

Robert Smithson**Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape (1973)**Published in *Artforum* (February, 1973)

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The landscape-architect André formerly in charge of the suburban plantations of Paris, was walking with me through the Buttes-Chaumont Park, of which he was the designer, when I said of a certain passage of it, "That, to my mind, is the best piece of artificial planting of its age, I have ever seen." He smiled and said, "Shall I confess that it is the result of neglect?"


Frederick Law Olmsted,
The Spoils of the Park

Imagine yourself in Central Park one million years ago. You would be standing on a vast ice sheet, a 4,000-mile glacial wall, as much as 2,000 feet thick. Alone on the vast glacier, you would not sense its slow crushing, scraping, ripping movement as it advanced south, leaving great masses of rock debris in its wake. Under the frozen depths, where the carousel now stands, you would not notice the effect on the bedrock as the glacier dragged itself along.

Back in the 1850s, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux considered that glacial aftermath along its geological profiles. The building of New York City had interrupted the ponderous results of those Pleistocene ice sheets. Olmsted and Vaux studied the site topography for their proposed park called "Greensward." In *Greensward Presentation Sketch No. 5* we see a "before" photograph of the site they would remake in terms of earth sculpture. It reminds me of the strip-mining regions I saw last year in southeastern Ohio. This faded photograph reveals that Manhattan Island once had a desert on it – a manmade wasteland. Treeless and barren, it evokes the observations of "the valley of ashes" in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), "where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens."

Olmsted, "the sylvan artist," yearned for the color *green* as "Nature's universal robe" (see James Thomson, *The Seasons*, 1728) and the "Sharawadgi" parks of England.ⁱ He wanted the asymmetrical landscapes of Uvedale Price in the middle of urban flux. Into Brooklyn he would bring "the luxuriance of tropical scenery ... gay with flowers and intricate with vines and creepers, ferns, rushes, and broad leaved plants." This is like having an orchid garden in a steel mill, or a factory where palm trees would be lit by the fire of blast furnaces. In comparison to Thoreau's mental contrasts ("Walden Pond became a small ocean"), Olmsted's physical contrasts brought a Jeffersonian rural reality into the metropolis. Olmsted made ponds, he didn't just conceptualize about them.

The origins of Olmsted's view of landscape are to be found in 18th-century England, particularly in the theories of Uvedale Price and William Gilpin. Price extended Edmund Burke's *Inquiry into the Origin of*



Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1757) to a point that tried to free landscaping from the “picture” gardens of Italy into a more physical sense of the temporal landscape. A tree, for example, struck by lightning was something other than merely beautiful or sublime – it was “picturesque.” This word in its own way has been struck by lightning over the centuries. Words, like trees, can be suddenly deformed or wrecked, but such deformation or wreckage cannot be dismissed by timid academics. Price seems to have accepted a side of nature that the “formalists” of this times would rather have excluded.

Some of our present-day ecologists, who still see nature through eyes conditioned by a one-sided idealism, should consider the following quote from Price.

The side of a smooth green hill, torn by floods may at first very properly be called deformed, and on the same principle, though not with the same impression, as a gash on a living animal. When a rawness of such a gash in the ground is softened, and in part concealed and ornamented by the effects of time, and the progress of vegetation, deformity, by this usual process, is converted into picturesqueness; and this is the case with quarries, gravel pits, etc., which at first are deformities, and which in their most picturesque state, are often considered as such by a levelling improver.


Three Essays on the Picturesque, 1810

And from William Gilpin’s *Observations Relative to Picturesque Beauty* (1789): “A piece of Palladian architecture may be elegant in the last degree, but if we introduce it in a picture it immediately becomes a formal object and ceases to please.”

Price and Gilpin were, for Olmsted, “professional touchstones,” whose views he esteemed “so much more than any published since, as stimulating the exercise of judgment in matters of my art, that I put them into the hands of my pupils as soon as they come into our office, saying, ‘You are to read these seriously, as a student of law would read Blackstone.’”

Inherent in the theories of Price and Gilpin, and in Olmsted’s response to them, are the beginnings of a dialectic of the landscape. Burke’s notion of “beautiful” and “sublime” functions as a *thesis* of smoothness, gentle curves, and delicacy of nature, and as an *antithesis* of terror, solitude, and vastness of nature, both of which are rooted in the real world, rather than in a Hegelian Ideal.ⁱⁱ Price and Gilpin provide a *synthesis* with their formulation of the “picturesque,” which is on close examination related to chance and change in the material order of nature. The contradictions of the “picturesque” depart from a static formalistic view of nature. The picturesque, far from being an inner movement of the mind, is based on real land; it precedes the mind in its material external existence. We cannot take a one-sided view of the landscape within this dialectic. A park can no






longer be seen as “a thing-in-itself,” but rather as a process of ongoing relationships existing in a physical region – the park becomes a “thing-for-us.” As a result we are not hurled into the spiritualism of Thoreauian transcendentalism, or its present day offspring of “modernist formalism” rooted in Kant, Hegle, and Fichte. Price, Gilpin, and Olmsted are forerunners of a dialectical materialism applied to the physical landscape. Dialectics of this type are a way of seeing things in a manifold of relations, not as isolated objects. Nature for the dialectician is *indifferent* to any formal ideal.


This does not mean that one is helpless before nature, but rather that nature’s conditions are unexpected, like Price’s hill torn by the flood. In another sense Olmsted’s parks exist before they are finished, which means in fact they are never finished; they remain carriers of the unexpected and of contradiction on all levels of human activity, be it social, political, or natural. An example of this can be found in Paul Shepard’s excellent book, *Man in the Landscape*:

His [Olmsted’s] report proceeded to note that Europe could not be our model. We must have something better because it was for all “phases of society.” The opulent, he continued, should be induced to surround the park with villas, which were to be enjoyed as well as the trees by the humble folk, since they “delight in viewing magnificent and imposing structures.” A kind of American doubletalk reconciling villas with democracy and privilege with society in general had begun.

The maps, photographs, and documents in catalogue form and recently on exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art are as much a part of Olmsted’s art as the art itself. The catalogue’s illustrative portfolio by William Alex, and an informative text by Elizabeth Barlow make one aware of the ongoing development of Central Park as a dialectical landscape.ⁱⁱⁱ Here the documentary power of the photograph discloses a succession of changing land masses within the park’s limits. The notion of the park as a static entity is questioned by the camera’s eye. The portfolio brings to mind Dziga Vertov’s documentary montages, and suggest that certain still photographs are related to the dialectics of film. For example, a photograph on page 78, *Tunnel carved out through Vista Rock for Transverse Road No. 2 at 79th Street* could be a still from a hypothetical film by Vertov on the building process of Central Park. In the photograph there is no evidence of the trees that would in the future screen the sunken roadway from the park proper. The photograph has the rawness of an instant out of the continuous growth and construction of the park, and indicates a break in continuity that serves to reinforce a sense of transformation, rather than any isolated formation. We notice in this photograph that nature’s development is grounded in the dialectical, and not in the metaphysical.

An example of a metaphysical rendering of a “tunnel” may be seen in John Martin’s mezzotint, *At the Brink of Chaos* (1825). Born into England’s industrial revolution, Martin translated engineering efforts into vision of cosmic doom. He substituted a tunnel for Milton’s bridge in *Paradise Lost*, and in doing





so retreated into the metaphysical.^{iv} In this instance the more dialectical aspect of the picturesque is shrouded in a sentimental gloom that has its origins in the Puritan religion. Modern day ecologists with a metaphysical turn of mind still see the operations of industry as Satan's work. The image of the lost paradise garden leaves one without a solid dialectic, and causes one to suffer an ecological despair. Nature, like a person is not one-sided. Another factor to note is that Olmsted's tunnel is in the real world, whereas Martin's is a pictorial *representation* derived only from the mind.

Olmsted's view of the landscape was lost sight of around the first part of this century, what with the rise of the "antidemocratic intelligentsia" that included Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and T.E. Hulme.^v Although Pound and Eliot did maintain traces of the picturesque in their poetry, they theoretically scorned it. "Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel," wrote Eliot in *The Waste Land*, "there is the empty chapel, only the wind's home." But Eliot's picturesque was a nostalgia for church authority, it ceased to be the democratic dialectic between the sylvan and the industrial that Price and Olmsted worked toward. Instead they stressed a neoclassical formalism, and T.E. Hulme, who exerted great influence on all three, was drawn to the "abstract" philosophy of Wilhelm Worringer. After World War II, when fascistic motives were revealed, various liberal critics moved in to pick up the pieces – among them Clement Greenberg. He tried to graft a lame formalism to a fuzzy Marxist outlook. Here is Greenberg upstaging both Lewis and Eliot:

Eliot has called Wyndham Lewis "the greatest prose stylist of my generation – perhaps the only one to have invented a new style." I find this exaggerated, but even if it were not, Lewis would still have paid too dearly for the distinction.


Clement Greenberg,
"Wyndham Lewis Against Abstract Art,"
Art and Culture, Boston, 1961

This is a smart way to subsume authority, but the rest of the article sheds no light on "abstraction." My feeling is that they all missed the boat.^{vi}

Turning to France, a sense of the picturesque results in Paul Cézanne's *Bibémus Quarry* (1895), but his direct encounters with the landscape were soon to be replaced by a studio-based formalism and cubistic reductionism which would lead to our present day insipid notions of "flatness" and "lyrical abstraction." The general direction of this tendency begins in 1914 when T.E. Hulme, lecturing on "Modern Art and Philosophy," talks about reducing trees to cones.^{vii} Representations of "stripes" became the logical outcome.

Any discussion concerning nature and art is bound to be shot through with moral implications. Once a student told me that "nature is anything that is not manmade." For that student man was outside the natural order of things. In Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908), we are told that





Byzantine and Egyptian art were created out of a psychological need to escape nature, and that since the Renaissance our understanding of such art has been clouded by undue confidence in nature. Worringer locates his "concept" of abstraction outside the sensuous anthropomorphic pantheism of Renaissance humanism. "The primal artistic impulse," says Worringer, "has nothing to do with the renderings of nature." Yet, throughout his book he refers to "crystalline forms of inanimate matter." Geometry strikes me as a "rendering" of inanimate matter. What are the lattices and grids of pure abstraction, if not rendering and representations of a reduced order of nature? Abstraction is a representation of nature devoid of "realism" based on mental or conceptual reduction. There is no escaping nature through abstract representation; abstraction brings one closer to physical structures within nature itself. But this does not mean a renewed confidence in nature, it simply means that abstraction is no cause of faith. Abstraction can only be valid if it accepts nature's dialectic.


In *The New York Times* (Sunday, March 12, 1972) Grace Glueck's column has a headline, "Artist-in-Residence for Mother Earth," and a photograph of Alan Gussow captioned "A sort of spiritual caretaker." Reading the article, one discovers that might be called an Ecological Oedipus Complex. Penetration of "Mother Earth" becomes a projection of the incest taboo onto nature. In Theodore Thass-Thienemann's book, *The Subconscious Language*, we find a quote from a catatonic schizophrenic: "They should stop digging (now shouting petulantly in rage) down inside the earth to draw metals out of it. That's digging down into Mother Earth and taking things that shouldn't be taken."

Simone de Beauvoir has written in *The Second Sex*, "Aeschylus says of Oedipus that he 'dared to seed the sacred furrow where he was formed.'" Alan Gussow in *The New York Times* projects onto "earth works artists" an Oedipus Complex born out of if wishy-washy transcendentalism. Indulging in spiritual fantasy, he says of representational landscape painters in his book *A Sense of Place: Artists and the American Land*, published by Friends of the Earth: "What these artists do is make these places visible, communicate their spirit – not like the earth works artists who cut and gouge the land like Army engineers. What's needed are lyric poets to celebrate it."^{viii}

Gussow's projection of the "Army engineers" on what he imagines to be "earth works artists" seems linked to his own sexual fears. As Paul Shepard in his *Man in the Landscape* points out, "Those [army] engineers seem to be at the opposite extreme from esthetes who attempt to etherealize their sexuality. Yet, the engineers' authority and dominance over land carries the force of sexual aggression – and perhaps the guilt as well."

An etherealized representational artist such as Gussow (he does mediocre Impressionistic paintings) fails to recognize the possibility of a direct organic manipulation of the land devoid of violence and "macho" aggression. Spiritualism widens the split between man and nature. The farmer's, miner's, or artist's treatment of the land depends on how aware he is of himself as nature; after all, sex isn't all a series of rapes. The farmer or engineer who cuts into the land can either





cultivate it or devastate it. Representing nature once removed in lyric poetry and landscape painting is not the same as direct cultivation of the land. If strip miners were less alienated from the nature in themselves and free of sexual aggression, cultivation could take place. When one looks at the Indian cliff dwelling in Mesa Verde, one cannot separate art from nature. And one can't forget the Indian mounds in Ohio.^{ix}


One wonders what the likes of Gussow would make of America's first "earthwork artist" – Frederick Law Olmsted. Perhaps, if Gussow had lived in the mid-19th century, he would have suggested the Olmsted write "lyric poetry" instead of moving ten million horse-cart loads of earth to make Central Park. Artists like Gussow are the type who would rather *retreat* to scenic beauty spots than try to make a concrete dialectic between nature and people. Such an artist surrounds himself with self-righteousness and pretends to be saving the landscape. This is not being an ecologist of the real, but rather, a spiritual snob.

This kind of spirituality mentioned in the preceding paragraphs is what Rollo May in *Power and Innocence* calls "pseudoinnocence," which can only lead to pseudospirituality and pseudoart. May speaks of an "... insulation from the evil in the world."^x The authentic artist cannot turn his back on the contradictions that inhabit our landscapes. Olmsted himself was full of contradictions; for instance, he wrote his wife his reaction to the California desert, "the whole aspect of the country is detestable."

In the 1862 photograph it is interesting to see the arrested construction of a water system for draining and filling a Central Park lake – five sunken pipes, guide lines, half-formed walls, dirt roads, and general rubble. All of the roughness of the process rises out of the park's earlier condition. As Elizabeth Barlow indicates, "The political quagmire was matched by the appearance of the park itself, which was rubbish-strewn, deep in mud, filled with recently vacated squatters' huts, and overrun with goats left behind by the squatters. Until they were eventually impounded, the rampant goats were a great nuisance, eating the foliage of the park's few trees." All of this is part of the park's dialectic.

Looking on the nature of the park, or its history and our perceptions of it, we are first presented with an endless maze of relations and interconnections, in which nothing remains what or where it is, as a-thing-itself, but the whole park changes like day and night, in and out, dark and light – a carefully designed clump of bushes can also be a mugger's hideout. The reason the potential dialectic inherent in the picturesque broke down was because natural processes were viewed in isolation as so many classifications, detached from physical interconnection, and finally replaced by mental representations of a finished absolute ideal. Biliou's books like *The Greening of America* present one with a notion of "consciousness" without substance. Central Park is a ground work of necessity and chance, a range of contrasting viewpoints that are forever fluctuating, yet solidly based on the earth.






By expanding our dialectic outside of Central Park to Yosemite National Park, we gain insight into the development of both park sites before they were turned into “parks.” The site of Central Park was the result of “urban blight” – trees were cut down by the early settlers without any thought of the future. Such a site could be reclaimed by direct earth-moving without fear of upsetting the ecology. My own experience is that the best sites for “earth art” are sites that have been disrupted by industry, reckless urbanization, or nature’s own devastation. For instance, *The Spiral Jetty* is built in a dead sea, and *The Broken Circle* and *Spiral Hill* in a working sand quarry. Such land is cultivated or recycled as art. On the other hand, when Olmsted visited Yosemite it existed as a “wilderness.” There’s no point in recycling wilderness the way Central Park was recycled. One need not improve Yosemite, all one needs is to provide access routes and accommodations. But this decreases the original definition of wilderness as a place that exists without human involvement. Today Yosemite is more like an urbanized wilderness with its electrical outlets for campers, and its clothes lines hung between the pines. There is not much room for contemplation in solitude. The new national parks like the Everglades and the Dinosaur National Monument are more “abstract” and lack the “picturesqueness” of Yosemite and Yellowstone.

In many ways the more humble or even degraded sites left in the wake of mining operations offer more of a challenge to art, and a greater possibility for being in solitude. Imposing cliffs and unimproved mesas could just as well be left alone. But as the nation’s “energy crisis” mounts, such places will eventually be mined. Some 5.5 millions of acres, an area the size of New Hampshire, is currently being bought up in North Dakota, Wyoming, and Montana by mining companies. “I think,” says Interior Secretary Rogers Morton (*Newsweek*, October 9, 1972), “we can set a standard for a new mining ethic so that the deep seams can be mined and closely followed by an environment program that is compatible esthetically and with proper land use.” One can only wonder what his notion of “esthetics” is. The precedents set by Olmsted should be studied by both miners and ecologists.^{xi}

Returning to Yellowstone, which celebrated its centennial last year, we see a combining of Europe’s “intoxication with ruins” with America’s newly discovered “natural ruins” at the origin of the park’s development. David E. Folsom, a wealthy rancher, who viewed Yellowstone in 1869, wrote in his diary “a huge rock that bore resemblance to an old castle; rampart and bulwark were slowly yielding to the ravages of time, but the old turret stood out in bold relief against the sky.” As Paul Shepard has pointed out, John Ruskin never visited America because it lacked castles. Nevertheless “Castle Rock” has become a name for many natural formations throughout the West.

New York in the 1870s yielded to different kinds of ravages. Olmsted was dismissed from his job in 1874. In a document privately printed in 1881 called *The Spoils of the Park: With a Few Leaves from Deep-laden Note-books of “A Wholly Unpractical Man,”* we get a glimpse of Olmsted’s conflicts with City politics.^{xii} Under Boss Tweed the Park Department deteriorated into a shambles along with serious unemployment, violent labor protests, and financial panic, causing Olmsted to write in 1877 that New York City was “essentially under martial law.” The Park Department was also being turned into a social welfare agency; in Olmsted’s words the Park Department had become “an asylum for






aggravated cases of hernia, varicose veins, rheumatism, partial blindness, and other infirmities compelling sedentary occupations."


When Charles Eliot Norton said of him (Olmsted), towards the close of his career, that of all American artists he stood "first in the production of great works which answer the needs and give expression to the life of our immense and miscellaneous democracy" he did not exaggerate Olmsted's influence.

Lewis Mumford, *The Brown Decades*

Entering the park at 96th Street and Central Park West, I walked south along the western side of the reservoir on a bridle path. The upper part of the park that includes Harlem Meer, The Great Hills, and The North Meadow (now filled with ball fields) was planned for lateral and horizontal views; in Olmsted's words it should be "bold and sweeping" as opposed to the lower park's "heterogeneous" character. One has the sensation of being in a sunken forest as well. A sense of remoteness was present in this region. This sense of engulfment deepened as foliage suggested the harmonies, tonalities, and rhythms of Charles Ives' music – *Three Outdoor Scenes*, *Central Park at Night*, and *The Unanswered Question*, subtitled *A Cosmic Landscape*, in particular.

At Bank Rock Bridge is an entrance to The Ramble. On the bridge stood a sinister looking character, who looked like the type who would rip off cameras. Quickly I vanished into The Ramble – a tangled net of divergent paths. Just the day before I had been looking at stereopticon photos of how this place looked before 1900, before the vegetation Olmsted planted had grown up. At that time, the shores of The Lake still had the look of a rock strewn quarry. Olmsted had wanted to plan "rhododendrons, andromedas, azaleas, kalmias, rhodoras," but his plans remain only partly realized. Olmsted was attracted to this place before he did anything to it, because it was "exceedingly intricate" with "sweet gum, spicebush, tulip tree, sassafras, red-maple, black-oak, azalea and andromeda." The network of paths he twisted through this place outlabyrinthed labyrinths. For what really is a Ramble, but a place to walk aimlessly and idly – it is a maze that spreads in all directions. Now The Ramble has grown up into an urban jungle, and lurking in its thickets are "hoods, hobos, hustlers, homosexuals," and other estranged creatures of the city (see John Rechy, *The City of Night*). Olmsted had brought a primordial condition into the heart of Manhattan. A small rock bridge crosses a miniature ravine, connecting tangle with tangle. Beneath leafless tree limbs the windings grow more complex, and seem to turn on themselves, so that the walker has no sense of direction. Autumn leaves smother the pathways as they lead one deeper into an infinity of curves. Flowing through The Ramble is The Gill, a stream of water which appears to be a cross between a brook and a pond, and apparently having its source in a cave under a heap of boulders. Tiny valleys and hills are scattered in such a way as to maximize seclusion and solitude. The Lake borders The Ramble; in it is a small flat island of rock.





Moving up a wooded incline, I approached Vista Rock Tunnel near Belvedere Castle. Water was seeping and dripping over the carved rock surfaces of the tunnel and falling on the rock-walled trench. At this point I was chased by three wild dogs. Later, I found out that there are other packs of dogs roaming the park. Also I discovered that the squirrels are rather aggressive – fat dynamos rather than suburban scrawnies. A series of steps curved right into the bedrock, leading to the castle which is also a weather station. From there one looks out over Belvedere Lake and the Great Lawn, once the Croton Water Works.


Walking east, I passed graffiti on boulders. Somehow, I can accept graffiti on subway trains, but not on boulders. On the base of the Obelisk along with the hieroglyphs there are also graffiti. Suddenly, one encounters the construction site of a new tunnel near The Metropolitan Museum of Art – a gray compound with a towering orange derrick in the middle. On the gray walls are more graffiti of an “ecological” sort: “Concrete and trees do not mix.” “Let’s not turn Central Park into an Asphalt Jungle.” “Decentralize the Met!” “Save the Park!” “The Met is not good for trees and other flowering things.” “Does the Met smell as nice as a tree?” “Preserve Wildlife.” Olmsted’s own view on buildings and museums in *The Spoils of the Park* is: “The reservoirs and the museum are not part of the Park proper: they are deductions from it. The Subways are not deductions because their effect, on the whole, is to enlarge, not lessen, the opportunities of escape from buildings.”

Passing under Glade Arch and into the Glade, I came to the Conservatory Water Pool; the overall shape of its concrete banks being an interplay of curves and right angles. The Pool had been drained, and this provided one with a vista of graceful desolation – a sea of autumn leaves. The bare trees that surround the Pool rose from the ground like so much smoky lace. Here and there people sauntered in and out of the haze and sunlight, turning the area into a phantom world.

As I continued southward, near Fifth Avenue, I passed a “kiddy land,” one of the latest incursions into the park. Designed by Richard Datter in 1970, it looks like a pastiche of Philip Johnson and Mark di Suvero. A sign on the fence that surrounds it exhorted one to “Enjoy.” Even cuter is the “kiddy zoo,” with its Disney-type Whale.^{xiii} In the Old Zoo some caged workmen were installing an artificial habitat.

In the spillway that pours out of the Woolman Memorial Ice Rink, I noticed a metal grocery cart and a trash basket half-submerged in the water. Further down, the spillway becomes a brook choked with mud and tin cans. The mud then spews under the Gapstow Bridge to become a muddy slough that inundates a good part of The Pond, leaving the rest of The Pond aswirl with oil slicks, sludge, and dixie cups. Maintenance on The Pond seems long overdue. The mud should be dredged out. This maintenance operation could be treated in terms of art, as a “mud extraction sculpture.” A documentary treatment with the aid of film or photographs would turn the maintenance into a physical dialectic. The mud could be deposited on a site in the city that needs “fill.” The transportation of mud would be followed from point of extraction to point of deposition. A





consciousness of mud and the realms of sedimentation is necessary in order to understand the landscape as it exists.

The magnitude of geological change is still with us, just as it was millions of years ago. Olmsted, a great artist who contended with such magnitudes, sets an example which throws a whole new light on the nature of American art.

ⁱ Sharawadgi involves a Chinese influence on English landscape development. The work corresponds to the Chinese syllables Sa-lo-kwai-chi, meaning “quality of being impressive or surprising through careless or unordered grace.” See Y.Z. Chang, “A Note on Sharawadgi,” *Modern Language Notes*, 1930, p. 221. Also see Edward Hyams, *The English Garden*, New York: “the fact, as appears in accounts of certain gardens, Alexander Pope’s garden at Twickenham, William Kent’s Stowe, the same artists’ Rousham, Hoare’s Stoumead (and there were others), is that ‘Chinese’ (i.e., poetic nature), gardening was well established in Britain almost half a century before the English had any but rather tenuous contacts with Chinese gardening.”

ⁱⁱ Hegelian dialectics exist only for the mind. This is close to Thoreau’s mental dialectic of mixing the local with the global. “I am accustomed,” says Thoreau in his Journal, “to regard the smallest brook with as much interest for the time being, as if it were the Orinoco or the Mississippi.” See John Aldrich Christie, *Thoreau As World Traveler*, New York, 1965.

ⁱⁱⁱ William Alex and Elizabeth Barlow, *Frederick Law Olmsted’s New York*, New York, 1972. This important book was very helpful in assembling this essay.


^{iv} See the chapter “The Age of Despair” in F.D. Klingender, *Art and the Industrial Revolution*, New York, 1970.

^v “The cult of Unnaturalism, I think, is the real trouble with the whole, and it is still very much with us, at any rate in academic criticism.” See William Empson’s introduction to John Harrison, *The Reactionaries*, New York, 1967.

^{vi} Greenberg does show an interest in dialectics in “Necessity of Formalism,” *Art International*, October, 1972. “Actually it’s a ‘dialectical’ turn that works to maintain or restore continuity: a most essential continuity: continuity with the highest esthetic standards of the past.” On the other hand, formalism emerges in the essay less as a “necessity” and more as a luxury. The notion of “quality” appeals in vague notions of luxury.

^{vii} The reductive tendency existed in English formal gardens of the 18th century. Joseph Addison, an essayist, writing in *The Spectator* (1712) had this to say: “Our British gardeners, on the contrary, instead of humoring nature loved to deviate from it as much as possible. Our trees rise in cones, globes, and pyramids.” Nikolaus Pevsner speaks of Addison’s dislike of mathematics in the garden





but admiration for the principles of mathematical order in the universe. "The Genesis of the Picturesque," *Architectural Review*, XCVI, 1944.

^{viii} The Enemies of Art might be expected to publish such a book, but not the Friends of the Earth. "One becomes irritated with the format from the start," says John Wilmerding in his review of this "pretentious nonbook" in *Art in America*, November-December, 1972.

^{ix} "From Wisconsin to the Gulf of Mexico, from Mississippi to the Appalachians, but especially in Ohio, rise tens of thousands of artificial hills. Many of them are so fantastically shaped that they defy description." C.W. Ceram, *The First Americans: A Story of North American Archeology*, New York, 1971, p. 193.

^x In *Power and Innocence*, New York, 1972, Rollo May points out in reference to Charles Reich's book *The Greening of America* that, "Far from Consciousness III being an answer, it will be no consciousness at all, for it lacks the dialectic between 'yes' and 'no,' good and evil, which gives birth to consciousness of any sort. Reich writes: "The hard questions – if by that is meant political and economic – are insignificant, even irrelevant." My feeling is that these "hard questions" are going to have to be faced – even by artists. All the bogus spiritualists, "ersatz Buddhists, Yogis and Hindus" (May) won't be of any help.

^{xi} "In *A Wilderness Bill of Rights*, [Justice William O.] Douglas rails at dams as a source of power generation, and mentions alternate sources of generation: coal-fired steam, nuclear powered steam, and solar energy. But the same book denounces the havoc wreaked by mining coal to fire the steam, and there is a solemn warning about the wholesale pollution from the disposal of nuclear waste." Frank E. Smith, *The Politics of Conservation*, New York, 1964.

^{xii} *Landscape into Cityscape: Frederick Law Olmsted's Plans for a Greater New York City*, edited with an introductory essay and notes by Albert Fein, Ithaca, 1967. Included is the essay "The Spoils of the Park" (1882), revealing Olmsted's concern with the politics of Central Park.

^{xiii} On March 31, 1918 *The New York Times* published a map titled "IF 'IMPROVEMENT' PLANS HAD GOBBLED CENTRAL PARK," subtitled: "Many Other Grabs Are Not Shown in the Picture, for Lack of Room." There must be a limit to "destructive innovations" (Fein). Disney-type improvements strike me as undemocratic because one must pay to enter.

