors to farm for a few rupees, while "[n]ative men, women and children [were] permitted to run riot...calling out and shouting to one another in every

¹³³ *India Act XIV for the Conservancy and Improvement of the Towns of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay*, 1856.

¹³⁴ See, for example, "Dissenting Ministers and Cantonment Burial Grounds," in *The Calcutta Christian Observer*, vol. 1, Jan-Dec. 1840; for more on the controversies over consecration and the emergence of new garden cemeteries in England, see James Stevens Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (Gloucestershire et al.: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2000), and Christopher Brooks, *Mortal Remains: The History and Present State of the Victorian and Edwardian Cemetery* (Exeter: Wheaton Press, 1989).

¹³⁵ MSS Eur F370/632; British Association of Cemeteries in South Asia, India Office Private Papers, British Library. Hereafter BACSA.

direction,...trampling over the tombs and graves and throwing stones." Furthermore, the landscape of the cemetery itself was overgrown and untidy, particularly compared to the writer's experience with the military cemetery at Bhowanipore which was "kept in excellent order" with tidy paths and "every care taken of it."¹³⁶ In response to several such letters of dissatisfaction and private testimony, *The Englishman*, the media organ of the British community in Calcutta, investigated the local public cemeteries, confirming their neglected state. The issue of remediation, however, turned out to be a complicated one of jurisdiction and responsibility. The paper noted that while the "general impression" was that the entire cemetery--graves, grounds, etc.--were the responsibility of the Government, in reality only the paths and spaces between the graves fell under its purview. The graves themselves were left to private effort and such an arrangement was the source of a "two-fold evil.... On the one hand, graves which are uncared for by any private guardian fall into ruin and become eyesores; on the other hand, the system under which fees are paid privately to the *malis* for looking after particular graves naturally tends to lead them to neglect their legitimate work."¹³⁷ Too much time was spent on private upkeep while the grounds themselves were ignored. Moreover, municipal law left the local authorities without the power to remove any ruined graves, something they were able to do outside Presidency towns. In response to the outpouring of community concern, both the Bengal Act and the Calcutta Burial Boards Act of 1881 were passed, setting up burial boards to manage and regulate cemeteries inside the city of Calcutta and its outlying suburbs. The Board members included the Calcutta Municipal Corporation's chairman, the Health Officer, a Public Works Department Officer to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, the Senior chaplain of St. John's Church, a "clergyman of the Church of Rome," and "not less than three nor more than 6" additional

¹³⁶ "Omnibus," Letter to the Editor, *The Englishman*, 21 September 1880.

¹³⁷ Editorial, *The Englishman*, 1 October 1880.

members to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. All rules and regulations made or amended by the Board were to be noticed in the *Calcutta Gazette* and the Board now had the right to "make over" any private cemeteries into municipal control.¹³⁸

The Acts did not, however, give jurisdiction over Muslim burial grounds and the need for such an act resulted in the passing in 1889 of an amended Calcutta Burial Boards Act, whereby both public and private Muslim cemeteries now fell under municipal control.¹³⁹ Unlike the act governing British cemeteries, the 1889 Act included in its First Schedule a definitive list of burial grounds to be closed.¹⁴⁰ Naming specific intramural cemeteries within the Act itself was significant in that it gave the law teeth, empowering the municipal and the Bengal governments to close specific Muslim cemeteries without any debate from the community. These burial grounds had been a source of concern for public health officials familiar with northern Calcutta, as well as non-official Europeans like Reverend James Long, a Baptist Missionary, who considered them a "crying evil" whose contagion was moral as well as physical.¹⁴¹ Muslim burial practices were characterized as uncivilized, with bodies wrapped in a cotton covering, a grave dug barely three feet deep and covered with boards. Such practice allowed not only for the "inroads of jackals" but the "emanations" of "virulent effluvia." In one widely circulated account of Muslim burial grounds, the New Kasia Bagan (which was closed by the 1889 Act), the son of

¹³⁸ F.G. Wigley, ed., *The Bengal Code in Five Volumes containing the Regulations and Local Acts in Force in Bengal*, vol. 1 (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1905), pp. 80-84.

¹³⁹ The Act would encompass the burial of "Muhammedans and others," correcting a deficiency in the language of the Acts of 1881, which restricted control over any burial grounds to Christian cemeteries only. Government of Bengal, *Bengal Act 4 of 1889*, Sec. 2., pp. 83-85.

¹⁴⁰ Chopdar Bagan burial-ground, Upper Circular Road; Meah Bagan burial-ground, Manicktollah burial-ground; Khodadad's burial-ground, Moonsheepara Lane (private); Rahim-ud-deen Moonshee's burial ground, Canal Road West; Gobra Gorastan, Gobra road; Talbagan, Talbagan Khoyratee and New Kasiabagan burial-grounds, Tiljullah 1st Lane; Sola-anna Kobrastan burial-ground, Ekbalpore road; Moonshee Ahmud Begg, Ke Kobrastan, Halsu Talos burial grounds Ramnugger Lane. Some of these originally were private cemeteries within a private compound, which had been expanded to accommodate community members, although a portion was meant solely for the landowner's family.

¹⁴¹ Reverend James S. Long, quoted in William Eassie, *Cremation of the Dead: Its History and Bearings upon Public Health* (London: Smith Elder & Co., 1875), p. 66.

an apothecary at Calcutta's General Hospital had wandered into the cemetery and "having approached a grave which had been invaded by jackals, was nauseated by the effluvia therefrom, and hurried home, complaining of sickness, and with a violent headache. He was attacked the same night with low typhoid fever...his life was for some time despaired of."¹⁴²

The question of closure of burial grounds became a sore point between the government and the Muslim community. Like Hindu death practices where the body was to be carried on foot to the river, Muslim ritual was also closely linked to access--accompanying a corpse on foot (rather than by carriage or railway as per British custom) was marked as a good deed. Burial grounds were therefore tied to their local community, quite unlike their British counterparts. But this was something that had only in recent memory changed in Britain as garden cemeteries emerged. It was only in the 1850s that Burial Acts in Britain were passed closing down churchyards. Although these grounds were usually reserved for the use of specific sects, occupational and ethnic groups, often if there was enough ground available and the graveyard the only available burial site in close proximity, areas would be cordoned off to accommodate such separation.¹⁴³ This was common practice in Calcutta. Also, the Muslim Sunni community would gather in their burial grounds for Shab-e-barat (or *Shobrat*), where they remembered their dead--an important part of their ritual calendar.¹⁴⁴

Not unlike their Hindu counterparts in the Nimtollah Ghat controversy, the Muslim community utilized the new laws to their advantage. Even with naming specific burial grounds

¹⁴² Reginald Craufuird Sterndale, *Municipal Work in India, Or, Hints on Sanitation--General Conservancy and Improvement in Municipalities, Towns, and Villages* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, and Co., 1881), pp. 43-44.

¹⁴³ M.K.A. Siddiqui, *The Muslims of Calcutta: A Study in Aspects of Their Social Organization* (Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India, 1974), p. 11.

¹⁴⁴ Joya Chatterji, "Of Graveyards and Ghettos: Muslims in Partitioned West Bengal 1947-67," in *Living together Separately: Cultural India in History and Politics*, Mushirul Hasan and Asim Roy, eds. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 233.

for closure, five Muslim burial grounds along the old Circular Road -- Narikeldanga, Gobra, Kasiabagan, Tangra and Karbela remained open for business. Section 381 of the Act held that no bodies could be buried in a cemetery closed to internments but also that a burial ground could not be closed unless or until another burial ground within reasonable distance was made available. As the government dragged its feet, Muslims like Babu Debendra Chunder Mullick appealed the District's conviction of a cemetery landowner who had allowed burials after the ground had been closed. Mullick argued that Section 381 required closure be posted in a conspicuous place, as well as published in the *Calcutta Gazette* (both in English and Bengali). Notice had been given that the grounds were to be closed, as per "No person shall after two months bury or permit to be buried any corpse in, within, or under the ground to which the certificate relates." Mullick argued he was unaware the burial ground had been closed and his lawyer appealed, arguing that no date was specified within the notice, although the notice was dated. The High Court concurred, noting that Section 381 required a date be specified within the notice and moreover that there were conflicts regarding when the date should begin to run, as notice in the *Gazette* was given as June 2, but the notice itself was dated April 28, 1897. And, the High Court also pointed out that the notice was not "affixed conspicuously" until May 21, 1897, making the question of the burials that had taken place before that time moot, and the sentence was set aside.¹⁴⁵ For the next ten years, questions of jurisdiction and definitions of "public" versus "private" would stymie the efforts of the local government to close down overused cemeteries as well as provide new grounds for internment. Like the Hindu community with the Nimtollah controversy, the Muslim community laid claim to their landscapes of death by utilizing British juridical and political narratives.

¹⁴⁵ L. Rahman Nuskur v. Munc. Ward Inspector 25 Cal. 498, in *The Indian Law Reports: Calcutta Series*, vol. 25.

Conclusion

The 'modern' urban landscape of Calcutta was a negotiated, contested terrain--emerging and evolving through complex relationships: variant ideas about 'public' versus 'private' space; tropes of nature and the garden tied to ideas of modernity; and state concerns for health, sanitation, and public order. Native participants were motivated by a range of concerns, not merely the anti-colonial, but as expression of cultural identity, assertions of imperial citizenship or national identity. The imperial state had to negotiate control over the public landscapes of the burning ghats and cemeteries, the Botanic Gardens and the Maidan, contending with communities deploying a diverse range of practices to participate in those spaces, spaces of constant contact where Indians and British publicly encountered one another, and encounters marked by conflicting priorities and ideas. Divisions were not always drawn starkly between British/native, but often competing alignments of elites and lower classes, religious and even national interests.

The production of these public landscapes and a 'modern' or 'imperial' Calcutta were the result of a wide range of entangled discursive and spatial strategies. While British authorities attempted to make the landscape of Calcutta more modern by controlling the use of public space and by removing native practices outside the city, native communities emphasized their rights as colonial subjects by turning local conflicts into larger issues of imperial citizenship, mobilizing both traditional and modern identities. Attempts to make and police space from above met with pushback and struggle from below – whether from natives contesting imperial authority or from the subsoil of the cemetery itself. If these struggles have not been characteristic features of the history of an imperializing Calcutta, they have left even less of an imprint on accounts of Delhi's transformation as the capital city of the Raj. There, the story of one architect's genius remains

powerful, at the expense, as we shall see, of more complex accounts of the contests over the fate of the garden city as the sign of English urban modernity at the heart of the empire.

Figures



Figure 3.1 Map of Calcutta, c. 1842. Maidan with Fort William at right.

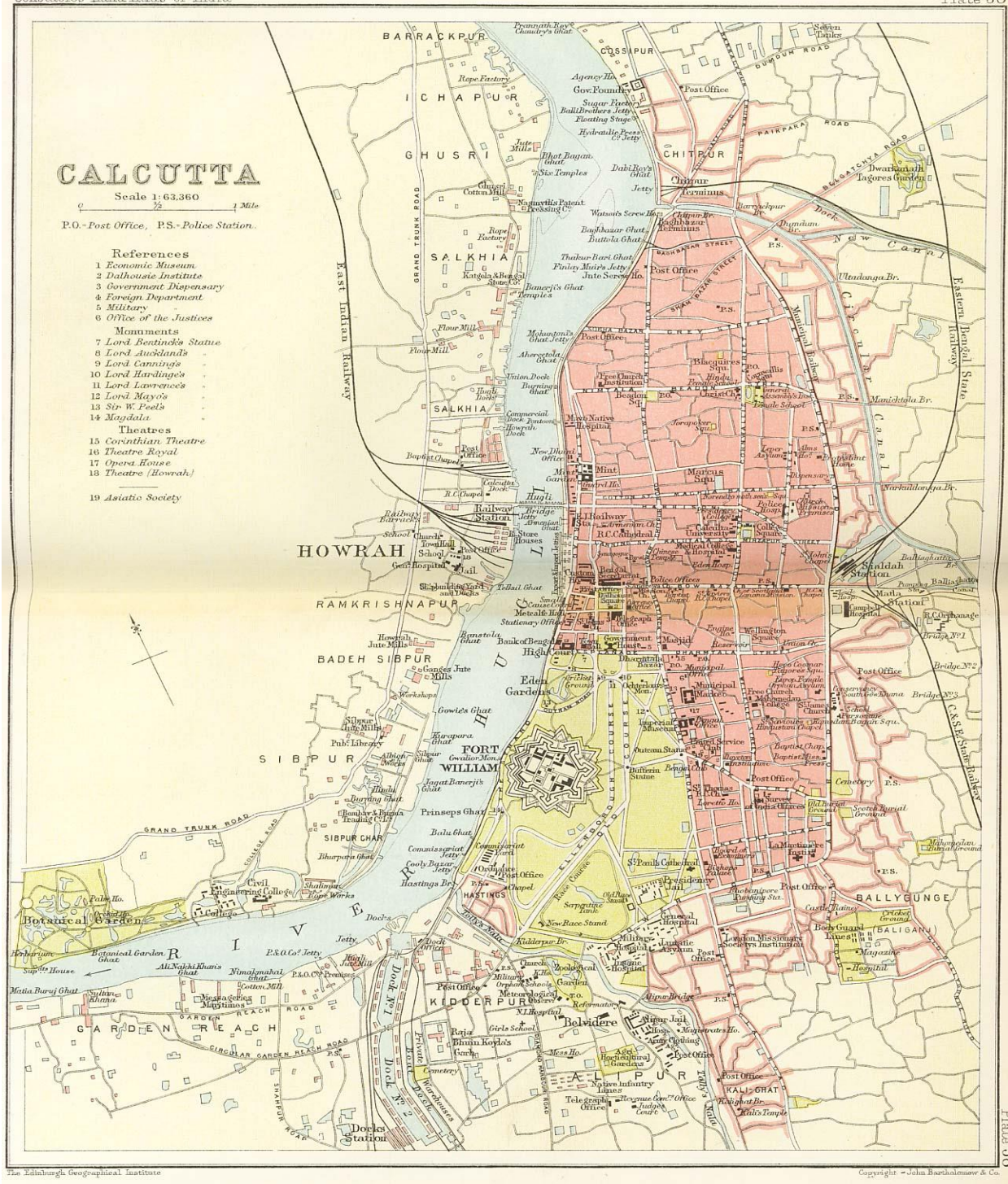


Figure 3.2 Map of Calcutta, c. 1893. Red-shaded portion shows the more heavily built-up portion of the City, in the north and northeast. (Source: map in public domain)

Chapter 4: Imagining a New Garden City? New Delhi, 1911-1931

To-day the glamour of its name has again attracted the paramount power to build on that historic site what promises to rank among the most magnificent of the capital cities of the world. But it is the rocks of the battle-stricken ridge and the stern walls of successive fortresses that give to the place its compelling characteristic and provide an historic background for the charm of sumptuous palace, mosque and garden, with which the Mughal knew so cunningly to adorn the wilderness and the desolate places, and for the splendours of the new metropolitan city of modern India.

Sir Henry Sharp, 1928¹

In the year preceding the inauguration of India's new capital city, *The Architectural Review* published an issue devoted solely to New Delhi.² Its author, Robert Byron, art historian and architectural critic, described the new capital city in rapturous tones. "It is expected, and assumed, that the representatives of British sovereignty beyond the seas shall move in a setting of proper magnificence...and that in India, particularly, the temporal power shall be hedged with the divinity of earthly splendor. To satisfy this expectation, New Delhi was designed and created." Byron placed the new capital of the Raj at the pinnacle of imperial modernity and British planning genius, comparing the Great Place of New Delhi to the piazza of St. Peter's and its Viceroy's House on a par with the Pantheon: "...the salient motives of the Viceroy's House...after the first drunken sensation of pleasure has given place to rational thought...is remarkable for its gigantic size, its perfect proportion of mass and detail, its colour, and its ponderous adhesion to the earth. But its essential genius, its novelty, lies in the way these qualities have been brought to serve a taste in architectural form which pertains specifically to

¹ Sir Henry Sharp, *Delhi. Its Story and Buildings* (Calcutta, et al.: Humphrey Milford, 1928), 7.

² *The Review's* editors noted that they were publishing this study of the new capital "[i]n view of the Indian Round Table Conference now convened in London." The conference would be the first of three held (unsuccessfully) to discuss constitutional reforms in India on the heels of the report issued by the Indian Statutory Commission (also known as the Simon Commission after its chair, Sir John Simon). The Commissioners had been appointed to study the development of representative institutions in British India, given the increasing demands for swaraj ignited by an Indian sense of betrayal after the Great War with the passing of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1919, as well as the oppressive Rowlatt Act of 1919.

the twentieth century.”³ This artistry and modernity of form Byron attributed to the ingenuity of Edwin Lutyens.

The story of New Delhi has often been entangled with that of Lutyens. To put it plainly, the imperial city’s genesis is considered to have been a product of Lutyens’ genius. More importantly, New Delhi as a new *garden city* has been credited almost exclusively to him, beginning with Hugh Brinkworth’s *Story of New Delhi* in 1930. “[It was] no crowded and insanitary city which the great architect’s mind conceived, but a city of regal buildings and noble palaces, picturesque residences and imposing road ways; indeed, a *garden city* such as existed nowhere else in the East.”⁴ Both Brinkworth and Byron placed Lutyens at the center of the story of the making of modern Delhi into the capital of the 20th century Raj. For Brinkworth, Lutyens’ New Delhi stood in stark contrast to what was once a “region of barrenness and desolation,” its spacious public parks, playgrounds with gardens, and modern bungalows in spacious grounds an antidote to the slum conditions of the old city. Byron, for his part, harshly criticized the work of Herbert Baker, the “other” architect of New Delhi, his Secretariats overly adorned with Indian architectural frillery and his squat Council Chamber a poor contribution.⁵ “The throwing together of Europe and India has been practiced in all the larger buildings of New Delhi. Under the direction of Sir Edwin...a fusion has resulted.... Under that of Sir Herbert...the elements have remained separate and allusive, ...his Council Chamber his unhappiest venture. It resembles a Spanish bull-ring, lying like a mill-wheel dropped accidentally on its side.”⁶

Historians Robert G. Irving, Andreas Volwahren and Jane Ridley have continued the myth of Lutyens and New Delhi’s genesis and design as a result of his “genius.” Even as Irving

³ Robert Byron, “New Delhi,” *The Architectural Review* Vol. LXIX, no. 410 (January 1931), 6-11.

⁴ Hugh A. Brinkworth, *The Story of New Delhi*. Simla: Model Art Press, 1930, 14.

⁵ Byron, 8-9.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

places Lutyens within the larger context of the garden city and town planning movement and grants the contributions of many others, New Delhi was “primarily the fruit of the mind and heart of Edwin Lutyens.”⁷ This chapter works to de-center Lutyens from the historical narrative of New Delhi. The reigning preoccupation with one man’s genius as an explanation for its development obscures the new capital city’s spatial evolution as the result of complex historical circumstances. My reassessment also allows us to see how, in terms of historical conditions, New Delhi’s urban morphology --rather than the organic result of a progressive evolution of ‘modern’ ideals -- more closely reflects its landscape as the result of struggle akin to London and Calcutta than has been previously supposed. It is, therefore, less unique than it has appeared to be. As elsewhere in the urban centers of empire, the emergence of the new Indian capital was rooted in the insecurity of the Raj, as debates over the transfer of the capital and the choice of Delhi, the choice of town planning experts and architects, and struggles over who should control the design and layout of the new administrative heart of the British empire.

“Mr. Lutyens’ Perfervid Imagination”⁸

Perhaps as surprising as the announcement in 1911 of the move of the capital to Delhi was the choice of Edwin Lutyens as one of the architects of New Delhi. Invited to advise the Government of India as part of a committee of experts, Lutyens had no town planning experience—or really any truly municipal experience at all--though he did have impressive imperial connections, including being married to Emily Lytton, daughter of Sir Alfred Lytton, a former Indian viceroy. He was also fresh from his engagement as consulting architect for the

⁷Irving, 82-87.

⁸ Quoting comment in newspapers on Lutyens’ designs, as noted by Lutyens to his wife, in Letter dated May 12-15 1912; LUE/12/9/4, V&A Archives; hereafter noted simply as “LUE...”

planning of London's Hampstead Garden Suburb. Hampstead--the brainchild of Henrietta Barnett, energetic social reformer and philanthropist, and designed by Raymond Unwin the planner of Letchworth (1903)⁹—was a planned community meant to bring together “all classes...under [the] right conditions of beauty and space.”¹⁰ Lutyens' relationship with Barnett and the garden suburb's Board foreshadowed his experiences with the New Delhi town planning committee and successive Viceroy, abhorring as he did planning by committee rather than by duke, preferring Liberal plutocrats and Tory paternalists to municipal socialists.¹¹

There had been more experienced candidates put forward in terms of urban planning and experience more generally and a familiarity with public works in India more particularly. Both Raymond Unwin and Patrick Geddes were nominated as able candidates, respectively, by Lord Crewe of the India Office and Lord Pentland, Scotland's Secretary of State.¹² Unwin was a well-known, highly-respected figure within the emerging garden city and town planning community and beyond. His advocacy for urban planning and housing reform led to his involvement with philanthropist and cocoa manufacturer Joseph Rowntree's New Earswick village estate. Rowntree's turn toward housing and community development followed that of the Lever Brother's model factory village at Port Sunlight and George Cadbury's model at Bourneville. Unwin's early work at Earwick, as well as his friendship with Ebenezer Howard and standing in the Garden City Association, led to his (and Barry Parker's) invitation to design “First Garden City” (aka Letchworth) built on Howard's principles. Like New Delhi would be, Letchworth was

⁹ Letchworth was the first garden city, embodying the ideals of Ebenezer Howard, the ‘father’ of the garden city movement. For his garden city of tomorrow, Howard envisioned a self-sufficient community, balanced between classes, town and country, functions and urban amenities and open space. See, Ebenezer Howard, *To-Morrow: A Peaceful path to Real Reform* (London: 1898); *To-Morrow* would be reissued in 1902 as *Garden Cities of To-morrow*.

¹⁰ Henrietta Barnett, *Canon Barnett* (London: 1918), vol. ii, 312-13.

¹¹ Ridley, 148.

¹² Irving, 40.

comprehensively planned in advance of construction. Given that the development of Letchworth was catalogued every month in the Garden City Association's professional journal (*Garden Cities & Town Planning Magazine*) as well as followed in the mainstream press, it is curious Unwin was not given more serious consideration. Clearly his experience as a builder and planner could not be questioned; at Letchworth Unwin had adapted the town to conditions of its site, which included an industrial area, administrative and cultural centers, commercial and residential districts and recreational area. (See Figure 4.1; Letchworth Plan)

Letchworth's plan allowed for a population of 35,000, not far from the anticipated population of New Delhi of 37,000. Unwin, meanwhile, had become an honorary member of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1910 in recognition of his achievements in organizing and implementing large scale planning schemes.¹³ And Lord Crewe's position both on the board of the Hampstead Garden Suburb and long membership in the Garden City Association made him intimately familiar not only with Unwin's ideas but the architect/planner himself. It is clear from a response by the King's secretary to a letter from Crewe, that Crewe was worried Lutyens might somehow persuade the King and others at a weekend spent at Albergeldie Manor, of the necessity of Lutyens as choice. Lutyens had been invited to show his plans for Government House and the King's secretary noted that while unintelligible to the layman, Lutyens plans spoke to the "conspicuous and commanding" presence the King desired. Lutyens' letter to his wife reflecting the encounter crowed he had impressed the King with his ideas for the "palace."¹⁴ Crewe's concern was not misplaced as he was aware that Lutyens was campaigning for the position. Lord Stamfordham, the King's Secretary, assured Crewe that he had made it quite clear

¹³ Michael G. Day, "The Contribution of Sir Raymond Unwin and R. Barry Parker to the development of Site-Planning Theory and Practice 1890-1918," in *British Town Planning: the Formative Years*, Anthony Sutcliffe, ed., Leicester University Press, 1981; 173-190.

¹⁴ Lutyens Letters to his wife, Emily, September/October, 1912. LUE 12/12/9.

to the King that the India Office had not committed to Lutyens.¹⁵ As for the candidacy of Geddes, even as his International Planning Exhibition, sponsored by RIBA in 1910, garnered national and international recognition, Geddes' town planning experience was arguably more theoretical than practical. At least Lutyens had had some practical experience.

Lutyens was criticized in the press, town planning and otherwise, as a designer of country homes who was not equipped for the project before him and the Delhi Town Planning Committee. As more evidence of the doubt cast on his suitability, the Royal Institute of British Architects had put forth the candidacy of both Lutyens and Henry Vaughn Lanchester. Lanchester had experience in India and the Local Government Board noted that both were known as competent architects, but Lutyens tended to exceed budgetary boundaries with impunity and in a particularly derogatory salvo, characterized him as a "capable domestic architect."¹⁶ Lanchester was also a contributing member of the Garden City and Town Planning Association¹⁷, and editor of *The Builder* from 1908 to 1911. Moreover, Lanchester's credentials were impressive enough that Lutyens saw him as a serious competitor for the choice of architect and took every opportunity to criticize Lanchester's ideas. Captain George S.C. Swinton had considerable experience with questions of urban planning, having served on the London County Council for over a decade; he had also promoted his candidacy based upon his tutelage in garden city principles at Ebenezer Howard's knee.¹⁸ He would give up the LCC chairmanship to serve for New Delhi. J.A. Brodie was Liverpool's municipal engineer. None of them had any practical

¹⁵ Letter dated 12 September 1912, from Lord Stamfordham to Lord Crewe, Secretary of State for India, reproduced in its entirety in Andreas Volwahn, *Imperial Delhi; The British Capital of the Indian Empire* (Munich, et al: Prestel Perlag, 2002), 23.

¹⁶ Irving, 40.

¹⁷ Reflecting the importance of town planning and the garden city movement's part in that, the Garden City Association changed its name to "Garden City and Town Planning Association" in 1908; its journal title would reflect that change as well.

¹⁸ *Garden Cities and Town Planning Magazine*, April 1912.

Indian experience, though Swinton had served as an aide-de-camp to Marquess Lansdowne. In terms of navigating the relationship between nature and architecture –the core of the new Garden City town planning ethos, Lutyens did have some experience. He worked for several years in partnership with Gertrude Jekyll, for whom the best design of house and garden required some knowledge of and consideration of the architect's and gardener's design principles.¹⁹ And he had had recently concluded a successful stint as consulting architect to Raymond Unwin in the layout of the Hampstead Garden Suburb.

In 1906, Dame Henrietta Barnett founded the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust, having raised funds a year earlier to purchase 80 acres of land north of Hampstead Heath. The Trust would then purchase an additional 243 acres of land. Barnett's object was to provide a beautiful and healthful living space for all classes, and the garden suburb was to be attached to London, yet self-contained—a suburb rather than a city like Letchworth. Barnett's choice of Unwin then, was unusual, as Unwin was hardly a champion of the suburbs of London, garden or otherwise. For Unwin, “no weak compound of town and country, composed of wandering suburban roads, lined with semi-detached villas, set each in a scrap of garden,” deserved the title of ‘garden city.’” Houses should be designed and arranged in relation to one another to secure the maximum benefit of nature and society; the “twin garden city ideals of health and community would be realized in a single architectural form.” Unwin urged the laying out of garden town sites around the familiar concept of the square, but with a communal twist: “In the squares and quadrangles of our Garden City dwellings the spirit of co-operation will find a congenial ground from which to spring, for there association in the enjoyment of open spaces or large gardens will replace the exclusiveness of the individual possession of backyards or petty garden-plots, and will no doubt

¹⁹ From Jekyll, *Wall and Water Gardens*, quoted in *Gertrude Jekyll: An Illustrated Life of Gertrude Jekyll, 1843-1932*, 35.

soon be followed by further association, to which the arrangement so admirably lends itself.”²⁰ Barnett’s prospectus, however, emphasized a range of housing for the wealthy as well those of humbler means, and the advantage of whole rather than piecemeal planning. A mixing of classes would provide a “contagion of refinement,” echoing the suggestions of the Select Committee of Public Walks in 1833 and subsequent public park building ethos. Cottages and houses on the estate were to be limited to eight per acre; roads would be 40 feet wide with house fronts at least 50 feet apart and the intervening spaces occupied by gardens. All roads would be lined with trees, the public gardens would be free to all tenants regardless of income or house rent and house sites so designed that “none should spoil each other’s outlook or rob its neighbor of beauty.”²¹

Unwin’s and Lutyens’ appointments as architects were approved simultaneously in May 1906, though Unwin (with his partner Barry Parker) had worked for close to two years, submitting revised designs to the Suburb Trust. While Unwin’s designs for Letchworth had borne little resemblance to Howard’s geometric boulevards and iron and steel Crystal Palaces, his and Parker’s transposition of a medieval village onto Howard’s original plan produced a model lying closer to Barnett’s picturesque ideal. As advocates of the Arts and Crafts movement, their Letchworth designs incorporated qualities the movement associated with the beautiful old English villages of the 14th century—cleanliness, simplicity, and community. So while hostile to the uniformity and crassness of the suburbs of Camberwell, Peckham and Willesden, Unwin did recognize the possible benefits of living in the suburbs, close to work but distant from urban congestion. His work on Hampstead Garden Suburb would inform his *Town Planning in*

²⁰ Unwin, at Bourneville Conference 1901, quoted in Robert Beevers, *The Garden City Utopia: A Critical Biography of Ebenezer Howard* (Hampshire & London: Macmillan Press, 1988), 109-110.

²¹ “Historical Background,” in *Hampstead Garden Suburb, a Conservation Study* (commissioned by the Council of The New Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust Ltd., 1971).

Practice (1909), lead to an Act of Parliament reshaping housing bye-laws, a shift in perspective with “The Garden City Principle Applied to Suburbs,” and serve as an influence in the Housing Act of 1909 (see London chapter).

Lutyens’ participation at Hampstead may have been due to the influence of Alfred Lyttelton, the chairman of the Trust, for whom Lutyens had designed a country retreat a few years earlier. Lutyens was a follower of Howard, though it is not clear whether he was a member of the Garden City Association at that time. Regardless, Lutyens and Unwin developed a somewhat symbiotic relationship with Unwin’s designs reflecting the influence of Lutyens’ formality and Lutyens benefitting from Unwin’s diplomacy, particularly with regard to Lutyens’ relationship with Barnett, whom Lutyens had dismissed as a “nice woman but proud of being a philistine.”²² Ultimately, disputes between Barnett and Lutyens would result in his being ousted, having finished only the Central Square buildings and denied the opportunity to design the surrounding housing and street layout. Both the design and the relationship foreshadowed Lutyens’ experience with New Delhi—his selection as architect was by no means self-evident and anticipated the challenges posed by critics across several fronts with regard to the redesign of Delhi as a new garden city.

²² Mervyn Miller and A. Stuart Gray, *Hampstead Garden Suburb* (Sussex UK: Phillimore & Co., Ltd., 1992), 77-81.

‘A Bold Stroke of Statemanship’²³: Debating the Move to Delhi

If the choice of Lutyens as architect is hard to fathom, given his lack of experience and his critics, the choice of Delhi also requires explanation. How did a ‘dirty, unsanitary’ city on a ‘malarial plain’ where the specter of the Mutiny (I use that term here purposefully, rather than ‘Revolt’) loomed large become the choice for the new capital? Proposals to move the capital from Calcutta date back to 1782 when Warren Hastings argued that the permanence of British dominion could not be guaranteed with such a capital, remote from the rest of the subcontinent and a climate unhealthy at best.²⁴ The Revolt in 1857 underscored the difficulty of ruling the subcontinent from Calcutta’s remote corner, while at the same time eclipsing any claim by Delhi as a suitable substitution. Apparently, Delhi was not unsuitable with regard to the Durbar in 1877 where Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India, where its pomp and circumstance rivalled the Mughal durbars of Aurangzeb, Akbar and Shahjahan.²⁵ Lord Lytton, Viceroy of India from 1876 to 1880, considered again the move of the capital from Calcutta but the Prime Minister vetoed the scheme, arguing that the capital of the Indian empire required access to the royal navy. The idea was bandied about once more after Curzon’s Durbar in 1903 celebrating Edward VII’s accession to the throne, but Curzon refused to discuss it.²⁶ One might assume this had a good deal to do with his insistence on Calcutta for the location of his pet project, the

²³ Taken from the memo from John Lewis Jenkins to Lord Hardinge, where Jenkins write that moving the capital to Delhi would be “A bold stroke of statesmanship, which would give universal satisfaction and mark a new era in history.” Jenkins to Hardinge, June 17, 1911. This phrase would be utilized in subsequent arguments for and against the transfer of the capital, notably, such journals like the *Fortnightly Review*, noted that such a transfer from Calcutta to Delhi was no more a ‘bold stroke of statesmanship’ than if a proposition were to be made to move the seat of government in England from Westminster to Winchester. See, “Coronation Concessions in India,” in *The Fortnightly Review*, New Series, vol. 97, January to June, 1911, pp 302-315; 314.

²⁴ Warren Hastings, *Minute*, in Irving, 16.

²⁵ For the British use of durbars and imperial spectacle, see Julie Codell, ‘On the Delhi Coronation Durbars, 1877, 1903, 1911” in *Branch*; also see R.E. Frykenburg, “The Coronation Durbar of 1911: Some Implications,” in *Delhi through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, R.E. Frykenburg, ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986); 369-390.

²⁶ Irving, 17-18.

Victoria Memorial, an homage to both the recently dead Queen Victoria and Britain's long history in India. In his speeches promoting Calcutta as the site of the Memorial, he had argued that while Delhi had its imperial memories, it was the graveyard of previous Indian empires and, therefore, unsuitable.²⁷ Curzon's Partition of Bengal in 1905 would later, however, set such a move in motion.

Lord Hardinge's proposal to his Viceroy's council in June 1911 could, therefore, be read as the culmination of decades of debate and discussion of the suitability of Delhi as the new imperial capital. Yet, it does beg the question why at this moment in time was the proposal not only considered but implemented? Robert Irving²⁸ lays the impetus upon the shoulders of the King, who wrote in his diary that the Coronation Durbar with him attendant in person was his own idea. As the Prince of Wales, he had visited India in the winter of 1905-6 where several Rajput princes supported Delhi as capital based upon its historical associations. Also of importance to the new King was the advantage of a visit to India as its sovereign—he would, in fact be the first to do so. The “seditious spirit” present in India also distressed him and as others had and did, the King blamed Curzon's partition of Bengal. In conversations with the Earl of Crewe, who would succeed Minto as India's Secretary of State, the King asked whether something might be done to appease those who had opposed Partition, something suitably announced as a boon at a durbar. The King had not agreed with the division of Bengal, bolstered by the opinions of Sir Walter Lawrence, a trusted advisor and friend and Curzon's private secretary in India.²⁹ But Curzon and other Anglo-Indians (particularly in Calcutta) would argue after the August 1911 Despatch was released in the press that agitation over Partition had died

²⁷ For more on the siting of the Victoria Memorial, see present work, Chapter 3; for Delhi as site, see *Journal of the Queen Victoria Indian Memorial Fund*, No. 1., April 1901, 5, and *Notable Speeches of Lord Curzon*, 305-306.

²⁸ Irving, 18-19.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 17-19.

down. The Newspaper Act, also known as the Incitement to Offences Act, had passed in 1908 in an effort to suppress increasing anti-government, anti-Partition agitation in the native press and public meetings “having a seditious purpose.” The Act enabled district magistrates to confiscate presses used in the publication of seditious material without the burden of a court trial.³⁰ Further, the passing of the Indian Councils Act of 1909 (also known as Morley-Minto due to its authors), had aroused mixed feelings in Indian nationalist circles.³¹ While the Act had introduced a new representative institution in the form of the Imperial Legislative Council, more radical nationalist factions viewed it as a hollow act of “mostly negative powers and...no positive responsibilities.”³²

As vociferous criticism in the native press over the Morley-Minto reforms grew, the Indian government moved to make the 1908 Act more comprehensive and punitive. The Secretary of State for India in London challenged the Government of India, arguing that some provision for recourse to the courts be included. The Government of India in turn insisted that a strong law was necessary to curb sedition. The proposed Press Act of 1910 was the first to be brought before the newly constituted Council. Indian Council members attempted to limit the scope of the proposed Act, but the concomitant assassination attempt on the Viceroy and other successful political assassinations like that of the Calcutta Deputy Superintendent of Police, virtually guaranteed the passage of the Press Act. Reminiscent of the Vernacular Press Act of 1878, Raj officials used it to suppress “offensive” or “incendiary” writing, including that which could be construed to incite antipathy between religious or racial groups.³³ If agitation over the Partition had, as Curzon argued, died down, it began again from fresh Government of India

³⁰ Gene Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India: A Study of Controversy, Conflict, and Communal Movements in Northern India, 1923-1928* (Leiden Brill, 1975), 21-22.

³¹ Sangat Singh, *Freedom Movement in Delhi 1858-1919* (New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1972), 155.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid, 155-56; Thursby, 22.

insult. Crewe would put forth to Hardinge the King's proposal of a united Bengal, that would provide a Presidency for Bengal, Commissioners for the different geographic divisions, and the provincial capital at Dacca. Crewe also suggested an imperial enclave be formed at Calcutta, surrounded by a small district governed by officials who would answer only to the Viceroy.³⁴ After consulting the opinion of his Council and, particularly, that of the Lieutenant-Governors of Bengal and East Bengal/Assam—Sir Edward Norman Baker and Sir Lancelot Hare, respectively—Hardinge told Crewe to drop the matter of unification. Hare had argued in favor of maintaining the status quo and Baker told the Viceroy that the idea of revising the partition filled him with despair--such a move would be a disaster for India. Sir John Jenkins on the Council concurred, commenting that what India needed was peace and quiet.³⁵ Only four months later in June of 1911, Jenkins would reverse his opinion on Partition with one caveat: the creation of a new imperial capital at Delhi.

Lord Crewe's despatch to Hardinge laid out in detail why the transfer of the capital was imperative in political, geographical and historical terms. Referring both to the long-term agitation in Bengal over Curzon's Partition and the recent Morley-Minto reforms of 1909, he cited "[r]ecent developments, constitutional and political, drove the need for separation of the Government of India from Calcutta and Bengal."³⁶ The Partition had unleashed widespread agitation and engendered the swaraj movement and Curzon had alienated Indian moderates during his time as Viceroy. With Curzon's exit, John Morley's government was poised for cautious (if ultimately, hollow) political reform in an attempt to bolster moderates and pro-

³⁴ Irving, 21.

³⁵ Irving, 20-22.

³⁶ *Despatch, in East India Coronation Durbar. Announcements by and on Behalf of His majesty the King-Emperor at the Coronation Durbar held at Delhi on the 12th December 1911, with correspondence relating thereto. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty* (London; Eyre and Spottiswoode, Ltd., 1911), August 25, 1911.

British loyalties to the Raj by including them in the workings of government while at the same time diminishing the appeal of Congress and furthering the divide between its radical and moderate factions. The constitutional reforms of the Indian Councils Act of 1909 (Morley-Minto Act) was focused at the provincial level. The Indian franchise was small and it had the ability to elect representatives to provincial councils and created an Indian imperial legislative council. The Government of India, however, retained the right to nominate the majority of the new council's representatives.³⁷ Within the *Despatch*, Crewe acknowledged that "Indian demands for a larger share in the government of the country [would] have to be satisfied" but that ultimately the supremacy of the Governor-General-in-Council needed to be maintained. The only possible solution to such a dilemma was to remove the seat of Government from any provincial capital (Calcutta), allowing for the growth of self-government along "sound and safe lines" and removing the central seat of government from undue and prejudicial influence.³⁸ Unlike Calcutta and Bengal, Delhi was (arguably) less closely tied to any particular province, imitating the federal structure of Australia and the United States (and the *Despatch* characterizes it as such).

In geographical and historical terms, Delhi was seen to be the only possible place. Crewe argued that historically the question of moving the capital had been made with the object of finding a site where the government could sit year-round, an ideal solution, but an impracticable one. At Delhi, the Government of India could sit for seven months out of twelve (October 1 to May 1) and its closer proximity to Simla and superior railway communications reduced the annual migration both in volume and time and would prove less costly. This question of the seating of Government and Simla would come back to haunt the Government of India in 1921 as

³⁷ For an elaboration of the agitation over Partition, see Chapter 3 herein; on the Morley-Minto reforms, see M.N. Das, *India under Morley and Minto: Politics behind Revolution, Repression, and Reforms* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964).

³⁸ *Despatch*, 6-7.

the exodus to Simla had hardly decreased in numbers or months spent, in the context of exorbitant costs of building New Delhi. And although great strides had been made in sanitation and public health, it was a far from salubrious location, even if marginally better than Calcutta in terms of climate. Alternative sites were considered either difficult to access or devoid of the historico-political associations that Delhi provided:

Delhi is still a name to conjure with. It is intimately associated in the minds of the Hindus with sacred legends which go back even beyond the dawn of history. It is in the plain of Delhi that the Pandava princes fought out with the Kurawa the epic struggle in the Mahabarata, and celebrated on the banks of the Jumna the famous sacrifice which consecrated their title to Empire. The Purana Kila still marks the site of the city which they founded and called Indraprastha.... To the Mahommedans it would be a source of unbounded gratification to see the ancient capital of the moguls restored to its proud position as the seat of Empire...every walled town has its 'Delhi gate,' and among the masses of the people it is still revered as the seat of the former Empire. The change would strike the imagination of the people of India as nothing else could do...and would be accepted by all as the assertion of an unfaltering determination to maintain British rule in India...."³⁹

By establishing itself among Delhi's ancient ruins and monuments, in other words, the British hoped to integrate and legitimate the Raj within a larger Indian imperial tradition and "consecrat[ing] their [own] title to Empire." Crewe was also at pains to place Delhi within an even larger imperial tradition "comparable with Constantinople...or Rome itself."⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 9.

Implicit in the choice of Delhi both politically and historically (if not outright articulated) was its significance in the narrative of the 1857 Revolt. Delhi had been a “crucial arena of resistance” and in the aftermath of the siege of Delhi, the old city and villages outside it had been demolished or confiscated; over a third of the old city was razed and monuments like the Jama Masjid reappropriated for British military and social use.⁴¹ Moreover, I would argue, there is a certain symmetry of insecurity in the choice of Delhi. Both in 1857 and 1911, Delhi reflected the vulnerability of British India at a moment of imperial crisis. Narratives of the Revolt and the siege of Delhi (and, ultimately, the taking) loomed large in the history of the Raj. In visitor’s handbooks and guides published before both the Coronation Durbar of 1903 and that of 1911, readers were reminded of the centrality of the Revolt in the recent history of Delhi.⁴² Accounts like the letters of Colonel Keith Young were also published the year before the Coronation Durbar; the excerpts of Young’s letters cover his participation in the Siege of Delhi. His wife’s preface to the letters--dedicated to those “who still lived who had taken an active part and to those who had perished,” reflects the larger narrative of the Revolt in the British imagination and a substantiation of British rule, as she dedicates it to those who had taken “an active part in the brave endeavor to quell it and restore right and order” and to those “either connected with India or having friends who were in the country during that troubled time...in those years of anxiety and suffering, followed by righteous retribution.”⁴³ Significantly, Crewe’s articulation of Delhi’s historical importance in the Despatch of 1911 reflects those put forward in these handbooks and guides.

⁴¹ Narayani Gupta gives a detailed accounting of the consequences for Delhi post-Revolt. See Chapter 3 in Narayani Gupta, *Delhi Between Two Empires, 1803-1931, Society, Government and Urban Growth* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981).

⁴² See, for instance, Fanshawe’s *Shah Jahan’s Delhi* (1902) and *1911: Delhi The Imperial City*.

⁴³ Sir Henry W. Norman & Mrs. Keith Young, *Delhi 1857*, repr. (Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1988).

An Invulnerable Position?

If the selection of Delhi went on largely behind closed doors, the announcement of the transfer of the capital produced a veritable firestorm. Although Hardinge and his aides had anticipated some opposition, they rather naively relied on the ‘patriotism’ of the British population and completely failed to anticipate the breadth and depth of angry response in India and Britain. The European community in Calcutta denounced it in different national terms as a departure from the traditions of British government, turning the Government of India’s assumptions on its head. Not unexpectedly, the decision was condemned by Lord Curzon both in print and before Parliament.⁴⁴ According to Robert Frykenburg, the lack of parliamentary discussion over the transfer almost created a constitutional crisis.⁴⁵ Speeches made in the House of Commons criticized the secrecy of the New Delhi project as it had not been made in a public forum but decided in secret amongst a small group of officials. The opacity of the decision would render the presumption of Delhi as capital vulnerable to attack past the time of its inauguration in 1931. Even in 1916, the transfer appeared to be in jeopardy as the cost of prosecuting the Great War had taken its toll in rising materials cost and inflation. Hardinge and the Government of India estimated three to four years build time and a total cost of 4 million pounds sterling. Even allowing for the war, it appeared that not much had been done beyond the laying of major roads (which were cheaper to construct than the buildings designed by Lutyens and Baker) and the beginnings of foundations for the Viceroy’s House and the Secretariats. In addition, the planning of the city took almost two years as controversies over site choice, the plan and style of the new city and the questions about the selection of the architect-planning team

⁴⁴ “The New Delhi. Curzon of Kedleston,” in *The Times*, October 7, 1912. Curzon spoke before the House of Lords on February 21, 1912, noticed and written up in *The Times*, February 22, 1912.

⁴⁵ See, R.E. Frykenberg, “The Coronation Durbar of 1911: Some Implications,” in *Delhi Through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986).

delayed progress. The *Quarterly Review* asked “What [were] the overmastering attractions of Delhi, to compel the Government to itself and the country to all this disturbance? The answer is that there were none, or none that would have counted for anything but for ulterior considerations. Historic renown, imperial associations, nearness to Simla, excellence of railway communications, and so on—these were all makeweights introduced after the decision. The truth is that the Government of India was not in love with Delhi, but it had become convinced that it must break off with Calcutta.”⁴⁶

Critics of the lack of transparency in the decision-making process also focused on the choice of the Delhi team of experts. Questions arose in Parliament as to why a design competition had not been held, who was paying the expense of sending experts to India, what are the experts’ credentials, and was there anyone besides Edwin Lutyens—who might be an architect of country houses but hardly fit to build a modern imperial city? Were Indian craftsmen to be employed? And what was being done about the conflict of expert opinion, by the Viceroy and the India Office? Some of the doubts had been assuaged by the appointment of H.V. Lanchester, who had considerable public works experience in India, and Swinton had served in India as an aide-de-camp and had considerable experience in planning on the London County Council.⁴⁷

Lutyens might not have been an unusual choice for architect in light of the fact that architects like John Sulman and George Coleman had concerned themselves with questions on city layout and public works in Sydney and Singapore, respectively. What does make him a strange candidate is that by the time the decision about the Delhi Town Planning Committee had been made, the garden city and town planning movement would result in the establishment only

⁴⁶ “India under Hardinge and After,” *The Quarterly Review*, v. 226, 1916, July-Oct, 99-105.

⁴⁷ See for instance, *The Times*, December 11, 1912, p. 12.

a few years later of the Town Planning Institute in 1914.⁴⁸ Architects like Raymond Unwin and Albert Thompson (South Africa) would acknowledge that effective town planning required architectural training. Even considering such an idea as valid, the jump from architect of the central square at Hampstead Garden Suburb to the planning of New Delhi was a leap of epic proportions. Moreover, the urgency implicit in such a closed decision-making process illuminates the vulnerability of the transfer of the capital to Delhi. The outrage in Calcutta and in Parliament, not only about the secrecy of the decision but the need for it, had raised questions in official circles and the public mind. The question of the planning team and a design competition had been brought up early on by John Jenkins, who initially proposed plans and estimates ““for all the more important buildings”” be given to a committee made up of a Bombay architect, a canal engineer and the Deputy Commissioner of the Punjab territory. That suggestion, and any other suggestions about Raj engineers and architects seem to have been shot down by the Council.⁴⁹ Even as Hardinge pushed for an amalgamation of ‘old’ and ‘new’ Delhi in the planning of the city, apparently, this did not extend to those who would design it.

Even at this late stage of development, the choice of Lutyens was not a foregone conclusion. The choice of the Delhi Town Planning Committee by March 1912 may also have been intended merely to give shape to the plan of Delhi, rather than as an outright appointment of Edwin Lutyens as architect. This is borne out in Lord Crewe’s letter to Lutyens notifying him of his appointment to the Delhi Town Planning Committee where Crewe clearly stated it did not mean that Lutyens had won the coveted prize of architect. In June 1912, when the Planning Committee was already in Delhi, Hardinge contacted the India Office asking for the “usual terms

⁴⁸ Home, 44.

⁴⁹ Irving, 91.

for competitions for architectural designs for public buildings.”⁵⁰ It is not clear why Hardinge had asked the question of competition; it may be a response to Lutyens’ campaigning for the post, even enlisting Lady Hardinge to persuade the Viceroy. It was also an issue of debate in Parliament and therefore in the papers. It is evident in Lutyens’ letters to his wife that he was determined to have the post and had already begun sketching designs.⁵¹ In response to Hardinge’s telegram, the India Office sent a letter to Leonard Stokes, the President of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Stokes provided the general parameters for competitions, including the Royal Institute’s own regulations, noting that such competitions often failed to attract architects of senior standing and experience. In Stokes words, competitions were a young man’s game and New Delhi required a level of expertise best left to men with considerable experience. He suggested a competition for invited architects, also noting later that an open competition would take considerable time and expense. Architects would have to be compensated for their costs, including travel to India. Fees would also be required for assessors.⁵² In light of the concurrent competition for the planning of Canberra, the new federal capital of Australia, Stokes’ opinion might seem curious. The international city design competition was announced by the Australian government in April 1911 and detailed information about the Canberra site was made available through the Australian High Commission in London, all offices of the Australian state capitals, public works departments, and British consulates in nine other cities, including New York, Chicago, Paris, Washington DC, Berlin, Cape Town and Pretoria, and Ottawa. The descriptive data also included two cycloramas of the Canberra site. The RIBA boycotted the competition, protesting an arrangement where a

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Letters from Lutyens to his wife, May/June 1912, LUE 12/10/3.

⁵² Irving, 91-92.

government minister had the final approval.⁵³ And yet, these were the same conditions of the designing of New Delhi.

Delhi was chosen as the site of Britain's new imperial capital in a context of political upheaval and crisis. As we have seen, the matter was not easily settled, and debates about the wisdom of the choice continued well past the immediate selection process. Questions about its suitability as the capital arose again in 1921, on the heels of the Chelmsford-Montagu reforms, with the creation of a new Indian legislative assembly. The new assembly held budgetary power, including reducing and eliminating expenditures. The debate began with a bill introduced in February 1920 to build a Council Hall at Simla, but rapidly turned into a discussion and an amended resolution to reconsider the location of the seat of government at Delhi.⁵⁴ At its core, the Cutchi-Memon Bill (aka the "Exodus Resolution") took apart one of the original arguments for the move of the capital to Delhi, the ability to seat the government for seven months of the year in Delhi, rather than Simla. Members of the assembly argued that by virtue of the introduction of the Simla bill, Delhi's favor as a suitable center for the headquarters of government had been mooted—the government's argument made empty as just as at Calcutta, the government remained *in situ* for only five months. Moreover, the decision to move the capital had never been discussed in council or in public, "without consulting European or Indian unofficial opinion,...the Civil Service and the governments of the provinces..... [A]ll this was done by the Government which in the same report admitted the just demand of India to a larger share in the Government." In response, Sir William Vincent (Under-Secretary) noted that the

⁵³ Robert Freestone, *Designing Australia's Cities: Culture, Commerce and the City Beautiful, 1900-1930* (Sydney NSW: University of New South Wales Press, Ltd., 2007), 94-95. An in-depth treatise on the competition specifically is David Headon, *Canberra Beyond the Boundaries: Canberra's Extraordinary International Design Competition, 1911-12* (Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate, ACT Government, 2013).

⁵⁴ "Proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India," as extracted in *East India (financial statement and budget). Return to an address of the Honourable the House of Commons, 1920-21, 1921-22.*

transfer of the capital had been debated in Parliament and ultimately, the decision let stand. He also argued that Delhi had not yet been given a good chance and the war had prevented a “good deal of movement forward” as costs of labor and materials had risen exponentially. Vincent also pointed out that for the last eight years all members of the Council had watched the progress of the new capital and none had raised objection, either by virtue of silence or by outright words of approval. With a last salvo, he was “surprised that he had heard so little of an Indian spirit” in the debate and put in a strong claim for Delhi from a historic point of view.⁵⁵

Although by March, 1921, the question of Delhi had been finally and irrevocably decided, the question of expense was not. The cost of Delhi had long ago exceeded Hardinge’s estimate of 4,000,000£ (Rs 60,000,000). The Indian Public Works Department had recently submitted a revised estimate for Rs. 129,000,000 and eight more years of construction. Assembly members argued that the city’s palaces, offices and avenues posed a heavy burden on the back of the poor taxpayer: “[W]e have no right to feed our aesthetic sentiments at the expense of the poor tax-payers of India. And I cannot find any justification whatsoever why we should think that we should be better housed...when we really know that the country is actually starving and suffering....”⁵⁶ The muting of the discussion of Delhi’s suitability soon turned to expenditures on the Government House (or Viceroy’s House) which in square footage exceeded Versailles. Over the next decade, efforts to control expenditures on Delhi (and India more largely) resulted in the appointment of the New Capital Enquiry Committee, and debates in the Legislative Assembly over cost and scope continued, including the non-use of Indian artists and designers, the justification of expense of the Viceroy’s house furnishings, and the lack of amenities and

⁵⁵ Ibid.; also, *Times of India*, February 19, 1920, and February 20, 1920.

⁵⁶ *Legislative Assembly Debates*, vol. 1 (Delhi and Simla: Government Printing Press, 1921), 1025-6.

services for Indian residents. By 1931, there would be no money left for a durbar-style inauguration.⁵⁷

My purpose in recounting these political contexts and crisis circumstances has been to counter assumptions that the choice of Delhi was self-evident or that its development was fore-ordained by that choice. Like the selection of Lutyens himself as architect, the process of Delhi's selection was embroiled in a set of relationships between individuals that challenge presumptions about either one's "destiny" in the making of imperial modernity at this juncture in the history of the Raj. For Robert Irving, ultimately the decision to move the capital seems to be a combination of personal relationships, self-aggrandizement and propitious timing. Lord Hardinge had watched the increasing turmoil in Bengal with some anxiety and the realization that "something must be done to remove all the anarchical agitation in Bengal." A rift had also developed between Sir John Jenkins and Hardinge, whereby Jenkins had criticized the Government's policy on Bengal as, at best, a policy of drift and, at worst, no policy at all. Irving argues that Jenkins' reversal on Partition and his new scheme for the move of the capital may have been motivated in part by a desire to return to the viceroy's good graces. Also, the King had been pressuring Indian officials for some sort of momentous announcement to be made at the Durbar, something in keeping with the importance and prestige of his making a personal appearance in India. And certainly there had been some concern at higher levels that the lack of such an announcement would be a problem, as native newspapers like the *Bengal Herkaru* had put forth the idea that the Durbar provided the opportunity to revise, if not totally rescind, the Partition. Such a rendering of events, however, fails to take into consideration the wider imperial context. Crewe for instance had been Viceroy of Ireland in 1892 and many of the other high

⁵⁷Inauguration (debates, vol. 4, 1927, pp. 3375, and vol 2, 1931, p. 1701) .

officials involved in the scheme had served in highly placed diplomatic and political positions outside India. Moreover, as David Johnson has pointed out, Robert Irving ignores how the decision to transfer the capital reflected a new climate of empire, where in parliamentary debates, British and Indian newspapers, and Government of India correspondence, questions about the nature of British rule and its best expressions had emerged.⁵⁸ New Delhi appeared to resolve the tension between British enlightened despotism and new constitutional reforms under, for instance, the Indian Councils Act of 1909, also known as the Morley-Minto reforms, which had granted limited native participation in Indian government by election to imperial and provincial legislatures and was meant to help restore stability to British India in the wake of the unrest over Partition. In Britain, the organization of labor and the burgeoning women's movement could extend the electoral base and in the aftermath of the South African War (as seen in Chapter 2 of the present work), questions of imperial fitness and Britain's place on the world stage were viewed with some trepidation. Speaking before the House of Commons on July 25, 1900, David Lloyd-George highlighted the contradictions of imperial policy and motives: "We went into the war for equal rights, we are prosecuting it for annexation."⁵⁹ J.A. Hobson's critique of the South African War and more largely of British colonial market expansion at the expense of the laboring classes, urged British politicians and economists to improve its domestic rather than imperial health.⁶⁰

Both Hardinge and Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson, a senior member on the Council, underscored the contexts of upheaval and crisis when they worried about the similarities between

⁵⁸ David Andrew Johnson, *Imperial Vistas: New Delhi's Role as a Symbol of British Constitutional Reform in India and the Cultural Politics of Colonial Space 1911-1931* (Diss.: University of California, Irvine, 2004), 14.

⁵⁹ Bentley Brinkerhoff Gilbert, *David Lloyd George: A Political Life* (Ohio State University Press, 1987).

⁶⁰ J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism*, 1902. For an in-depth analysis of the influence of the South African War on Hobson, see Paula M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire; Public Discourse and the Boer War* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 22-31.

anti-Partition agitation and that of Irish Home Rule. Hardinge was convinced that the outrages committed on British subjects between 1908 and 1911 could be attributed to Partition and that the demand by Bengalis to rescind Partition was becoming a “‘traditional demand based on racial reasons, like Home Rule for Ireland.’” Wilson responded to Hardinge’s note to Council by arguing that “‘many of the features of the agitation [in Bengal] remind me greatly of the earlier phases of the Home Rule movement.... [T]he unyielding, non-possumus attitude adopted by England towards the political-racial aspirations of the Irish people contributed largely to the terrible trouble England has had to face in regard to Ireland.’” For Wilson, the Celtic and Bengali-Hindu colonial subjects were of the same mold, “‘both highly imaginative, very sensitive, passionately devoted to their land and to their religion and easily moved to nurse a sense of injury, real or imagined.’”⁶¹

The Durbar fanfare had scarcely ebbed when the planning of the new capital began. Sir John Jenkins, Home Member of the Viceroy’s Council and the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, Sir Louis Dane met to decide on a town planning committee with three men proposed to the Viceroy: the Consulting Architect for Bombay, the Deputy Commissioner of the Punjab and the Superintending Engineer of the Jumna Canal. The suggestions were rebuffed by the Viceroy’s Council as nonentities unsuited for “laying the foundations of one of the finest cities in the world, and certainly the finest city in the East.” Instead members of the Council argued that town planning experts from Britain were needed for the building of such a grand capital. John A. Brodie of Liverpool was one of two municipal engineers put forth by the Local Government Board, but the selection of a committee member combining the skills of both town planner and architect would prove more difficult. London’s Local Government Board suggested Stanley

⁶¹ “Note by his Excellency the Viceroy,” June 20, 1911, in *Transfer of the Seat of Government of India from Calcutta to Delhi and the Creation of a New Lieutenant-Governorship at Patna*, 2-5.

Adshead, the founder of the Town Planning Review and a professor of civic design at University of Liverpool's School of Architecture. The LGB argued that Adshead was the "one architect in England who had made a systematic study of town planning." But Adshead was characterized as a theorist who might not be up to the task. The India Office both received and put forth its own suggestions for candidates, including Patrick Geddes, Raymond Unwin, Reginald Blomfield, H.V. Lanchester and Edwin Lutyens. Lutyens' work was familiar to Lord Crewe of the India Office and it was ultimately his recommendation to the Viceroy that decided Lutyens' appointment to the Committee. Crewe also recommended George Swinton, the Chairman of the London County Council, to serve as the head of the Committee, a position for which Swinton had lobbied heavily. With the blessing of the King, the Committee's composition and date of departure was set.⁶²

In the face of political crisis and interpersonal frictions, it may not be entirely surprising that there was no open and public competition for Delhi's design. But this did not go unnoticed.. It was a subject and concern much covered in the press, and particularly in the larger debates about the decision to move the capital itself having been conducted in secrecy, foregoing a competition draws fresh questions about why the urgency to proceed. Certainly the initial committee of experts—Swinton, Lutyens, Brodie—was characterized as a planning committee. Lord Crewe notified Lutyens that his appointment to the committee of experts did not mean an appointment as architect. This was something Hardinge would also reiterate to Lutyens. His suggestion of Baker with his experience not only as an architect but as a planner in South Africa recommended him more than Lutyens could. Baker's article on New Delhi published in *The Times* in October 1912, while angering Lutyens, worked to persuade Hardinge and Crewe that

⁶² Irving, 39-41.

Baker and Lutyens together would be an excellent choice. The choice of Lutyens, then, was not motivated by belief in his genius but by the hope that he might put an end to the controversy. Like all the factors involved in the decision to move the capital, the choice of whose designs would shape the new modern capital of empire may have been made behind closed doors but it was deeply enmeshed in contemporary politics.

New Delhi and the Garden City Experiment

The planning and design of New Delhi was watched closely by those in the garden city movement, which as we have seen had emerged from social and imperial concerns generated by the South African War and the subsequent findings of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Designers who saw in Delhi the promise of the garden city on a grand scale had, in other words, less an India-centered view of the project than a global imperial one. In formulating the ideas promulgated in *To-Morrow A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* —the signature tract of the movement that would later be published under the title, *Garden Cities of To-morrow* -- Ebenezer Howard had drawn on multiple resources, including the ‘Grand Modell’ espoused by William Light and Edward Gibbon Wakefield in the early settlement of Australia (Adelaide) and New Zealand (Wellington), respectively, who had in turn drawn inspiration from the “squares, grid-iron road layout, public lands and a common” of Savannah and Charleston in the British North American colonies and the early London estates. Light and Wakefield had both been influenced by the promotion of public parks by the 1833 Select Committee on Public Walks; both designed park belts intended for public recreation.⁶³ Both men were also aware of

⁶³ Home, 19-29. Home notes that the pressure of migration into both colonies (and elsewhere) as well as a shift in “colonizing theory” (in settler colonies) from a doctrine of systematic urban development to one of individual

John Claudius Loudon's ideas about urban space as well, as there was a regular correspondence with Australia and New South Wales through Loudon's *Gardener's Magazine* and his personal contacts and relationships with professional gardening and botanical circles, including Alexander Leay, who became Colonial Secretary in Australia in 1825. Loudon had also recommended his American and Australian readership pay attention to "the subject of village breathing-places, or playgrounds, noticed in a former Number." In fact, decades before the garden city movement, Loudon advocated that a capital of the Australian Union be planned along his designs; Wakefield's plan for Adelaide included large belts of parkland.⁶⁴ And, given the similarities in their designs for a 'garden' city, Howard was probably familiar with Loudon's plan for London⁶⁵, though a direct connection has never been established. Before his publication of *To-Morrow*, Howard had been involved in schemes to create a Wakefieldian 'home colony,' with Adelaide's park belt as inspiration, where he noted that as Adelaide expanded it jumped its green belt rather than build upon it, creating the new town of North Adelaide.⁶⁶

Well before Delhi was officially in mind as the new imperial capital, the Garden City Association's new chairman, Ralph Neville, argued that the garden city question was "an Imperial question—and...a question of paramount importance to the Empire, because...the ultimate destiny of our Empire depends upon the character and capacity of the citizens of this country."⁶⁷ Neville, in his testimony before the Interdepartmental Committee, had expounded on the need for open space and clean air to ameliorate the poor physical condition of South African

judgment and enterprise. Between 1775 and 1815, Britain's New World and Antipodes colonies swelled from a population of less than 3 million to over 25 million emigres from Great Britain alone. (29-30).

⁶⁴ Colleen Morris, "Diffusion of Useful knowledge: Loudon and his influence in Australia," in *Garden History*, vol. 32, no. (Spring, 2004), pp. 101-123;113.

⁶⁵ As elaborated in 'Hints on Breathing Places for the Metropolis, and for Country Towns and Villages, on fixed Principles' 1829 (from *Gardener's Magazine*, Vol. 5).

⁶⁶ Home, 66.

⁶⁷ Garden City Association, *The Garden City Conference at Bourneville: Report of Proceedings* (London, 1901), 9-10.

War recruits. The question of imperial ‘degeneration’ and racial decline was visible in the Association’s journal over the next several years. “We want not only England but all parts of the Empire to be covered with Garden Cities.”⁶⁸ With the announcement of the move of the capital to Delhi in 1911, garden city supporters saw the opportunity to promote town planning on a monumental scale and “hoped that the Indian Government [would] see...the opportunity...taken full advantage of and that a Capital City will result which will be a credit to the Empire in every sense of the word.”⁶⁹ Even as the Garden Cities Association cast the garden city question in imperial terms and the garden cities to be spread across imperial landscapes, the question remains, why New Delhi as a garden city? Only a few years before, one advocate of garden cities and town planning had noted that “modern town planning” was largely a private effort rather than a municipal enterprise,⁷⁰ dependent upon the philanthropic largesse and social vision of industrial capitalists like Lever and Cadbury. Port Sunlight and Bournville could only marginally be considered garden cities (and would in fact be at the core, later, of Howard’s delineation of the difference between garden suburb, village and city), falling more into a category of model or factory village. But Hampstead Garden Suburb and the First Garden City at Letchworth were the result of private rather than municipal momentum and governed by trustees, bearing out the larger critique of entities like the London County Council’s provision of open space as less the LCC on its own and more a partnership between private and public philanthropy.

The garden city imaginary, while operating in the global imperial sphere, had multiple scales – which reminds us of the entanglement of local and global in the making of Delhi as a

⁶⁸ Ewart G. Culpin, *Garden City Up to Date*, 1907. Culpin, part of the Executive Committee of the Garden City Association, would publish an updated version of this every year following.

⁶⁹ *Garden Cities & Town Planning; a journal of housing...*, ser. 3 v.2., 1912, 2-3.

⁷⁰ P. Abercrombie, “Modern Town Planning in England, a Comparative Review of ‘Garden City’ Schemes in England,” in *The Town Planning Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (April, 1910), pp. 18-38; 18.

transfer site for imperial ambition and style as well. The Metropolitan Public Garden Association, as we have seen in Chapter 2 of the present work, had been founded because its members felt that the Metropolitan Board of Works had been ineffectual in its provision of open space.⁷¹ And while Robert Home attaches the rise of enthusiasm for town planning to a “higher social purpose,”⁷² that ‘higher social purpose’ had been long been the impetus behind movements for housing and spatial reform in London. As we have seen, the passing of the Act of 1909, even as a modified collection of previous legislation, underscored the question of private philanthropy versus the role of the state in municipal improvements that had emerged in the wake of the South African War, the findings of the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, and the impetus for a more comprehensive town planning legislation. More importantly, larger imperial questions and connections, international competition and debates, and a world war would work to shift the burden of improvement from private monies to the public purse. In such an historical context as not only a garden city, but an *imperial* garden city, New Delhi could serve as an apotheosis of modern urban form and British imperial superiority.

If from the outset the very siting and style of New Delhi was fiercely debated in the press, Parliament and the town planning community, it was because Delhi’s historical importance was tied to earlier moments of imperial crisis: through the memorialization of the Revolt; the ongoing vulnerability to protest and unrest of the city itself; and, not least, conflicts over how both the modernity and the sovereignty of empire would be represented in the new capital’s built form. Although the King’s Durbar announcement of the transfer was quite vague on logistics, it was quite clear from studies undertaken and orders given that the new capital was envisioned as grand in scale. Within days of the laying of the foundation stone on the Ridge by the King

⁷¹ See Chapter 2 in the present work; *Story of the London County Council*, 1907.

⁷² Home, 141.

and Queen, the Secretary to the Government of India wrote to officials in both the Punjab and United Provinces that “steps [should] be taken with the least possible delay to acquire the necessary land under the Land Acquisition Act.”⁷³ The government was concerned about land speculation as the question of a judicial stay being placed on land around Delhi pursuant to the Act could not be accomplished before the Durbar. The need for secrecy trumped the possible ramifications due to speculation, however. The first hint of the garden city with respect to the physical layout of the new space seems to have come from Sir Louis Dane, the Punjab province Lieutenant Governor. After several site visits to Delhi in late December and early January and investigation of several possible sites, Dane questioned whether there was sufficient area of good building land to the north of the city and the Ridge for a “large spacious garden City, such as I presume the New Government capital should be.”⁷⁴ The north site, in Dane’s opinion, could prove problematic and he doubted that sanitary experts would approve the area as a whole, given its propensity to flooding at certain times of the year, as well as a fairly high water table. He did acknowledge that given the importance of the Ridge, that portions of the site could be used for both a new Cantonment and the villas of the native princes and a hall or pavilion erected for state ceremonies on the site of the foundation stones laid by the King and Queen immediately after the Durbar. He went on to say that if the northern site could not provide “sufficient good ground for

⁷³ Referring to the Land Acquisition Act of 1894, which allowed the government to acquire privately held land for public purposes; prices paid for land were meant to be at a fair rate. After the announcement of the transfer of the capital, the Government of India was concerned about prices being driven up through land speculation. Once notification had been published in the government gazette for the province of the intention to acquire land, prices for land could not exceed the price estimated on the date of publication. For more on the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, see *The Land Acquisition Act, 1894, with State Amendments*, repr. (Delhi: Universal Law Publishing Co., Ltd., 2011).

⁷⁴ “Note by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor on the selection of a site for the new City of Delhi,” n.d., enclosure to Letter from C.A. Barron, Chief Secretary, government of the Punjab to Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Revenue & Agriculture, 16 December 1911, in *From Ghalib’s Dilli to Lutyens’ New Delhi, a Documentary Record*, Mushirul Hasan and Dinyar Patel, eds. (National Archives of India, Oxford University Press, 2014), 118-122.

a spacious garden city,” the sites he had indicated south of the old city had “ample space for such a city.”⁷⁵

The question of why a “spacious garden City” as the form of the new capital is not indicated in Dane’s notes, but I would argue that given the context in which the transfer and discussions of the new capital took place, the idea was in keeping with emerging ideas about modern town planning. Between 1901 and the announcement of the transfer of the capital, the garden city movement in Britain had gained momentum, having an impact on both legislation and landscape. The Garden Cities Association had been formed in 1899 to give practical effect to Howard’s principles as outlined in his *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to real Reform*⁷⁶. Though Howard at first was labelled a utopian crank, nicknamed “Ebenezer, the Garden City geyser,” by George Bernard Shaw,⁷⁷ his ideas were given some credence in the wake of the South African War and constant pressure from groups like the Metropolitan Public Garden Association, who pushed for housing and land reform. And, growing out of the Garden Cities Association would be the National Housing and Town Planning Council and the Co-partnership Tenants Housing Council.⁷⁸ Parliamentary support of town planning increased, although as noted in Chapter 2, the tenets of the eventual Housing and Town Planning Act in 1909 were debated for several years, even in the wake of fears about physical and moral deterioration and the decline of the British ‘race.’ National and international town planning conferences would bring together key players like Raymond Unwin, Ebenezer Howard and Barry Parker from Britain, Daniel Burnham and Charles Mulford Robinson from the US, Frenchman Eugene Henard and German Joseph Stubbén. The Town Planning Conference of the Royal Institute of British Architects in London

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Published in 1898, would be re-issued in 1902 as *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*.

⁷⁷ Meacham, 48.

⁷⁸ P. Abercrombie, “Modern Town Planning in England, a Comparative Review of Garden City Schemes in England,” in *The Town Planning Review*, Vol. 1., no. 1 (April, 1910); 18-38; 20..

in 1910 revealed the alignments as well as diverse concerns of an emergent global planning movement: town extension planning, garden suburb and garden city development, design of public space and civic ornamentation, and the provision of open space.⁷⁹

In August of 1907, the first International Housing Congress was held over three days at Westminster, covered heavily in the national and international press, and engendering a feeling of “comradeship in a world-wide movement...unique in the history of reform....” Special tours of Hampstead Garden Suburb and the First Garden City at Letchworth had been arranged, as well as a special train carrying 300 delegates to the Sheffield Cottage Exhibition and then on to Manchester and Liverpool for views of newly cleared areas and suburban extensions. There was a general sense of agreement amongst those who attended this and the Town Planning Conference held later that year that “well-considered, concerted plans in modern town building [was] one of the most urgent wants of our time..... [T]he present planless and haphazard extension of towns is detrimental to the best interests of the nation, inasmuch as, by the creation of new slums and overcrowding, it produces mental, moral, and physical degeneration.”⁸⁰ Planning along garden city lines provided the solution of linked national and imperial concerns where the improvement of brain-power and physique with the improvement of conditions of life, the need for remedial agencies would be diminished, and the question of imperial fitness negated.⁸¹ New Delhi as a garden city, I would argue, can be seen as a solution to the ‘deterioration’ of the Raj.

Within a year, three separate announcements were made that would provide opportunities for the fledgling town planning community to construct their ideals on an international stage:

⁷⁹ *Transactions of the Town Planning Conference, London, October 1910, Royal Institute of British Architects, London, 1911.*

⁸⁰ *The Garden City*, New Series Vol II, September 1907, no. 19; 415-416; November 1907, no. 22, 444-445.

⁸¹ *The Garden City*, November 1907, 453.

The interest manifested in city planning various parts of the world is evidenced by two recent important competitions for designs open to architects and engineers of all nationalities: (1) The Australian Federal Capital City; and (2) The Re-planning of the Uruguayan capital City, Monte Video. Following these has come the decision to remove the Capital of the Indian Empire from Calcutta to Delhi and the scheme to found a new city there. In each instance the insistence on a scientific civic development is to be noted and shows the wide influence made manifest by the modern efforts of city planners.⁸²

The call for competitive designs of Canberra required submissions to embody in their designs “all recent developments in the science of town planning,” as well as requesting that plans must show the influence of the utilitarian, scientific, architectural and artistic standpoints articulated at the RIBA Town Planning Conference the year before.⁸³ American Walter Burley Griffin’s prize-winning design was an amalgam of City Beautiful principles of a “monumental city dominated by grand axes and vistas, ensembles of monolithic buildings, terminal landmarks, citadels and cumulative massing,”⁸⁴ and garden city ideals: specialized land use, separated residential areas, in a combination of geometrical and curved forms. For its monumental scale, its areas were intimately connected. (See Figure 4.2; Walter Griffin’s Plan for Canberra).

Hardinge was quite skeptical of the Delhi Town Planning Committee’s version of a garden city which exhibited the tension Swinton would later note between the design of Imperial Delhi as a garden city and a Lutyens’ influenced Beaux Arts grand model: “...the spaces and

⁸² *International City Planning*, 114, ser 3 v2, 1912, Guy Wilfrid Hayler.

⁸³ *Information, Conditions and Particulars for Guidance in the Preparation of Competitive Designs for the Federal Capital City of the Commonwealth of Australia*. 30 April 1911, p. 10, Digitized Copy; National Archives of Australia.

⁸⁴ Robert Freestone, *Designing Australia’s Cities: Culture, Commerce and the City Beautiful, 1900-1930* (simultaneously published in UK: Routledge, and USA/Canada: Routledge, 2007), 99.

avenues are too hopelessly big, and the buildings too hopelessly small. Insignificance coupled with inconvenience would, I fear, be the inevitable result.... The main avenue line of the Committee necessitated having large areas of garden and park, along and abreast the main avenue line near the Ridge.....”⁸⁵ It is clear here that this idea of design conflicts with the essence of the garden city as elaborated by Howard and his followers, particularly the First Garden City; it even falls against William Griffin’s design of Canberra, where the residential area was set amidst and surrounded by parkland and greenbelt. Griffin’s winning plans had been published widely and two months after the announcement, Hardinge telegraphed the Australian Governor-General asking for a copy of the plan. The Governor-General had obliged by sending not only Griffin’s winning design but seven others as well. But Hardinge was ultimately concerned with cost not only of construction but maintenance of the new city. Given Delhi’s location on an arid plain, a green ‘garden’ city might be expensive, if not impossible, to maintain.

The Committee’s third and final report made it plain that town planning was more than street layouts; rather, it was a “three-dimensional” problem in design encompassing questions of water supply, sewage systems, transportation lines and facilities, and parks and open spaces. The Committee also noted the special concerns of each proposed site, including specific physical conditions and the necessity of building an imperial city worthy of the British Raj. Delhi had distinct physical circumstances to be considered – a wide fluctuation in rainfall and temperatures (105 degrees in the hot months to just above freezing during the cold season), and the persistent

⁸⁵ Note by Captain G.S.C. Swinton, to Lord Hardinge, 19 December 1912, enclosed in letter from Sir James DuBoulay to Hon’ble Mr. Wheeler, 10 January 1913, in Hasan and Patel.

problem of malaria.⁸⁶ Its conception as a garden city on a monumental scale would prove difficult as the two ideals were at odds by definition as well as by resources. Irrigation would be essential to combat Delhi's constant dust, glare and aridness. To ameliorate Delhi's physical problems, the Committee recommended wide grass strips and well-irrigated trees to dissipate heat radiation, "rest the eyes" and lowering the margins of roads and footpaths so that the grass could be completely covered by irrigation water, trapping the dust and filtering into the soil.⁸⁷ Garden city and modern planning ideals were further reflected by the Committee, urging care must be taken to provide "ample air space and playing grounds for children" near the bungalows of those more minor officials where, unlike the green acreage around the residences of their superiors, garden space would be limited. One acre of open space for every 10 residences was suggested, particularly in the Indian extensions to Shahjahanabad (Old Delhi) and the living spaces of the railway staff that would be housed close to the rail yards. The Delhi Committee argued in no uncertain terms of the "paramount need" for not only open spaces and large parks but for those small recreation and playground areas that were the "essence of *modern town planning*." (my emphasis).⁸⁸ In its report a year earlier, the Government of India had estimated, that an initial outlay of 8,38,000 Rs. would be needed for parks in the new city: "Here...the estimate is on a fairly lavish scale. There is no limit to what could be spent per acre on parks.... *The city is going to depend in a large measure for its beauty on its parks, [and] avenues of trees and gardens, so the estimates for parks has been kept at a liberal figure.*" (my emphasis added).⁸⁹

⁸⁶ *Final Report on the Town Planning of the New imperial Capital, with Plan and Two Maps* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1913).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Ultimately, as Swinton had noted, the conflict between the design of New Delhi as a “monumental city” versus one ‘along garden city lines” was evident. The idea of the garden city obviously had had traction early on, evidenced by the choice of British experts like Swinton, with his 20 years on the London County Council, and his tutelage at Ebenezer Howard’s garden city knees, and J.A. Brodie’s experience with ‘garden suburb’ extensions in Liverpool highlight Hardinge’s intent to create a modern imperial city tied to British progressive, urban ideals. Lord Crewe’s initial push for Raymond Unwin as architect (rather than Lutyens) reflects Crewe’s connection to the garden city movement through his membership in the Garden Cities Association and as a Trustee for the Hampstead Garden Suburb and recognition of Unwin’s expertise and vision. Ultimately, Unwin’s ‘socialist’ leanings may have proved to be too progressive for a city which, while envisioned as modern, was still rooted in an imperial tradition. Politics of all kinds shaped Delhi’s historic transfer, making it impossible for historians to understand its selection and development as somehow natural, let alone as the product of one architect’s genius. Enmeshed as it was in the matrix of Britain’s global imperial urban experiments, New Delhi could not but reflect the tumult and crisis that helped to shape, and to limit, the ambition of those multi-sited projects. (See Figure 4.3 Map of Proposed Layout of New Delhi, 1912.)

Conclusion: Reifying “Lutyens’ Delhi”

....This is the threshold of the city. The motor turns off the arterial avenue, and, skirting the low red base of this gigantic monument, comes to a stop. The traveler heaves a breath. Before his eyes, sloping gently upward, runs a gravel way of such infinite perspective as to suggest the intervention of a diminishing-glass; at whose end, reared above the green tree-tops, glitters the seat of government, seventh Delhi, four-square upon an eminence—dome, tower, dome, tower, dome,

red, pink, cream, and white, washed gold and flashing in the morning sun. The traveler looses a breath, and with it his apprehensions and preconceptions. Here is something not merely worth, but whose like has never been. With a shiver of impatience he shakes of his contemporary standards, and makes ready to evoke those of Greece, the Renaissance [sic], and the Moguls.⁹⁰

Commissioned by the *Architectural Review* to write New Delhi's story, Byron worked hard to shore up the image of Delhi as the beating heart of the Raj at yet another moment of imperial crisis. Written preceding both the inauguration of the new capital and within the context of the Round Table Conference soon to take place in London, Byron's admiration for Lutyens and his contribution and criticism of Baker reflected the need to substantiate the continuing importance of Britain in the historical narrative of modern India. In Byron's view, Edwin Lutyens represented the best of what Britain and the melding of the art and science of the West, with the mysticism and romance of the East, could accomplish. New Delhi in design and substance represented the science of town planning and the high art of advanced architecture. Echoing Byron, Brinkworth's *Story of New Delhi*, also released before the inauguration, argues the "perfect harmony" of the new capital and he writes with a sense of wonder and discovery of a city which designs and vision have been "culled from the best in the world as it is to-day and from the world as it was in the ages past." He also notes that it might sound strange to boast of a well-planned city in light of Australia's Canberra and America's examples. What Brinkworth is careful to construct is the new capital of the Raj as the pinnacle of a long "sacred history" of Delhi. From a city "no more beautiful and no more inviting than any large city of the East," British ingenuity and knowledge had transformed a conglomerate of neglected ruins and the unsightly evidence Indian backwardness into a modern urban marvel. Implicit, however, in both Byron and Brinkworth's narratives is the insecurity of the Raj, not only in the larger framework

⁹⁰ Byron, *New Delhi*, 6.

of the British empire, but Britain's place on a global stage. Ultimately, New Delhi's landscape spoke to the tensions and imperatives of British rule through its somewhat incongruous pairing of Beaux Arts monumentality with the social reform at the core of the garden city ideal. Perhaps this incongruity was solved by producing a long-lived narrative of New Delhi as the product of one man's genius.

Figures

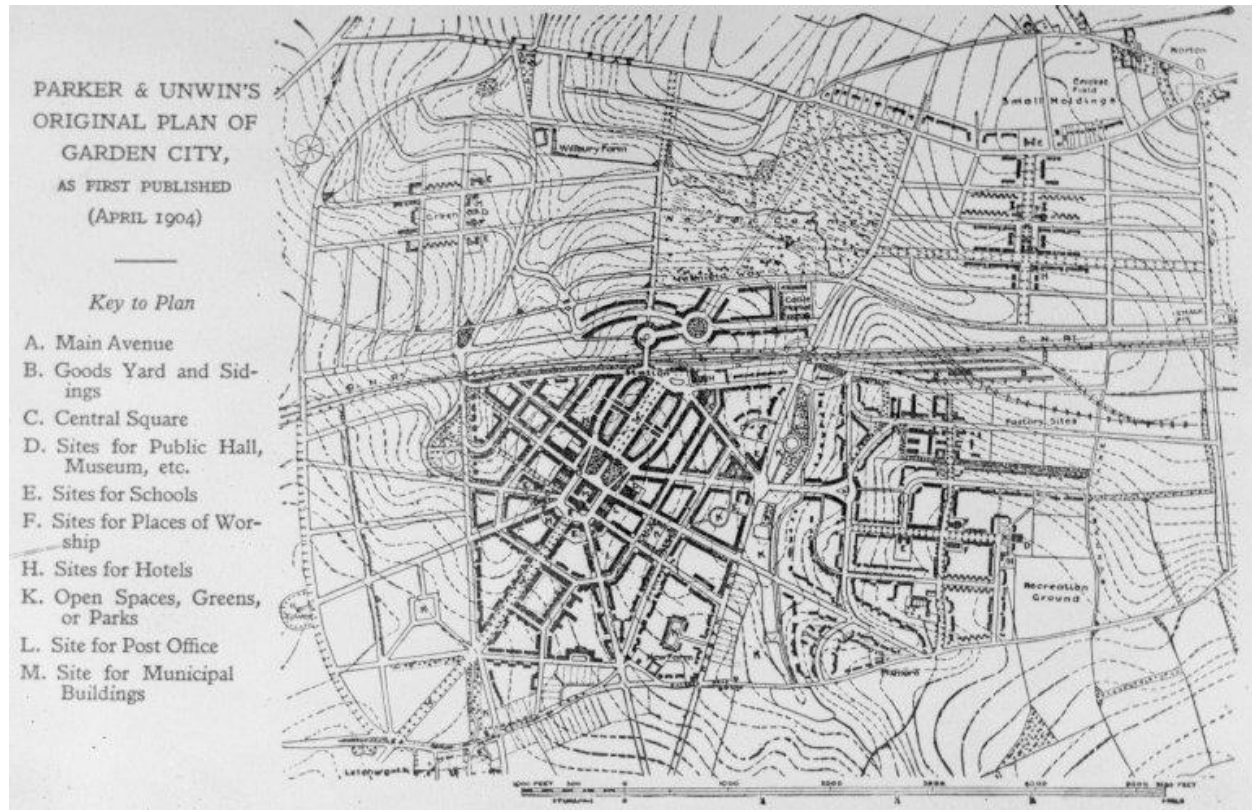


Figure 4.1 Plan of Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, First Garden City at Letchworth. April 1904. Source: Raymond Unwin, *Nothing Gained by Overcrowding*, 1912, repr, 2014.

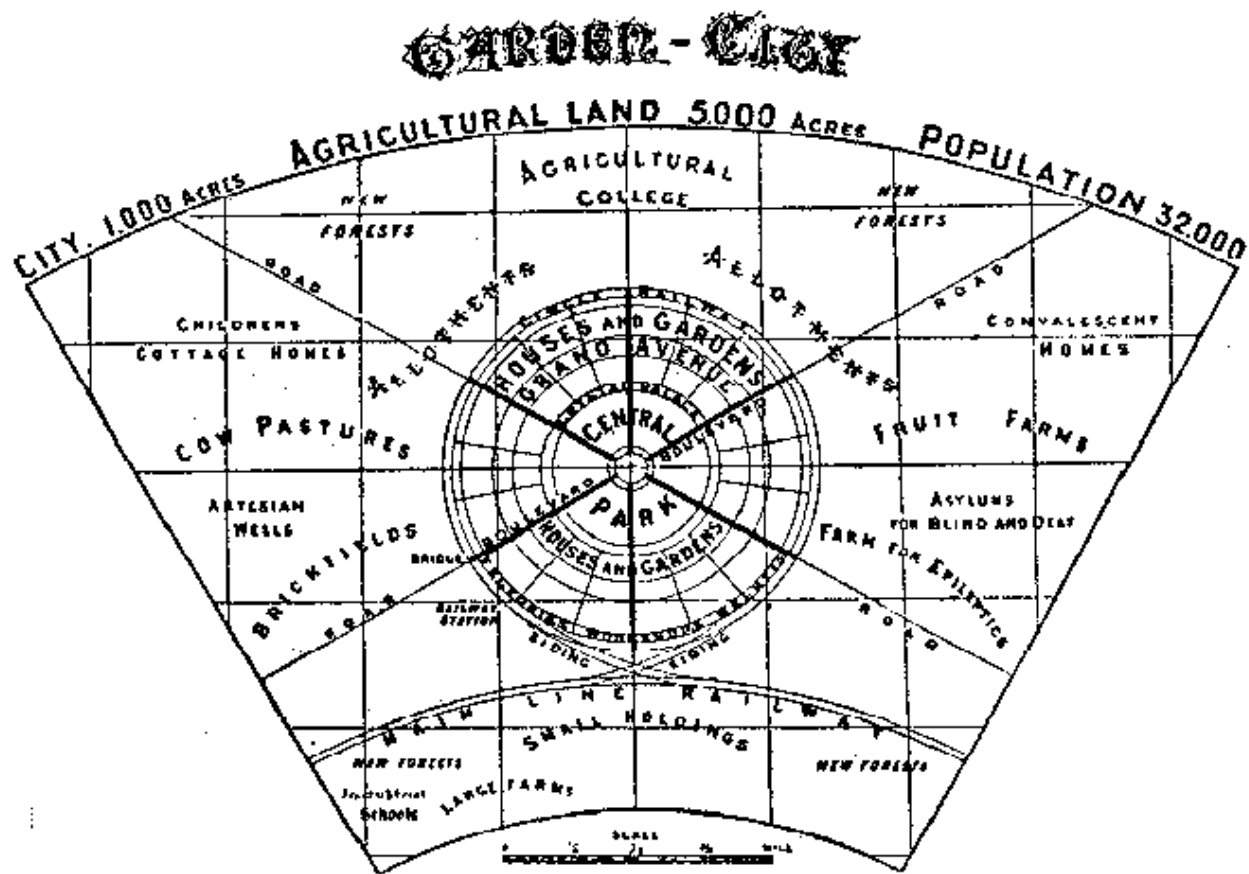


Figure 4.2 Garden City Diagram. Source: Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*, 1902.

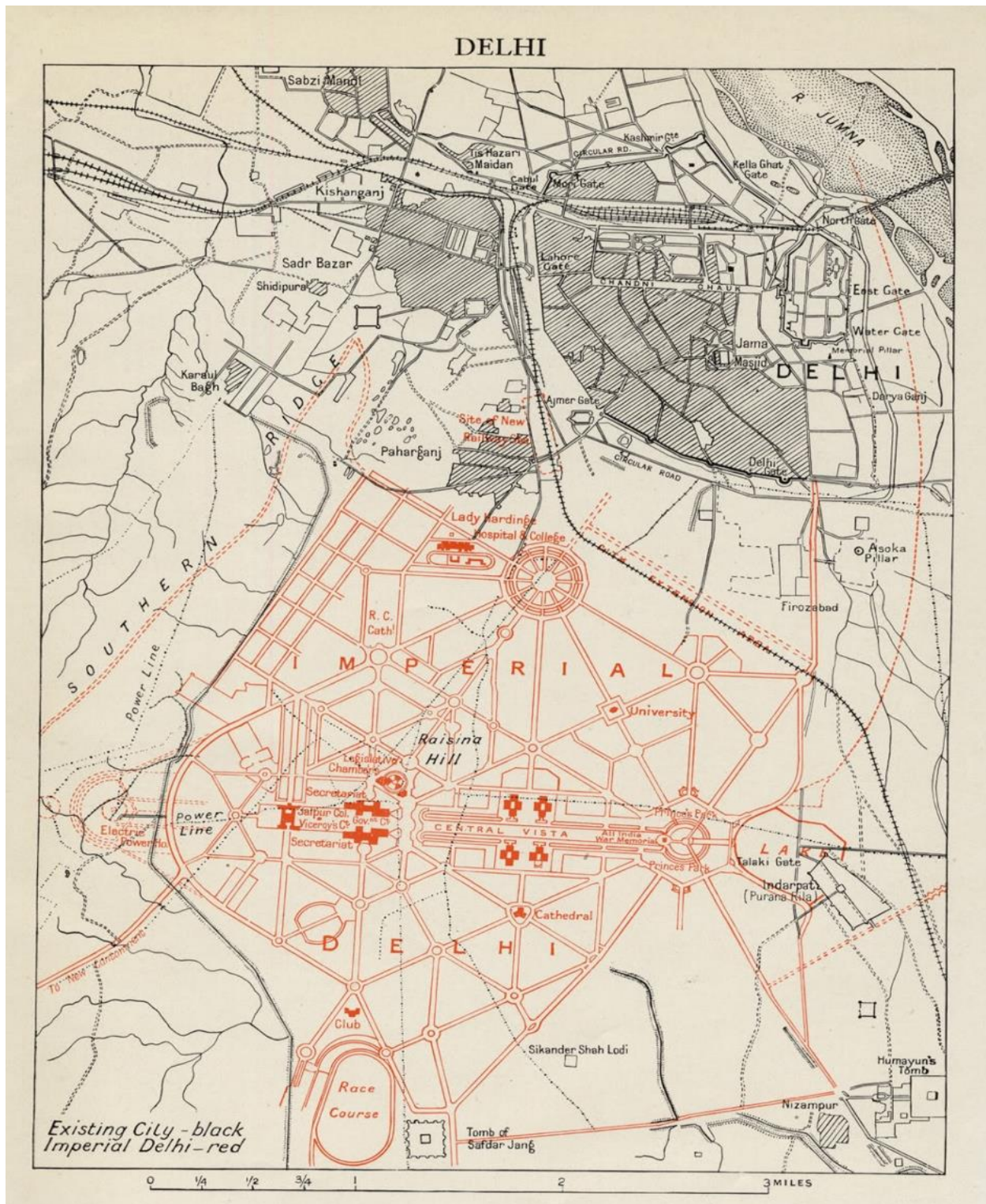


Figure 4.3 Proposed Layout of New Delhi. The old city of Delhi is at the top, in black gridlines, noting its built density. (map in public domain.)

Epilogue: The Limits of the Garden City and the Limits of Imperial History

You must become a Capital City, not only in name, but in fact; you must make your town a model of municipal administration; your institutions, your public buildings, your sanitation, must be an example to the rest of India. To attain these results will demand on your part much sustained effort, and the cultivation of a high sense of public duty. I can promise that the Government of India will be prepared to sustain you in those efforts by every means in its power. We shall not forget, when building a New Delhi outside your walls, that there exists an Old Delhi beside us which claims your interest and our assistance.

Lord Hardinge, Speech before the Delhi Municipal Committee¹

Even as the announcement of the transfer of the capital to Delhi was only a few weeks old, and the shape of the new capital in its embryonic stage, decades of piecemeal improvements to the old city loomed ominously on the horizon. For all the machinations over the choice of Delhi for historical and geographical reasons, the question of the old walled city had been neglected in the grand scheme. Now of course, what to do with Delhi, would be a central concern in the planning of the new capital. Hardinge had insisted that the old and new city be not two, but one; it would not come to pass, regardless of ‘sustained effort’ on the part of the Delhi municipal commissioners. Not unlike London, attention in New Delhi was focused on providing its new infrastructure. As an administrative ‘suburb,’ New Delhi drew capital and resources, and did little to alleviate the old city’s urban problems. Further, Delhi was arguably a grander rendition of the familiar model of the residential cantonment visible elsewhere across the subcontinent. New Delhi’s ultimate location south of the “walls” of the old city, the prevention of expansion to the north for fear the ‘Indian city’ would surround the Civil Lines, the manufacturing suburb of Sabzi Mandi to the north east, and the river to the east – all these factors limited any extension of the old city to the west. This only exacerbated existing congestion. Limitations also were put on

¹ December 23, 1912; quoted in Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism*, 152.

expansion because of the debates over the location and layout of New Delhi and the subsequent rise in land costs on surrounding areas, as well as the drain of capital for the construction of the new city. The garden city met its limits even before its development was complete.

Moreover, while an improvement trust had been proposed for Delhi along the lines of Calcutta and Bombay, it, too, would stall. The neglect of the old city, financially as well as in terms of improvement projects, would haunt the Government of India, as the two cities would be made one in post-inauguration public concerns about the “death trap” posed by the increase in tuberculosis and an outbreak of meningitis that would cross city boundaries.² As a garden city, if not in green form then certainly in intent, New Delhi had failed, as garden cities and even garden suburbs were intended to relieve the pressures of congestion and public health concerns. Both Ebenezer Howard and Henrietta Barnett had conceived their garden city and garden suburb as geographies of urban and social reform, not only a mixing of the infrastructures of urban and rural (for Howard), but of classes as well. With its spatial segregation from the old city and the separation of its residential areas along racial and status hierarchies, New Delhi could hardly be seen as mixed. Of course, at the time of New Delhi’s design, the First Garden City was still being built and the questions of land ownership, cost and public trust versus private capital had somewhat diluted the material elaboration of Howard’s vision. The architectural appeal of Henrietta’s working-class housing in Hampstead Garden Suburb, as well as costs, also diluted its mission as housing stock was bought up by middle-class families.

But the place-making of New Delhi as garden city with Lutyens at its center has been hard to shake. As I have researched and written this work, the pressure of development on the open, green space of New Delhi’s residential landscape and ecological questions driven by

² Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism*, 156-160.

dwindling water resources have pressed upon the ‘garden city.’ And the last few years has seen the ramping up of a bid for the two “Imperial Delhis” – Shahjahanabad, the old Mughal city, and “Lutyens’ Bungalow Zone in New Delhi – as UNESCO World Heritage site. I cannot help but wonder if articulating the bungalow zone as Lutyens’ creation (it was not; rather it was designed and implemented by Montmorency) is an attempt to neutralize the residue of the Raj by embracing the myth of the genius of one man.

My own experience of space and place and the production of my dissertation was profoundly influenced by the archives and geographical locations of the former British empire which I explored. Although the central questions still remain, the narrative I have produced here is quite different from my project as originally envisioned—a spatialized history of the garden “writ large” told through local struggles over colonial landscapes. Serious illness halted my research in India as it was only beginning, requiring me to rethink certain elements of my project and my archival locations. While in New Delhi, a verbal tussle with an agent of the Foreign Registration Office over the original title of my dissertation (stamped in my visa!) could have ended badly as he interrogated me about “this making of the modern British self” (my original title) under the Raj. My having read William Dalrymple’s *White Mughals* offered a bridge between us and I regret not being able to return for a tour of the agent’s Delhi. My experience navigating the streets of Kolkata—not only the southern suburb in which I briefly resided but around the Maidan, the Victoria Memorial and into a busti near the old South Park Street cemetery—struck me more forcibly—as I felt the pressure that 15 million+ inhabitants can put to bear upon the meanings, representations and utility of open space. Gaps between the holdings of the British Library, the PRO and archives in India of the workings of the Raj, the death of a beloved (in terms of archival knowledge) IOR archivist over the course of several research trips

(and years) to London, and the unavailability of complete manuscript holdings (all of John Gibson, parts of the MBW and the MPGA) made me consider how the writing of history can be as much about chance as methodology.

My point here is to elaborate briefly how personal intellectual trajectory and engagement with the imperial archive—how it is navigated, conceived and produced—informs historiographical production. I am not the first to consider this of course.³ Reading across methodological boundaries of the new imperial history, bodies of work on British town planning, and a closer look at the larger global context in which New Delhi was conceived, points to the slippage and tensions of these methodologies. While Sinha's imperial social formation is critical for understanding the relationships between metropole and colony as mutually constitutive, that neither can be separated from the other, it ultimately limits the scope of inquiry because it is a transnational paradigm. Ballantyne's (and Lester's) insightful analysis of imperial connections and circulations as one that is horizontal as well as vertical provides a larger field of analysis, highlighting the multiple nodes and knitted networks in which imperial identities were constituted. But ultimately, as in the case of New Delhi, connections across the British empire offers its own limitations, as the context in which New Delhi emerged was global as well as imperial. Indeed, if New Delhi was the signpost of the end of empire (as Irving and Metcalfe have argued), it also speaks to the insecurity of Great Britain's place on the world stage. Burton and Ballantyne's scholarship on mobility and the impact of empires on global processes and transformation, but as importantly, the impact of the global on the imperial, national and local,⁴ challenges the story of New Delhi (as garden city or otherwise) as an epic located within an

³ See Antoinette Burton, *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Duke University Press, 2006).

⁴ Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds. *Bodies in contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005).

imperial framework. As Ballantyne has noted, place-making—London, Calcutta, New Delhi—is the result of the convergence of a “unique set of networks, movements and exchanges...constantly being remade”⁵ and reshaped. They are, essentially, open-ended and never finished. What I have offered here highlights how the study of imperial history, like empire itself, is a messy business. Ultimately, the work at hand is less about the garden city and more about imagining how that story is told.

⁵ Tony Ballantyne, “On Place, Space and Mobility in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand,” *New Zealand Journal of History*, 45, 1 (2011), pp. 50-70; 60.

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