

Readings from John Stilgoe's *Common Landscape of America*

1) **The Medieval Landschaft**

- A self-sustaining cluster of dwellings surrounded by concentric **arable fields**, at distances that all are walkable. Outside the arable land or fields is **wilderness**...
- The **wilderness** is the spatial representation of chaos, evil, bewilderment, danger, madness...
- Literally, **wylder ness** is an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning the *lair of the wild beast*.
- **The Landschaft, then, was the alternative to danger and evil** - it represented order, agriculture, protection, civility, the Old Religion, and then the New Religion (Christianity)
- In the center of the landscape was the **roland** a tree that represented the life of this tenuous agricultural community. It was semi-sacred - an **axis mundi** for the community
- The agricultural land upon which the landscape resided was owned by a **noble**. Nobles allowed workers or **serfs** to live on the land in exchange for a portion of crop or military service. This arrangement of *indentured servitude* with minimal rights (if any) was **feudalism**. **Serfs were the workers tied to the land and the land was owned by nobles.**
- Three types of dwellings in the landscape:
 - **dwelling** - an impermanent shelter for a laborer or shepherd
 - **cottage** - slightly more permanent. The cottage could be dismantled and moved
 - **house or homestead** - a dwelling that was permanent and could be owned apart from the noble. If one were lucky enough to hold one (own one), they became a **householder**
- Therefore, **spatial position** and **social position** was intimately tied to the landscape, which was adherent to common law

2) **Roads through the wilderness**

- Once nobles and landowners become aware that it was beneficial for them to connect their holdings, they, in fact, did connect them, by *building roads through the wilderness*...
- A new spatial, landscape-architectural awareness comes into play, along the path of the road - now the spatial form is **linear**, or **linearity**
- The **road** brings with it connotations and narratives that suggest *mystery, linearity, anonymity* (the anonymous traveler), *unknown places, romance of the road, traveling commerce, vitality from other places*... etc, etc...
- French word *vill* for cluster of dwellings becomes **village** now that it is connected to other villages outside of the *landschaft*
- This becomes the **dominant spatial organization** of medieval society
- And so the *village evolves into a town* and the *medieval town becomes the setting for the Gothic cathedrals to follow*.

3) **Landskip and Landscape (and then to America)**

- The Dutch word **landschap**, meaning painting of natural scenery, is garbled in English into **landskip**... meaning traditional Dutch scenery painting of the land. **landskip** becomes **landscape**....
- The connotations remain. Stilgoe posits then that there are three types of **landscape** :: **wilderness; agricultural; the homestead & garden**